

Special Meeting Watab Town Board Minutes October 30, 2007

The Special meeting of the Watab Town Board was called to order on Monday, October 30, 2007 @ 7:03 pm. The purpose of the meeting was discussion of the Rice Fire Department request for costs exceeding the fire contract for 2008. Board members present were Supervisors Craig Gondeck, Brad McIntosh and Lloyd Erdmann and Deputy Clerk Maureen Graber. Others present were: Ed Kacures, Duane Cekalla, Steve Janski, Scott Janski, Bob Brenny, Mitch Fiedler, Kristi O'Brien, Chuck Popp, Pat Rolph, Robert Beitz, Jim Hovda, Bradley Vaillancourt, Greg Brustle.

After the Pledge of Allegiance, Supervisor Gondeck explained that the purpose of the meeting is to discuss the Rice Fire Department's request for additional funds. Scott Janski had a power point presentation that was displayed on the wall. They are receiving more calls than ever before and serving a larger population. When he started as a fire fighter, it was fairly easy. Now there are many things they need to attend training on. This takes a lot of their time. The new technology is important and it is also expensive. Fire calls take more time and they are required to train on more topics more often. Technology helps them to be more efficient and it makes it safer for citizens.

General supplies are EMS supplies like oxygen, defibrillator batteries, foam, and flash light batteries.

The costs for training are as follows:

1. First responder training \$337
2. EMT \$915
3. Fire fighter I training, \$650
4. Firefighter II training
5. Fire officer training, \$385

This is federally mandated. National Incident Management System training is IS 300 and IS 400.

Repairs and Maintenance:

The reserve pumper is 33 years old and the main pumper is 13 years old. There are more calls and more wear and tear on the equipment. Sometimes it is cheaper to replace the equipment rather than repair it. For example, when the truck is stopped and emergency brake on, there are supposed to be lights on the bottom of the truck that come on. There is also a need for reflective striping.

Motor Fuels: more calls means more fuel.

SCBA Self contained breathing apparatus cost \$325 each.

There are annual inspections and certifications.

The fire department needs to purchase three sets of additional turnouts. New fighters need helmets. NFPA will be recommending a ten year life of all turnouts in the near future.

Radio units need to meet the new state wide communication systems. Stearns County is almost all 88 mhz. Benton sheriff will soon be all 88 MHz. This will allow for unified communication. Some radios need to be changed out by 2012.

They are applying for a Fire Act Grant. This is a joint application with Foley for Federal Funds At a 10% match, our share is \$3,000. (The feds will cover 90% if the grant is received)

Radio system repairs. May need to replace one radio Unit 4. Two new fire fighters require pagers. Adding a new fire fighter includes the following costs:

\$ 1,000 for two new training.

\$ 6,000 for new gear. This includes turnout pants, coats, boots, gloves, helmets, SCBA.

Personnel expenses include:
Addition of two fire fighters
More training required
NIMS
EMS
Haz Mat (Hazardous Materials) Training

Question: On the average, how many fighters respond to a call. Answer: 14 to 22. Day time calls are slim. Day time numbers of fighters are slim. The suits can be interchangeable between fire fighters. They are reused if possible.

Factors affecting our fighters: calls, meetings, training, public education, meetings three a month. Work demands, fewer people work in or near our city, fewer employers willing to let them leave for a call. Family demands, school, sports, vacation.

Commitments for the fire fighters:

Firefighter I is 120 hours of classroom

8 hours live burn training

First responder- minimum 40 hours of training.

EMT is 120 classroom and 48 hours of continuing ed. ER rotation.

If they do not have Firefighter I they are not allowed to go in the truck to the call.

The rookies can handle the radio room.

Departmental drills, monthly drills are four hours per month. Officers meet at least once per month and they attend some City Council meetings. They have meetings on arson investigation, equipment committee meetings and meetings with Gold Cross Ambulance.

Fire calls average one to two calls per week. Truck and equipment maintenance: monthly truck checks.

Mitch Fiedler explained the ISO rating. It is done by a private organization. They look at everything. It is a rating for insurance. They look at the age of the equipment, how often they test it.

A question was asked on the average age of the Rice firefighter. There is a gap in between. There are several older fighters and several younger ones. There are youth interested. They don't want the time commitment.

They get \$ 11 per hour on the job. After 20 years of service, they get \$ 800 per year of service as a lump sum retirement. No one has retired and four were hired last year. One is leaving for life changes. Society is more mobile.

If they buy new trucks, it is approved by the Rice city council.

