

Minutes of the Special Watab Board Meeting on Rice Fire Contract on November 17, 2016

The Watab Town Board invited interested residents to serve on a committee for input into the next contract with the City of Rice for emergency services. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, November 17, 2016 at the Watab Town Hall. Following the Pledge to the Flag, those present gave introductions: Chair Craig Gondeck, Supervisor Lloyd Erdmann, Supervisor Todd Waytashek, Clerk Pat Spence, Jerry Lage, Kim & Arlen Roos, Maureen Graber, Bob Raveling, and Ed Kacures Jr. Those invited, but not present, were the manager of Rockwood Estates and Tom Finken.

Kim Roos explained that her husband had two medical calls at their mobile home during the past year stating that, "Seven men piled into our house and now I owe the township \$528.94. I have sent the bills to my insurance company, and they won't pay for the First Responders, only for the ambulance. If Rice would do the billing, my insurance company said they would pay the bill. I went to the Rice City Council meeting and offered to help them do the billing, but I got nowhere. They said I should come back to Watab. There was further discussion about how the township has also requested that the City of Rice do the billing as Sauk Rapids does. Many more of the bills would be covered by individual's insurance providers.

Those present reviewed the list of types of calls, street address, amounts paid City of Rice, and amounts collected from recipients of service. Through October of 2016, cost of calls has been \$19,250.00. \$3,249.13 has been collected. There have been 41 medical calls; 6 rescue calls; and 5 fire calls. The fire calls were: 1 garage fire, 1 grass fire, 1 car fire, 1 cancelled fire call for report of car fire, and 1 electrical fire that was out on their arrival. One-half of the medical calls were to Rockwood Estates residents. They also reviewed that property tax statements for similarly valued homes in each fire district. A home with an Estimated Market Value of \$209,300 in Fire District I pays \$90.73 for emergency service protection from the City of Rice; a home with an Estimated Market Value of \$211,000 in Fire District II pays \$33.97 for fire protection from the City of Sauk Rapids. All agreed that this was an unacceptable difference.

After considerable further discussion, all agreed on the following:

- Ask the City of Rice to do the billing for the emergency calls
- Ask Sheriff Heck to have the dispatchers ask those in the Rice service area if they want the First Responders, the ambulance, or both; provide them with a script they can use
- Ask the Rice Fire Chief to send only those needed into people's homes; keep remainder outside unless needed. There have been many complaints about this.
- Send a letter to Rockwood residents that if they get the rescue squad from Rice, they are responsible for the bill.
- Have Pat and Maureen review the 2016 calls to see the ambulance compared to the First Responders arrival times
- Request a one-year contract
- Keep the payment the same and reduce call amount to \$300 per call for 1st hour and \$250 for each additional hour because of over dispatching
- Get full information on each call; remove the statement "good faith effort" from the current contract; if City won't do the billing, request that they at least provide phone numbers for recipients of service
- Have Rice Fire Chief be careful in describing calls. When no service is provided, the township would not pass on the bill to the resident; these calls should be marked "No Service Provided."

- Check total costs of fire contracts going back several years
- Do a careful review of Rice expenses for medical calls; audit if necessary
- If residents of Rockwood don't pay their bill, have ordinance that allows the township to put the unpaid calls on Rockwood's property taxes
- Research having a future Watab sub-station with a building for a fire truck and first response vehicle and whether or not the township has interested parties in serving as volunteers.

Maureen Graber and Pat Spence were asked to arrange a private meeting with the Rice City Mayor and Fire Chief to begin negotiations. The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by Clerk Pat Spence