

**CITY OF CEDARBURG/TOWN OF CEDARBURG
AD HOC JOINT FIRE/EMS SERVICES
COMMITTEE MEETING
APPROVED MINUTES**

June 22, 2021

A regular meeting of the Ad Hoc Joint Fire/EMS Services Committee was held Tuesday, June 22, 2021 at Cedarburg Fire Station #1, W61 N631 Mequon Avenue.

Roll Call: Present – City of Cedarburg – Council Member Robert Simpson, Scott Gonwa, Daniel Den Boer

Town of Cedarburg – Town Supervisor Bill Wattson, Don Borgwardt, Daryl Herrick

Also Present - City Administrator Mikko Hilvo, City Clerk Tracie Sette, Town Administrator Eric Ryer, Fire Chief Jeff Vahsholtz, Deputy Chief William Hintz, and interested citizens.

CALL TO ORDER

Cedarburg Fire Chief Jeff Vahsholtz called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

STATEMENT OF PUBLIC NOTICE

At Chief Jeff Vahsholtz’s request, City Clerk Tracie Sette verified that notice of this meeting was provided to the public by forwarding the agenda to the City’s official newspaper, the *News Graphic*, to all news media and citizens who requested copies, and by posting in accordance with the Wisconsin Open Meetings Law.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

All Committee members, Administrators, Chief Jeff Vahsholtz and City Clerk Tracie Sette provided a brief introduction to the Committee.

INTRODUCTION OF CITY ADMINISTRATOR MIKKO HILVO AND TOWN ADMINISTRATOR ERIC RYER

City Administrator Mikko Hilvo provided an overview of the mission of this Committee highlighting the task of developing a plan for the longevity of the Fire Department with respect to staffing needs and/or potential consolidation.

Town Administrator Eric Ryer echoed the mission of the Committee and added the importance of communication with other municipalities as they may be potentially researching the same topics and facing the same challenges.

ELECT CHAIRPERSON, VICE CHAIRPERSON; AND ACTION THEREON

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A motion was made by Daryl Herrick to nominate Chief Jeff Vahsholtz as Chairperson, seconded by Council Member Robert Simpson. No other nominations were made. Motion passed without a negative vote.

A motion was made by Daryl Herrick to nominate Town Supervisor Bill Wattson as Vice Chairperson, seconded by Don Borgwardt. No other nominations were made. Motion passed without a negative vote.

COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS FROM CITIZENS - None

NEW BUSINESS

REVIEW AND CERTIFY CODE OF ETHICS BY CITY OF CEDARBURG COMMITTEE MEMBERS; AND ACTION THEREON

Chief Jeff Vahsholtz verified the Code of Ethics was read and understood by the City of Cedarburg members of the Committee.

CONSIDER MEETING DATES, FREQUENCY, TIME, AND LOCATION OF FUTURE MEETINGS; AND ACTION THEREON.

Town Administrator Eric Ryer and City Administrator Mikko Hilvo explained to the Committee Members they will not be in attendance at most future meetings. They suggested, and the Committee agreed to choose one main topic to address per month. A one-hour long meeting should be sufficient to cover one main agenda item.

The Committee decided to alter the locations of the meetings each month. The meetings began at the Cedarburg Fire House located on Mequon Road in the City of Cedarburg. The next meeting will take place at the Fire House located in the Town of Cedarburg (near Five Corners). The meetings will continue alternating between the City and Town on the second Thursday of each month. Both locations are equipped to handle the meetings in-person and via Zoom.

OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT CEDARBURG FIRE DEPARTMENT; AND ACTION THEREON

Chief Jeff Vahsholtz provided an overview of the status of the Fire Department including challenges facing the department. He explained there are only two (2) positions which are full time, the rest of the Fire Department is volunteer. The Fire Chief position is considered part time. The volunteers do not receive any pay for training attended. EMT's do receive pay and are paid per call they attend. Chief Jeff Vahsholtz explained the volunteer pool is shrinking and it is becoming increasingly more difficult to find people willing to volunteer.

The Fire Department is a municipal department with the City Mayor, City Administrator and Police & Fire Commission overseeing operations.

The Fire Department is responsible for its own accounts payable. This function is not handled by City staff. They also handle janitorial services for the building.

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The average number of calls per year is approximately 1200. Calls per day average three (3) to five (5).

The Fire Department added two (2) dormitories for the full-time employees to be able to spend the night; thereby reducing response times.

Chief Jeff Vahsholtz explained Cedarburg Fire Department Incorporated is a separate non-profit company which conducts fundraising on behalf of the Fire Department. Cedarburg Fire Department Incorporated oversees Maxwell Street Days as well as other fund-raising functions. Due to the extensive fund-raising efforts over the years, all Fire Department trucks have been purchased through fund raising, not with tax dollars. When COVID-19 hit, the fund-raising efforts were severely curtailed, putting a huge strain on potential replacements of much needed fire trucks.

A discussion ensued regarding the two most important challenges the Department faces. First is the inability to replace volunteer fire fighters. The second challenge lies with the ability to hire EMS respondents.

The topic of Fire Department consolidation was raised. Joint Fire/EMS Services Committee Member Dan Den Boer explained the challenges faced with consolidation boil down to two (2) main points: What is the political appetite for consolidation? And what is the price tag? A third possible element exists: What is the expectation of residents? Chief Jeff Vahsholtz confirmed the Village of Thiensville met to discuss the Fire Study and may be interested in forming a committee. Also, the Village of Saukville is in desperate need of EMS Services.

The Committee asked Chief Jeff Vahsholtz if the current Fire Department Members have been polled about what direction they feel the agency should move toward. There has been no formal poll, however, Chief Jeff Vahsholtz explained he has been very transparent in explaining what the future may hold for the department given the challenges they are facing today.

CONSIDER PROCESS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS; AND ACTION THEREON

The Committee reached a consensus that EMS calls should be the first priority for the Committee. Chief Jeff Vahsholtz will reach out to other Fire Departments to see how they are handling EMS challenges. The Committee decided to add a standing agenda item to each meeting to cover what other Fire Departments/Communities are doing.

IDENTIFY FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS; AND ACTION THEREON

Future agenda items will include a discussion on department finances as well as level of service. Town Supervisor Bill Wattson will send a list of questions to Chief Jeff Vahsholtz to be addressed at future meetings.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Chief Jeff Vahsholtz, seconded by Dan Den Boer, to adjourn the meeting at 8:53 p.m.

Tracie Sette
City Clerk