



Minutes of **SPECIAL WORKSHOP MEETING**
Held **August 26, 2014**

Township of Springfield

Laura Moreau, Clerk

Call to Order: Supervisor Walls called the August 26, 2014 Special Workshop Meeting of the Springfield Township Board to order at 7:00 p.m. at the Springfield Township Civic Center, 12000 Davisburg Rd., Davisburg, MI 48350.

Roll Call:

Board Members Present

Collin W. Walls	Township Supervisor
Laura Moreau	Township Clerk
Jamie Dubre	Township Treasurer
Marc Cooper	Township Trustee
Judy Hensler	Township Trustee
David Hopper	Township Trustee
Dennis Vallad	Township Trustee

Board Members Not Present

None

New Business:

1. Medical Plan

Clerk Moreau presented a summary of medical plan options and costs. She noted that the Township pushed back their medical plan renewal date but as of December 1, 2014 the Township will need to select a new plan that is compliant with the Affordable Care Act. Michigan Planners provided analysis for several options including three choices through Blue Care Network which is the Township's current medical plan carrier. HMO Platinum 10% was mapped by BCN as the closest option to the current plan. HMO Platinum 20% and HMO Gold 30% were suggested by Michigan Planners. The Township also asked for options through other carriers and Michigan Planners provided plan details and rates for similar plans offered by HAP, HealthPlus and Priority HMO.

Clerk Moreau explained that two major hospitals in the area do not participate with Priority HMO and this option was eliminated. HAP and HealthPlus offer lesser benefits with little or no cost savings. Since the Township and the employees on the plan have been very satisfied with Blue Care Network, she recommends selecting from among the three BCN plans. Ms. Moreau provided detailed analysis of the rates for the three BCN options and explained that plans are now quoted with contract rates for each employee rather than standard single, two person and family rates for the group. This change creates an administrative and budgeting challenge and she suggested analyzing costs and determining employee contribution based



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on averages for each of the categories. She further provided comparisons of each plan's total cost to the State of Michigan Hard Cap maximum under PA 152, offered three employee contribution options and indicated the resulting net cost of each BCN plan to the Township.

Board members discussed the plan rates and considered the employee contribution options. All Board members indicated that the HMO Platinum 20% was preferred. A tentative employee contribution plan of \$50 per month for single coverage, \$100 per month for two person coverage and \$200 per month for family coverage was selected.

2. Fire Department Budget

Supervisor Walls explained that he met with Chief Graham this morning and following the meeting both agreed that they should have found time to hold the discussion earlier. They discussed several factors and issues that Chief Graham needed to be aware of regarding the Board's previous planning decisions and how the Board looks at fund reserves. The "hard reality" from the discussion is that it is necessary to scale back some of Chief Graham's proposed plans.

Supervisor Walls stated that, from his perspective, when the Board began to explore the impact of Chief Oaks' retirement and request feedback from firefighters, the primary goals were recruitment of paid call staff and retention. He noted that he does not see a lot of that in the information and plans presented. However, he understands from Chief Graham that he believes that recruitment and retention will be achieved through his plan because much of what he is proposing comes from the input and desires of the firefighters. Supervisor Walls stated that the Board has long established plans, priorities and set of goals; he believes they are adjustable however Chief Graham needs to help the Board understand what adjustments are needed and provide the Board with enough information to either approve those adjustments or not.

Regarding the vehicle replacement schedule, Chief Graham provided a schedule based on current NFPA guidelines with a 15 year replacement cycle. The guidelines are not requirements and the Board has planned for many years on a 20 year cycle. If the Board continues with the 20 year cycle then \$1.1 million dollars in proposed expenditures would come out of the 2015, 2016 and 2017 budgets. Supervisor Walls suggests working toward a 15 year replacement cycle but not institute it immediately.

