

DRAFT

**Walworth County Fire/EMS Study Committee
April 17, 2019 Meeting Minutes
County Board Room 114, Walworth County Government Center
100 W. Walworth Street, Elkhorn, Wisconsin**

The meeting was called to order by Chair John Peters at 10:07 a.m.

Roll call was conducted and the following members were present: Chair John Peters, Vice Chair Dave Nelson, Denise Pieroni and Bruce Vander Veen. James Weiss and Lowell Hagen were absent. A quorum was declared.

Others present: Dr. Steven Andrews-Aurora Health Care; Walworth County Administrator David Bretl; Robert Whitaker, North Shore Fire Department Chief

Bruce Vander Veen made a motion, seconded by Denise Pieroni, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried by voice vote.

Vice Chair Nelson made a motion, seconded by Bruce Vander Veen, to approve the March 22, 2019 meeting minutes. Motion carried by voice vote.

Public comment – There was none.

Unfinished Business

- Follow-up on speakers for consolidated dispatch
The Committee will invite Mr. Richard Tuma to attend the next meeting to discuss Dispatch Centers. Peters suggested a date also be set to tour the Waukesha County Dispatch Center.

New Business

- Presentation by the North Shore Fire Department
Robert Whitaker introduced himself as the Chief at North Shore Fire Department. He discussed the creation of the North Shore Fire Department in 1995 and the challenges that were present before, during and after the transition from multiple volunteer departments to a consolidated department. He emphasized the need for elected officials in the area to be supportive of consolidation in order for it to be successful, and also keep the public informed as to the changes and decisions being made. He also stated it is important to have only one Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) to improve communication and limit confusion. He said compromise between all those involved in the consolidation process is the most important element for success. Discussion ensued.

- Discuss changes to the “Recommendations” document
Chair Peters said this topic will be discussed at a future meeting.

- Forward the ProPhoenix issue to the Emergency Communications Advisory Committee for discussion, along with a recommendation
Chair Peters said members voted unanimously in favor of acquiring ProPhoenix access at the last MABAS Division 103 meeting. They will draft a letter to the Sheriff encouraging implementation. This item will continue to be discussed at the Walworth County Emergency Communications Advisory Committee and will possibly be included in the 2020 County budget.

- Possible field trips/speakers/dispatch centers for future meetings
Bretl confirmed there will be a speaker from Gateway Technical College at the May meeting.

- Possible speaker at a future meeting from a County that has County-supported ALS services
Members will look into which counties in Wisconsin have county-supported ALS services and possible speakers. Vander Veen said he will contact the Chief in Baraboo to speak at a future meeting.

- Topics for next meeting

The following items were set to be discussed at the May meeting:

- Richard Tuma
- Gateway Speaker
- Schedule a field trip to Waukesha County

Public comment – There was none.

Next meeting date and time: The next meeting will be held on Wednesday May 29, 2019 at 10:00 a.m. in Room 114 of the Walworth County Government Center.

Adjournment

On motion by Bruce Vander Veen, seconded by Denise Pieroni, Chair Peters adjourned the meeting at 11:42 a.m.

Submitted by Betsy Stanek, Administrative Clerk II. Meeting minutes are not considered final until approved at the next regularly scheduled meeting.

As volunteer fire, EMS departments struggle with recruitment, lawmakers propose new bill to help

Bill would provide tax credits

By:

[Rose Schmidt](https://www.channel3000.com/meet-the-team/rose-schmidt/652524395) (<https://www.channel3000.com/meet-the-team/rose-schmidt/652524395>)

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Posted: May 05, 2019 08:30 PM CDT Updated: May 06, 2019 07:52 AM CDT

MADISON, Wis. - A new proposal at the state Capitol aims to incentivize people to become volunteer firefighters and emergency medical services workers in Wisconsin as many departments around the country struggle to find volunteers.

