

Minutes of November 7, 2019 WESC Meeting, held at Lititz Fire Station.

In Attendance: Sonny Ebersole, Jeff Garner, Andy Greiner, Frank Kenavan, Edna Kline, Jon Lamb, Lynn Mearig, Duane Ober, Ron Oettel, Keith Rothermel, Mike Smith, Dennis Strauss, Chris Strayer, Brian Wiker, and Dan Zimmerman.

Meeting was called to order by Chairman Brian Wiker at 6:30pm.

Treasurer's Report: The 2019 year-to-date budget, as of October 31, 2019 was reviewed. Frank Kenavan made a motion to accept the budget as presented, seconded by Lynn Mearig, and passed.

Previous Minutes: Ron Oettel made a motion to approve the July 2019 Minutes as presented; seconded by Andy Greiner and passed.

Unfinished Business

Fire Extinguisher Training Prop – Duane reported that the fire extinguisher prop was discounted, saving over \$2,000, so with approval, he placed the order and has received it. The prop has been used to train over 500 people, with more than 200 having hands-on experience with it. Most of the use was during fire prevention week and a training for the staff at Sonshine daycare. We are still waiting to hear from DCED if we will receive a grant to help fund up to half of the prop. Some local businesses donated towards the purchase of the prop, in anticipation of using the prop to train their employees.

Medical Exam – Duane reported that UPMC is working to finalize an updated medical exam procedure. In the meantime, Cornerstone Family Health has also created a plan for our members, if they choose to use this facility instead. Also, a new benefit of functional testing is an option being reviewed to add to the medical exam process. Duane will work with the medical facilities to finalize the procedures and then will set up a meeting with the fire chiefs and ambulance leaders to review everything.

New Business

2020 Meeting Date – The meetings in 2020 will be on Mondays, beginning at 6:30pm, on the following dates and locations: February 3rd at Brunnerville; April 6th at Brickerville; June 1st at Warwick Ambulance; August 3rd at Rothsville; October 5th at Lititz; and December 7th at Brunnerville. Ron Oettel made a motion to approve the meeting schedule; seconded by Lynn Mearig and passed.

2020 Proposed Budget – The proposed 2020 WESC budget was reviewed, which shows an increase for Operating Costs and Prevention/Planning categories next year. The total budget for 2020 is approximately \$145,000, a 7% increase from 2019. Frank Kenavan made a motion to accept the proposed 2020 Budget; seconded by Andy Greiner and passed.

Tax Credit – Elizabeth Township approved a \$200 tax credit for volunteers in 2020, and Warwick Township is budgeting to do the same. Dan Zimmerman stated that our goal should be to have consistency in all three municipalities and encouraged Lititz Borough to match the \$200 tax credit.

Review of three previous presentations – Open discussion was held, reviewing the three presentations made to the Board in the past year: Duane Hagelgans from Blue Rock Fire District, Steve Bair from Centre Region Council of Governments, and Mike Ibberson from Swatara Township Fire Rescue. Duane provided a recap of each of the presentations and then members were asked for their opinions.

Lynn Mearig feels we will probably take a little from each one to create our model, something that is more suitable to the WESC companies.

Ron Oettel feels we should have someone from Garden Spot Fire Rescue present to us also, which included a merger of two fire companies, from two municipalities. Chris Strayer also would like to see how we compare to the Garden Spot system.

Jon Lamb, reading an email from Greg Young, stated that Greg favors the Swatara Township model, which Keith Rothermel, Lynn Mearig, and Brian Wiker also favored, however, Jeff Garner did not feel the same way.

Sonny Ebersole liked each one, but wonders what the membership thinks of the three?

Andy Greiner pointed out that the goal is to sustain volunteerism as long as possible to provide fire protection, but we need to look at how we can do so regionally, in a more efficient system.

Mike Smith pointed out that one of the most important things we should do is to create contract for services between the municipalities and the fire companies, with clear expectations spelled out. That would help create the framework, from which to measure how long the volunteer fire system can work. Ron Oettel commented that this is similar to the oversight that municipalities have over the police departments.

Mike Smith also commented we will need to move forward with open discussions and evaluations of our services if we want to be successful, not just being satisfied that a fire truck responded.

