

**SPRINGETTSBURY/SPRING GARDEN TOWNSHIPS
JOINT FIRE SERVICES COMMITTEE
WORK SESSION**

**NOVEMBER 21, 2006
APPROVED**

Springettsbury and Spring Garden Townships Joint Fire Services Committee meeting-work session convened on Tuesday, November 21, 2006 at 6:00 p.m. at the Springettsbury Township offices located at 1501 Mt. Zion Road, York, PA.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Austin Hunt, Spring Garden Township
Bill Schenck, Springettsbury Township
Jon Countess, Spring Garden Township
Ellen Freireich, Springettsbury Township
Holly Gumke, Spring Garden Township
Bill Mader, Spring Garden Township
John Fullmer, Jr., Spring Garden Township

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: John Holman, Springettsbury Township Manager
Greg Maust, Spring Garden Township Manager
Barry Emig, Spring Garden Township, Fire Chief
Andrew Stern, Managing Director of Fire and Rescue Services
Lee Sowers, Spring Garden Career Fire Representative
Dave Eckman, Springettsbury Career Fire Representative
Don Eckert, Springettsbury Volunteer Fire Representative
Scott Curtis, Spring Garden Volunteer Fire Representative
Joe Barron, Spring Garden Volunteer Fire Representative
Various members from Spring Garden/Springettsbury FC

A. Call to Order

HUNT Chairman Hunt called the meeting-work session to order at 6 p.m.

He stated that the goal for the work session is to go through the report to see if there were any potential comments.

Scope of the work session:

Goal #1- To determine whether or not to endorse the report with comments for submission to the municipal boards for action.

Goal #2- To review and discuss any caveats.

Mr. Hunt explained that one representative from each of the Municipal Volunteer Fire Companies and the Career Fire Companies was invited to join the committee at the table for the work session.

It was agreed that Mr. Adams did his homework.

Mr. Hunt asked to go around the table to see what sense each received from the report.

SOWERS Mr. Sowers reported that the Spring Garden Career Fire Fighters support the report and recommend sending it on to the municipal boards for action. Comments from the Spring Garden Career Fire Fighters are attached to the minutes.

ECKMAN Mr. Eckman reported that the Springettsbury Career Fire Fighters also support the basic premise report with only a few technical minor issues found. Comments from the Springettsbury Career Fire Fighters are attached to the minutes.

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- ECKERT** Mr. Eckert reported that the Volunteer Advisory Board compiled five pages of questions and made it clear that this only means that they are undecided about what to think of the merger at this time but look forward to participating in any way that proves to be beneficial to the Fire Departments and the residents of both municipalities. Comments and questions from the Springettsbury and Spring Garden Volunteer Fire Fighters are attached to the minutes.
- HUNT** Mr. Hunt added that the volunteers as a hole would have, and have had, the opportunity to participate in the process.
- CURTIS** Mr. Curtis explained that the volunteers are not opposed; they just have many questions.
- HOLMAN** Mr. Holman advised that copies of all the comments would be made and distributed to the committee members and representatives.
- BARRON** Mr. Barron expressed that there are some volunteers that have many questions and some that are unhappy and that some volunteers are not sure how to feel. There is a lot of uncertainty. There is concern of response times and allocations of manpower; how to get the same results as today.
- COUNTESS** Mr. Countess agreed and said that this is very important. Traffic congestion is a great concern.
- EMIG** Chief Emig stated that many things questioned are things expected as development occurs. It is important to have continuing review, this is especially important after a merger has occurred.
- STERN** Mr. Stern agrees with Chief Emig and added that he supports the merger and wished it were done 3-4 years ago. He stated that we need to start looking at the details and make recommendations based on the details and not just the concept.
- HUNT** Mr. Hunt reported that through potential options the question arose how are we going to pay. He indicated that he had requested Chief Emig one year ago to put together potential funding numbers. The numbers are based on assessed values and exempt properties.
- Mr. Hunt enlightened the committee and representatives with some items that he and Vice-Chairman Schenck had wrestled with and explained that they were trying to find something fair and objective which would make it easier to move forward. However, the question remains, "How are we going to pay?"
- COUNTESS** Mr. Countess explained that all tax-exempt properties are assessed but the figures do not represent the tax exempt. He added that even if the two municipalities levied a fire tax that tax would not be payable by tax exempt properties and would result in them not paying their fair share.
- He suggested studying W. Manchester Township model and York Township.
- HUNT** Mr. Hunt stated that York Township is reasonably manned.
- SCHENCK** Mr. Schenck believes there is another equalizer. The number of calls is almost identical.
- MADER** Mr. Mader expressed that he believes there is enough information that would establish funds from the two areas to come up with models.

