

**Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue
Joint Finance & Personnel Committee Minutes
July 28, 2015 – 5:00 p.m.
Hauser Room – City of Neenah**

Present: Ald. Benner, Ald. Taylor, Ald. Keehan, Ald. Stevenson, Ald. Kunz and Ald. Ramos.

Also Present: Chief Auxier, Director Steeno, Director Easker and OM Theisen.

Public: Ald. Pollnow, AC Sipin, and Mayor Kaufert.

Ald. Benner called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Public Forum: No members of the public wished to speak.

Minutes: The Committee reviewed the meeting minutes of May 26, 2015. **MSC Stevenson/Keehan to approve the May 26, 2015 meeting minutes, all voting aye.**

5:02 p.m. Ald. Kunz entered the meeting.

Budget Report: The Committee reviewed the June 2015 budget report. Chief Auxier noted there is some savings on salaries and fringes from not filling the DC position right away. Dive Team overtime wages have gone over budget. The decision was made to have one of our divers attend classes so he can become certified. This will allow us to have him perform training versus hiring an outside vendor. **MSC Keehan/Stevenson to approve the June 2015 budget report and place on file, all voting aye.**

Monthly Activity and Automatic Aid Report: The Committee reviewed the June activity, June automatic aid, quarterly activity and quarterly automatic aid reports. Ald. Taylor said he has brought this issue up before consolidation, with former Chief O'Brien, regarding purchasing smaller vehicles to have two firefighters respond to EMS calls versus having the fire trucks respond with three firefighters. He asked if we looked at making this change yet. Ald. Benner asked AC Sipin about the report that he put together last year when Ald. Taylor asked this question. AC Sipin said, without having the report in front of him, he can review the information but will not have specific data. There are some larger departments who have switched to this type of a response for EMS calls. It works for them because of the number of additional resources, and staffing, they have. La Crosse Fire Department does this as they have enough staffing to have two firefighters respond to EMS calls with a smaller vehicles and fully staff engine companies to cover structure fires, Haz Mat calls, extrication calls, backup for additional EMS calls, etc. Recently, Janesville Fire Department began a slightly different staffing model for EMS calls. A three person ladder crew cross staffs a smaller vehicle that responds to EMS calls. While this crew responds to EMS calls this leaves their only ladder truck out of service. They have had issues where their ladder crew is on an EMS call and couple of structure fires came in while they were at an EMS call. The firefighters had to drive back to the station, to get their gear, and then jump on the ladder truck to respond to the structure fire. This caused significant delays in getting their only ladder truck to the structure fire. He said he would be happy to forward this report to everyone again for review. Ald. Benner asked him to do this. Ald. Taylor asked how many people are allowed off at one time. Chief Auxier said each shift is allowed to have four people off. Ald. Taylor asked if we need people at every station responding to EMS calls. Chief Auxier confirmed that we do. If we only have some vehicles responding to EMS calls and/or if we separate our crews there will be significant increases in response times. Ald. Taylor said with a \$500,000 vehicle purchase we want to preserve the life of this vehicle and he does understand the staffing issues.

Ald. Benner asked AC Sipin what kind of vehicles the other departments use when they went to this alternative response plan. AC Sipin said he thought they were F250 vehicles that were customized. If we did this it would have to be a heavy

duty vehicle with MDC, radio, lights, sirens and other equipment. He estimated it would be around \$70,000 for this type of a vehicle with a life expectancy of 15-20 years. Ald. Benner said we would have to purchase one of these for all four stations and the life expectancy is the same as a fire truck. We come out ahead by sticking with our current response method of having fire trucks staffed at all times. We still need fire trucks, and equipment, to respond to non-EMS calls. It makes sense to continue our current response protocol as it keeps crews together and reduces response times, which is what is best for our citizens.

Ald. Stevenson asked how long we have had the EMS program in place. Chief Auxier said this began prior to consolidation and thought it began around 1998. Ald. Stevenson said implementing an additional service costs money. We are starting to see maintenance experiences as it has been almost 18 years since this service began. **MSC Stevenson/Keehan to approve the June activity, June automatic aid report, quarterly activity and quarterly automatic aid reports and place on file, all voting aye.**

MSC Stevenson/Keehan to amend the agenda to move up new business for consideration and action at this time, all voting aye.

