

**CITY OF CEDARBURG COMMON COUNCIL  
TOWN OF CEDARBURG TOWN BOARD  
JOINT MEETING**

**CC20210216-1  
UNAPPROVED**

**February 16, 2021**

A joint meeting of the City of Cedarburg Common Council and Town of Cedarburg Town Board was held Tuesday, February 16, 2021 at City Hall, W63 N645 Washington Avenue, second floor, Council Chambers, and also utilizing the zoom app. Mayor Michael O'Keefe called the joint meeting to order at 8:00 p.m.

Roll Call: Present – Common Council – Mayor Michael O'Keefe, Council Members Sherry Bublitz, Jack Arnett Kristen Burkart, Rick Verhaalen, Robert Simpson, Patricia Thome, Barb Lythjohan

Town Board – Chairman Dave Salvaggio, Supervisors Wayne Pipkorn, Bill Wattson, Gary Wickert, Thomas Esser

Also Present – City Administrator Mikko Hilvo, Deputy City Clerk Amy Kletzien, Town Administrator Eric Ryer, Fire Chief Jeff Vahsholtz, Deputy Chief William Hintz, Fire Inspector Blake Karnitz, interested citizens and news media.

**STATEMENT OF PUBLIC NOTICE**

At Mayor O'Keefe's request, Deputy City Clerk Kletzien verified that notice of this meeting was provided to the public by forwarding the agenda to the City's official newspaper, the News Graphic, to all news media and citizens who had requested copies, and by posting in accordance with the Wisconsin Open Meetings Law.

**CONSIDER HIRING A DEPUTY CHIEF AND ONE (1) FIREFIGHTER/AEMT; AND ACTION THEREON**

City Administrator Hilvo explained that the Cedarburg Fire Department has budgeted to hire two (2) Firefighter/AEMT's. The first hire was planned for June 2020 and the second is planned for June 2021. To date, no additional Firefighter/AEMT's have been hired. Currently, the Department has a part-time Chief and a full-time Fire Inspector/AEMT along with volunteers that respond to calls. The goal to hire two additional Firefighter/AEMT's was to help with our response time to EMS calls. After further discussions with the Fire Department leadership team and evaluation of the Departments organizational structure, the City is proposing a change from hiring two (2) Firefighter/AEMT's to a one (1) Firefighter/AEMT and a Deputy Chief (salaried position) to assist the Chief in the management of the Department and respond to EMS calls. It will be valuable to have a Deputy Chief that can assist the Chief in developing a plan for the future growth of the Fire Department and also able to respond to emergency calls.

The additional Firefighter/AEMT would be hired in July of 2021 with a goal of having three (3) full-time staff (Deputy Chief, Fire Inspector/Firefighter/AEMT, and a Firefighter/AEMT) and a part-time Chief by the end of 2021 that will be able to respond to calls in a timely manner.

Fire Chief Vahsholtz explained that currently, he and Fire Inspector Karnitz are responding to 98% of the daytime EMT calls. The request for an increase in staff is twofold; to help handle day-to-day

operations and improve response times. The Department has made great efforts in recruiting volunteers; however, they have not had the response that they need. Fire Chief Vahsholtz also explained their diverse membership which include residents from the Town of Cedarburg and Village of Grafton, which make the response times longer in some cases. Hiring a Deputy Chief would make a salaried person available for assisting in day-to-day operations and responding to calls. The Deputy Chief would be a great asset in developing the Department and helping with succession planning.

City Administrator Hilvo explained that there would be no added costs to the City or Town until 2022. The City budget would increase by \$40,968.51 and the Town budget would increase by \$20,024.62 with the proposed hiring.

Fire Chief Vahsholtz shared an updated organizational chart and staffing sheet. He also shared the staffing at surrounding communities; all of whom have increased their staffing levels considerably. Fire Chief Vahsholtz stated that the Fire Department may have done a disservice to the Department by not asking for any funding help in the past. The Corporation has purchased all the equipment to-date and staffed the Department with all volunteers. People's lives have changed, resulting in less volunteerism which is making it harder to sustain the Department without help.