To help concentrate the discussion toward the more pressing priorities, Supervisor Walls asked the Board if there is enough information available tonight to make a decision to go



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forward with full ALS (Advanced Life Support) service provided by Springfield Township Fire Department and 24/7 staffing. Board members responded unanimously that there was not enough information. Supervisor Walls then asked the Board if efforts should be concentrated on ALS options that might be available from our neighbors and from Star EMS. The majority of Board members responded “yes” however the majority also indicated that there is not enough information at this time to determine if the Township can and should move to ALS service from the current BLS (Basic Life Support) service.

Chief Graham explained that he is still learning the operations and culture of the Department however the Department has made some good, positive moves thus far in his tenure. The Department has improved response time and changed some procedures to improve service. The document that he prepared for the meeting was meant to provide a broad spectrum look at some of the concepts that could improve fire department operations over the next several years. He is looking for an avenue to improve service for the residents that would be at least partially sustainable through some revenue generating mechanism. The Department could then use the ALS revenue to fund personnel and that venture then improves fire suppression because personnel would be cross trained paramedic-firefighters.

Chief Graham reviewed his report regarding ALS training and licensing requirements; station, vehicle and equipment needs; a proposed timeframe to transition to ALS service; data regarding run volume, activity and revenue of some surrounding departments; and estimated activity and revenue for Springfield Township Fire Department. The Chief summarized that he wanted to give the Board an idea, based on the request, of what he believes is a good direction to take the Department while still keeping an eye on being self-sustaining.

Supervisor Walls noted that 2016 is an important year for Fire and Police services as half of the Police millage funding is up for renewal and all of the Fire millage is up for renewal. It brings to mind what will be on that 2016 ballot on behalf of the fire department. Supervisor Walls stated that some of the proposals on Chief Graham’s list would need to be up to the electorate. Ballot language would need to be decided by around the first of May, 2016. Supervisor Walls suggested that the Chief and Board keep this in mind and hold discussions by at least the end of 2015 so the Board has time to decide how to proceed with millage proposals in 2016.

Supervisor Walls commented that Chief Graham should consider for any future preparation and presentation to the Board showing that ALS service is needed and desired, that the various options for shared service or contract and the pros and cons of each option should be provided. Further he does not believe that the Board could do a fair analysis without



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information for shared services with Groveland and at least an attempt to work out an arrangement with Independence because, in addition to NOCFA, they are our closest neighbors.

Clerk Moreau asked why Groveland wasn't included in the Chief's report. Chief Graham explained that he tried but due to a billing system problem with Star EMS he was not able to get Groveland's information. He has also had difficulty meeting with Groveland Chief McGee .

Chief Graham stated that he provided preliminary information as a glimpse of what he's proposing so that he could get feedback before he spends too much time investigating and planning a direction the Board might not support. He asked that the Board trust him that he would not let them down and that he would do what is fiscally responsible and in the best interest of the residents.

Trustee Hensler commented that the timeline proposed is very tight and she is having trouble putting numbers with the Chief's benchmarks. She would like at least some estimates for training and other expenses so that the Board knows what a transition to ALS would cost along the way. Trustee Hensler stated that, even if the Township had the money to fund ALS, she does not believe it could happen in two years. Her main concern is with what Chief Graham told the Board last month—more than 50% of paid call personnel are responding less than 20% of the time. She has a concern moving ahead with this proposal based on the response figures and she would like to first see progress in that area.

Captain Matt Strickland stated that the Board will not see much progress in response rates—everyone is living busy lifestyles. This is why the proposal is to move toward shift coverage. Paid call staff has indicated that if they could schedule their fire department duties into their life, they would love it. They would prefer to schedule an eight hour shift instead of having to respond whenever a call hits.

Chief Graham added that he is working on response by looking at incentives, creature comforts and by addressing some concerns from the past to bring paid call staff back in. He has addressed staff at every meeting about responding but he is being told they are doing the best they can do. This is not a problem confined to Springfield Township—it is a problem nationwide. He believes that training is an opportunity to reinvest in the employees and through training and giving staff added responsibilities and duties we will bring them back.

