

**SOUTHERN OZAUKEE FIRE AND EMS BOARD
MINUTES**

Thursday, June 16, 2022

LOCATION: 250 Elm Street, Thiensville, WI

TIME: 5:30 PM

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Mobley called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

Members present: Thiensville Trustee Kristina Eckert, Mequon Administrator Will Jones, Thiensville Administrator Colleen Landisch-Hansen, Thiensville President Van Mobley, Mequon Mayor Andrew Nerbun, Mequon Alderman Brian Parrish and Mequon Alderwoman Kathleen Schneider

II. INTRODUCTIONS – BOARD MEMBERS & STAFF

President Mobley asked all members and staff to introduce themselves.

III. REVIEW AND DISCUSSION – INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT

a. Agreement

Administrator Jones presented a summary of the approved intergovernmental agreement between the City of Mequon and Village of Thiensville. Fire and EMS operations will commence jointly between the two departments starting in a few weeks. This body will develop a budget over the next few months that can be submitted to the Mequon Common Council and Thiensville Village Board by October 1, 2022. The official merger under a unified budget commences on January 1, 2023. The Board will also address plans for combining dispatch operations. Combined facilities will begin by January 1, 2025.

A determination on future potential mergers with other municipalities interested in consolidating can occur at any time. The Cedarburg City Administrator recently sent an email to both Administrator Jones and Administrator Landisch-Hansen expressing interest in resurrecting discussions that began this spring. President Mobley has reached out to the Mayor of Cedarburg and Town of Cedarburg Chairman to encourage them to consider joining the new department. Administrator Jones noted that there likely are monetary advantages that would accompany an expansion to additional communities.

The consolidated department will provide firefighting, emergency medical response and emergency medical transport, either during an emergency or between health care facilities. The department will conduct commercial plan reviews, fire inspections and fire safety instruction.

The interim period between July 1, 2022, and December 31, 2022, defined as the joint services period, will be the focus of tonight's discussion. As of July 1, 2022, Fire Chief David Bialk will oversee both departments. Employees will remain employed by their current municipalities.

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There will be separate budgets, billing, payroll and supplies. Spending by both departments will not exceed the combined budgets.

The scope and duties of the Board include implementing the initial plan over the next six months. The Board has oversight of the repairs, maintenance and renewal of the vehicles, other apparatuses and buildings, as well as expenditures for the operation of the department. The Board can contract for necessary capital improvements and will approve wages, benefits and associated contracts. The purchase, disposal or sale of any equipment or other assets under \$100,000 can be handled by the Board. Any assets of more than \$100,000 requires the approval of both the Thiensville Village Board and Mequon Common Council. The Board will monitor capital assets and update a 10-year replacement schedule for those assets, including equipment, apparatuses and potentially facilities. The Board also has all powers and duties authorized by state law for a publicly appointed governing board.

The Board also will recommend an operating budget to the two respective government bodies by October 1, 2022. Capital budgets can be submitted any time, but they require four votes of the Board to make a recommendation to the Thiensville Village Board and Mequon Common Council. Invoicing will occur on a quarterly basis. The Fire Department will compute a service fee credit twice a year. For instance, money raised by firefighters in Thiensville selling concessions can be used to offset Thiensville's financial contribution to the operations of the Department. Donations from residents would be applied in the same manner.

As of January 1, 2023, municipalities are required to contribute all records, parts and supplies to the joint department. Prior to 2024, the Board shall determine the fleet and equipment needs and purchase from Thiensville and Mequon the equipment they have determined will support the new department. The apparatuses not purchased by the new department will be disposed of by each municipality independently.

Starting January 1, 2024, once the fleet is combined, the Department will be responsible for repairs, maintenance and replacement of the equipment. On July 1, 2022, the agreement stipulates the municipalities will transfer custody, use and control – but not ownership – of their respective buildings to the combined department. The municipal owner of the building will continue to bear all maintenance costs, including snow removal and landscaping. For any new buildings constructed by a municipality, a rent formula would be calculated to ensure proportionate costs.

The cost formula is 84.4 percent for Mequon and 15.6 percent for Thiensville. The formula is subject to recalculation after five years, based on calls, population and changes in equalized

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assessed values. If the partnership is expanded to other municipalities, the formula would be adjusted and follow a 40-30-30 split relative to call, population and equalized assessed value. Cedarburg has requested a cost estimate of what it would take for them to join as a third partner. Any donation of land, equipment or other property requires Board approval. Those donations can be credited to the municipality. After the initial five-year period, a municipality, if desired, must provide a two-year notice to disassociate from the department.

