

## **Fire Rescue Task Force**

January 16, 2014

7:30 p.m.

City Manager Conference Room  
City of Whitewater Municipal Building  
312 W Whitewater Street, Whitewater, Wisconsin

### **MINUTES**

(as amended at January 28, 2014 meeting)

#### **1. Call to order and roll call.**

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Chairman Ken Kidd. Present: Don Gregoire (Fire Chief), Shannon Schepp (Rescue), Jan Bilgen (Police Commission), Ken Kidd (Council), Phil Frawley (Council), Cameron Clapper (City Manager). Absent: None. Also present: Todd Lindert, Bob Gabbey, Stephen Chene, Terry Malone, Dawn Kiernan, Scott Brautigan, Mike Higgins, and John Pecha.

#### **2. Discussion and possible action on Task Force membership.**

Task Force members discussed the composition of the Fire Rescue Task Force and unanimously agreed that task force membership was tied to the position, not the individual.

#### **3. Approve minutes from meetings on October 29, 2013, December 5, 2013 and December 9, 2013.**

It was moved by Bilgen, seconded by Frawley to approve minutes presented for October 29, December 5, and December 9, 2013. Ayes: Gregoire, Schepp, Bilgen, Kidd, Frawley, Clapper. Noes: None. Absent: None.

#### **4. Discussion of the needs and goals of the Fire Department.**

Task force members discussed goals and expectations for the future of the fire service division of the Fire Department and areas of focus for future task force discussions. Goals and recommendations as defined by task force members included the following:

- a) Define the Fire Department/City Relationships: should the Fire Department exist as a department within the City that reports to the Police and Fire Commission, or should the Fire Department be a separate entity that contracts with the City to provide fire and EMS services.
- b) Change, update, unify, simplify and/or streamline Fire Department bylaws to include all divisions of the Fire Department under same rules with same expectations for all volunteers.
- c) Insure that the Fire Department continues to recruit and retain qualified individuals for positions within the department. That there be operational and administrative support provided and that there be an established code of ethics and conduct. Provide professional skill development and offer training, as well as currency in State certifications.
- d) Define a clear process for selection of officers that ensures all hires and appointments are based on skill level and experience.

- e) Establish reasonable compensation system for Fire Department officers.

## **5. Discussion of the needs and goals of Rescue.**

Task force members discussed goals and expectations for the future of the EMS division of the Fire Department and areas of focus for future task force discussions. Goals and recommendations as defined by task force members included the following:

- a) Insure that qualified people continue to work for EMS. That there be operational and administrative support provided and that there be an established code of ethics and conduct. Provide professional skill development and offer training, as well as currency in state certifications.
- b) Development of 5, 10 and 20 year plans for EMS operations.
- c) Evaluate fees for service to find ways to increase or improve revenue stream.
- d) The advisability of keeping fire services and EMS within the same department.
- e) Change, update, unify, simplify and/or streamline Fire Department bylaws to include all divisions of the Fire Department under same rules with same expectations for all volunteers.
- f) Evaluate feasibility and appropriateness of hiring a paramedic for the department.
- g) Clarify, standardize and formalize all personnel processes within EMS and the Fire Department as a whole (including hiring and termination).
- h) Establish a clear system for the maintenance and updating of equipment (including trucks). Insure that 1st truck out is fully staffed.
- i) Seek to “mend wounds” of volunteers within the department.

## **6. Discussion of the needs and goals of the City.**

- a) Establish a formal agreement for fire suppression and EMS services with the Whitewater Fire Department. If the two (city and fire department) are to remain separate entities, establish 501(c)3 tax status for the Whitewater Fire Department as soon as possible.
- b) Formally establish procedures for quality assurance and performance review for all divisions within the Whitewater Department.
- c) Establish meaningful oversight, possibly by committee, of financial and quality assurance issues. If by committee, the committee’s composition should include representatives from all stakeholders or stakeholder groups.
- d) Structure the Fire Department organization in a manner that would allow for the development of innovative strategies to improve and/or maintain services. This organizational structure could be a “hybrid” system with City involvement.

- e) By virtue of promoting professionalism, professional development, and qualifications-based advancement maintain credibility for Fire Department officers and operations.
- f) Establish measurable goals and objectives annually (particularly related to training) similar to those set by other departments within the City.
- g) Address current issues and concerns with retention and recruitment of volunteer personnel.

**7. Presentation of City balance sheet for 2013 regarding Fire Department and Rescue.**

Clapper explained the balance sheets as provided in packet materials and reviewed direct and indirect costs as defined in packet materials. Some task force members had questions regarding estimates derived by the finance department for depreciation on vehicles and equipment as well as the facility. Ken Kidd clarified that the intent of the financial analysis was to counter the perception that EMS revenues far exceeded the cost of Fire Department operations and clarify that when all true costs were included in the analysis, the cost of operations is \$350,000. Kidd pointed out that this is a bargain price for the services provided.

**8. Presentation of Fire Department balance sheet for 2013.**

Due to a server outage, Fire Department data was unavailable for presentation and discussion.

**9. Preliminary discussion regarding various organizational models.**

Task force members discussed the meaning of “hybrid” or “hybrid department”. For purposes of task force discussion the term “hybrid” refers to some combination of volunteers and City employees. At one end of the spectrum would be a City department staffed with full time and/or part time City employees. At the other end of the spectrum would be a completely independent fire department with no full time and/or part time City employees. A “hybrid” organization would be a combination of full time, part time employees and/or volunteers which may or may not report to the Police and Fire Commission as a City department. The task force will review potential models for the organizational structure at future meetings and the City Manager will research potential organizational models for discussion at the next meeting.

**10. Confirmation of next meeting date.**

The next meeting of the Fire Rescue Task Force is scheduled for Tuesday, January 28 at 7:30 p.m. in the City Manager Conference Room at the Whitewater Municipal Building.

**11. Adjourn.**

It was moved by Gregoire, seconded by Frawley to adjourn the meeting. Ayes: Gregoire, Schepp, Bilgen, Kidd, Frawley, Clapper. Noes: None. Absent: None. The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cameron Clapper  
City Manager