

## **Fire Territory Board Meeting**

**Weds., Sept. 13, 2023 - 5:30 p.m. (EST)**

**New Carlisle Library, 408 S. Bray St., New Carlisle, IN 46552**

### **ATTENDANCE:**

Board members:

Brian Gray, Hudson Twp. Board

Tim Creason, Olive Twp. Board

Marcy Kauffman, New Carlisle town council

Bob Middlebrook, Olive Twp. Board

Keith Batzel, Olive Twp. Board

Jerry Colanese, New Carlisle town council

Dave Wilson, Hudson Twp. Board

Also:

Josh Schweizer, Fire chief

Chad Hess, Asst. Fire chief

Will Miller, Olive Twp. Trustee

Kristi Chadderdon, Wills Twp. (La Porte) Trustee

Stan Hynek, former Wills Twp. Trustee

Paul Tuszynski, former Wills Twp. Board

Meeting called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Brian Gray, board president.

Motion to adopt agenda by Bob Middlebrook. Second by Marcy Kauffman. Approved 7-0.

Motion to approve minutes of 8-17 and 8-22 by Jerry Colanese. Second by Bob Middlebrook. Approved 7-0.

Introduction of new fire captain, Clint Weisenberger, by chief Josh Schweizer.

**EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT:** Josh Schweizer, with backup from Will Miller, discusses a new executive assistant position which will work primarily with the fire department. This was originally to be an assistant to current clerk Tina Scott. However, chief Schweizer said, he and Will Miller decided they want somebody with some experience in the fire field who could work primarily on fire department matters.

Will Miller said having an administrative person solely for the fire department “really cleans things up.” This person would be cross-trained on the Olive Township side as well.

Josh Schweizer said they are going to hire Suzanne White, who has been working at the Clay Twp. fire department. She has 10 years’ experience. Her office may be in the fire station.

**2023 CHEVY TAHOE:** To replace the 2016 Ford Explorer, Kelly Chevrolet in Fort Wayne is offering a 2023 Chevy Tahoe. With trade-in, the price would be \$29,050. It is prepped for use by a fire department, with wiring for radio and lighting. Everyone agrees it is an exceptional deal. The money is already budgeted.

**EXTERIOR FIRE DEPARTMENT RENOVATION:** Will Miller says new steel siding is being considered for the front of the building, not covering the brick, and a paint job on old siding. Also, some windows are not flashed and there is some leaking. He got an estimate for painting which ran \$25,650 but that amount may vary depending on how much siding is installed. Replacing the siding on the front and necessary windows is estimated at \$8,600.

Will Miller also has contact with a painter who may be able to work up a mural.

Josh Schweizer says a recommendation will be made at the next meeting.

**WILLS TOWNSHIP (LA PORTE):** Brian Gray states the trustee of Wills Twp. in La Porte County has approached us about joining the fire territory. Kristi Chadderdon, the trustee, is present.

Brian Gray states all the fire territory is doing at this point is gathering information.

(NOTE: Kristi Chadderdon states she approached Brian Gray on the request from the Wills Twp. Board to seek information and present back to them on all fire service options available for Wills Twp.)

Kankakee Twp. in La Porte County is presently providing the fire service for Wills Twp. They have been billed \$40,000 for the service in previous years, but Kankakee is raising that amount to \$60,000.

Kankakee is presently answering approx. 150 calls per year to Wills Twp. There have been missed calls recently. Distances to the farthest points are roughly the same from New Carlisle or Kankakee stations.

Kristi Chatterton states she contacted Baker-Tilly for information to learn what it would take for Wills Twp. to join the fire territory. Baker-Tilley would review financial status, including tax caps. She states she will have a contract ready to sign with Baker-Tilley once the township attorney gives her the okay. There is not a contract with Baker-Tilley already in place.

Josh Schweizer says he is frustrated because Kankakee doesn't call New Carlisle for help. He emphasizes that response times with the fire territory would be better than what the residents are currently getting.

Brian Gray gives a brief history of negotiations between Hudson, Kankakee and Wills Townships. Josh Schweizer says Kankakee is having difficulty getting volunteers, as is the case statewide.

Jerry Colanese says he originally opposed the fire territory when it was formed, but now his opinion has flipped 100% and he is a full supporter.

Dave Wilson states a lot of rumors are flying on social media. Several are saying that this hasn't been posted and nobody knows about it.

Tim Creason says the state legislature could possibly cause problems because there are some issues about fire territories crossing county lines, because of how the money is divided up. He is going to contact state representative Jake Teshka.

In response to a question, Josh Schweizer states the New Carlisle fire department has 15 full-time firefighters and three (3) volunteers.

Brian Gray states the 2021 law says a fire territory does not have to be dissolved and reopened to add or subtract a member.

Josh Schweizer says a township would need a dissolution plan should it choose to leave the fire territory later.