IV. REVIEW & DISCUSSION – OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS STARTING JULY 1, 2022

a. Initial Plan

Chief Bialk noted there are some tasks that must be completed by July 1, 2022. One is the merging of the two scheduling programs. The departments will have to rely on each other. For instance, if each department has one person on duty, they will be at the same location so an ambulance can be en route immediately. The Department has applied for a Medicare number, which can be up to a six-month process. Other immediate concerns include a payroll and accounts payable program, health insurance, the application for Ozaukee County funding, creating a new fee schedule, combining EMS billing, an EMS operational plan to cover the two departments, obtaining a new VA number, reconciling the narcotics owned between the two departments, adoption of a once-a-year fire inspection ordinance in Thiensville and adoption of a 2023 budget.

Starting July 1, 2022, Ozaukee County will answer all cellular 911 calls for both Mequon and Thiensville. Ozaukee County is going through radio reprogramming in July 2022.

Chief Bialk added there are many issues left to discuss including IT services, email services and phone numbers. Work is underway for a new web domain and website.

Administrator Jones added this will be an interesting transition for both communities. The merger has been phased over a number of years. Even though there will be separate budgets and a separate facility, the department will be using the facilities and equipment rent-free. The Board may want to think about opportunities to continue to support the new department with services such as finance, legal, IT or HR. At some point, they will have to go out on their own. It will be similar to the library, that does not get legal advice or IT support from either community.

Chief Bialk noted the new Department is starting to incur costs. For example, an appraisal recently was conducted of the fire equipment. Also, there were costs associated with merging the two scheduling programs.

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V. REVIEW & DISCUSSION – MERGER-RELATED ACTION ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED PRIOR TO JANUARY 1, 2023

a. Launch Task List

The Board agreed to conduct a discussion at the next meeting about fees and other key components that will influence development of the 2023 budget in both municipalities. Whatever fees the Board sets would be uniform for both municipalities.

Chief Bialk will bring forward anything that has a budget impact at the next Board meeting. President Mobley added that it would be helpful to review any ordinances for potential changes. A fee schedule will be needed as part of the budgeting process. Administrator Jones noted that the Board can review fees and ordinances, have a policy discussion at the next meeting and then give direction to the staff to develop a new fee schedule that will go into effect in 2023. This would come back at a subsequent meeting for action by the Board.

VI. OZAUKEE COUNTY ARPA GRANT FUNDING UPDATE

Deputy Chief Zellman stated that the ARPA funds go to Ozaukee County, who then distribute the funds. The program was authorized by Ozaukee County Resolution 21-72. Assistant Chief Deutsch and Deputy Chief Zellman have been charged with preparing the application. Each community has to apply separately. One will be designated as a lead agency, the other as the combining agency. The terms that define how the money gets allocated specify that if only one department was to apply they are eligible for up to \$200,000 to recruit and retain paramedics. Both communities would be eligible for that amount of money. If the departments consolidate, they are eligible for another \$100,000 per year for the term of the program which is three years. That is \$300,000 per organization. Departments that consolidate with three or more entities are eligible for another \$100,000 grant. If just Mequon and Thiensville apply, there is a potential \$1.8 million in funding over three years. If Mequon, Thiensville and Cedarburg are able to come to an agreement, it increases to \$3 million.

President Mobley has had discussions with various Ozaukee County officials. The Sheriff has indicated he would prefer a county-wide department. Alderman Parrish asked if participating agencies must be fire and EMS. Deputy Chief Zellman replied that it is a gray area the way it is written.

The application is due June 30, 2022. Assistant Chief Deutsch is preparing the Thiensville application and Deputy Chief Zellman is preparing Mequon's. They will be similar, other than a few differences, such as response times.

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MOTION by Alderman Schneider, **SECONDED** by Mayor Nerbun to authorize Deputy Chief Zellman and Assistant Chief Deutsch to Prepare and File by the Deadline Applications for ARPA Funds. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mayor Nerbun noted the applications should be accompanied with questions about whether the grant period is 30 months or 36 months and if an application can be amended if a third member joins. Deputy Chief Zellman will reach out to the County Administrator with those questions.

Administrator Landisch-Hansen has received an email from State Representative Deb Andraca regarding a state EMS Flex Grant that was issued June 13, 2022. Supplies, equipment, training and staffing may be eligible. Administrator Landisch-Hansen suggested collaborating so the requests from each municipality complement each other.

VII. Approve Tentative Meeting Dates & Times – Summer 2022

The next meeting will take place at 5:30 PM Wednesday, July 13, 2022, at the Village of Thiensville Board Room, 250 Elm Street.

VIII. Adjourn

MOTION by Mayor Nerbun, **SECONDED** by Alderman Parrish to adjourn the meeting at 7:24 PM. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Submitted by,

Gary Achterberg
Village of Thiensville
Administrative Assistant

Signed by,

Amy L. Langlois
Village of Thiensville Village Clerk