

Memo

To: Village Board

Fr: Neil Cameron, Fire Chief

Re: Fire Department Consolidation Effort Update

Date: July 13, 2011

Since the public information meetings held on March 9th and March 29th there has been continued activity with regard to exploring the options for consolidation of the fire department with a neighboring community. We have approached the Village of Bellevue, and the Cities of De Pere and Green Bay and have reviewed the performance goals the Village has identified for delivery of fire and emergency medical response services with the following outcomes to date.

Bellevue.

The Village of Bellevue Board has considered the potential for consolidation and has responded that it is not interested in pursuing a joint department at this time.

De Pere

The City of De Pere has expressed an interest in a potential full consolidation with the Village of Allouez. They are not interested, at this time, in pursuing an administrative consolidation. The City indicates they will be able to meet the response time and other performance indicators identified by the Village. Operationally De Pere would operate the Village of Allouez station in the same way it does the De Pere west side station - a minimum staffing level of three, two of whom would be paramedic qualified. Currently Allouez maintains a minimum staffing level of four in the station. This adjustment in staffing level would be offset for fire responses by an increased immediate response level of at least ten firefighters to an alarm.

The Village would be asked to consider standardized fees for services and to adopt a fire code compatible with that in effect in De Pere.

While there has been extensive discussion on structure and operations issues there is not yet a formal cost proposal.

Green Bay

The City of Green Bay has indicated a willingness to consider an administrative consolidation only on a short term basis with the understanding that it is more likely than not to lead to a full consolidation. The City has also indicated a desire to enter into a mutually beneficial consolidation with service delivered by contract and there has been discussion about options for reporting structures that would engage the village board in influencing goals and service delivery plans within the village. The City indicates they will be able to meet the response time and other performance indicators identified by the Village.

The staffing plan would establish that, at a minimum, the current minimum staffing pattern at the Allouez fire station would be maintained. Two of the on-duty staff members would be paramedic qualified. An initial response to an alarm would result in a response of eighteen firefighters.

The Village would be asked to consider standardized fees for services and to adopt a fire code compatible with that in effect in Green Bay.

While there has been extensive discussion on structure and operations issues there is not yet a formal cost proposal.

Next Steps:

It is hoped that we will receive formal cost proposals in the next couple of weeks that would allow the Board to compare options and select a preferred path forward. It is fully expected that this will result in further dialogue with the selected community to finalize cost details including addressing questions related to fleet and facility use and ownership. Costs will fall into two broad categories: annual operational costs and start-up costs.

There are also several issues associated with how existing Allouez employees would be integrated into a successor department, including: accrued leave and other benefits, seniority, residency, and other items within the labor agreements. These items will require negotiations with both the other municipal partner and the firefighters union.

Status Quo Option:

As part of the initial assessment of the department several areas of need were identified, as a result of that review I have recommended to the Board that consolidation is the preferred emergency service delivery mechanism for the Village of Allouez. This assumes the financial details are favorable from a budgetary standpoint. It should be recognized that, while there will be some start-up costs associated with a merger, many of those items will still be faced by the Village within five years as an independent department.

Should the Village elect to not move forward with a consolidation, I believe the following issues need to be addressed immediately:

- 1) Review the current compensation package for the fire chief to ensure it will attract qualified applicants and begin a search for a permanent chief.
- 2) Conduct an aggressive recruitment campaign to replenish the diminished pool of paid-on-call firefighters.
- 3) Review and revise the organizational structure to address supervision and staffing needs. This could include, but not be limited to, adding a position(s) to the current table of organization to address training and prevention needs. It is anticipated that this could be initially accomplished with a less than fulltime position. There may also be alternatives that include employee sharing with other communities.
- 4) Increase the budgetary commitment to employee training and develop an aggressive training program to ensure all firefighters are able to maintain required skills.
- 5) Develop and conduct a rigorous promotional process to select supervisors to be assigned to each shift.
- 6) Hire fulltime firefighters to fill current (2) and anticipated (1) vacancies.
- 7) Review and revise all standard operating practices and department policies.
- 8) Review and revise the approach to accounting for costs of operating the department to better reflect vehicle replacement, operations, and maintenance costs. A similar approach should be considered for other items that have significant cyclical replacement costs such as SCBA's, Radios, Heart Monitors, Extrication equipment, etc. This approach will limit spikes in budgets.
- 9) Review and revise the facility maintenance plan and develop a five year capital plan for the fire station.
- 10) Consider alternative methods of providing aerial apparatus coverage in the Village and sell the current aerial. This could include exploring the potential for contracting for service from neighboring departments on a fee basis. In addition a department team should be used to develop a thorough assessment of vehicle needs and the utility of the current fleet.

At this time we do not have specific cost estimates for these items but will be seeking to assemble them in preparation for the 2012 budget process. It should be noted that facility capital planning will be required with or without consolidation.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.