

Minutes of May 2, 2019 WESC Meeting, held at Brickerville Fire Station.

In Attendance: Sonny Ebersole, Herb Flosdorf, Jeff Garner, Andy Greiner, Rodney May, Duane Ober, Keith Rothermel, Mike Smith, Dennis Strauss, Greg Young, Brian Wiker, and Dan Zimmerman. A few other members from the fire companies were present as well.

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

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Herb Flosdorf reviewed the 2019 year-to-date budget, as of April 26, 2019. Greg Young made a motion to accept the budget as presented, seconded by Dennis Strauss and passed.

Previous Minutes: The March 2019 Minutes were approved as presented.

Unfinished Business

Earned Income Tax / Property Tax Relief – Duane stated that Lititz Borough had 5 volunteers submit for their tax credit, for a total of \$951 in refunds, for an average of \$190. Warwick Township has paid the tax credit to 39 volunteers, for a total of \$3,900. Elizabeth Township has not passed the ordinance to approve the tax credit yet.

Fire Extinguisher Training Prop – Duane reported that he submitted the grant paperwork to DCED for the fire extinguisher training prop. The grant period is continuous; there was no deadline, so now we're just waiting to hear from DCED.

Updated Hydrants – Duane reported that he has been plotting hydrants in Warwick Township and Lititz Borough that are not shown on LCWC's mapping right now. He has found 68 hydrants that are not listed in the system. This information has been submitted to the Lancaster County GIS department for an update.

New Business

Warwick Township Resident on WESC Board – Duane reported that Don Hoover has stepped down due to a scheduling conflict with meeting on the first Thursday. Duane has reached out to Daryl Weaver to see if he is interested in serving on the Board. He is interested to learn more about it, but has not committed yet. He was unable to attend this meeting due to work obligations.

Open Comments

Brickerville – Dennis Strauss reported that they had a successful chicken BBQ in early April, selling 834 chicken dinners, making about \$4,500. He also told everyone about a Save-A-Life program that the fire company is hosting with Northwest EMS on Thursday, May 23rd, showing people how to do hands-only CPR and how to control bleeding. The event is asking for registrations so that they know how many instructors will be needed to assist.

Brunnerville – Jeff Garner reported that they also had a very successful roast beef dinner fund raiser recently, selling about 600 dinners.

Rothsville – Greg Young reported that they are currently upgrading the security at the fire station by installing an electronic key access system.

Warwick Township – Dan Zimmerman reported that the township and WTMA are working to update their hydrant maps and that some water meter pits are being updated with larger valves.

Guest: Duane introduced Steve Bair, the Fire Director of Centre Region Council of Government. He gave a very detailed presentation about how their system works in State College. His fire department responds to approximately 1,300 calls per year, serving approx. 93,000 residents in 6 municipalities, covering 104 square miles. Alpha Fire Company is the sole provider of fire, rescue, and related services to 5 municipalities and covers a small portion of another. EMS is a separate entity and not involved in the COG.

All fire company vehicles are owned by the COG. The regional fire protection program is comprised of three entities that work together for a common purpose. The COG provides tax funding that pays for the career staff, vehicles, stations, equipment, fire marshals and codes. The Relief Association pays for insurance, equipment, and training funds. The Alpha Fire Company is the volunteer staff that provides grant access, member amenities and donation funds. Alpha Fire Company is an all-volunteer fire company, with 96 active members, a 15-member Executive Board, 8-member Administration Staff, 13-member Operational Staff, and a 501(c)3 corporation.

The Alpha Fire Company / COG relationship is this: Alpha provides the personnel and technical expertise, while COG provides the funding, direct support and supervision. There are also strong codes focus on the issues affecting the fire company, such as false alarm reduction, targeted public education, joint response to incidents, and joint plan reviews. They also have excellent access to local elected officials, since they are actively and engaged as stakeholders.

Alpha Fire Company members focus on the core mission and training. Fund raising is not necessary for Alpha. The COG is a professional management resource, by providing consistent management and consistent training. The fire company is provided with ample, modern equipment and safe, modern stations. The COG benefits to the community include: professional oversight of the fire company; very low risk for financial corruption; control of operating and capital costs; good retention of personnel; and protection of physical assets. COG has performance measures in place, including Financial, Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction.

The municipalities contribute according to a formula, made up of assessed property value, population and earned income tax receipts. Penn State University contributes to the operational costs and capital costs, according to a legacy agreement. The municipal contributions equal approximately \$1.57 million per year.

The volunteers are rewarded through a stipend program. The COG funds and sets the baseline amount, while the fire company determines the participation and bonus requirements.

The COG receives customer satisfaction feedback from elected officials, borough and township resident surveys, periodic third-party surveys of the program, and retention and recruiting data based on blind exit surveys and variability in the donations. The focus of their future is centered around cost, recruitment and retention, and continued public goodwill and confidence. They also feel that the volunteer fire service is beginning to be in direct competition with part-time jobs, meaning they are losing volunteers who have the need to earn income, rather than volunteer their time as firefighters.

At the end of his presentation, Chief Bair continued to provide feedback through a question and answer period. Chief Bair was thanked for his time spent visiting with and educating us about Centre Region COG.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approx. 8:45pm. The next WESC meeting will be Thursday, July 11th at Warwick Ambulance, beginning at 6:30pm.

Minutes submitted by Duane Ober, May 9, 2019.