

AMSA BOARD
Area Metropolitan Services Agency
Department of Public Works - All Purpose Room
150 S. Kendall Street
Battle Creek, MI 49037
Tuesday, March 5, 2019
10:00 AM

Members Present: Susan Baldwin, Marcie Gillette, City of Battle Creek: Steve Buller, Emmett Township: Kevin Catlin and Terry Blanair, City of Springfield: Dave Morgan and Barb Darlington, Pennfield Township: Troy Radcliff, Newton Township: Rande Johnson, Bedford Township

Members Absent: Chris Simmons and Rebecca Fleury, City of Battle Creek, Tim Hill, Emmett Township: Jason Farmer, Convis Township: Marty Uldriks, Bedford Township: Laveta Hardish and Doug Chapman, Leroy Township: Steve Frisbee and Kelli Scott, Calhoun County (non-voting members).

Guests: Brian Sturdivant, Battle Creek Fire Chief: Tim Smith, Pennfield Fire Chief: Joshua Miller, Springfield Fire Chief

Others Present: Vicki Houser, Battle Creek City Clerk

Call to order/Recognition of Quorum: Mr. Morgan called the meeting to order at 10:08 am, noting a quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes:

A motion was made by Kevin Catlin, supported by Barb Darlington, to approve the December 4, 2018 and January 17, 2019 AMSA Board minutes. All yes, none opposed. Motion approved.

Discussion of Collaboration between municipal Fire Departments

Mr. Morgan welcomed Chief Sturdivant, Chief Smith and Chief Miller to the AMSA Board meeting. Mr. Morgan stated municipal collaboration among local fire departments would be a win-win for municipalities and residents via cost savings in light of reduced funding, while also improving services throughout the community. Mr. Morgan discussed his previous experience in Phoenix, AZ, stating all the fire departments in Maricopa County collaborated on purchasing opportunities and a strategic plan for equipment placement between the municipalities.

Chief Miller stated he was a proponent of standardization among Calhoun County fire departments, stating there was always room for improvement. Chief Miller also stated that in his experience in South Dakota each municipality ran their own department, but all resources were standardized throughout the county, which allowed dramatically decreased prices through bulk buying power, while also improving operations. Chief Miller noted different styles of equipment does prohibit the ability to borrow and function together sometimes.

Chief Sturdivant stated he was familiar with shared services in Phoenix, that they are a pre-eminent model, all training and operating off the same policies, even how the supply compartments are stocked, without removing administrative autonomy, so all departments remain intact.. Chief Sturdivant informed the Board that he has identified some nuances in Calhoun County, stating he attended a meeting of the local Fire Chiefs on January 23rd. Chief Sturdivant noted they discussed ideas related to shared services and training opportunities, comparing policies to make services more streamlined. Chief Sturdivant stated the Fire Chiefs also moved forward to solidify mutual aid services, and the level of consistency when calling for mutual aid. Chief Sturdivant agreed all municipalities would gain more return on investment by working together on contracts for supplies and equipment. Chief Sturdivant shared that he needed more time to get a better understanding of the differences between the departments, particularly career paid organizations compared to surrounding departments with on-call fire fighters, to identify the training components and consistency of training. Chief Sturdivant noted research continues on what a regional fire service would look like. Chief Sturdivant stated Battle Creek wanted to be seen as a "big brother" not a bully, to lead and embrace positivity. Chief Sturdivant acknowledged his members have not always been positive, noting often the direction of leadership was based on ego, but that they needed to overcome past practices to support fire service coverage for the entire community in a positive productive manner. Chief Sturdivant also stated they wanted to re-energize the MABIS mutual aid box, noting some

analytics on what it would look like for Calhoun County. Chief Sturdivant stated he wanted to do more than just listen to the opinions of his members, he wanted data for a more informed decision process.

Chief Smith, noting he has served the area for many years, stated the mutual aid policies are very extensive, stating the municipal departments work seamlessly. Chief Smith noted Bedford, Pennfield and Emmett Townships use the same turnout gear, while Springfield, Bedford and Pennfield Townships use the same mask models. Chief Smith stated it is expensive to constantly upgrade equipment, noting Battle Creek and Leroy Township use different models. Chief Smith stated that although all municipalities need to consider expenditures, it is a struggle due to personal preferences. Chief Smith emphasized that Calhoun County does have a mutual aid policy in affect, with the local department automatically first out, but there is potential to step up more. Chief Smith noted Battle Creek has a fundamentally different operation than other departments. As they have an on-call department, Pennfield, and many of the other townships, do not have the ability to have fire fighters right out of the station. Chief Smith informed the Board that several of the township departments work closely with adjacent municipalities, stating other departments are automatically dispatched, dependent upon geographical areas. Chief Smith acknowledged that everyone wants to improve service to the community, and that no department is against collaboration.