"Right now, we have a huge problem with trying to get volunteers to participate in their local fire departments. Of our 863 fire departments in the state of Wisconsin, 701 rely on volunteers," said Sen. Patrick Testin, a Republican from Stevens Point.

Chanse Kaczmarek, deputy chief of the Belleville Fire Department, said the most difficult part for volunteers is the time commitment involved with the job, as they often are juggling a full-time job with a family at the same time.

"We operate 365 days a year so it takes out of holidays and other family events," Kaczmarek said.

He said his department luckily has not faced challenges with recruitment, but retention has been a bit of an issue.

So what happens when a department can't get the volunteers needed?

"It means there's a delay in response because now you're waiting for a firetruck to come from another community," Kaczmarek said.

To address the problem, Testin and Rep. Jeff Mursau, R-Crivitz, began working on a bipartisan bill that would provide tax credits to volunteer firefighters and EMS crews. On the same day their proposal was introduced, a bill aiming to address the same issue and do something very similar was introduced by Sen. Steve Nass, R-Whitewater, and Rep. Treig Pronschinske, R-Mondovi.

The four lawmakers are now in the process of combining their two bills into one. Testin said he believes their blended proposal would provide three types of refundable tax credits. New volunteers would get a tax credit when they join. Then, that credit would increase after five years to encourage retention. The third type of credit would provide reimbursement to volunteers for minor expenses such as equipment and travel and training expenses.

Right now, there's a real push for departments that were struggling with recruitment and retention. "It's difficult to attract people into certain professions, we're trying to remove any hurdles into entry into this type of work," Testin said. "I think they could help; I don't think they're going to hurt. Ultimately, our firefighters aren't here looking for money or tax credits. They want to serve their community and do what's right by their neighbors," Kaczmarek said.

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BY **VARIDESK**

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2019 ASSEMBLY BILL 142

March 25, 2019 - Introduced by Representatives MURSAU, BALLWEG, BORN, BRANDTJEN, EDMING, HESSELBEIN, HORLACHER, KITCHENS, KULP, KURTZ, MEYERS, MILROY, MURPHY, NOVAK, PETERSEN, QUINN, RAMTHUN, RODRIGUEZ, SKOWRONSKI, SPIROS, SUMMERFIELD, TAUCHEN, TITTL, THIESFELDT, TRANEL, TUSLER, VANDERMEER, SHANKLAND and JAMES, cosponsored by Senators TESTIN, BERNIER, BEWLEY, ERPENBACH, FEYEN, JACQUE, NASS, RINGHAND, L. TAYLOR, TIFFANY and SCHACHTNER. Referred to Committee on Ways and Means.

- 1 **AN ACT to create** 71.07 (8m), 71.07 (8n) and 71.10 (4) (ct) and (cu) of the statutes;
2 **relating to:** creating two tax credits for volunteer emergency responders.

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

This bill creates two nonrefundable individual income tax credits for volunteer fire fighters, emergency medical responders, and emergency medical services practitioners.

The first credit equals \$20 for each hour an individual who volunteers for one of these positions spends on active duty, in training exercises, or in class completing coursework to improve skills or to obtain or maintain certification. The second credit equals the volunteer's unreimbursed expenses for purchasing gear and equipment plus an amount to reimburse him or her for using a personal vehicle to attend training. The maximum amount an individual may claim per year is \$1,000 for the first credit and \$400 for the second credit, except that these amounts are doubled for an individual who serves as a volunteer fire fighter and a volunteer emergency medical responder or services practitioner. Because the credits are nonrefundable, no amount will be paid to the claimant if the credit he or she is due exceeds his or her tax liability. The credits are only available to full-year Wisconsin residents.

For further information see the *state* fiscal estimate, which will be printed as an appendix to this bill.

The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:

1 **SECTION 1.** 71.07 (8m) of the statutes is created to read:

2 **71.07 (8m) EMERGENCY RESPONDER CREDIT.** (a) *Definitions.* In this subsection:

3 1. “Claimant” means an emergency responder who files a claim under this
4 subsection.