Firefighter Vacancy: The Committee reviewed the memo, from Chief Auxier, regarding future the firefighter vacancy and requested permission to fill this vacancy. He noted Mayor Merkes and Mayor Kaufert support filling this position and it would not be filled until after the firefighter retires. **MSC Taylor/Stevenson recommends the City of Neenah and City of Menasha Common Councils authorize hiring one firefighter subject to the retirement of an existing employee on September 4, 2015, all voting aye.**

Modification of Item 4.01 Budget and Cost Distribution Formula of NMFR's Merger Agreement: The Committee reviewed the memo from Director Steeno regarding the issues the City of Menasha has in obtaining accurate information on the square footage of buildings in their City. Director Steeno noted last year the Committee decided to increase the City of Menasha's share by 1% and asked her to continue to investigate Menasha's ability to come up with this information. The City of Neenah is able to obtain this through their utility billing system. The City of Menasha doesn't track this information and when information was put together by staff to the best of their ability. Due to this circumstance both Finance directors didn't feel it was appropriate to continue the five part formula. They both recommend changing the formula from five parts to four parts. Ald. Stevenson asked if this Committee can recommend this change. Directors Steeno and Easker said they spoke to CA Godlewski and CA Captain and both were in agreement this Committee can make a recommendation to both Councils for a change.

5:28 p.m. Ald. Ramos entered the meeting.

MSC Kunz/Keehan recommends the City of Neenah and City of Menasha Common Councils approve the modification to item 4.01 Budget and Cost Distribution Formula of Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue's Merger Agreement and change this from a five part formula to a four part formula that would eliminate the square footage of buildings portion from the formula, as outlined in Director Steeno's memo dated July 23, 2015, all voting aye.

Consideration of Replacing Pumper 35: The Committee reviewed the memo from Chief Auxier regarding Pumper 35's current mechanical issues. Chief Auxier said it is out of service. If one of our front line vehicles has to be taken out of service for any mechanical issues and/or if we have a major incident and need to staff our reserve engine for additional support we do not have ability to do this. The initial estimate to fix the issues is around \$20,000. However, there may be additional costs once they start looking at it. This vehicle is 25 years old and discussion was held on whether we spend money to make these repairs or replace the engine. If we purchase a new vehicle, Pumper 35 would be removed from the fleet, Engine 35 would be moved to a reserve engine status and the new engine would take Engine 35's place as a front line response vehicle.

Ald. Kunz asked expressed concern with the current vehicle replacement procedure. He noted this is the second time, in the past year, we have had to make a decision like this. Chief Auxier said five years ago we were asked by each City to

start pushing back replacements of vehicles due to the budgetary issues each City was facing from decreased State shared revenue, etc. Director Easker said the dynamics have changed on equipment, vehicle and building repairs/replacements. Neenah puts together a replacement cycle for these items and these vehicles were to be replaced at 15-20 years. However, each City decided due to the budget constraints they had at that time it was best to push back the replacement of NMFR's vehicles and we are now in a state of things piling up. Ald. Kunz expressed frustration with this procedure and asked that we put together a replacement policy for vehicles, have this Committee review it, and each Council needs to understand we cannot continue to go down the road of pushing back replacements as it is catching up with us.

5:45 p.m. Mayor Kaufert entered the meeting.

The Committee reviewed information on the vehicles available from different vendors. A lengthy discussion was held on differences between these vehicles and the Department's needs. Chief Auxier noted it is the Truck Committee's recommendation to purchase the Saber 28574 from Pierce Manufacturing for \$387,000 and we would need an additional \$20,000 for transferring the radio, MDC, decaling the truck, and purchasing some additional features to meet the functionality needs of our Department.

