

October 3, 2011

Fire Department needs study

The meeting was called to order at 6:00

Present: Andy Peters, Dave Tebo, Jim Cotter, Tom Becher, Greg Kippenhan, Mark Evers, Robin Krause, Randy Immel, Todd Hajos, Jim Ecker, and Jeff Roemer.

A study was done this past year which shows more of where we are at right now. It was not a long range study. The goal of this meeting is to list questions. If expansion of Fire Department is in the future, what questions do we need to ask, what facts do we want to know? Then we can figure out a strategic direction. Jeff Roemer has a lot of background in Fire Departments and also in studies. There was also a more thorough study done in 2002. A lot of things were used from that study.

Questions:

1. Where are our calls located? – For expansion.
2. Where does our FD/EMS live?
3. Fire Department current (can or/can't) house future expansion.
4. FD/EMS needs land for future expansion? – now (first step).
5. Later – building discussion.
6. Land discussion needs to include size of building to be sure parcel is large enough.
7. Addition of police?
8. Bldg plan – FD/EMS 3 – 10 years out.
9. In one of our studies, it stated we should have a second station. The Fire Department believes that is gone now with automatic mutual aid. The Department views that as obsolete.
10. Financial – how does it fit in with the Town's overall financial situation?
11. Inventory of possible lots available.
The Fire Department feels the Field of Dreams area is not a good area for a station.
12. How many acres needed?
13. Four plus acres is the best to allow for driving into the bays rather than backing in.
Someday we will be housing an ambulance. Regulations discourage backing in.
14. Do current Town owned properties work? Training area?
15. Need to further evaluate properties.

There are some advantages of Fire and Police being together but it needs to be well thought out. You can share some rooms. Andy Peters does not see starting our own department any time soon. Start up costs are huge and today you see many areas combining departments.

Sites looked at - east of Post Office by Co-op, west of animal hospital, Technical and Levi, north side of Zebra. School Road and 76 east and west side, Meadow Park by the Bennett property, by the lift station on Sunnyvale and the Reimer property. The Fire Department just drove around and looked at open properties with acreage.

16. Is there a possibility that the Town would be interested in having a combined structure - Fire station on one side and Town offices on the administration side?
17. While trying to meet stormwater requirements, could that be incorporated with a station?
18. Yard waste facility – with building?
19. Tie in with other public entities – YMCA, Fire Departments, Airport, school district?
20. Need for urgency (before ideal site it gone) to discuss with current land owners?
21. Answer questions of citizens - Why do we need this?
22. Need to look at 20 plus years down the road. Can we expand in the future?
23. Jeff Roemer feels we need to get focused through a needs analysis study and develop a capital improvement plan. Look at annexations. Need to look at growth. Need a complete review and project management to answer some of these questions. One station should be centralized.
24. Is the price of the property at the going rate?
25. What is current Fire Department financial situation?
26. When exactly does the next piece of equipment need to be replaced?
27. What are objections from perspective neighbors? Don't want to go through a residential area for every response.
28. Style of station? Construction/green.
29. Compare with other communities fire departments to benchmark?
30. It is hard to understand the need to expand without understanding how we operate.

Jeff Roemer stated we need to review how the department is operating, what their growth is, and what rescue vehicles they have. We need to look at what the entire Town is doing and growth potential is. It will probably cost around \$15,000 for a study to be done. For the public to accept this, it has to be laid out and show that we answered all the questions. The Fire Department cannot do this. They do not have the time or expertise to do this. Public opinion and the reality of public opinion is real. We need a lot of justification to convince the public of a need. One thing we should do is that people want to know that we need to expand some time and make a case for why it needs to be done.

The next step

Do we want to do a study? Do we try to do it on our own? A study would take 3 – 6 months. We should probably go outside to do the study if we decide to go that way. Jim Ecker wants to be convinced that now is the time to do the study and not just because the land is available.

Dave Tebo will talk to the bank to see if anyone else is interested in the Reimer property. The price of that land could possibly be negotiable. The group will meet again on October 17th at 6:000 p.m. and tour the fire station. That will give everyone time to digest what we talked about tonight and then decide on what is next.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Deborah Wagner,
Town Clerk