5 2. “Course-work time” means the number of hours spent in a class, either in
6 person or online, by an emergency responder if the course maintains or improves
7 skills required by the individual to continue serving as an emergency responder or
8 is necessary for the individual to obtain or maintain certification to continue serving
9 as an emergency responder.

10 3. “Emergency responder” means an individual who serves in this state as a
11 volunteer emergency medical responder, as defined under s. 256.01 (4p); a volunteer
12 fire fighter; or a volunteer emergency medical services practitioner, as defined in s.
13 256.01 (5).

14 4. “Service time” means the number of hours an emergency responder spends
15 on active duty as an emergency responder, or the number of hours such an individual
16 spends in training exercises, or both.

17 (b) *Filing claims.* Subject to the limitations provided in this subsection, a
18 claimant may claim as a credit against the tax imposed under s. 71.02 an amount
19 equal to \$20 multiplied by the sum of the hours of service time or course-work time,
20 or both, that the claimant spends participating in such activities in the year to which
21 the claim relates.

22 (c) *Limitations.* 1. The maximum credit that a claimant may claim each year
23 under this subsection is \$1,000, except that a claimant who serves in the year to
24 which the claim relates as a volunteer fire fighter and a volunteer emergency medical

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1 responder or services practitioner may claim a maximum credit of \$1,000 for each of
2 the 2 positions.

3 2. No credit may be claimed under this subsection by a part-year resident or
4 a nonresident of this state.

5 3. No credit may be allowed under this subsection unless it is claimed within
6 the period specified in s. 71.75 (2).

7 4. No credit may be allowed under this subsection for a taxable year covering
8 a period of less than 12 months, except for a taxable year closed by reason of the death
9 of the taxpayer.

10 (d) *Administration.* Subsection (9e) (d), to the extent that it applies to the credit
11 under that subsection, applies to the credit under this subsection.

12 **SECTION 2.** 71.07 (8n) of the statutes is created to read:

13 71.07 (8n) EMERGENCY RESPONDER REIMBURSEMENT CREDIT. (a) *Definitions.* In
14 this subsection:

15 1. "Claimant" means an emergency responder who files a claim under this
16 subsection.

17 2. "Emergency responder" means an individual who serves in this state as a
18 volunteer emergency medical responder, as defined under s. 256.01 (4p); a volunteer
19 fire fighter; or a volunteer emergency medical services practitioner, as defined in s.
20 256.01 (5).

21 3. "Expenses" means unreimbursed expenses incurred by an emergency
22 responder for gear and equipment that the individual purchases, in the year to which
23 the claim relates, primarily for his or her use while he or she is serving as an
24 emergency responder.

ASSEMBLY BILL 142**SECTION 2**

1 4. "Mileage" means the number of miles traveled by an emergency responder,
2 in his or her personal vehicle in the year to which the claim relates, to attend training
3 related to his or service as an emergency responder, multiplied by the mileage rate.

4 5. "Mileage rate" means the standard mileage reimbursement rate for
5 business, set by the Internal Revenue Service, that applies under federal law for the
6 taxable year to which the claim relates.

7 (b) *Filing claims.* Subject to the limitations provided in this subsection, a
8 claimant may claim as a credit against the tax imposed under s. 71.02 an amount
9 equal to sum of the claimant's expenses and mileage.

10 (c) *Limitations.* 1. The maximum credit that a claimant may claim each year
11 under this subsection is \$400, except that a claimant who serves in the year to which
12 the claim relates as a volunteer fire fighter and a volunteer emergency medical
13 responder or services practitioner may claim a maximum credit of \$400 for each of
14 the 2 positions.

15 2. No credit may be claimed under this subsection by a part-year resident or
16 a nonresident of this state.

17 3. No credit may be allowed under this subsection unless it is claimed within
18 the period specified in s. 71.75 (2).

