

APPROVED
Cedar Area Fire & Rescue Board
Regular Meeting
Wednesday, October 3, 2024 at 2:00 pm
Cedar Fire Department

Call to Order

Chairman Greg Julian called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance. Present on roll call were Greg Julian, John DePuy, John Imboden, and Ron Schaub. Chris Comeaux was absent. Andy Doornbos and Dana Boomer was present as staff.

Discussions/decisions will be for the direction of the Cedar Area Fire & Rescue Board as previously published, per the Open Meetings Act. Potential quorums of township boards will be noted in the minutes.

Citizens Comments – None

Consideration of Agenda – The board briefly discussed the agenda. Imboden asked to add the Interlocal Agreement to unfinished business. **Motion by DePuy to approve the agenda as amended, second by Schaub. All in favor, motion carried.**

Minutes: Approval of September 4, 2024 General Meeting Minutes – **Motion by Schaub to approve the September 4, 2024 General Meeting Minutes as presented, second by DePuy. All in favor, motion carried.**

Correspondence Received – The Kasson Township Board sent a letter electronically regarding the second station that was distributed to the board, and will be attached to the minutes.

Presentation – None

Financials –

Boomer had previously provided a handout to the board which detailed the financial statements for September. The board briefly discussed the vendors payable and payroll. The updated unpaid bills detailed list was presented, and briefly discussed.

Imboden moved to accept the September vendors payable as presented, Schaub seconded. All in favor, motion carried.

Schaub moved to accept the September payrolls as presented, Imboden seconded. All in favor, motion carried.

Imboden moved to accept the September financial statements as presented, Schaub seconded. All in favor, motion carried.

Unfinished Business:

- a. Second Station – Julian stated that after the Kasson Township meeting he spoke with the architect regarding the contract for design services, and that work can be delayed. The Kasson Township Board sent a letter to the fire board (see attached), in which they requested that Chief Doornbos be allowed to work with the architect for conceptual design work. Julian stated he did not support the letter that was sent from the Township Board, and he understands that the fire board would like to move more slowly than the Kasson Township Board does. He doesn't think that the Fire Chief should spend any time on the interior design work, and asked for a motion to that effect. The board determined there was a consensus that the Chief not work with the Kasson Township Board architect.

Schaub thinks that the Chief should wait to do any work on the design work until after the first of the year. Julian stated that Schaub and Comeaux have expressed interest in being on an exploratory committee for costs, and suggested potentially beginning to explore this for a report potentially at the December meeting. Imboden supports not moving quickly, and analyzing the potential results of these moves on the interlocal agreement. DePuy feels that additional assessment is needed, and more work needs to be done after the election or down the road. He thinks a location committee needs to be formed, and he thinks that the fire department staff needs to be included. Julian stated that Schaub and Comeaux could be the financial committee, and Imboden and DePuy could be the location committee. Imboden is not convinced the department needs a second station, and so would like to see the location committee be expanded to a need and location committee. Julian stated that additional community members could be brought into these committees. DePuy stated that a needs assessment needs to be completed to see where the most needed spots for faster service are, and where additional agreements might be able to be put in place. It may be time to look at a larger regional agreement. DePuy stated that the department has come a long way, and there are a lot of things to look at.

Julian returned the discussion to the letter from Kasson Township's Board. DePuy stated that he doesn't think the Fire Board is ready to have the Chief continue to move forward with the Kasson Township Board at this point. Julian also brought up that the Fire Board is the boss of the Fire Chief, and he thinks that the Township Boards should not be making specific requests of the Fire Chief without notifying the Fire Board rep or board. Doornbos stated that he mostly works with Planning Commissions and Zoning Administrators on Special Use Permits – Julian stated that is not what he is referring to, just specific requests from Township Board members.

The board continued the discussion of exploratory committees. There needs to be exploration into agreements with surrounding areas, exploration into the need and location for a second station, and exploration into the financials. Imboden wants to see an

overarching plan for the next 20 years regarding station placement. Doornbos stated that as long as the area remains rural, there are professional standards for response times and the goal of the department should be to meet those. There is a good justification for meeting those standards – the department should maintain and meet that standard. Julian and DePuy will work on the exploration into agreements with surrounding areas and the exploration into the need and location for a second station. Changes may be made to the makeup of this committee in the future, with the possibility of Imboden replacing Julian. Schaub and Comeaux will be assigned to look into finances and costs. The groups will plan to come back with a plan for their committees by the December meeting. The groups can bring additional community and staff members into their committees as needed.

- b. Union Negotiations – Comeaux and Julian are moving forward with discussions with the union.
- c. Interlocal Agreement – Imboden thinks that there are items within the interlocal agreement that are not being completed. In Article 4, it states that job requirements and duties for the Fire Chief will be documented, and that evaluations will be completed for the Fire Chief. Boomer stated that there is a job description for the Fire Chief; Julian stated that evaluations have not been being completed. Imboden thinks there are several things that don't need to be included, because they are things that the Fire Chief and staff should be taking care of – he will pass those along to his Township Supervisor. Julian stated that after the election the supervisors will be re-convening to work on the draft of the next agreement. DePuy stated that evaluations should be based on goals that are set in advance – there can't be an evaluation if there are no goals. The evaluation needs to be objective, not subjective. Julian, Imboden and Doornbos will sit down to discuss where to go with evaluations.

