

Benton Township Board Meeting

May 8th, 2019

7606 E State Rd 45, Bloomington, IN 47408

Attendance

- Michelle Bright, Trustee
- Joe Husk, Chair
- Hans Kelson, Secretary
- Lynn Stevens, Board Member
- Kevin Robling, Legal Counsel
- Deputy Chief Matt Bright, Northern Monroe Fire Territory

Meeting called to order at 6:30 PM

Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve minutes: Stevens

Second: Kelson

Approved Unanimously

Financial Report

Rainy Day Fund:

- YTD Expense: 0
- Cash Balance: 104,718.47

Township Fund:

- YTD Expense: 15,973.43
- Cash Balance: 197,055.35

Township Assistance Fund:

- YTD Expense: 3,267.18
- Cash Balance: 91,657.49

Firefighting Fund:

- YTD Expense: 9,055.29
- Cash Balance: 408,878.97

Cumulative Fire Fund:

- YTD Expense: 0
- Cash Balance: 282,942.94

Recreation Fund:

- YTD Expense: 1,094.75
- Cash Balance: 16,324.66

Financial Report, Continued

Deposits:

- **Restitution Deposit from Heather Cohee**
\$46.52

- **Income Tax**
\$10,959

- **Trust Indiana account**
\$1,857.52

Motion to Approve Financial Report: Kelson

Second: Stevens

Approved Unanimously

Trustee Report

Legislative Update

- **HB 1177:**
Cash amounts next year will be lower due to capital purchases, so this should not be a concern.
- **HB 1492:**
Noxious weed control. Varieties of vegetation added this year.

Danny Smith Park

- Rain causing problems for construction. Waiting for concrete block walls to be built.

Senior Center

- Scanning event in conjunction with Monroe County History Center. Tuesday, June 4, 1-3pm. Looking for photos and documents from pre-1970 Unionville-area history to add to digital collection.

Cemeteries

- **Brock Cemetery:**
We need a survey for deed transfer. Will have survey of Richardson-Fleener Cemetery at same time.
- **Richardson-Fleener Restoration:**
Stonehugger Cemetery Restoration will be completing the work over one year, instead of two.

Fire Department

- **Joint Maintenance**

Northern Monroe Fire Territory invited BTVFD to join in annual fire services, which Chief Shaw approved. This will involve:

- DOT inspection of apparatus
- Oil change and lube of grease fittings
- Change oil and fuel filters
- Move equipment to and from Station 5 for service if volunteers not available

Benefits of this plan include:

- Have several outstanding issues; haven't had time to address them
- Preventative maintenance lets us know of issues before a truck has to be taken out of service
- We will know the status of equipment as we make decisions about fire protection moving forward, and while we have budget for repairs
- Good idea of cost of annual maintenance for budgeting purposes
- Servicing trucks at Station 5 means minimal time outside township
- Having documented maintenance helps with ISO evaluation
- Helps meet NFPA requirements

This may become an annual arrangement, if it goes well. We are paying for the service- NMFT is just making the arrangements with Donley to come down to Station 5. This should simplify logistics.

- **Public Safety Local Income Tax Committee**

Background: LIT is County-wide. The first portion goes to dispatch, and Townships/other municipalities in the county can apply to receive portions of the rest of it. The Public Safety LIT Committee is responsible for reviewing applications and recommending what, if any, should be allocated toward non-qualifying units (townships). The committee opted to contract with SPEA to interview everyone involved and make a recommendation on how to improve the process. Most are from City of Bloomington, which has a 55% vote on the Committee. Trustee Bright has requested a copy of the report, but hasn't yet seen it.

- **Tanker replacement**

Last month, we talked about the possibility of refurbishing rather than replacing tanker. Donley said that this may not be the best choice- on our truck, the cabinets are welded to the tank, so repair would require re-welding tank. This is not recommended. They think it would be a better idea to sell it as is and purchase a new one. While this truck is not within standards to be used as a fire truck, it could be used for non-emergency application, such as hauling pool water.

- **Building left open**

On April 11th, Northern Monroe firefighters passing the station noticed that the upstairs door was open. They notified Benton Township chiefs and the Sheriff. No items appeared to be missing. The door was likely not shut properly, and had blown open. We are in the process of re-keying the building.

