

**HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**OF DECEMBER 10, 2018**

Municipal Council of the City of Vermilion  
Municipal Complex, 685 Decatur Street, Vermilion, Ohio 44089

**In Attendance:**        **Vermilion City Council:**  
*Steve Herron, President of Council; Monica Stark, Council at Large; John Gabriel, Ward One; Frank Loucka, Ward Two; Steve Holovacs, Ward Three; Barb Brady, Ward Four; Brian Holmes, Ward Five*

**Administration:**  
*Jim Forthofer, Mayor; Amy Hendricks, Finance Director; Chris Howard, City Engineer; Tony Valerius, Service Director; Chris Hartung, Police Chief; Chris Stempowski, Fire Chief*

**Call to Order:**        Barb Brady, Chairwoman, RESOLVED THAT this Health & Safety Committee comprised of the committee of the whole does now come to order.

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**TOPIC ONE:**            **Firehouse #1/Ambulance Services**

Mayor Forthofer explained in 2017 the fire chief recommended that the city needed a new fire station. In early 2018, he formed a committee on council's recommendation which consisted of himself, Fire Chief Stempowski, City Engineer Howard, Finance Director Hendricks, Councilman Holovacs, Service Director Valerius, and Mark Wagner of Poulos Design. The mission of the committee was to identify the needs that the Fire Chief addressed, and they recommended a design encompassing those needs to the architect. The committee worked on identifying a site location and they made recommendations to council who authorized the administration to prepare specifications for RFQ's.

Chief Stempowski conveyed that the needs of a new station are self-evident when you enter the existing Fire Station #1 as it was built many years ago and back at that time the apparatus was much smaller and the needs to the fire department and personnel evolved over the years. They simply outgrew the current station and it was presented and brought to this point where they determined the needs of the station, which is identified in the drawings that were provided by the criteria architect with input from the fire department personnel.

Jim Machkoff of Nautical Drive said he wasn't trying to make things difficult for anybody as he sees the need for some changes in the architectural drawings. He agreed with the chief that Vermilion needs a new fire station. There has been some talk and input amongst council, the administration, and the fire department, except for input from the public. He provided his own recommendations as the city needs to think about this fire station for at least 50 years. He would recommend the city considering a metal roof all the way across the fire station instead of partially over the apparatus. He isn't sure what was on the housing part of the station for the roof. Mark Wagner said it's showing shingles as of now, but they can always switch since this is only a criteria basis. Once they get through this process then it goes out to design build, so things can change. He said these are not working drawings but are drawings to show what is needed to get them to the next level. J. Machkoff said he was under the impression these were working drawings and they had a set figure. M. Wagner said it was only an estimate at this

point. The next step is to go to a design build contract, which they will have a set figure at that point.

J. Machkoff addressed his recommendations to the chief based on the preliminary drawings. He said if they are going to put the building on Devon Drive then he would recommend they take up a lot more property than shown and completely eliminate a certain area and put garage doors in every bay on the front and back of the building, so they can pull into the back of the fire station and drive in instead of backing into the station. Chief Stempowski explained this is exactly what they show on the drawings; they have two drive-through's. Firefighter Bill McCale explained when they put these plans together all the bays, rooms, etc., were not necessarily concrete and these things can change. Part of the thought was having the back area to accommodate doors if they need them. They didn't feel they needed full drive-through bay doors throughout the entire facility. J. Machkoff thought it would be easier for the fire personnel to pull the apparatus in and out of the station and not just back up in the station. Chief Stempowski noted this recommendation.

J. Machkoff recommended eliminating the second-floor area and putting along another area or eliminating the area and putting doors in there for the apparatus (Note: general conversation as J. Machkoff was pointing out these areas to the Chief per the drawings). B. Brady suggested to Mr. Machkoff the idea of setting up a separate meeting with the Fire Chief to review his recommendations as it didn't seem like the right platform to go over these suggestions. Mr. Machkoff thought this was the committee meeting they had agreed on to discuss these issues. S. Herron said the committee meeting would be to discuss legislation and they didn't have a problem with informal discussion as it's up to the Chair of the committee, but to sit and chat about the plans is the administration's job which is the brought forward to city council. He said Council encourages residents to come before City Council with questions, comments, or objections for the public record, but the back and forth is not what they're here to do.

J. Machkoff proceeded with recommending a metal roof on the entire fire department. For example, he stated that the City of Elyria built a brand-new fire station about this size about 15 years ago and it wasn't five or 10 years until the roof failed and now the station has been closed because it's going to cost too much money to fix the roof, so now the building is storage. They invested a huge amount of money in this fire station and the roof has failed, so this is the reason why he is recommending a metal roof rather than shingles.

Furthermore, he addressed the proposed training tower and suggested eliminating it completely for the reason being that there are two or three training towers in the State of Ohio – the City of Cleveland has one and nobody else in the area has a training tower; it's completely unnecessary. When the rookies are sent to school for the State of Ohio they are sent to Cleveland to use their training tower. Nobody has a training tower; unnecessary money that's going to be afforded to the station when the department can use that money for some other project or designation. Chief Stempowski noted that not everybody goes to the Cleveland Fire Academy for their training. He said it's not simply a training tower; it's a multi-use tower and it would be very beneficial to them and surrounding areas.

