



**ACME TOWNSHIP
PUBLIC SAFETY CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Monday, April 11, 2005, 8:00 a.m.
Acme Township Hall
6042 Acme Road, Williamsburg MI 49690**

Meeting called to Order at 8:08 a.m.

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

A. Correspondence: None

B. Reports: None

C. Limited Public Comment: None

D. Old Business:

- 1. Approve minutes of the March 14, 2005 meeting:**

Motion by Maitland, support by Nelson to approve the minutes of the March 14, 2005 meeting as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

E. New Business:

- 1. Discuss Station 8 Daytime Duty Crew for July through October 2005:** The state is looking for response times of 1 minute out-the-door and 4 minutes on-scene. This goal would be easier to accomplish if someone is on duty to get trucks rolling while others are still making their way to the station. Collins provided a printout from the township Fire Fund showing that last year \$4,524.15 was spent to have someone on call for 8 hours during weekdays starting in July. Collins would like to recommend that the Board begin the program in June this year at a maximum of 32 hours/week with no benefits to be paid. When there isn't a service call, the on-staff person performs maintenance work.

Andres supported the idea, saying that M-72 alone poses problems in the summertime. To have someone on-call who can also keep up with maintenance seems like an unbeatable deal. Hoxsie agreed, although he expressed concerns that he is not confident that there was a \$188,000 Fire Fund Balance Forward as Collins stated. Nelson asked how much the position is paid; \$10.50/hour, which is the same rate the on-call duty staff are paid in East Bay and Garfield Townships. Maitland suggested that the program be recommended for June – October. Collins believes that June – November would cost around \$5,500.

Motion by Hoxsie, support by Nelson to recommend that the Board of Trustees fund duty crew June – October 2005. Motion carried unanimously.

- 2. Discuss recommendation to Board of Trustees for Metro Fire income to be based on yearly budget:** As requested, Collins provided information that compares the contributions made and services received by each of the Metro Fire member townships. Collins noted that the annual Metro Fire budget includes savings that can be put aside so that periodic major purchases can be paid for in cash.

Hoxsie asked why Acme's cost per run is so much higher than the other townships; the cost/run calculation is based on the total amount the township contributes to Metro (including funding for administration and inspections) and we have far fewer runs than the other townships over which to allocate the total contribution expense.

Andres stated that he has heard a rumor that Acme is thinking of leaving Metro Fire and joining Rural Fire. Right now, our risk rating with Metro is 6; if we left them and joined Rural it would be 9 which would raise individual homeowners insurance rates. Plus, the township would have to purchase from Metro any equipment it wanted to keep. Collins replied early in the new Board administration a resident of the township asked what might happen if a move from Metro to Rural was made, and after becoming well-informed decided it would be a bad idea. The rumor persists that the idea is still being considered; this rumor should be fairly easy to lay to rest.

Collins referred to sheets in the committee notebooks showing SEV figures. These figures have now become outdated and can be replaced by figures in the handouts for today. The spreadsheet also includes calculations as to the amount of revenue various sized millages would generate. The column labeled "Fire District Revenue" reflects revenue based on real property only. The millages currently in place will generate a slight surplus over the amount the township is committed to pay to Metro again this year (approximately \$40,000), increasing the Fire Fund Balance Forward to approximately \$227,000.

The paperwork also contains information for East Bay and Garfield Townships' current SEVs and Taxable Values and calculating the amounts of revenue that would be generated there at various millage rates. Garfield currently levies 1.8 mills and East Bay levies 2.1 mills (some of which fund ambulance service.)

The fact that we collect on taxable value but are charged based on SEV has been a concern for some time. Collins has spoken with Wayne Hanna at Metro, and both agree that it may be time to look at some different math. Simply dropping the Metro contribution requirement back to being based on taxable value would mean a significant cut in services. Instead, both feel that it may be time to change the process to one whereby Metro would submit a budget for scrutiny and approval, with annual contributions based accordingly. There is also some discussion of bonding for land acquisition for new stations. Maitland believes that there should be a consistent millage rate from year to year, with special circumstances such as purchase of land for and construction of new stations to be paid for through a temporary extra millage or bond issue, should be followed. If the millage could fluctuate broadly from year to year it would be difficult for taxpayers to budget for their individual obligations, and he would tend to vote against it. Nelson suspected that in practice the millage rate would be kept fairly constant. Maitland noted that one downside of a fire district is the idea that the millage rate could fluctuate without further voting. Nelson posed the thought of combining fire and police protection into one millage; Maitland noted that the township is not obligated to provide either service. Each tends to have separate millages and each is a sort of "bonus" service.

