

**CITY OF CEDARBURG/TOWN OF CEDARBURG
JOINT FIRE/EMS SERVICES
COMMITTEE MEETING
UNAPPROVED
MINUTES
DECEMBER 27, 2023**

A regular meeting of the Joint Fire/EMS Services Committee was held Thursday, December 27, 2023, at the Town of Cedarburg, 1293 Washington Avenue, Cedarburg, WI Town Board Room, and online utilizing the Zoom app.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Scott Gonwa at 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call: Present – City of Cedarburg – Scott Gonwa, Council Members Patricia Thome and Robert Simpson

Town of Cedarburg – Town Supervisor Larry Lechner, Don Borgwardt

Excused – Town Supervisor Wayne Pipkorn

Also Present - Fire Chief Jeff Vahsholtz, City Administrator Mikko Hilvo, Town Administrator Eric Ryer, Town Clerk and Assistant Administrator Jack Johnston, and interested citizens.

STATEMENT OF PUBLIC NOTICE

At Chairperson Scott Gonwa's request, Town Clerk Johnston verified that notice of this meeting was posted in accordance with the Wisconsin Open Meetings Law.

COMMENTS & SUGGESTIONS FROM CITIZENS – None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Don Borgwardt made a motion to approve the November 16, 2023, Joint Fire/EMS Services Committee minutes, seconded by Council Member Robert Simpson. Motion carried without a negative vote.

NEW BUSINESS

DISCUSSION AND REVIEW OF INITIAL COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

Bill Foster of Community Perceptions was present to overview the results of the community survey sent to all Town and City households over the past month regarding the Cedarburg Fire Department and potential future funding options.

Mr. Foster explained response rates for the survey were about 24%, which is quite high. He noted typical response rates are around 19% to 20%. About 65% of respondents were City residents, and 35% being Town residents (which aligns with population numbers, as well as the shared service agreement breakdown). Slightly over 50% of respondents denoted their age being 65+. Approximately 80% of respondents noted high quality emergency response services being important to them, with most of the other respondents denoting the service as "somewhat important."

Regarding potential funding mechanisms to address the Cedarburg Fire Department, about 15% of

respondents were in favor of budget cuts to fund the Fire Department, about 30% in favor of a wheel tax, and approximately 70% in favor a voter approved referendum.

The Committee inquired whether the results of the survey were a strong indicator of support for a referendum if it were to be placed on a future ballot for consideration. Mr. Foster responded that the 70% positive feedback was quite high compared to survey results for other communities they have surveyed. He believed it was a good indicator of community support for that funding mechanism.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATION TO ELECTED OFFICIALS FOR THE CITY AND TOWN OF CEDARBURG REGARDING THE OUTCOME OF THE SURVEY AND POTENTIAL NEXT STEPS REGARDING FUNDING FOR STAFFING PLAN

Council Member Patricia Thome made a motion that the Fire & EMS Committee recommend that the Cedarburg Town Board and Cedarburg City Common Council consider placing a referendum question on a future ballot to fund the Cedarburg Fire Department based on the responses to the community survey results (in relation to the staffing plan/intergovernmental shared services agreement). Town Supervisor Larry Lechner seconded, and the motion carried without a negative vote.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON FUNDING PLAN FOR PHASE III: PUBLIC EDUCATION INITIATIVE OF THE CEDARBURG FIRE DEPARTMENT

City Administrator Hilvo explained that Mueller Communications has now completed their contractual obligations for Phase I and Phase II in terms of creating the options assessment report and drafting and executing the community survey. They have provided a quote for an optional Phase III: Public Education Initiative. The quote provided by Mueller included three additional mailers as well as other public education initiatives including video presentation and community outreach presentations. The total quote was \$43,708.

Administrator Hilvo explained staff have discussed the Phase III package quote and are suggesting consideration of the work, but were open to omitting the additional mailers from Phase III. Mr. Hilvo explained that only the Town and City of Cedarburg conducted the initial mailing including the survey, while other nearby communities did not to the best of his knowledge. He explained the additional mailers would come at a cost of nearly \$21,000. He proposed using up to \$30,000 of Fire Department fund balance to cover Phase III as well as account for any overage costs, minus the mailers.

The Committee discussed the proposal by Administrator Hilvo. Council Member Patricia Thome made a motion directing staff to utilize up to \$30,000 to fund Phase III, not including the quoted additional mailers, as well as allowing the Fire Chief to use any leftover funds at his discretion for public education regarding the referendum. Don Borgwardt seconded that motion, and it carried without a negative vote.

CONFIRM NEXT MEETING: JANUARY 24, 2024, CITY OF CEDARBURG COUNCIL CHAMBERS

Town Administrator Ryer noted that with the action by the Committee tonight, it was unlikely that Committee would be required to meet until summer to address the 2025 budget, or meet before then if an item that needed to be addressed were to arise. The Committee concurred and did not schedule another meeting for January.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Patricia Thome, seconded by Council Member Robert Simpson, to adjourn the meeting at 6:40 p.m. Motion carried without a negative vote.

Jack Johnston
Town Clerk