

**Minutes of March 7, 2019 WESC Meeting**, held at Brunnerville Fire Station.

**In Attendance:** Jeff Garner, Andy Greiner, Aaron Hoover, Edna Kline, Lynn Mearig, Duane Ober, Keith Rothermel, Mike Smith, Chris Strayer, Greg Young, and Dan Zimmerman. A few other members from the fire companies were present as well.

Meeting was called to order by Vice-Chairman Andy Greiner at 6:35pm.

**Guest:** Vice-Chairman Greiner introduced Duane Hagelgans, Fire Commissioner from Blue Rock Regional Fire District as our guest presenter for the meeting. Commissioner Hagelgans leads a consolidated fire service in Millersville Borough and Manor Township. He spoke about the process that they took from being separate fire companies to become Blue Rock Fire Rescue. The fire companies agreed to consolidate their operations if they would become fully funded. Manor Township, which contributes 83% of the annual budget of nearly \$1 million, initiated a fire tax, and Millersville Borough funds their portion (17%) from their general budget. The new fire district functions as the fire service and EMA for the region.

Upon consolidation, the fire companies handed over all of their equipment and apparatus to the Fire District. Blue Rock Fire Rescue is a 501(c)3 organization, made up of the “people” in the organization. The Fire Administrator was hired in May 2011, and the contract to work towards consolidation was signed in July 2011. The Fire District took over the leadership on January 1, 2012, at which time, the organization had \$1.4 million in debt. Through their annual budget and planning, the organization is now debt-free and has \$1.8 million in Capital reserves. They have also reduced their fleet of apparatus, and have saved money from paying only one insurance premium instead of four individual policies. They also budget approximately \$25,000 per year for retention efforts for the members and families, such as bus trips, sporting events, etc. This was a result of members expressing their concern that the lack of fund raisers took away their social time with the other members.

Within the first few months of his hiring, Hagelgans was appointed by the District Board as the Fire Commissioner in order to have authority over the Fire District and Fire Rescue services. His role has since become a part-time role because of his other career as a Professor at Millersville University. He has hired a full-time Chief Administrative Officer, who handles the day-to-day operations, such as paying bills, scheduling maintenance, etc. They also have another part-time employee who assists with incident reports and wherever else he is needed.

The District Board is made up of 5 officials, 3 from Manor Township and 2 from Millersville Borough. At least one official from each municipality must be an elected officer of the municipality. Another benefit of the regional fire district is that they only need to adopt one Emergency Operations Plan for the both municipalities and they have a joint Emergency Management Coordinator. Statistically, the fire companies run a combined 800 calls per year.

Asked what he would change if was able to go through the process again, Hagelgans said he would eliminate the “grandfathering” of all members from the previous fire companies to the new one. He would require membership applications from everyone, so that everyone is accounted for and their personal information is on file. No one would lose their Life Membership status, it’s just that many previous members, who have never been seen for years, became members of the new organization and it’s created a lot of problems. He also stressed the need for one person to be in charge and for everyone within the organization to work within the “system”. The fire companies can still function independently, but the policies and guidelines must be the same for everyone. He compared the organizational structure to that of a career fire department, such as New York City, or even Lancaster City. There are multiple fire companies, but one fire department – everyone needs to operate and function in the same way to be successful. There may be different dynamics in each fire station, but during emergencies, everyone must be operating the same way.

Hagelgans presentation was followed by many questions from the members, with his presentation ending shortly after 8pm.

**Treasurer's Report:** Vice-Chairman Greiner reviewed the 2019 year-to-date budget, as of March 7, 2019. Jeff Garner made a motion to accept the budget as presented, seconded by Greg Young and passed.

**Previous Minutes:** The January 2019 Minutes were approved as presented.

### **Unfinished Business**

**Earned Income Tax / Property Tax Relief** – Duane stated that Lititz Borough and Warwick Township have adopted the tax credits for the volunteers and Elizabeth Township will be voting on it at their March meeting.

**Fire Extinguisher Training Prop** – Duane reported that he was waiting on Warwick Township to adopt a resolution that verified that they would be responsible for their (WESC-funded) share of the cost of the prop (50%). The resolution was approved last week and the grant submission will be made next week.

### **New Business**

**Fire Statistics** – Duane reviewed the fire company statistics for 2018 and compiled stats from 2015-2018. Features reviewed included total incidents, average number of firefighters responding to calls, hours in service, manhours in service, incident times, responses to structure fires, accidents and automatic fire alarms, incidents by municipalities, and usage of fire apparatus.

**Public Fire Protection in Region** – Duane reviewed current issues with some hydrants not showing up in the WebCAD, due to local hydrant maps not being updated. Duane is working with Warwick Township Municipal Authority and Entech to update their records so the information can be submitted to the County GIS Department, so that they can be uploaded in the WebCAD.

**Local Building Projects** – Duane reviewed multiple projects taking place right now, including photos of the projects. Projects highlighted included: 6<sup>th</sup> Street extension, LEFC, Warwick Woodlands, Wilbur redevelopment, Breezy Heights, Lititz Land Trust, W. Sixth Street (S. Walnut Street) homes, Moove-in Storage, Sheetz, Riptide Car Wash, Tractor Supply, and Rothsville traffic lights improvements.

### **Open Comments**

**Brunnerville** – Jeff Garner reported that they have contracted with a design company for an addition to the fire station for a gear room. Their spring dinner will be April 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Rothsville** – Greg Young reported that they have 22 members eligible for the tax credit from the municipalities and several others who don't meet the criteria, since they don't live in one of the three municipalities or are retired. These members will receive a \$100 gift card from the fire company so that they receive the same benefit.

**NWEMS** – Edna Kline reported that NWEMS had 8,713 calls in 2018, with 922 of them coming from the Brickerville station.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:42pm. The next WESC meeting will be Thursday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> Brickerville Fire Station, beginning at 6:30pm.

Minutes submitted by Duane Ober, March 13, 2019.