J. Machkoff said the last concern he has is that the station is very large and somewhere down the road it could eventually turn into a combination volunteer or full-time fire department where they will need people at the station. He also recommended they start their own rescue/ambulance service. He thought the proposed fire department was too big for a volunteer department and felt the living quarters should be scaled down. Chief Stempowski said with all due respect what is the difference between a volunteer and a career department. J. Machkoff

said size-wise for one thing; you had between 88-100 guys on the fire department in Elyria and you have anywhere between 25-75 guys on most of the departments now that have people who are running a full-time department. He said they have a proposed facility that could handle at least 80 people. Chief Stempowski said the living quarters (two bunk rooms) are literally 18' x 11', which is very compact. J. Machkoff said the monies that could be used with scaling the whole project down could be used in running the city's own rescue squad and ambulance – full-time paramedics; full-time rescue squad. With the amount of money that's coming in from the two fire levies and the amount of money that is already squirreled away, he feels it could be done. Chief Stempowski said they have one operating levy and one capital levy. J. Machkoff thought the money should be able to be allocated by the fire department from both one mill levies and used anyway the chief saw fit and not predicated on some language that was put into this when he initially told council that he felt that 80% of the fire department's in the country run their own rescue squads and run their own ambulance services. B. Brady asked the administration if she correct in saying the city received a legal rendering that this could not happen. Mayor Forthofer said he ran this by the law director, and he would love it if they could use some of the fire funds for ambulance service, but the law director's ruling is that the way the levy is written it cannot. J. Machkoff said he categorically disagrees with the law director's ruling and he understands he can't do anything about it except verbally disapprove. Mayor Forthofer said his point is well-taken regarding the future possibility of an internal rescue/ambulance service as the firefighters have shown a real interest in starting one up, and he verbally gave them the go-ahead to do the necessary research as he understands there are state guidelines that can help them, and eventually it may even require a levy, but they should go ahead and explore this possibility. In the meantime, the city will need ambulance service by January 1, 2019. J. Machkoff understood this and was not advocating that they try to pull this off between now and January 1, but he felt six months or a year from now will be the time to step up. He said saving a life is the paramount idea of having your own rescue, fire department, and ambulance service. Chief Stempowski said the services the city provide now is doing the exact same thing; it may not be in-house but to save a life is being done both on the fire side and the ambulance side. J. Machkoff said he is not criticizing but is trying to make things a little easier financially.

J. Machkoff's final recommendation was to not close the existing fire station and turn it into the chief's office and possibly a place for a rescue squad or an ambulance service. This way no one is going to have problems with accessibility for equipment and the chief will have an office. Chief Stempowski said there has been discussion amongst the committee about this topic and it's still in the planning stages. J. Machkoff said he is only making recommendations that he feels are necessary. He doesn't think closing the existing fire station is in the best interest of the fire department. Chief Stempowski said they need to consider the funds coming in. He said around \$275,000 from the operating levy is generated every year and the same amount for the capital levy. J. Machkoff thought they should combine these two levies. J. Gabriel said the only way they can combine the two levies is by taking it back to the voters to amend them. It's not an interpretation; it's black and white. J. Machkoff asked if this is the ruling by the law director and J. Gabriel said this is black and white in the ordinance; it's not vague language. It's fire apparatus, buildings, grounds...and the other one is operation and they would have to take this back to the voters to make any changes.

**Topic Two: Fire Chief's Report**

Chief Stempowski reported the fire department responded to 11 incidents in the month of November for a total of 196 responses year to date. The command vehicle is scheduled for outfitting on December 20 and it will be returned by the end of the year. He reported yesterday

they held their promotional exams in-house and they had five firefighters participate. They were given their scores at the end of the exam and the promotional list is good in-house for two years for the Lieutenant's position.

**TOPIC TWO:        Police Chief's Report**

B. Brady thanked Chief Stempowski, Chief Hartung and their departments for responding to the VOL Clubhouse alarm on Saturday.

J. Gabriel said there was a report to be prepared on Station #2 and wanted to know the status. C. Howard said they were going to get a price from another architect on a facility condition assessment as those reports aren't cheap and it could cost the city up to \$20,000. He said M. Wagner gave the city a ballpark life. J. Gabriel said he just wanted somebody with knowledge to give him something in writing.

Chief Hartung said the winter ban is in effect and during the first week or so they handed out notices to people who were found in violation. He said residents can contact him if they need an exemption. However, from December 21 to January 2 he doesn't have the department issue any parking citations since a lot of families are home for the holidays, so there is no need to contact him for an exemption during this holiday week.

He reported they are in their beta testing for the e-citations as they are getting away from issuing hand-written paper citations. All cruisers have printers installed in them, so they swipe the id's which print the citation. They just started this program and the first citation was a disaster, so it's a work in progress. As soon as they issue the citation they transmit it directly to the court which eliminates a lot of paperwork and extra steps, which is very beneficial as well as a cost savings.

He said they are happy to work with the Salvation Army and the Chamber of Commerce this year for their adoption. They picked up 15 people and the police department all pitched in, so he and Captain Graham will go shopping to pick up the items. He said this is a great program.

B. Brady reminded the community that Sunday, December 16, is the Fireman's Santa Party at Sailorway Middle School and the VOL building from 10-5pm.

B. Brady adjourned the meeting after no further discussion came before the committee.

*Next Meeting: January 14, 2018 at 6:00 pm*

*Gwen Fisher, Certified Municipal Clerk*