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- GUMKE** Ms. Gumke questioned if it was a model of choice primarily based on assessed values.
- COUNTESS** Mr. Countess asked Mr. Adams what his experience was.
- ADAMS** Mr. Adams replied that his predominance experience is with combination departments. He expressed that he gave several options and is not recommending one or the other.
- ECKERT** Mr. Eckert stated that the concern at hand is ultimately that the cost will keep going up. He does not know what can be said. How is it going to increase enough to offset concerns? You need to know about the service to know what is right or wrong to convince them to pay more money.
- HUNT** Mr. Hunt stated that we have the two best-protected municipalities in the area. It is just a matter of record keeping. We need to reduce the rate of increased cost.
- GUMKE** Ms. Gumke added that safety needs to be taken into consideration.
- ADAMS** Mr. Adams stated that from street level, a call at 2 am with 13 fire fighters responding with 6 pieces of apparatus on the street; does this seem cost effective?
- ECKERT** Mr. Eckert added that it will take the right people to sit down and make the changes.
- HUNT** Mr. Hunt asked if County Control dispatches the apparatus.
- STERN** Mr. Stern replied technically, the Fire Chiefs tell the County what apparatus is to be dispatched on the different types of calls by putting together a list for each kind of fire. Each type of fire demands different manpower. Whether there is a merger or not, the Chiefs are still responsible for giving them this information and mutual aid will still be provided.
- EMIG** Chief Emig added that is the difference between today and 10 years ago. You had more volunteers respond to fires back then. You need to make sure that you have enough staff to man the pieces of equipment for the call.
- MAUST** Mr. Maust stated that there is minimal savings in operation but if it is run out long enough the cost of capital will not be able to be bought and paid for by the volunteers like in the past. You cannot help but show that there will be a savings. In capital, if the budget is split 55-45 what is going to happen? He stated this is one piece of the puzzle that we have been struggling with. He explained that to build the next station at a cost of \$4, 000, 000.00, on 20-year bonds at 5% equals \$500,000.00 a year.
- ADAMS** Mr. Adams agreed these issues still need to be reviewed.
- FULLMER** Mr. Fullmer stated that the long-range budget projection is based on fixed and variable cost. The challenge over the next couple of months is to determine the funding formula.
- He indicated that the committee would have to look towards the experts to figure out what are the biggest benefits, determine the cost increase in the future as well as how the township is going to incur and communicate to the residents the reason for the increase, and then take this back to present to the municipal boards.

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- HUNT** Mr. Hunt expressed that there are many opinions on how this should be done. There would be staffing assumptions.
- FULLMER** Mr. Fullmer stated that you have to make assumptions as you put the numbers together.
- HUNT** Mr. Hunt indicated that a 20-year operational budget was constructed looking at the separate verses the combined that was not split out by GIS. There were no personnel savings.
- FULLMER** Mr. Fullmer stated that it actually shows short staffing.
- ADAMS** Mr. Adams expresses that he did not want to mix increase staffing and yet show going from 4 stations to 3 stations.
- HUNT** Mr. Hunt questioned; what is the best way to address concerns?
- COUNTESS** Mr. Countess stated on the funding issues, you need to have a fixed cost in place. Identify and separate the two, would be fair to spread over all the people who will benefit.
- GUMKE** Ms. Gumke asked if we kept status quo for next several years, laying out the combine services, at some point the lines will cross?
- HUNT** Mr. Hunt replied that he would not think the cross over points are the same.
- GUMKE** Ms. Gumke added that she does not believe that it matters. Maybe we will not save money.
- MADER** Mr. Madder expressed that it is cost avoidance not a savings.
- HOLMAN** Mr. Holman stated based on the report, you could actually run the cost out.
Each municipality will need to build a new station. Chart out cost and assume new stations in the projections. Eventually you will have to replace fire stations whether the service is combined or stays separate.
- FULLMER** Mr. Fullmer asked, down the road with adding other municipalities; how would this change the formula?
- HOLMAN** Mr. Holman explained that charter members would run out the cost when future members are added.
- FREIREICH** Ms. Freireich said we need to look at the constituents, putting the plan in motion then figure out how to pay it. It will not save money at this point, maybe 20 years from now but not right away. Start by putting together models and make assumptions. There are a lot of variables you will not know. Nothing is written in stone. We just need to know what we want to do.
We already have a formula, now we need to make it work. We need to compromise, strategize, compromise again and then try it.
- COUNTESS** Mr. Countess stated that Mr. Adams did not guarantee us to save money.
- ADAMS** Mr. Adams replied no, it will cost money but the cost will depend on the level of service provided.