In answer to Council Member Arnett's question, City Administrator Hilvo explained that the recent Fire Consolidation Study shows that Cedarburg has a slower response time.

Council Member Thome asked if the City will need to continue to rely on Thiensville for advanced life support. Chief Vahsholtz explained that because the City does not have any paramedics, the City will need support from Thiensville. It takes approximately two years to implement a paramedic program and the City does not have this type of commitment to sustain this type of program.

Council Member Lythjohan asked if tonight's proposal were approved, would the Fire Department be able to discuss a paramedic program. She would be fine with paying additional taxes for this level of service.

Fire Chief Vahsholtz explained he would be able to devote more time to network and plan for the future of the Department if the City and Town agreed to adding a paid Deputy Chief to their roster.

Town Supervisor Wattson expressed concern for the EMS program not being self-funding. Fire Chief Vahsholtz explained that Medicare and Medicaid do not pay the full amount for an emergency call and many calls are for this population. Town Supervisor Wattson asked why EMS is a taxpayer issue and asked for more work to be done on the financials for this service.

Town Supervisor Wickert asked if there were any policies in place to collect or pursue insurance reimbursement from third parties.

Fire Chief Vahsholtz explained that outstanding claims involving insurance companies are sent to collections or a payment plan is set up when appropriate. Town Supervisor Wickert suggested filing a lien against those with outstanding debt. City Administrator Hilvo agreed that more work needs to be done in this area.

In answer to Council Member Bublitz's question, Fire Chief Vahsholtz explained that all area Fire Departments rely on taxpayer money for support. He added that the Fire Department has a small budget from the Town and City for operating; however, the Department does so many additional things, such as keeping the Fire Station clean, that they cannot do it all anymore. He understands that levy limits are a concern; however, the entire County has the same predicament.

Council Member Bublitz stated that this is money well spent and she would rather have Police and Fire/EMS services over a new public works vehicle. The City cannot compromise these services and the City will need to start funding Fire and EMS services.

Motion made by Council Member Arnett, seconded by Council Member Bublitz, to approve hiring a Deputy Fire Chief and one (1) Firefighter/AEMT. Motion carried without a negative vote.

Motion made by Town Supervisor Wickert, seconded by Town Supervisor Pipkorn, to approve hiring a Deputy Fire Chief and one (1) Firefighter/AEMT. Motion carried without a negative vote.

**CONSIDER FORMING AN AD HOC CITY/TOWN FIRE AND EMS COMMITTEE; AND ACTION THEREON**

Town Administrator Ryer stated that after the completion of the Fire Consolidation Study, it will be important to evaluate the joint Fire/EMS services and work on an action plan moving forward. The City/Town are proposing to create an equally represented ad hoc committee consisting of City and Town representatives that will work on a plan and also begin discussing the shared services agreement. He suggested that the Committee be comprised of the Fire Chief or Deputy Chief, one (1) City Council Member, one(1) Town Board Member, two (2) City residents, and two (2) Town residents.

Town Administrator Ryer added that the Committee will be advisory only to the Common Council and Town Board.

Motion made by Council Member Thome, seconded by Council Member Burkart, to approve forming an ad hoc City/Town Fire and EMS Committee. Motion carried without a negative vote.

Motion made by Town Supervisor Wattson, seconded by Town Supervisor Pipkorn, to approve forming an ad hoc City/Town Fire and EMS Committee. Motion carried without a negative vote.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Motion made by Council Member Arnett, seconded by Council Member Bublitz, to adjourn the meeting at 9:08 p.m.

Motion made by Town Supervisor Wattson, seconded by Town Supervisor Pipkorn, to adjourn the meeting at 9:08 p.m.

Amy D. Kletzien, MMC/WCPC  
Deputy City Clerk