

Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue  
Joint Finance & Personnel Committee Meeting Minutes  
April 28, 2015 – 5:30 p.m.  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Council Chambers – City of Menasha

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

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

Members of the Public: Neenah HR Director Heather Barber, L275 President Jamie Leonard, Greg Wroblewski and Al Wroblewski.

Ald. Ramos called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

Election of Chair: **Motion made by Ald. Taylor to nominate Ald. Keehan as Chair. Motion failed due to the lack of a second.** The Committee agreed it would be best to hold the election of the Chair until the May meeting as there will be a third member of Menasha appointed to the Committee and equal representation from both Cities.

Election of Vice-Chair: The Committee agreed to hold the election of vice-chair until the May meeting as there will be a third member of Menasha appointed to the Committee and equal representation from both Cities.

Public Forum: Local 275 President, Jamie Leonard addressed the Committee and said every position on our Department is vital. It is crucial to fill the Deputy Chief's position and maintain the current staffing levels we have so our Department can continue to provide the quality and high-level of service the citizens of Neenah and Menasha expect from us. He noted it is L275's opinion this position needs to be filled and he strongly encouraged all members to consider this and make a recommendation to fill the Deputy Chief position. He invited everyone to attend our open house on Saturday, May 2, 2015. It will be held at Station 31 located at 1080 Breezewood Lane in the City of Neenah. There are a lot of activities planned and the weather looks promising for the event. Lastly, he noted Tim Patterson, a L275 Firefighter, has been busy planning the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Back Draft Bike Tour. This event is scheduled for Sunday, June 7<sup>th</sup> at Jefferson Park in the City of Menasha. All proceeds from this event help send burn injured youth to summer camp. He noted Ald. Stevenson has helped out the past few years with the event and has knowledge of how well received this event is. He asked for everyone's support for the Back Draft Bike tour and invited Committee Members to contact him if they are interested in volunteering to help.

Minutes: The Committee reviewed the February 24, 2015 meeting minutes. **MSC Kunz/Keehan to approve the February 24, 2015 meeting minutes, all voting aye.**

Monthly Budget Report: The Committee reviewed the March 2015 budget report. Ald. Taylor asked if the Department tracks the overtime usage of special operations. Chief Auxier confirmed this is done and noted we receive reimbursement for this training from the State. Ald. Keehan asked about the auto physical damage line item and if it is lower than expected due to experience. Chief Auxier noted he would have to ask Director Easker this question as the City of Neenah takes care of handling the costs for this. Ald. Kunz asked about maintenance of motor vehicles and if the budget usage is low due to the replacement of the Quint and if there are any additional repairs to other vehicles that we know of. Chief Auxier said he plans on this line item remaining within budget as there are no issues right now with any of our vehicles. However, the oldest vehicle in our fleet is our reserve engine and we will have to consider replacing this in the near future as it's our only back-up vehicle. Ald. Stevenson asked about the FVTC reimbursement line item and why it is a negative number. Chief Auxier explained when FVTC vacated the building they paid the remainder of their lease and utilities, which was through June. Ald. Kunz asked about the City of Neenah IS Services and asked if it is advantageous for our Department to know if they are going to make major purchases so it can be budgeted ahead of time. He said there are some major purchases coming up that will affect our current budget and these were not budgeted for this year. Chief Auxier said the Neenah IS Department uses the previous years' experience to recommend a dollar figure for our upcoming budget. They do let us know if there will be major purchases that would affect the follow year's budget so we can plan accordingly. Ald. Stevenson said it his understanding the major purchased planned for this year has already been included in the current budget and confirmed there is a complicated formula that figures

out what actual usage by the Department so they can budget appropriately. The potential change within the City of Neenah is to attempt to capture capital payments. Chief Auxier said the current discussion regarding City of Neenah IS Services is strictly related to a City of Neenah building. Therefore, this is only a City of Neenah expense. Each Department is responsible for their portion of shared usage but this wouldn't affect our current budget. **MSC Ald. Stevenson/Taylor to approve the March 2015 budget report and place on file, all voting aye.**

Monthly Activity and Automatic Aid Reports: Chief Auxier noted OM Theisen ran two different reports from Firehouse for review. The first report shows the activity for the month of March and compares activity to previous years during the month of March. The second report shows how the activity for the first three months of 2015 and compares activity to previous years during the same time period. He noted we continue to experience and increase in fire calls this year compared to previous years. Chief Auxier reminded everyone due to the current construction on 441/Appleton Road automatic aid calls will be very limited due road closures in this area. Ald. Kunz asked if we can make the headings on the automatic aid report more descriptive. Chief Auxier said we can change the heading on the reports for everyone. **MSC Taylor/Stevenson to approve the March 2015 activity and automatic aid reports and place on file, all voting aye.**