Stan Hynek asks how the new Samsung battery plant is going to affect long-term planning. He also asks how long a volunteer must be trained before he or she can ride on a truck. Brian Gray states about a year, normally.

Brian Gray says the process would have to start in 2024 to add Wills Twp. in 2025. Bob Middlebrook points out fire territories are the wave of the future. And training is more consistent. Brian Gray feels the state of Indiana seems interested in combining townships to combine resources.

Josh Schweizer says studies have shown the more residents that a fire territory serves, the more efficiently tax dollars are used, as long as the territory is capable of servicing them.

Keith Batzel says it is a positive not to have volunteers speeding through town to reach the fire station. Jerry Colanese compares fire territory formation to the consolidation of schools in the 1960's.

Will Miller asks Kristi Chadderdon what are her intentions, to come on board in 2025 or do they need coverage in 2024? Kristi Chadderdon says no contract has been signed with their current provider, and Wills Twp. would ask if it can contract for the 2024 year.

Will Miller compares to the Hudson Twp. situation in 2019. Brian Gray says if the fire territory wants to offer Wills Twp. coverage, there would have to be a dollar amount agreed upon. Will Miller says Baker-Tilley would have to review the proposal and the other entities would have to agree to it.

To continue current coverage, Wills Twp. would have to sign another contract with Kankakee Twp. by mid-October. Brian Gray says Kristi Chadderdon would have to know what the fire territory plans to do by that time. The next fire territory meeting is Oct. 11.

Brian Gray says, "We need to come up with a number, then we need to take it to our township boards so that they will approve covering Wills Twp. with the territory and approve the number, and then it needs to come back to a fire territory meeting to be approved or not approved there, and then we would have to present it to Wills, and then she would have to have time to present it to her board and her citizens."

Paul Tuszynski says, "That sounds to me like a pretty fast track." He says there may be public reaction. Brian Gray says, "I'm almost certain that we can make it happen," but he doesn't want Wills to miss out on the opportunity to re-sign with Kankakee Twp.

Kristi Chadderdon says in the past, Wills Twp. has budgeted \$45,000 per year for fire coverage and actually paid \$40,000. However, Kankakee is asking for an increase to \$60,000. The DLGF told her they will not be able to accommodate the increase.

Will Miller suggests the \$5,000 they have not spent each year could be applied with an additional appropriation, depending on how many years they've been doing that. He says Wills Twp. could sign a contract with our fire territory for coverage with the understanding that it is joining the fire territory in another year.

Josh Schweizer says this board could agree to offer Wills Twp. a contract for the same price as Kankakee. He feels the faster Wills Twp. is on-boarded, the better. Jerry Colanese suggests that if the fire territory services Wills Twp. next year for the same amount that Wills is going to be charged, then the people there could see how much better the service would be.

Paul Tuszynski asks how that is possible since there are no financial numbers to review, yet. Josh Schweizer says "I can tell you that I could start tomorrow," to get the firefighters acclimated to the area. He says the numbers would have to be worked out. Brian Gray says, "We are well within what we could handle, call volume-wise."

Jerry Colanese wants to confirm this contract would be a one-year deal. Kristi Chadderdon says yes.

Brian Gray says he would like to offer the following: "I would like to gather the board's thoughts for putting an offer to Wills Twp. for 2024 coverage for \$60,000 for the year on a one-year deal with the stipulation that they would have to be working towards the territory to start in 2025, and that would not extend that cost into 2025 if we had another year supporting them."

Bob Middlebrook moves to adopt Brian Gray's proposal. Jerry Colanese seconds.

Stan Hynek asks, "Don't you need a public meeting for this?"

Will Miller says, "This is a public meeting" and "This is just a formal offer so that you can take that back to your board and your constituents."

Brian Gray repeats the motion made by Bob Middlebrook. Motion passes 6-0.

Will Miller repeats that Wills Twp. will need to get approval from her board. Kristi Chadderdon says they would like to move forward.

Paul Tuszynski asks, "OK, \$60,000 for one year, but if we join permanently, how much more, if any, would the second year be? We ought to have that number." Kristi Chadderdon says Baker-Tilley will be reviewing.

**FIRE INSPECTIONS:** Dave Wilson asks Josh Schweizer if future fire inspections applies to the whole fire territory or just within the towns. Josh Schweizer states it applies to the entire territory but they only inspect businesses, not residences.

Bob Middlebrook motions to adjourn. Marcy Kauffman seconds. Motion passes 7-0. Adjournment at 6:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Creason  
Secretary

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Bob Middlebrook, Territory Member

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Brian Gray, Board President

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Marcy Kauffman, Territory Member

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Keith Batzel, Territory Member

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Tim Creason, Territory Member

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Dave Wilson, Territory Member

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Jerry Colanese, Territory Member