

APPROVED
Cedar Area Fire & Rescue Board
Regular Meeting
Wednesday, September 4, 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, Chris Comeaux, and Ron Schaub. John Imboden was absent and Tim Stein was present as his replacement. Andy Doornbos and Dana Boomer was present as staff.

The meeting was dedicated in honor of Rich Zywicki, currently recovering from serious injuries sustained recently in an accident.

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. **Motion by Schaub to approve the agenda as presented, second by DePuy. All in favor, motion carried.**

Minutes: Approval of August 7, 2024 General Meeting Minutes – **Motion by DePuy to approve the August 7, 2024 General Meeting Minutes as presented, second by Comeaux. All in favor, motion carried.**

Correspondence Received – Rick Royston sent a letter electronically regarding the second station that was distributed to the board, and will be attached to the minutes.

Presentation – Tobin & Co/Jonathan Poortenga – Poortenga was at the meeting to present the audit to the board. He summarized the process of the audit. He had no difficulties with conducting the audit. The department's net position increased somewhat this year, which he likes to see. He would recommend that capital outlays be accounted for in the budget process. Julian thanked Poortenga for attending the meeting. DePuy asked Poortenga if he believes over the department is in good shape. Poortenga stated yes – his recommendations are minor. The audit shows that the financial record keeping is accurate. Poortenga requested a final approval today before the audit is submitted to the state.

DePuy moved to approve the audit as presented by Tobin & Co., second by Schaub. All in favor, motion carried.

Financials –

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

DePuy moved to accept the August vendors payable as presented, Stein seconded. All in favor, motion carried.

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

Stein moved to accept the August financial statements as presented, Comeaux seconded. All in favor, motion carried.

Unfinished Business:

- a. Second Station – Julian reported that this continues to be looked at by the Kasson Township Board. Kasson Township held a special board meeting last week to meet with Ray Kendra from Environment Architects to begin the discussion on the conceptual design of a second fire station. The next special meeting will be held on September 25 at 6 pm to review the discussion currently being held between fire department staff and Kendra regarding needed amenities for the station. The fire board and other township boards are invited to this meeting, along with interested members of the public.

Stein asked if the conceptual design process was premature, since there hasn't been agreement from the other three townships to fund the operations for this station. Julian said no, because Kasson would like to have a solid concept to present with more solid budget numbers, rather than just a theoretical project.

DePuy suggested an ad hoc committee of citizens from all four townships to look at ongoing costs for the operation of the station. He thinks that the township looking at design and costs for the building is important, to have a firm estimate. Comeaux feels that more full time employees should be hired to staff the station fully.

Stein doesn't see the need for a full-blown fire station on the western side of the service area, as he doesn't think the need for service on the western side of the service area has changed substantially. The board discussed the need for staffing at a second station. Comeaux agrees that an ad hoc committee would be useful to explore budgets and staffing. Comeaux and DePuy think that beginning to approach other departments about looking at additional cooperation would be beneficial.

Julian stated that one outcome from the special Kasson Board meeting was to request that Julian and Doornbos reach out to the bordering townships regarding partnerships in many forms. The fire board agreed that exploring partnerships with bordering townships would

be beneficial. Julian stated that there have been concerns regarding a new station, but also concerns that the existing station has been outgrown and is not adequate for current needs. The board had discussion about the history of the discussion of a full station versus a substation. Chris Logan, a member of the public, asked whether a new station couldn't be designated as the main station and the current station in Cedar as a substation.

DePuy thinks it's a good thing for Kasson to start looking at the needs for a second station, but that a location is too up in the air to discuss at this point. The board discussed next steps – DePuy and Comeaux would like to see additional discussion with surrounding townships regarding additional partnerships. Schaub would also like to see what can be done with additional partnerships.

The recommendation from the fire board was that Kasson Township hold off on continuing with a design process until additional information is gathered. There was a general consensus to hold off on further discussion until the new township boards are seated.

Julian asked Doornbos for his thoughts. Doornbos stated that a lot of the information requested today is already available. Response times are available, Doornbos and Ferguson have already discussed a substantial amount of reduction in duplication, etc. While there are potentially increases in service through mutual aid agreements in Cleveland Township, there are areas of Kasson Township that would not see improvements in service even with increased mutual aid agreements. Regional fire chiefs are working to reduce redundancies across the county departments, but this does not improve response times to areas where there is no station nearby.