2020 Objectives – Denny Strauss asked for the chief officers to get together to work on operating concepts, forming a subcommittee to do so.

Dan Zimmerman asked the fire companies to work together to create a regional apparatus replacement plan so that the funding model can be established and managed.

Jon Lamb, again reading for Greg, shared his three objectives – the apparatus plan and funding, solidify Duane's role according to the recommendation in the fire study and give him a call sign, and work to create consistent regional operating guidelines.

Mike Smith also suggested the apparatus plan, Duane's role, and reviewing the key points from the presentations, such as one person in charge and ways to measure the service we provide to the community.

Duane Ober shared that he has been compiling statistics each year for the services provided. The fire companies and elected officials need to use the statistics to make informed decisions and not just use past practices and emotions to base their decisions on.

Brian Wiker is concerned about current conditions, such as low staffing, money being spent to buy rigs even if no one can staff them, and what facts will help determine when a fire tax is needed?

Dan Zimmerman reminded the fire chiefs that we are here to form partnerships, not create roadblocks to reaching the same goals. We need to work together to serve the community.

Andy Greiner shared that it's easy to manage the capital budgets, but we can't predict the staffing levels of the volunteers.

Sonny Ebersole pointed out that the report and the presentations all said one person in charge is key to success. He asked why we haven't done that yet?

Andy Greiner said we will work on updating the job description and Chris Strayer asked how we will handle changing to the new role?

Mike Smith again said the municipalities should create a service contract with the fire companies, clearly stating that the WESC Fire Commissioner role is the person in charge of fire services.

Brian Wiker asked if the three municipalities should recognize WESC as the fire protection with the fire companies serving under WESC?

Lynn Mearig will get the chief officers together to review the new role and possible job description and make a recommendation before the next meeting in February.

Brian Wiker also reminded everyone that the suggested changes may result in WESC Charter updates as well.

2020 Board Leadership – Andy Greiner is scheduled to be the Board Chairman in 2020, and Sonny and Chris both offered to stay on as municipal reps. We are still searching for a resident to serve as the Warwick Township representative.

Comments from Agencies

Brickerville - Denny reported that the new mini-pumper will be at their fire station Friday night for a brief time. They also had a successful chicken BBQ recently.

Brunnerville – Jeff Garner reported that the WESC Structural Burn class will take place next Saturday, November 16th on Snyder Hill Road. They will be having a 75th Anniversary Banquet in January. The members approved a station renovation that includes a new gear room, and an extension to their Squad bay, including raising the roof and the door heights.

Lititz – Ron Oettel reported that Truck 25 is out of service currently for an engine issue. A Verizon antenna is being placed on their fire station roof, which should improve service in the downtown area. AT&T is most likely going to install an antenna as well, if they can get zoning approval to do so.

Rothsville – Jon Lamb reported that they just completed the installation of a keyless entry system, security cameras, and a new in-house alerting system. They will use this year's state grant to purchase more pagers.

Warwick Ambulance – Frank Kenavan reported that they are replacing their 2004 Ford Explorer with a 2020 Ford F-150.

NVEMS – Edna Kline reported that the Brickerville unit ran 68 calls in October and has run 698 calls this year.

Elizabeth Township – Brian Wiker expressed his appreciation to everyone for engaging in open conversation and that he's excited to see the talk turn into action.

Lititz Borough – Andy Greiner thanked everyone for their service to our communities. He also told everyone that East Main Street and Water Street will be paved and have storm sewers replaced in 2021. The Cedar Street bridge by the former BBT building (now LGH) will also be replaced in 2021.

Warwick Township – Dan Zimmerman reported that they are focused on improving fire flow through the hydrant systems. In the near future, the valves in the meter pit at Arrowhead Drive will be replaced with a larger 6” valve. They are also studying ways to improve the water storage capacity along the Route 501 corridor.

Chris Strayer – Chris expressed his desire to see a subcommittee to take a look at the cost of housing and how it has an impact on the volunteer firefighters. He feels there could be value in having a financial incentive to assist with volunteers purchasing homes in the region.

With no further business, Andy Greiner made a motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Lynn Mearig. The meeting ended at 8:15pm.

Minutes submitted by Duane Ober, November 12, 2019.