A lengthy discussion was held regarding the pros and cons of fixing Pumper 35 versus purchasing a new vehicle. Mayor Kaufert asked who gave us the cost estimates for repairs and noted his brother-in-law works for Seagrave. He told him there are people from Detroit Diesel will come and refurbish engines at Seagrave all the time. He suggested we call Detroit Diesel and see if they would do this for us and give us an estimate on repairs. He said if it only costs us \$20,000 to fix this, and it can last another two years, it would be a better option. Ald. Taylor said he agrees with Mayor Kaufert. If it is a small repair it would save money and he knows that rural departments salivate over things they don't have and NMFR does. He expressed concern about the reliability of Pierce's engines. Ald. Stevenson pointed out the issues Pierce was having were mainly caused by having Detroit engines and it was solved by switching to a Cummins engine. Pumper 35 has a Detroit engine.

Chief Auxier said it was an independent contractor who gave us the price estimate. He reminded everyone that it was only an estimate and there could be more costs once they start investigating what the issues may be. The labor charges are high due to the design of this vehicle. The cab doesn't lift, it is attached to the frame and we have to unscrew the roof mounted aerial ladder and go from there to get at the engine. This year the brakes were replaced and the vendor had an issue finding parts due to the vehicle's age. They had to make some custom things in order to finish the job. Even if it is a simple fix right now, we have to remember these "new" things are attached to other pieces that are 25 years old and eventually things wear out.

Ald. Benner asked Directors Easker and Steeno about financing options for each City if this vehicle was replaced at this time. Chief Auxier noted Mayor Merkes said he has some concerns regarding the funding of a new vehicle and would prefer a recommendation for replacement not move forward immediately from this Committee. Director Easker said Neenah has some flexibility. Every purchase has to be made by one City and it has always been Neenah. Neenah bills Menasha for their portion and Menasha pays within 30 days. If we do not take delivery of this vehicle until October money wouldn't be due until that time. Neenah can pay for the vehicle and if it would help out Menasha they can reimburse Neenah their share in January of 2016. Director Steeno said from a cash flow standpoint it is not an issue but citizens want things in the budget before it's approved. Menasha would finance this purchase through another State trust fund loan. Regardless if the purchase is made in October of 2015, Menasha's first payment wouldn't be due until January of 2017. Director Easker reminded everyone that if this is the route taken it would be a 2015 expense but would be put in the 2016 budget.

Ald. Kunz said we should have learned our lesson last year with pushing back the replacement of Quint 32. He said we should move forward with replacing this vehicle now and have the Department continue to research additional options to see what the costs may be to repair the Pumper 35 and bring it back to the Committee for review. If it makes sense to spend money to fix Pumper 35, to increase the value of this vehicle to sell it, we should do it. However, he doesn't agree with making repairs to Pumper 35 to and push back replacing this for two years. Ald. Ramos agreed with Ald. Kunz's opinion. Ald. Benner asked AC Sipin what the cost would be, if we were not in crisis management, and replaced it in

2017. AC Sipin doesn't have exact figures but it would be upwards of \$450,000 because costs increase every year for new vehicles. Ald. Benner said he agrees with Ald. Kunz's opinion. Ald. Stevenson said if what AC Sipin said is true, this purchase gives us everything we need for operations, we can continue to protect the citizens in both Cities in the same manner and save \$75,000 by replacing it now, it makes more sense to replace this now. Ald. Keehan asked if the \$20,000 needed for equipment and transferring the radio, MDC, etc. would exist even if this vehicle is replaced in 2017. Chief Auxier confirmed this. Ald. Keehan said he agreed that it makes more sense to replace the vehicle at this time. **MSC Ramos/Keehan recommends the City of Neenah and City of Menasha Common Councils approves the purchase of the SABER 28574 from Pierce Manufacturing for \$387,000 with an additional \$20,000 for equipment, for a total cost of \$407,000. Each City Finance Director shall give information to their respective Common Council on funding sources available for each of their Cities for this unbudgeted purchase prior to each Common Council's approval, all voting aye.**

Committee members asked Chief Auxier to work on obtaining information from Detroit Diesel to see if they can fix this vehicle and what the potential costs may be. He should bring this information back to their next meeting for review. Ald. Kunz said if Chief Auxier is able to obtain this information prior to council approving the purchase of this new vehicle, to please forward this to them.

Due to time constraints, the Committee didn't review any old business items and decided to review this at the next meeting.

MSC Stevenson/Keehan to adjourn at 6:25 p.m., all voting aye.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tara Theisen
Office Manager