- b. Union Negotiations – Comeaux and Julian stated they had a productive meeting with the union on August 28, and will be meeting again in September. They hope to have something to present to the board in October.

New Business:

- a. Any New Business – Comeaux requested that the meeting schedule for the remainder of 2024 to moved to the first Thursday of the month at 2 p.m. There was consensus to do so. **Comeaux moved to change the meetings for the remainder of the year to the first Thursday of the month at 2 p.m., Stein seconded. All in favor, motion carried.**

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 has been reaching out to the other surrounding townships to address similar issues that everyone is dealing with. He has reached out to a Glen Lake School official about the potential for a station near to them, as a major population center in the service area.

Citizens Comments – Chris Logan – He congratulated the department on their successful audit and on the Facebook post regarding the recent training in Palmer Woods.

Board Member & Chair Comments – None

Next Meeting Date – The next regular board meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 3, 2024 at 2 pm.

DePuy moved, Stein seconded to adjourn the meeting. With no further business, Julian adjourned the meeting at 3:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Dana Boomer
Recording Secretary

To: Cedar Area Fire Board
From: Richard Royston
Date: August 28, 2024
Re: Kasson Township Board Action

I received word that the Kasson Township Board was holding a meeting today relative to the construction of a new fire station to serve the Kasson Township community. I attended the meeting and the Kasson Board of Trustees entered into a contract with an architectural firm to proceed with design for a station on a yet-to-be-named site. I must say that I was surprised that CAFR members and other township officials were not formally invited to a meeting that will affect their CAFR budgetary and management decisions for the long term.

During my tenure on the fire board, several discussions took place on the board relative to an additional station to serve the west side of the CAFR coverage area. Discussions were taking place between Kasson Township and Cleveland Township to find a mutually agreed upon site for a new station and some investigation was held into a site in the Miles/Kimmerly Park area. Eventually Tim Stein, Cleveland Township Supervisor has indicated that Cleveland no longer has an interest in an expansion of this type at the present time.

The recent actions by Kasson Township are a great concern to me for several reasons:

1. The CAFR board, the managers of our area fire service, has not been included in any discussion as to the need, location, costs, design, staffing, or apparatus which CAFR **MAY** have to absorb into the budget **IF** the station is accepted into the CAFR system.
2. The integrity of a very efficient 4 township fire service agreement is in jeopardy since the agreement **CLEARLY** states that any new facilities constructed by any participating township **MAY** be accepted and managed by the CAFR fire board **IF** all 4 participating townships vote unanimously to accept the facility into the system. Unless Cleveland Township changes their stance, a unanimous vote will not take place. For this reason, I believe that all members of the fire service agreement must be included in any talks relative to any expansion of facilities. A breakup of the agreement will result in an increase of costs to all participating agencies just as an expansion of facilities will increase costs. (i.e. if CAFR should become 3 agencies instead of the current 4 agencies as a result of Kasson going on their own which could happen if Cleveland does not vote to accept the new facility.)
3. CAFR cannot afford an expansion of facilities. It is a fact that one station is less expensive and more efficient than multiple stations. A second station **WILL** cost CAFR participants twice as much money. Mutual aid, automatic mutual aid and purchased fire services are all options. Forget geographical boundaries. Someone in Cleveland Township who is having an emergency doesn't care whose name is on the side of a fire truck or ambulance as long as they get someone to their emergency. Paying \$100,000 a year to neighboring agencies to cover distant response areas is still less costly than the expense of a second fire station. These alternatives have not been studied. The statement was made at the Kasson meeting that neighboring agencies have been asked but were not interested. I submit that boards have changed and chiefs have changed and the CAFR Board is not doing their job unless all alternatives are thoroughly studied and examined.

As a past member of the CAFR Board, and a resident of Cleveland Township, I am requesting that you please take time to consider the impact this decision will have on the future of CAFR services and the fire service agreement. Read the agreement closely because any expansion of facilities impacts the agreement a great deal and it impacts participating townships which ultimately ask for those dollars that all residents pay for the service. Please become involved in these events before it is too late.

Copy to: Tim Stein