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- EMIG** Chief Emig stated that sometimes you do not have enough people. We need to find a way to increase manpower. We need to make this a part of the first steps.
- SCHENCK** Mr. Schenck stated that everyone has been in agreement about the level of service and not the cost savings. Some questions are; how do we share this? In addition, are we comfortable with 16-19 responders? Let the cost formula up to the townships municipal boards.
- HUNT** Mr. Hunt asked if there was a consensus of the committee that York City is over staffed.
- EMIG** Chief Emig responded absolutely not. They have 8 fire fighters and 2 officers.
- CURTIS** Mr. Curtis stated that fire companies whether merged or not will still need the same number of responders.
- ADAMS** Mr. Adams stated that his firm can tell you what you need, but what are the people willing to pay is the real question as well as what level of service do you want to provide to the residents.
- FULLMER** Mr. Fullmer expressed that we need to start putting away now for the future.
- MADER** Response times are a big concern. We look for the merger to improve the service being provided; therefore, we need more stations not less. The roads have not changed but the number of people on the roads has changed. The situation needs to be looked at closely to see if a reduction of stations is necessary or do we need to increase them to supply and manage the service provided.
- ECKERT** Mr. Eckert stated that he has been an active fire fighter for 52 years and has a good relationship with the municipality. The volunteers would like to know how do we get from here to there. They have no model because they have all these questions.
- HUNT** Mr. Hunt, addressing the volunteer representatives, said that he hopes that it is clear that this is open to the volunteers and will be continuously.
- SCHENCK** Mr. Schenck asked Mr. Eckert how do the volunteers see themselves 5 years from now? How do they fit in?
- ECKERT** Mr. Eckert replied that new volunteers get discouraged. There are many questions. There is a prerequisite to what the volunteers will be allowed to do. What happens to the ownership of equipment and properties? There is a chain of command. They will be able to give input after the questions are answered.
- FULLMER** Mr. Fullmer stated, based on the budget and cost, as a commissioner, I believe this needs to move forward.
- HUNT** Mr. Hunt asked the committee and representatives if there was anything additional they would like to see included before the next meeting.
- SCHENCK** Mr. Schenck stated that as it stands today he understands the level of service provided.
- MAUST** Mr. Maust asked Mr. Schenck if he could sell the idea to his fellow officials.
- SCHENCK** Mr. Schenck replied that the process to figure out the funding and the focus on how to pay for it is going to be the hard part.

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B. Determination of Voting Quorum

HOLMAN Mr. Holman certified that a Quorum was present with Mr. Countess, Ms. Freireich, Mr. Hunt, Mr. Schenck and Ms. Gumke with five voting members.

He reported that copies of the comments would be distributed to the committee members and representatives.

MRS FREIREICH MOVED THAT THE DRAFT CHARTER AGREEMENT AS IT STANDS AND THE BURACKER REPORT AS IT STANDS WITH MINOR AND TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS BE PRESENTED TO THE MUNICIPAL BOARDS FOR REVIEW.

MR. COUNTESS AMENDED THE MOTION TO INCLUDE ATTACHING THE COMMENTS FROM THE VOLUNTEER AND CAREER FIRE FIGHTERS OF SPRING GARDEN AND SPRINGETTSBURY TOWNSHIPS AND SECONDED IT. MOTION UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED.

HUNT Mr. Hunt stated that technical and funding issues would need to be worked out before any municipal boards will endorse it.

The committee can continue to meet in this function.

SCHENCK Mr. Schenck stated that the committee, at the Joint municipal board meeting, ask what the governing bodies recommend and direct the Joint Fire Committee as to the next step.

HUNT Mr. Hunt indicated the joint presentation to the municipal boards would be sometime in January and after that meeting the committee would be inactive pending further instructions.

C. Adjournment:

HUNT Chairman Hunt adjourned the meeting at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John Holman
Secretary

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