New Business:

- a. Any New Business – None

Reports:

- a. Fire Chief – The Chief's Report was provided in the meeting packet. Doornbos summarized his report.
- b. Department Staff – None
- c. Chairman – Julian stated that the finance portion is a huge part of the discussion of a second station. He would like Schaub and Comeaux to work together to resolve the questions regarding the costs of a potential second station.

Citizens Comments – Mike Lanham – He has sat through township board meetings discussing a potential second station for over two years. Kasson and Cleveland were looking at a potential location, and Kasson sent Cleveland a letter; Cleveland responded by stating they were not interested in pursuing the construction of a second station. At that point, Kasson decided to continue pursuing the construction of a second station on their own. They are not looking at putting a foundation in the ground right now, they want to make sure that the last few years of

discussion don't stop. The citizens of Kasson Township are concerned about fire and EMS coverage. Serious fire calls always have mutual aid, but EMS coverage doesn't – it is EMS coverage that needs to be improved.

Board Member & Chair Comments – DePuy agrees with what Lanham stated. EMS is critical; there is frequently not much time. That time can get burned up quickly with drive time. Citizens need to get the response that they deserve – the further you get away from a station, the more time gets burned up just getting to the scene. These items need to be addressed.

Imboden – He is not insensitive to how fast you can lose someone, but there are also other considerations. He asked if there had been any update on the new ambulance. Doornbos stated that it is still on track for late 2025. Imboden asked if he could get the annual call histories by township for the last few years – Doornbos will send this to him. Imboden will not be present at the meeting in November.

Julian – It is important to look at the long-term costs of the issues facing the fire department.

Next Meeting Date – The next regular board meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 7, 2024 at 2 pm.

Imboden moved, DePuy seconded to adjourn the meeting. With no further business, Julian adjourned the meeting at 3:26 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Dana Boomer
Recording Secretary

September 11, 2024

Cedar Area Fire and Rescue Board

Cedar Area Fire and Rescue Board Members:

Over the last several years, discussions have proceeded regarding the construction of an additional fire station for Cedar Area Fire and Rescue on the western side of the CAFR service area. In early 2024, the Kasson Township Board began taking steps to move forward with exploratory work regarding the construction of such a station. The CAFR Board has been apprised of these steps at their regular meetings since early 2024. We want to ensure that everyone is on the same page with regard to the process that the Kasson Township Board has been following, and to mitigate concerns regarding that process.

Kasson Township has two main reasons to be interested in moving forward with the construction of a new fire station in the western portion of the Cedar Area Fire & Rescue service area:

1. Western Kasson Township, and specifically southwestern Kasson Township, is not adequately served by the current arrangement of stations in the region. Distances from the current CAFR station in Cedar are long, and distances from potential mutual aid stations in Empire, Glen Arbor, and Almira Township are not substantially shorter. A new station in this area would substantially shorten response times to properties in western Kasson Township, including a large stretch of M-72 and an ever-expanding number of residential, commercial, and industrial properties, above and beyond what can be accomplished by the current service level or even by expanded mutual aid agreements.
2. The current station in Cedar was originally built as a volunteer station and has been added onto over the years. While the building was well-built for its original purpose and has served the area well over the years, CAFR has grown to the point that the station now lacks the ability to fully accommodate meetings, training, and even allowing the current volume of staff to efficiently complete their day-to-day work. On its own, the current station can no longer meet the needs of the professional, full-time department that the CAFR Board continues to develop.

As the CAFR Board was informed at their July and August regular meetings, the Kasson Township Board has spent the summer exploring options for contracting with a design firm to prepare conceptual drawings and explore funding options for the construction of a new station. On August 28, 2024, Kasson Township contracted with Environment Architects for these stages of the project. The Kasson Township Board acknowledges that there are still many steps to take in the exploration process for the funding and potential construction of a new station. What is expected to come out of the process being undertaken with Environment Architects is a picture of what Kasson Township is interested in building for CAFR and how its construction might be funded. We believe that having this initial picture of a potential station will allow for more

targeted discussions and accurate estimates of staffing needs and operational costs. The Kasson Township Board requests that the CAFR Board allow the fire chief to continue working with the Kasson Township Board and with Environment Architects to provide requested information regarding the conceptual design of a second station.

The Kasson Township Board is interested in building a station to satisfy the needs of the CAFR service area both today and in the future. Our area has an ever-increasing number of structures, residents, visitors, commercial occupancies, and target hazards. The Kasson Township Board urges the CAFR Board to move forward with the exploration of options for operational funding, staffing partnerships, mutual aid partnerships, ideal locations, and other items related to the construction of a second station.

Thank you in advance for your communication, and for all of your previous and ongoing work and discussion on this topic.

Sincerely,

The Kasson Township Board