There are 900 homes in Watab Township. Mobile homes are not taxed at the rate of regular homes. \$ 5056 would be the difference for the Watab township share of the budget increase request. Increase would be \$ 6 per household in Watab Township. In 2008 Watab share is 28.5 % Watab paid 35,881.00. With a total needed of 40,937.00, the difference is \$5056.00.

The current contract with Rice has 7 years left on it. In the contract, the annual rate increase is 3%. They are now asking for 28%. The contract says they will have to have the fire board approval. Insurance, labor, gas, cannot be controlled. 3% is not a lock; it is supposed to be flexible.

Robert Beitz, 9475 Lakewood Shores Road, 320-266-0311. He had a problem with the Sauk Rapids fire department. Supervisor Gondeck said he would look into it.

Jim Hovda gave his thanks to the Rice fire department. He looks at maintenance as being done in Rice and said the township's duty is to look at spending. When other fire departments are doing it for less money, this needs to be looked at. Everyone wants another chunk of our money. The townships need to look at the costs and whether they really need the equipment or not. The mechanics need to be certified to work on the fire trucks. They have certified people to work on gas engines in Rice, but not the heavy diesel truck, unless they want to wait several days. The person in Rice was given a three month opportunity to work on the trucks and he didn't do it so they had to take it to St. Cloud to be fixed.

Duane Cekalla served on the town board from 1970 to 1976. He said the fire department levy used to be limited to a 5% annual increase.

Supervisor McIntosh wants to open it up to the three townships, hire someone to do a study where there are no politics involved. Langola is interested, but Graham Township has no interest in doing a study. In Graham, they have raised their fire fund 9 times. If they bring it up to their annual meeting, it will not fly. They need more participation at the annual meetings.

Greg Brustle stated that Langola does not have any reason to do a study.

Rice fire department says 80% of the calls are EMS calls. Lots of the calls are unnecessary. The people should be charged for the calls. When Gold Cross is called for an emergency call for the Sauk Rapids fire department area in Watab, Gold Cross bills the customer. When the Rice Fire Department goes out on an EMT call, they do not bill. Steve Janski stated that on every medical call they go to, Gold Cross also goes to the calls for transport of the patient. The Rice Fire Department cannot transport patients.

Supervisor Erdmann thinks that most of the fees would be covered by the person's insurance company if we were to bill the resident for the medical call.

There was much discussion about where the boundary line is and which fire department covers which residential area. There was a discussion about changing the boundaries and whether the home owners would save more money on home owners insurance if they were covered by the Rice FD.

Mitch Fiedler stated this is a preliminary budget, and these budgets all need to be approved in December by the Rice City Council. These are preliminary figures, and if the need is presented to the Rice City Council, each much be acted on separately.

Someone asked about the listed amount as Equipment-Set Aside. Does the \$ 35,000 go to make the payments? Yes, this is a \$ 325,000 loan from East Central. The purchases made from that loan are mostly targeted for vehicles to serve townships to carry water. The city of Rice has fire hydrants so they don't need the pumpers as much.

Their ISO rating is 6.

An example of the repairs: the 1993 Freightliner truck engine went out. They found a plugged oil port on it. The engine costs \$14,000 and they tried to negotiate with the mfg and they did not get any funds from them under the warranty. There are extra ordinary expenses that come up. Watab shared in that cost. Repairs and maintenance has increased substantially as shown on their budget for the last two years.

The city of Rice has two votes and each township has one vote on the Rice fireboard. Mitch Fiedler will have a fire board meeting Nov 14 at 5:00 pm in the Rice City Hall. He wants to discuss the budget then.

Craig thanked the fire department and the city of Rice for coming to the meeting and for the fire department power point presentation.

The township will consider charging the people in Watab Township for the Rice FD EMT calls and consider moving the boundaries further south to have the Rice Fire Department cover even more of Watab Township.

Would the Rice fire department be willing to cover the additional area if the boundaries were re-drawn? In the history of fire departments, Mr. Vaillancourt thinks it would be important to have an independent study. The Rice fire fighters have to work with the Sauk Rapids fire department. Supervisor Gondeck volunteered to do this work, but others present were adamant that it should be objective and non-political.

The town road agreement with Langola was discussed. Langola Township thinks we should continue with the town line road agreement as is. Supervisor Gondeck made a motion to continue the town line road agreement with Langola. This was seconded by Supervisor McIntosh. Motion passed.

Jim Hovda thanked them for taking over North Freedom Road. The meeting adjourned at 9:05.

Respectfully submitted, Maureen Graber, Deputy Clerk