Chief Sturdivant agreed, but cautioned the need to look at the service delivery model, noting both Battle Creek and Veterans Administration were career models, and they would need to integrate with the on-call model that is present in the townships. Chief Sturdivant stated questions arise when mutual aid is deployed in the city, stating they need to know the resources they will receive and the level of training, which has to be a consideration when attempting to work together.

Chief Smith stated it was necessary to consider different geographical locations and different staff and services, stating it may not be possible to always guarantee an additional engine. Chief Smith stated they have to consider that on-call fire staff may not always be available. Chief Smith commented that Battle Creek has a fire hydrant on every corner, noting there are a lot of things that need to be worked out, that one department does not fit all.

Mr. Farmer asked if different gear was necessary to work in Battle Creek, and if it was, could the townships consider selling newer equipment to get similar gear.

Chief Smith stated it was not necessary to have the same equipment, but that turnout gear could be more uniform. As to selling newer equipment, Chief Smith stated he recently participated in a joint purchase opportunity with Bedford and Emmett Townships, noting Springfield had also considered the opportunity. Chief Smith stated departments purchase the equipment that meets their needs, but they could get to a point where they all agree on common gear.

Chief Sturdivant stated purchasing the same gear was not the most important part, stating operations is more of a challenge. Chief Sturdivant felt operational issues had to be more strategic, with all departments working together for service delivery and equipment. Chief Sturdivant stated local Fire Chiefs can make decisions on economies of scale, but that it would take a lot of work to integrate the different models seamlessly.

Chief Smith stated the municipal departments do achieve their goals differently, but that they do try to model operations and policies, stating they need to continue to build on that, to try to unify and strive to work as one unit. Chief Smith shared that Battle Creek fire staff were involved when Pennfield completed their written policies and functionalities, while discussing what is expected when providing mutual aid. Chief Smith agreed it was important for the departments to integrate services so that they know what service they will receive when calling for mutual aid.

Mr. Morgan asked if the local fire departments would be against a county authority just for equipment purchases.

Chief Smith reiterated that purchasing power was an easy task for the local fire chiefs, stating it was important to acknowledge everyone's needs may be different and there would be a lot of expense when asking everyone to change to one model.

Mr. Johnson agreed there was not a problem implementing cooperative buying opportunities when considering nozzles, communication devices, etc., but that everyone wanted their own gear, such as face

masks, but not everyone is in the same position to purchase new gear. Mr. Johnson stated it was more important to know what equipment and vehicles every department had. Mr. Johnson challenged local fire chiefs to conduct more training together, allowing all departments to learn different techniques and strategies, to be prepared in case of an extreme incident or tragedy.

As an example of an extreme incident, Chief Miller expressed his concern the large accident on I-94 was not well handled.

Chief Sturdivant stated the County Emergency Management plan was being devised to address proposed incidents. As to cooperative purchases, Chief Sturdivant stated it will take some time as a plan will need to be phased in. Chief Sturdivant suggested a survey be conducted to consider everyone's needs. As an example, Chief Sturdivant informed the Board that one of his Battalion Chiefs was able to negotiate a \$360,000 grant awarded for radios. Chief Sturdivant also noted Battle Creek had to consider collective bargaining language that could be restrictive, which might prohibit opportunities. Chief Sturdivant stated he would like to keep opportunities open, but would need to determine how willing or flexible union staff are. Chief Sturdivant felt it was time to seize some opportunities, requiring they all work together to reinvigorate and reenergize to get some tangible work done. Chief Sturdivant agreed it was important to all work together.

Mr. Johnson asked who would lead a collective training session.

Chief Sturdivant stated his new training officer collected all training dates and time at the last chiefs meeting. Chief Sturdivant expressed concern collective bargaining agreements may limit his department's ability to engage in evening or weekend training sessions, stating Battle Creek would need to reach agreement with the union as he was obligated to follow the terms of their contract. Chief Sturdivant confirmed conversations have been initiated to determine how Battle Creek can participate with other departments and regional partners. Chief Sturdivant stated former Training Officer Jeff Slayton has worked with Lansing to identify training opportunities.

Chief Miller stated the Fire Chiefs would work together with every department to determine training and equipment needs.

Chief Smith stated Pennfield has had trainings with other municipalities, usually in the evening or on weekends, which is different for Battle Creek because of bargaining agreements. Chief Smith note their training sessions meet all state standards and requirements. Chief Smith stated the host department normally leads the training session, setting the type of training and the expectations. Chief Smith reiterated that all departments function under the state rules and guidelines, but may do it differently because of the functionality of the department. Chief Smith stated the key component is the first response and the need to know the resources of all departments who provide mutual aid, stating some events will require working with multiple departments from multiple counties.