19 4. No credit may be allowed under this subsection for a taxable year covering
20 a period of less than 12 months, except for a taxable year closed by reason of the death
21 of the taxpayer.

22 (d) *Administration.* Subsection (9e) (d), to the extent that it applies to the credit
23 under that subsection, applies to the credit under this subsection.

24 **SECTION 3.** 71.10 (4) (ct) and (cu) of the statutes are created to read:

25 71.10 (4) (ct) Emergency responder credit under s. 71.07 (8m).

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1 (cu) Emergency responder reimbursement credit under s. 71.07 (8n).

2 **SECTION 4. Initial applicability.**

3 (1) This act first applies to taxable years beginning on January 1 of the year
4 in which this subsection takes effect, except that if this subsection takes effect after
5 July 31, this act first applies to taxable years beginning on January 1 of the year
6 following the year in which this subsection takes effect.

7 (END)

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Recommendations of the Walworth County Fire/EMS Study Committee

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

(Reserved)

II. BACKGROUND

In response to the requests of numerous towns, cities, and villages located in Walworth County, in 2016 the County Board of Supervisors passed Resolution 31-11/16 establishing the Walworth County Fire/EMS Study Committee. Membership of the committee consisted of three fire and EMS professionals and four government representatives; one each representing town, village, city and county government. The following individuals were appointed to the committee: Lowell Hagen, Whitewater town chair; Jim Weiss, who served as both the Linn town chair and administrator for the village of Williams Bay; and Denise Pieroni, administrator for the city of Delavan. The fire and EMS perspective was represented by: Lake Geneva's Fire Chief John Peters; Bruce Vander Veen, Chief of Sharon Fire and Rescue; and Dave Nelson, an Assistant Chief with the Lauderdale-LaGrange Fire/Rescue department. Dale Wilson, the County's human resources director, represented Walworth County government. The county board eventually modified the structure of the committee to provide a number of alternate members and to create advisory seats for the county's emergency medical directors, Doctors James MacNeal and Steven Andrews. County Board Supervisor Ken Monroe was the county government alternate while Dennis Martin, Fontan's village administrator, was the local government alternate. Fred Schalow, Chief of the Bloomfield-Genoa City Fire and Rescue was the fire service's alternate member. The Study Committee held its first meeting on March 23, 2017.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. Walworth County should establish a consolidated-unified dispatch center that operates independently of the Sheriff's Office and which would be responsible for emergency services dispatch.
- B. Until Recommendation A is accomplished: the charter of the current 9-1-1 governing board should be modified to include Fire/EMS and law enforcement professionals and the duties of the committee should be changed to include the following:
 - i. Review protocols and encourage common protocols;
 - ii. Make recommendations to the communications captain;
 - iii. Make recommendations on evaluating customer service levels;
 - iv. Review data and make recommendations on dispatch staff training and quality assurance.
 - v. Develop a unified dispatch protocol for all PSAPS to include, but not limited to, response time standards and required mutual aid protocols.
- C. GPS devices should be installed on all ambulances, including private agencies contracted for service in the County with the capability to be located in real time

by a centralized dispatch center. Protocols should be developed to determine when to dispatch the closest ambulance to respond to the emergency.

- D. Since law enforcement is often first on the scene, encourage all law enforcement agencies to ensure that deputies and police officers receive first-responder training and have basic life-saving equipment in squad cars.
- E. Encourage fire departments and EMS agencies to support the concept of utilizing the ProPhoenix fire module countywide to aid in information sharing, consistent reporting and GPS monitoring of vehicles.
- F. Encourage every agency to assess their response statistics and ability to meet the NFPA response standards. This assessment should identify their strengths and opportunities and be shared with their leadership and local elected officials.
- G. Require all PSAPs to generate reports of response time statistics, by agency, to the Fire/EMS Committee and the Emergency Communications Advisory Committee.
- H. Encourage regional cooperation in evaluating resources and utilizing financial support, if allocated, from the Walworth County budget to facilitate this cooperation.