Review of Cold/Ice Water Response Area: The Committee reviewed the shoreline analysis information. Chief Auxier noted OM Theisen ran a report and reviewed calls from the past 11 years. Of the 105 calls we responded to on Little Lake Butte Des Morts only 8 of them were in the Town of Menasha. A second map he received from Winnebago County was reviewed. He noted this map was used to help the county establish their areas of responsibility for the waters and the municipalities these fell into. Our Department, Oshkosh Fire Department and Winneconne Poygan Fire District all provide back up to each for water/ice calls. We do not help Winneconne Poygan as much as Oshkosh Fire Department and this is because Oshkosh Fire Department is closer to Winneconne and can respond faster. Winnebago County Sheriff's Department provides us with a Husky airboat, Marine 3, pays for all of the fuel, maintenance and related equipment to operate both boats. In return, we provide staffing and this is so we can respond to calls quicker. Previous discussions from this Committee included receiving reimbursement from the Town of Menasha for calls within their district. He noted it is inappropriate to ask the towns for reimbursements. Instead this request should be from Winnebago County as they are responsible for the waterways. Chief Auxier did speak to Sheriff Matz and he cannot provide reimbursement for calls as he doesn't have money in his budget and if he does this for us he will have to make sure he does this for other departments that respond to calls.

Ald. Kunz asked if we would provide service to the Town of Neenah if there was a water call. It is difficult for him to accept the Cities providing additional services, that are better than what the Towns provides, we pay for these services through our budget but the Towns receives these services for free and flaunt how their taxes are much lower than ours. He asked if we provide the money for the manpower and the County provides the equipment is this tradeoff still equal to what it was years ago when the agreement was made. Chief Auxier said there were increased response times for calls within our areas when this service was provided only by the County. There is always the chance that whoever we are rescuing from the water is a resident from another City or Town but our goal is to help people and to try to save lives and that's how the agreement started. If there is a disparity in the costs we pay for manpower versus what the County pays for the equipment it would be up to the Cities of Neenah and Menasha to decide if this agreement is still a feasible trade off and discussions regarding this would have to be done at the City level. Ald. Taylor said at this time the City of Menasha is experiencing a village war with the Town of Menasha and Town of Harrison and they consistently state how cheap their taxes are compared to the City of Menasha but they do not provide the same services. He said he would like to see the original document that was signed when this agreement was made and what was spelled out in that contract. Chief Auxier said this was done prior to the merger of NMFR and he can try to find the document. Ald. Taylor asked if the dive team service is above and beyond what the county expects from us. Chief Auxier confirmed it is. Ald. Taylor said we are providing an additional service to the area townships and we need to figure out a way to recoup these costs from them. He suggested we look at increasing boat launch fees and a specific amount in the increased fees would be used set aside for costs associated with the dive team. He asked what would happen if the Cities pulled out completely from this agreement and where they would respond from. Chief Auxier said if the Cities decided to discontinue the agreement the Sheriff's Department would be the only one responding and it would be from Oshkosh. There is a great chance they would not have divers on duty to respond to the call right away. Therefore, they would have to call off duty people in who would have to pick up the equipment from Oshkosh and then respond. This would increase response times to help people within our area. Ald. Taylor asked if the County would provide funds for the dive team. Chief Auxier said he already discussed this with Sheriff Matz and he doesn't have the funds within his current

budget. Ald. Stevenson noted he was on this committee previously and all of the questions the current committee members have regarding this service were discussed at length. When the Peterson Family asked to provide the gift of money to start our dive team there were several discussions on what happens if we accept this gift of money and how we can fund this services in the future after the money runs out. Members expressed the same frustrations of how the area towns will not provide money for the services we provide but reap the benefits. The family members expressed frustration in the delayed response from the County due to the logistics of where they respond from and they didn't want this to happen this to another family. The firefighters expressed frustration in their helplessness in not being able to help during this and during other times when this has happened. Winnebago County has a legislative responsibility to provide this service. Either we address this funding issue with the County and try to come up with a mutual decision. If we can't the Cities have to decide to give all of the responsibility back to the County or continue with the current agreement. Ald. Taylor said he is looking for a vehicle to generate revenue from people who come from out of town and require the service from us. Ald. Keehan asked how we could potentially generate revenue with fees. Ald. Taylor said non-residents pay higher fees to launch their boats and we should look at this to see if we can add additional fees to fund the dive team. The Committee directed Chief Auxier to discuss this request with Director McCoy and Director Tungate. They would like information on how many yearly permits and revenue each City generates from boat launch fees. Information for the past few years should be broken out to reflect residents versus non-residents permits and revenues, how often each City increases their rates and what they were increased from/to when they were increased and are there certain times of the year where each City sees an influx of permits. Ald. Kunz asked if we can review the agreements the County has with Oshkosh Fire Department and Winneconne Poygan Fire Department to see if we are receiving the same things as they are. Chief Auxier said the County provides Oshkosh Fire Department and Winneconne Poygan Fire District a Husky airboat. However, they provide us a Husky airboat and Marine 3.