- **Automatic Aid**

Automatic Aid is the process by which a fire department will be automatically dispatched when a call comes in, even if it is outside their normal area. We have been informed that the City of Bloomington fire department will no longer be responding outside of City limits, county-wide. Deputy Chief Bright, of Northern Monroe, is here tonight to answer questions.

- **Community Day**

Saturday, May 11 at Benton Township Fire Dept there is a Ham & Bean Supper and Touch-a-truck event for kids.

- **Fire Territory Discussions**

Ron Hudson of Bean Blossom: has been approached to consolidate or merge with Richland Township or Town of Ellettsville. Michelle offered to meet with him to discuss what we've learned.

Also, since April 17, Van Buren firefighters are reaching out to taxpayers to get support for merging with Monroe Fire Protection District. Firefighters going door to door with petitions and standing at stores like Kroger

Meetings summary

- **April 23 meeting with Bloomington and Washington Townships**

Several Benton officials, firefighters, and taxpayers were present. There was lots of information presented, and lots of questions asked. Many questions are not answerable at this point because we have not engaged consultants to work out the costs, etc. There was no public comment allowed, and no Benton officials spoke.

Main points from the discussion, as reflected on in our meeting:

- Allowing Benton to join would allow us to pay our fair share by contributing an equal amount
- There are concerns about tax rate increase, especially for Washington Township
- There are concerns about the cost of equipment upgrade- who would pay?
- Washington township is concerned about having to give up some control, as Benton representatives would join the board.
- There was no general consensus established. Chairman Husk hoped for an agreement to include Benton in discussion, but that did not happen. Secretary Kelson said it seemed like not everyone grasped that they were discussing starting discussions about adding Benton to the Fire Territory, not discussing the details of actually joining at this point in time.

- **Washington Township Board Meeting**

On April 25, the Washington Township Board met. From what we know, they did not come to a consensus on whether or not to begin negotiations with Benton.

- **Meeting with Volunteers**

On April 29, Chairman Husk and Trustee Bright met with Benton Township volunteers. 3 volunteers were in attendance.

One question that was asked was: If someone is paid by Northern Monroe, can they also volunteer for Benton? The answer was that they are discouraged from getting paid overtime, and they cannot be paid by more than one entity. Other than that, there's no problem with fire professionals volunteering for Benton. This information was sent to Chief Shaw to distribute to members. Also, the departments would need to work out how to handle a situation where Benton and Northern Monroe both respond to a call, and an individual is listed as a volunteer for both units.

We need a Plan B for fire protection in case the Territory doesn't work out. A budget proposal needed in about two months. For consideration:

- We can continue the status quo for one more year.
- Decision to table this topic until next meeting to allow time to think about options.

Township Assistance Report

- **Assistance Request:**

This month we had one request, from family of 5. Asked for a lot. They are losing Section 8 housing- we helped them find help finding new housing. We also gave them \$20 gas money, which came out of the cash fund donated by the Boy Scouts. We also helped with REMC assistance.

- **Pantry**

We had quite a few donations, and it was used 5 times by 3 different families. Michelle went shopping for a family with needs and no transportation, and dropped goods off at resident's house. Grassroots government! \$38.20 was spent for that grocery run.

Next Meeting

Our next meeting is on June 12th. We will cover transfer some of Surplus Funds to Rainy Day at that time.

Motion to approve Trustee Report: Kelson

Second: Stevens

Approved unanimously

Fire Reports

Northern Monroe Fire Territory Report

- **Total:** 17 runs
- **Benton Only:** 1
- **NMFT Only:** 8
- **Both:** 7
- **Reviewed detailed response sheet**

Benton Township Volunteer Fire Department

Note: This report is from March only

- Chief Support Truck - 3 responses
- Fire on James Road - City of Bloomington was integral in putting it out
- Woods fire - 1 person responded
- 8 were not responded to
- Vegetation fire outside the township that no one responded to

Motion to approve Benton Township Volunteer Fire Department Report: Stevens.

Second: Kelson

Approved Unanimously.

New Business: Chief Bright.

