



**ACME TOWNSHIP
PUBLIC SAFETY CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Monday, March 14, 2005, 8:00 a.m.
Acme Township Hall
6042 Acme Road, Williamsburg MI 49690**

Meeting called to Order at 8:07 a.m.

Members present: P. Collins (Chair), L. Andres, J. Maitland, W. Mervau, D. Nelson, D. Smith
Members excused: D. Hoxsie
Staff present: S. Corpe, Office & Planning Coordinator/Recording Secretary

- A. **Correspondence:** None
- B. **Reports:** None
- C. **Limited Public Comment:** None
- D. **Approval of Minutes from February 22, 2005 meeting:**

Motion by Maitland, support by Nelson to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

E. New Business

1. **Presentation of Metro Fire 2005 Strategic Plan:** A video presentation and a PowerPoint presentation (included and incorporated by reference) were given by Chief Wayne Hanna, Deputy Chief Pat Parker and Troy Holliday.

One of Metro's goals is to establish a permanent funding millage in each of the three participating townships or to establish a Metro-wide Fire District for funding. They are also seeking to consolidate ownership of existing fire stations under Metro (currently owned/maintained by the townships where located) and to add new stations to the network. Addition of several full-time medical and fire response personnel is also desirable, as the required levels of training and number of calls for service are putting strain on the current volunteer force.

The national service goal is for the fire service to be out the door within 1 minute and on-scene within 4 minutes for 90% of calls for service.

The cost of implementing the key components of the plan would involve a levy of 8 mills across the entire Metro Fire area, which is clearly more than can be anticipated immediately. Other financing avenues are being discussed, including bonding.

Chief Hanna stated that many of the goals expressed have been deferred for a year, largely at Acme Township's request. He believes that a Fire District is still the best long-term option. Creation of such a district requires public approval at the polls, so significant public education would be required.

Smith asked about the relationship between the City of Traverse City and Metro Fire. Chief Hanna stated that there is a mutual aid agreement in place. At times the city has tried to annex portions of Garfield Township. Garfield is still growing rapidly. Metro

and the City train together and have similar equipment; there is currently a good working relationship. Differences include the fact that the City staff are full-time employees and are unionized; both conditions create certain differences in point of view between the City and Metro Fire.

Smith asked about the possibility of other townships joining Metro Fire. This is possible, but to do so a joining township must pay in a certain share of the original Metro startup costs.

Nelson asked if there has been discussion about combining Metro and City fire services. Chief Hanna says there has been, but Metro perceives no benefit to such a combination. Deputy Chief Parker indicated that the combination would have provided staff benefits to the City but no benefits to Metro. The City also expressed that the members of Metro would have to become employed rather than being volunteered; they don't work with volunteers.

Nelson noted that statistic that 60% of calls for service are medical in nature. He wondered if it would be possible to have additional individuals who are trained as First Responders (medical) only but do not have the fire training. Chief Hanna and Deputy Chief Parker responded that right now they require all staff to have both medical and fire training because medical personnel are called on to drive fire department equipment and perform fire service-related duties.

Chief Hanna stated that newcomers to the area largely come from places with professional fire service. They don't have a strong spirit of volunteerism, and even when they do the training time commitment is often a barrier.

Mervau noted that only Peninsula Township has its own ambulance among the Rural Fire townships. Nelson thinks there could be benefit to having some ambulance component to Metro.

Maitland would like to see some comparative figures for how much it costs to run Rural, Metro and City fire, and the cost per run for each. Nelson asked if a map has been done to show the distribution of fire calls. Deputy Chief Parker stated that this has been done; this is what has led to the proposed locations for new fire stations. He asked that members of the community be on the lookout for 3-5 acre parcels of land available in Acme for a potential station. Chief Hanna mentioned that due to strong efforts to have Metro's tanker trucks recognized, everywhere in Metro that is within 5 road miles of a fire station has an ISO rating of 6. The lowering of this rating from roughly 8 or 9 can save homeowners hundreds of dollars per year on their insurance.

Andres has talked to a number of his acquaintances regarding whether they would be more likely to approve an ongoing fire district or would rather re-vote a millage regularly. Most of them said they would prefer not to vote repeatedly, although a minority expressed concerns over how to ensure that funds were not mishandled or the system abused. This leads him to believe that a Fire District request might succeed if public education is done well. Deputy Chief Parker noted that according to Public Act 33 which enables Fire Districts, the fire service is budget-based and spending is reviewed annually through a public hearing process.

Smith asked what types of benefits Metro offers to hired staff. Chief Hanna replied that the package is excellent, comprehensive and is approved by the Metro Fire

Board. Wages are more of an issue; when they tried to hire new inspectors that are already well-qualified and experienced, none would leave their current positions for the salary Metro offered.

Maitland noted that even a Fire District would collect funding based on taxable value of land rather than SEV. There was discussion about the fact that in terms of SEV, population, service calls and funding Garfield makes up 50% of Metro, East Bay 30% and Acme 20%.

Discussion turned to what would be the optimal timing for a millage or fire district request. There is only one scheduled election in 2005, which is the May school election. There are several scheduled elections in 2006. Holding a special election just for the fire question would cost approximately \$8,000 - \$10,000. Is there enough in the fund to wait until an election is otherwise being held to avoid the extra expense, or would waiting until next year to pose the question to the public be cutting things too close in case the proposal made should fail? This is something for the committee to consider.

Smith would like to know what the SEVs of each of the Metro Fire participating townships is. He would like more information regarding the extent to which Acme's share of the funding represents its share of the cost. Development patterns are shifting. Maitland agreed that a variety of statistics are needed in order to make a decision. Possibly being the only question on a ballot in November 2005 could have advantages and disadvantages that need to be weighed. The committee would also like a better breakdown of the annual cost of the improvements proposed in Metro's strategic plan. Andres feels that spending \$8,000 on a separate election is good value compared to what the township could lose out on if fire service is endangered. Not having backup from the other Metro battalions in just one big fire could be devastating. Collins wondered if some of the money in the segregated Fire Fund can be used to cover the costs of an election; Kurtz, who was in the audience, stated that this would need investigation. Maitland observed that the *Record Eagle* often criticizes municipalities or public entities for having expensive special elections.

To be on a November 8, 2005, language would have to be submitted to the County by about August 23. Maitland also asked how much lead time is needed between a vote and first collection of a millage; Corpe stated that she believes the millage can be collected immediately on the next tax bill. Collins will ask Plude about any restrictions.

E. Public Comment/Other Business

The next meeting was set for Monday, April 11 at 8:00 a.m.

Meeting adjourned 9:38 a.m.