Mr. Morgan stated it was important for all departments to come together to provide the best service and protection, regardless of multiple unions. Mr. Morgan suggested the Fire Chiefs start small with equipment collaboration and looking at operations and training in the future.

Chief Smith stated similar turn out gear is just a matter of discussions, stating some items may be utilized by other departments, but that everyone does not have to have the same things.

Mr. Catlin stated the purchasing component was easy, stating the group needs to think strategically as residents are interested in cooperative partnerships that improve services. Mr. Catlin said Springfield wants to know what service they will be getting and that other departments are trained to respond as necessary. Mr. Catlin recommended partnerships to deliver services in respective communities, noting current relationships seem segmented, and departments may not know how other department services are being delivered. Mr. Catlin stated there was not a need to develop a fire authority, that it would be better for the fire chiefs to come back to AMSA, as a collective group, and tell the board what model would be best for all departments. Mr. Catlin recognized there was a lot of support and participation, but the departments needed to work cooperatively together.

Chief Sturdivant expressed concern that on-call fire personnel may exceed the speed limits to get to a fire scene, stating it was necessary to reduce the risk to the community, stating he would advocate that all fire personnel respond to their department station first. Chief Sturdivant noted it was important to be proactive with safety and provide a strategic approach to incident response.

Mr. Radcliff stated many departments are already purchasing together. Mr. Radcliff, noting on-call fire fighters go through the same training as City fire fighters, stated the issue is generally the attitude toward on-call fire fighters. Mr. Radcliff stated the division begins at the Fire Academy where the instructor would ask who were on-call and who worked for a city, stating the attitude that city fire fighters are better than township fire fighters presents a hindrance to cooperation. Mr. Radcliff stated on-call fire fighters drive separately because there would be a delay to respond if the fire truck had to wait for all on-call fire fighters to arrive at the station. Mr. Radcliff took exception to Chief Sturdivant's comment that when dispatch sends other departments for mutual aid, he did not know what he would get or what kind of training the responders had. Mr. Radcliff stated that although the staffing is different between on-call and career fire fighters, the emergency response was not different, as on-call staff go through the same training exercises as full time, union firefighters.

Chief Sturdivant responded that the State of Michigan does not have a specific number of hours required for training, and recertification is not required, but that the State is considering requiring re-certification.

Mr. Catlin stated he did not get the sense that Battle Creek's training was better than other municipalities, just that it was different.

Mr. Radcliff stated all fire departments should be following the same manual for training.

Chief Sturdivant stated the issue is repetition, gained from actual firefighting experience, noting a difference between lectures and hands-on experience. Chief Sturdivant stated he was hired to modernize the Battle Creek department, stating he is challenging his members to analyze what the best models are and not to assume that everything done in the past is the only way to do it.

Chief Smith informed the Board that Pennfield Township requires fire fighters have extensive training on the use of personal vehicles, noting the personal vehicles do have emergency lights. Chief Smith noted it was important to understand there would be some give and take when working with smaller departments, that smaller departments do not have a full staff at the station, which may cause delays. Chief Smith agreed mutual aid responders do need to seek incident command when arriving at the scene, and if this was not done in the past, it should have been addressed immediately after the incident.

Mr. Johnson recommended the local fire chiefs meet to discuss standardized training for all local municipalities, suggesting the AMSA Board set the standards.

Chief Sturdivant stated the challenge is how to integrate all the different department models.

Review of Permits

- a. **Building**
- b. **Plumbing**
- c. **Electrical**
- d. **Mechanical**
- e. **Signs**

Mr. Buller informed Ms. Gillett of some minor corrections to the forms, also asking that the revision date be placed as a foot note on all of the forms.

Ms. Darlington recommended the building permit also have the \$150 fee for starting without a permit.

Ms. Gillett agreed to make the recommended changes, stating she would add the working without a permit fee to page 2 of the building permit.

A motion was made by Mr. Catlin, supported by Ms. Darlington, to approve the permit forms, with the recommended changes. All in favor, none opposed. Motion approved.

Discussion of 911 Surcharge Proposal - Not discussed.

Reports

3rd Quarter Treasurer Report

Mr. Catlin presented the 3rd Quarter Treasurer reports, noting there were few expenses, with printing and reproduction expenses low.

A motion was made by Mr. Buller, supported by Ms. Darlington, to approve the 3rd Quarter Treasurer reports. All yes, none opposed. Motion approved.

Member Comments

Mr. Buller and Mr. Radcliff thanked Ms. Gillette for all of her work on the permits.

Mr. Morgan expressed appreciation to the Fire Chiefs who attended the meeting.

Ms. Houser, responding to Mr. Johnson's inquiry, stated the township board needed to provide a resolution appointing an alternate to the AMSA Board.

Next Meeting: June 2019: date and time to be determined.

Adjournment : Mr. Morgan adjourned the Board meeting at 12:05 pm.