About Chief Bright

- Joined fire department in 1992
- In charge of operations, which includes maintenance. Operations: anything the territory does. This includes scheduling (except for training) for full-time staff, spring cleaning and hose testing, etc.
- Does not coordinate with Volunteers

Territory Daily Operations details

- Staff have varied responsibilities: making sure equipment is tested on set schedule, grant writing, liaison with county emergency management, station and grounds maintenance, quality control on records, medical records.
- The territory likes to have 3 full-time staff and 2 others on duty at all times.

Annual Service

- It is cheaper to purchase oil and other things and have Donley do the work, rather than buying parts and supplies through them.
- Donley will record all the maintenance, and also do the DOT inspection, which is helpful for catching issues before they become major repair needs.
- Service will be done in a day.
- Captain Bailey is very vigilant about vehicle maintenance.
- Cost should be about \$1000 for engine and tanker.

Automatic Aid vs. Mutual Aid

- Surprised that Automatic Aid was cancelled, though it was threatened two years ago.
- Background: Last Monday, the city called and said they were stopping Automatic Aid. They didn't call all the departments in the county.
- Informal Automatic Aid has been in effect for decades. ISO has given credit for that, to the benefit of homeowners.
- Chief Moore says that Mutual Aid will continue.
- Everyone immediately surrounding the city is affected by this. For example, Sare Road, which is not actually in the city limits, will no longer be receiving Automatic Aid from the city
- No one showed up to a structure fire in Batchelor Heights, which had been an Automatic Aid area. Chief Moore said the change would go into effect on the 13th, but instead it went into effect immediately.
- Chief Moore says that no progress had been made since the last time this came up, however, these things were accomplished:
 - A Safe Structural Firefighting Guideline was agreed to
 - County departments offered to renumber stations and equipment in compliance with this agreement
 - County departments agreed to adopt the city's accountability system, which is how they track firefighters on the scene, so we know who is where in case a building collapses
 - Began training on all of this with the city. Unsure whether Benton volunteers participated in the training, but they were invited
- County fire entities have drafted automatic aid agreements.
- Training Chiefs have met from across the county, and are going to move forward with automatic aid training regardless of this change.
- It is disappointing that progress has been halted. It took a long time to get everyone to the table to discuss this.
- This change will likely add 5-10 runs per year to Benton's load.

Washington Township

- Washington Township Board not happy with donated property, so they are looking at other possibilities.
 - Station location was chosen based on a study which was conducted in 1970. Station locations are chosen to maximize protection for as many people as possible.
 - The current temporary station has reduced response times considerably.

- If we didn't have all 3 stations, we would have an area with long (13-15 minutes) response times. A fire doubles in size every 30-90 seconds, meaning that the difference between 7 and 13 minutes is substantial in a structure fire. It's often the difference between containing a fire and having flames coming out the windows.
- Territory enjoys an ISO rating of 5. Missed a rating of 4 by few points. It is likely that the next rating will be a 4 due to changes at Dispatch, which shave time off responses.
- ISO rating is not tied to location of fire hydrants, because we qualify as a "water haul" (able to haul a designated amount of water).
- Training has also improved, which will improve the ISO rating.
- Having a fire prevention program adds "extra credit."
- We could achieve an ISO rating of 3, which is just one point lower than City rating, and better than 70% of departments across the nation. If that happens, joining the Territory would mean that Benton residents benefit from lower insurance rates. We are not sure when that inspection will happen. We could request that once Benton joins and everything is in order. Benton is currently rated as a 7 or 9.

Additional Information

- Chief Bright would be happy to attend Township meetings regularly to ensure that Benton is kept up to date.
- The territory has an interest in helping Benton keep equipment maintained, so that Benton is ready to respond when needed to assist the territory. Annual inspections and regular checks on equipment are very important. Benton should feel free to put the request out for assistance.
- In response to the earlier question about who pays professional firefighters who volunteer for Benton: The territory is legally obligated to pay firefighters who go out on call.
- The territory is happy that Benton has begun this conversation, and hopeful that we will continue to move forward.
- Press Releases regarding Automatic Aid will be attached to the minutes.

Motion to table vegetation policy: Stevens

Seconded: Kelson

Passed unanimously

Motion to adjourn: Kelson

Second: Stevens

Passed unanimously

Meeting Adjourned at 8:37 P.M.