Clerk Moreau asked how a scheduled eight hour shift would be any easier to accommodate in a busy family and work schedule than responding to calls. She also expressed concern with moving ahead with an aggressive training schedule; she would prefer a “wait and see”



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approach to determine if shift coverage will work before the Township invests in advanced training.

Chief Graham stated that it's easy to schedule for a known class time. Staff can't always leave work or stop what they're doing when a call hits. He would like to try shift coverage this fall to see how it goes so he can do an effective cost analysis.

Trustee Hensler asked if Chief Graham is suggesting eight hour shifts.

Chief Graham clarified that it would mean a neighboring department bringing in an ALS unit and a paramedic in our station and Springfield would supplement with one of our people on a 24 hour basis.

Clerk Moreau asked if shift coverage would go along with that ALS scenario.

Chief Graham stated it's the same thing—they are synonymous.

Supervisor Walls stated it is not the same thing in the minds of the Board members—the Chief returned to ALS whereas the Board is thinking about shifts. This means having paid call staff cover the station for a period of time or commit that they will stay home and be available to respond.

Clerk Moreau added that the Board received feedback from paid call staff that it would be easier to respond if they could commit to certain days, times or weekends. It is easier to know, for example, that I'm committed to the first weekend in September instead of feeling obligated to be available every day, all the time. This type of scheduling is what the Board is thinking when we talk about shifts.

Chief Graham asked if the Board's intent would be that the shifts would be at the station.

Board members responded maybe but maybe not. It could just mean that certain staff is in the Township, available and committed to respond during a certain time.

Chief Graham stated that he suggested that concept to the department but it wasn't well received.

Treasurer Dubre stated that her primary concern is covering the community as it stands currently—with BLS coverage, not even thinking about ALS. If that means having shift coverage then that means paying staff so that we have two people assigned at Station 1 and two people at Station 2 at the times that are needed and are typically low response. We know



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those windows when calls are heavy and paid call is typically not available; this is what we need to cover. Also we need a way to cover full time staff when they're off.

Trustee Hensler concurred with Treasurer Dubre's description of coverage and the intent to pay staff for time on call.

Board members further clarified that the time to be available to respond would be paid and does not necessarily have to be time at a station—the firefighters could be home doing yard work but know that they are responsible to respond.

Chief Graham did not have a favorable reaction to paying for shifts if it meant paying someone to be at home and be on call. He is leaning toward requiring the firefighters to be at the station so that when the call comes in, they can jump in a vehicle and be on their way to a call. This is the scenario he is proposing. It is difficult to know when calls are going to come in and when you're talking about shift coverage in fire service, you're generally talking about 24 hour coverage with 10 or 14 hour shifts.

Supervisor Walls stated that this kind of coverage is not conducive to a paid call department. He clarified that the Board is looking to Chief Graham to come up with a plan for what we do with our staff—our paid call staff and our future paid call staff—to improve the level of service and response rate.

Chief Graham responded that you do that by training the staff to the next level, and the next level, and you put them on call in the fire house.

Clerk Moreau asked Chief Graham if this would mean having beds in both the stations so that our staff and staff of another community or Star EMS would be housed overnight in our stations. The Chief agreed that would be the plan and noted that this is the same model that Auburn Hills used to transition.

Treasurer Dubre reiterated that her concern is still with BLS and providing basic coverage. She does not understand how we will solve our coverage problem and expect staff to attend training. She wants to provide the best basic service and the best coverage with what we have currently but always work towards improving. Treasurer Dubre agrees we need more EMTs and would support that training. She would also like to see partnering with another community.

The Board discussed with Chief Graham the options for shift coverage and the level of interest and commitment from staff. Chief Graham suggested testing different configurations and see how it works and identify any deficiencies. Clerk Moreau concurred and suggested



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that the proposed timeline should include time to assess after each stage before we would progress, for example, to joint operations or to paramedic training.

Chief Graham provided a chart with costs to provide 24/7 shift coverage at the station. Staff would be paid \$10 per hour to be on call in the fire house with an additional \$6 per hour when responding to a call. The chart estimated revenue for transports based on projected call volume. Board members had many questions about the chart and cost estimates. The plan included revenue based on ALS transport but the Board first wants to review coverage costs with BLS transport.