Consideration and Action of Replacing the Deputy Chief's Position: Chief Auxier handed out a memo regarding replacement of the Deputy Chief position. He noted both mayors have agreed to move forward with replacing the position. Ald. Kunz asked if the Mayors looked at not filling the position prior to their support in replacing this position. Chief Auxier said he had several discussions with the Mayors. They looked at what would happen if we moved responsibilities of the Deputy Chief's position to line staff and/or other administrative staff and how that would affect the operations and services we provide. In the end, it was decided what is best is to replace the position. Ald. Kunz asked if the attempt was made to re-evaluate staffing since the merger has been in place. Chief Auxier said when the merger was agreed upon this included eliminating three line staff and one administrative position through attrition. Prior to filling any open position, the process is to review the job responsibilities of the position, see if these duties can be changed, what would happen if they were changed, how this would affect operations, etc. Ald. Stevenson noted this is process is a requirement for the City of Neenah. Ald. Kunz said he has difficulties with this as he has no clue how the department operates and this information isn't included with this request. Chief Auxier said the current table of organization was agreed upon during the merger and positions were reviewed to make sure we had a functional department. When you compare our staffing to other career departments in our area we are on the low end for staffing. He invited Ald. Kunz, and all members, to spend time with us to see how we operate and go over the services we provide. He would be happy to review the department structure, job responsibilities of each position, how they complete these responsibilities, why we staff the way we do, etc. Ald. Kunz said in the City of Neenah when there is a request to fill a position there is always a very lengthy report included with the replacement request and isn't included with this request, it's difficult to understand the responsibilities of the position and why it has taken so long to receive this request. Chief Auxier said it took time to coordinate meetings with two very busy Mayors, he wanted adequate time to review all options and he did have some scheduled vacation during this time period. In the end, all options were explored before the recommendation was made from both Mayors. Ald. Stevenson said whether we like this process, or not, the Mayors have the administrative responsibility to review job functions. They have the ability and time to review this information with the department head and it is their job to do this before it is brought to the committee for a decision. He said he was an alderman during the merger and one administration position was eliminated with the merger. Since the merger, every time a position has been vacated this process was completed prior to replacing positions. Chief Auxier said Menasha's municipal code states the Deputy Chief's position has the responsibility as the Emergency Operations Director for the City of Menasha. This position is also responsible for building maintenance of all four buildings, overseeing maintenance of all equipment, personnel scheduling, helping with the operating and capital budgets, etc. Ald. Keenan said the Mayors, the Chief and the firefighters all see who does the work and we have to trust them on what would happen if the position is not replaced and the department is not currently overstaffed. **MS**

**Keehan/Stevenson recommends the City of Neenah and the City of Menasha Common Councils authorizes hiring a replacement for the Deputy Chief of Operations position subject to the departure/retirement of the existing employee with Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue.** Ald. Taylor said both he and Ald. Stevenson were on the councils during the merger. When the merger was first approved, the original thought was there were too many chiefs and the Cities would continue to look at staffing through the years to see if staffing could be reduced. Corporate America is reducing staffing all the time and other departments within the City of Menasha have reduced staffing within the past 4-6 months. He has had many discussions with Mayor Merkes regarding this position and they both feel the same way. He said we didn't want to eliminate jobs when the Cities agreed to the merger. This position is a high ticket item and if we can reduce or eliminate this position we should go through this process to see how it works before filling it. Chief Auxier said the Department did eliminate three line staff positions and one administrative position with the merger and we are functioning at appropriate staffing levels. He's confident in his recommendation and reassured members the current numbers we have for administrative staff is appropriate. It will be very difficult to continue the same level of service if we eliminate this position. Operational issues will carry over into other areas of our Department. Ald. Taylor said he appreciates the feedback from Chief Auxier, and the union, but he is trying to mirror what is happening in the real world and the Cities have to try to see what can be accomplished with the operations before filling the job. Ald. Stevenson said he is all for an evaluation of work flow but he's seen it fail in areas where we do not have a succession planning. He would be more inclined to fill this position, look at the structure of the Department, Chief Auxier should have succession planning with the current staff for when he retires and decide at that time if a position can be eliminated. Ald. Taylor said he spoke to Mayor Merkes and they agree this may be the best time to do this and a requirement of the next chief will be how to reduce administrative staffing. Ald. Kunz asked what the current management structure is. Chief Auxier said we have a Chief, Deputy Chief, two Assistant Chiefs, one Office Manager and 63 line staff. **All voting aye, motion carries.**

Review of Upcoming Events: Chief Auxier invited everyone to our Open House on Saturday, May 2, 2015. He also invited everyone to attend the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Backdraft Bike Tour at Jefferson Park on June 7<sup>th</sup> and commended Local 275 for this event. Ald. Taylor asked if the City of Neenah sponsors the Back Draft Bike Tour and why this communication is on the agenda. He said it's a good event but feels it's inappropriate to allow private organizations to put things on the agenda to advertise. Chief Auxier said the intent was to update the Committee of things that involve our Department and staff. Local 275 does sponsor this event and Administration supports them. He will keep this in mind for future agendas. Ald. Stevenson said having been involved with the Back Draft Bike Tour since its inception; he would vehemently challenge anyone who would question why this communication was put on the agenda. It's the Committee's job to manage the firefighters and they can tell us the things that they are doing that benefit both of the communities.

**MSC Stevenson/Keehan to adjourn at 6:50 p.m., all voting aye.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Tara Theisen  
Office Manager