Hoxsie feels that somewhere along the line the difference between taxable value and SEV has to be addressed. He understands Maitland's point that with a fire district and charges based on a valuation benchmark it is easier for people to deal with. The group wondered when the current police protection millage will expire. It started out at 0.3 mills and may have been approved for 5 years.

Collins asked Chief Hanna for an estimated cost to implement the Metro Strategic Plan to acquire new properties, but he has not received the figures yet. Maitland stated that East Bay and Garfield townships each have special assessment districts that permit them to levy up to 10 mills for police and emergency services. He is very impressed by the amount of data Collins has been able to provide. He believes that to maintain the level of service that township taxpayers expect and desire, a special assessment district (SAD) that allows the township to adjust the actual millage year-to-year is the best idea. He believes it should be touted as a SAD that would be just for fire service now, but when the current policing millage expires could also cover policing and potentially future ambulance service as well (although he personally does not support providing ambulance service).

Nelson calculated that there have been consistent increases in taxable value of real property over the past 6 years at an average of 7.2%. He did not calculate the rate of change in SEV over the period. It is anticipated that development growth will occur in the community as well. Assuming that the increases continue on pace, even at about 1.5 mills there is room for increases in the Metro Fire budget. On the other hand, if there is a downturn in taxable and assessed values, everyone could experience difficulties. Andres supported Maitland's point of view. Hoxsie noted that the committee seems to be recommending that it not be referred to as a Fire District but as an Emergency Services District to allow for the idea that a variety of police and emergency services could be funded. Collins noted that the Board can change the millage rate in such a district on its own authority. Receiving the Board's endorsement is the first key step; if received the next key step is public education. If the Board does not endorse this approach, the committee would have to examine other options.

Collins asked whether or not the committee would recommend a change to the Metro funding formula whereby their budget is based on SEV. Maitland feels that this is not within the committee's scope; it is a decision for the Metro Board itself. He feels basic operating funds should remain under the existing formula, but special projects should be funded through special means.

Nelson asked if funds from emergency services SADs or millages are segregated only for that use; Collins confirmed this and noted that the fund earns interest for segregated use as well.

3. **Discuss recommendation to Board of Trustees regarding millage issue:** (discussion above)

Motion by Maitland, support by Andres to recommend formation of an emergency services special assessment district per Public Act 33 of 1951 to the township Board of Trustees. Motion carried by unanimous roll call vote.

Hoxsie noted that this group is advisory to the Board, and asked if the group can take an active role in supporting the initiative. Maitland feels this is possible; next everyone will need to figure out the concrete steps to be taken. Collins has been working with Clerk Dorothy Dunville to find out what election law states as the necessary steps. Maitland also stated that a plan for what will be funded should be laid out; in his mind there is still a police millage and he does not believe we need ambulance service at this time, so for several years the only thing to fund would be fire service and the overall millage rate to individuals would remain the same.

It is also important to make sure that if the SAD is put in place the existing 1 mill levy that won't expire at the end of this year is appropriately discontinued. It would be unwise to discontinue it until and unless the SAD is approved and takes effect. Nelson clarified that if the SAD is put in place it is perpetual; Hoxsie and Mervau speculated that to end it would probably require another vote to terminate it similar to the one creating it.

Maitland left at 9:12 a.m.

- 4. Review Metro Fire Strategic Plan:** Mervau reports that Metro Fire has met with the GT Band regarding a possible location for a future new fire station in the Brackett Road /Dock Road area as called for by the Master Plan. Collins advised that the slide from the Strategic Plan presentation that indicates that 7 or 8 mills would be needed to fund the plan should be viewed carefully. The plan is a long-term document and these costs would be spread over time. Mervau also noted that some equipment might be reallocated from existing locations to new stations.
- F. Public Comment/Other Business:**
The next meeting will be set by Collins after he has prepared information regarding procedures and next steps.

Collins provided the committee with a roster for Battalion 8, and a look at the Rural Fire budget which is calculated differently than Metro's.

Meeting adjourned at 9:18 p.m.