Supervisor Walls concluded the discussion by asking Chief Graham if he needed any more information to understand the Board's priority and where the Board believes the focus should be. Chief Graham indicated he did not.

Board members summarized that Chief Graham should leave out considerations ALS and look at the balance of 2014—four months with BLS, 24 hour shift coverage, running two people out of each station. The Chief will determine cost estimates and whether, with our current staff, the department can man the shifts.

Trustee Cooper stated that the Chief needs to provide actual costs to the Township for staff. \$10 per hour is actually more like \$12 per hour when you factor in taxes and other costs.

Trustee Vallad reiterated that the proposal is good to consider but we need to “sneak up on it” and take this transition slowly.

Chief Graham said that he would look at the concept of shift coverage and potentially utilizing our neighbors as assistants in a bridge program. He will also look at stretching the timeline out a little bit and focus on shift coverage and BLS with Springfield firefighters for the remainder of 2014. Partnering efforts would not begin until after January 2015. For shift coverage the Board wants to see what can be filled with the staff that we currently have—it doesn't necessarily have to be 24/7 coverage.

Supervisor Walls noted that there are two cost estimates for the rescue unit. Chief Graham explained that he gave two choices. He stated that he believes that two new rescue vehicles are needed but that if only one can be purchased in 2014 that would be acceptable but not his preference.

Trustee Hopper noted that it would make sense not to purchase two rescue squads in the same year so that you can stagger the replacement expense.



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Chief Graham stated that he will do his best to get information for the September meeting to the Board as soon as possible. Trustee Cooper stated he wants to see information at least a couple of days in advance. Supervisor Walls stated that he will not forward information from the Chief at the last minute. Clerk Moreau suggested that if the information isn't complete and ready for the September meeting, the Board can review it in October. Trustee Hopper added that pushing the date back a month would mean October to December and we would have shift coverage costs for the last quarter of 2014.

3. Next Budget Meeting Date

The Board set the next budget workshop date for 6:00pm on Wednesday, September 17, 2014.

4. State Revenue Share

Supervisor Walls explained that 10% of State Shared Revenue has been going to the Police Fund. He explained that it would not be detrimental to the Police Fund if those funds were transferred to the Fire Fund instead. Board members agreed that the greater need is with the Fire Fund and the funds could be transferred.

5. Personnel

IT Coordinator—Supervisor Walls explained that the role and responsibilities of this position have changed and expanded. Further the IT Coordinator is servicing other departments and is doing less directly for the Supervisor's office. The Board determined to review the job description and the majority decided that instead of tracking time and charging to various cost centers and funds, it would make better sense to charge the personnel costs for this position to general services with a portion charged to the Cable Fund.

Property Manager—Supervisor Walls noted that this position has also grown and expanded. The responsibilities as property manager leave less time for grounds maintenance and plowing and his time and skills are better spent in other ways. The Board decided also to review this job description and reconsider time spent plowing.



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Planning Coordinator—Supervisor Walls indicated that the Supervisor’s office is going to need help with planning. He suggested that it’s time to look at reinstating this position; Board members concurred.

6. Capital Outlay

Supervisor Walls asked Board members for input for other priority Capital Outlay projects that should be considered for 2015.

Based on a request from DTE, Board members discussed transitioning to LED street lights on Dixie Highway. Board members decided to earmark some funds for Dixie improvements including \$100,000 for the Big Lake realignment and some budget amount for LED lights. Clerk Moreau stated that her priority for Dixie improvements would be to look at aesthetic improvements at the gateway by I-75.

In response to the memo regarding phragmites from Property Manager Forst, the Board expressed a strong interest in addressing the invasive throughout the Township. Supervisor Walls suggested allocating more than the \$5,000 requested by Mr. Forst and further suggested that the Board identify an individual who would be responsible for the effort on behalf of the Township.

Adjourned: 9:38 p.m.

Collin W. Walls, Supervisor

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