

**TOWN OF MANITOWOC RAPIDS**  
**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING FROM AUGUST 19, 2024**

The special meeting on August 19, 2024 for the Town of Manitowoc Rapids meeting was called to order by Chairperson Stradal at 5:30 p.m. at Manitowoc Rapids Town Hall, 8624 CTH JJ, Manitowoc, WI.

**ROLL CALL**

The roll was called and members present were: Josh Stradal, Chairperson; Tom Wetenkamp, 1<sup>st</sup> Supervisor; and John Jost, Supervisor 2.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chairperson Stradal opened public comment at 5:30 p.m.

Paul Roelke, 2325 Victoria Dr, does not support the change of fire service from Rockwood and Silver Creek Volunteer to City of Manitowoc. He believes the current system has worked since it was implemented and urges the Board to obtain more research.

Marietta Johnson, 2118 Wimmer Rd, expressed concern how many town residents are not aware of possibly losing the service performed by the Silver Creek Volunteer Fire Department. She questioned why the Chairman, also the Chief of Branch VFD did not recuse himself of this discussion.

Glenn Kapplemann, 2213 Shadyside Rd, voiced concern as to how the City of Manitowoc would service a rural resident without a water source such as a fire hydrant.

Randy Drumm, 101 S Parkview Rd, questioned what would happen to the fire service once the five-year contract came due with the City. He also believes there should be negotiations between the town board and volunteer fire departments if this is a concern over money.

No one else present wished to speak, subsequently Chairperson Stradal closed public input at 5:43 p.m.

**NEW BUSINESS**

*Discussion and possible action with Manitowoc Fire and Rescue*

Chairperson Stradal responded to the questions asked during public input. He informed the public each meeting regarding the fire department's discussion was always posted and nothing was kept from the public. The Town Board (board) just received the contract amount from the City of Manitowoc (city) at a meeting last week before any further discussion was to take place. Tonight's meeting was at the request of Silver Creek Volunteer Fire Department (SCVDS). Stradal reassured the public the EMS services would continue as is with Silver Creek, Branch, and the City of Manitowoc Ambulance. He informed the public he did not recuse himself because this has no impact on the Branch Volunteer Fire Department (BVFD).

Fire Chief Todd Blaser responded to a concern from the public as to what the city would do if they ran out of water in a rural area. Blaser informed the public that the city was not set up for rural fire fighting and that was why only the sections bordering the city are considered within this contract because they would have access to hydrants. The areas without hydrants would be serviced by their engines that carry 750 gallons of water. The city's response time would be one minute out of the station and four to five minutes to the location at the furthest section in the town. There would be enough water for a full five minutes. By that time another engine would already be there. They would use MABAS and have other departments willing to respond arrive to assist. Stradal questioned if there was any area of the city that did not have a hydrant. Blaser confirmed there was one residence on Dutch Rd that does not have a hydrant. Stradal mentioned the city does have pre-plans in place to cover areas in the Town that are not hydrated.

Regarding the five-year contract, Stradal responded that no one knows what will happen five years from now. He mentioned that currently the Town pays five dollars per person on a yearly basis for city ambulance service. His concern was how much will it cost the Town in the future and how will the town cover the potential increases. He felt more comfortable with a five-year contract where the town knows the payment for fire and ambulance would be \$100,000.

SCVFD Assistant Chief Kevin Klosinski questioned if the city was offered the contract, do they plan to install hydrants in the future and what would be the cost to residents. The volunteer fire departments have the equipment to fight a rural barn fire, the city does not. SCVFD Chief Joe Stanzel informed the Board that all three volunteer departments are required to have the equipment to do the job of fighting rural fires. Klosinski also questioned what the plan would be once the five years expired. Stradal mentioned that no one knows what the plan would be in five years. The only thing we know right now is that the town would be locked in for five years at the same cost. Kosinski questioned the savings homeowners would receive if their ISO rating changed from a nine to a two and if any research was done. He mentioned that he contacted an individual at the ISO office and questioned these changes. The individual informed him that rating two applies to an area within 1000ft radius of a hydrant, and an eight B rating would apply to an area outside the 1000ft radius of a hydrant and within five road miles of a fire station. He does not believe many residents would be covered under this definition and would not receive the savings. Stradal mentioned that anyone that is within the 1000ft of a hydrant would receive the ISO of a two and provided maps as to where hydrants were in the town. Klosinski believes there should be a town board meeting where all the town residents that may be affected have a chance to speak. He questioned why BVFD was not mentioned. This looks very unethical by losing two fire departments, but not BVFD. This will affect the agreements with mutual aid and more municipalities than just the Town of Manitowoc Rapids. Stradal believes by contracting with the city to service the areas bordering the city, this would benefit those homes by reducing their ISO rating and protect the people in the town for five years. Stanzel mentioned the board could work with the two fire departments to lock in a five-year contract as well. Stradal agreed, but the board wants to benefit the people of the town with the lower ISO rating. Stanzel mentioned SCVFD has been in contact with an individual regarding what can be done to lower their ISO rating, and they will continue trying to lower the rate.

Stradal questioned what type of negative impact moving to the city for fire services would have on the town. Klosinski believes by making this move it would decimate SCVFD and the town would be sending the wrong message. No one would want to volunteer and help in the town anymore. The residents wouldn't see a change in their insurance right away. This would also affect personnel that live in the town. He reviewed the contract numbers and did not see a potential savings. The SCVFD has been here a long time and there haven't been any complaints. He questioned why the move. Stradal mentioned there haven't been any complaints. This would be a lateral move with a full-time department and a quicker response time for town residents.

Stradal asked how many people on SCVFD live within the town. Stanzel believes there are 12 out of 36. Stradal mentioned what Klosinski thinks was negative impact would affect the entire township in two to three years when ambulance costs increase significantly, which the township has to cover it. Meanwhile two-thirds of SCVFD live in another town or in the city. Stanzel commented that just because two-thirds do not live in the town, doesn't mean their families aren't here. Most of SCVFD members have family in the town.

Rockwood Volunteer Fire Department (RVFD) Chief Tom Arndt mentioned he was unaware this conversation was taking place. He remembered meeting with the board less than a year ago to discuss how their fire department services the town. During that meeting, he believes it was stated that there was no intention to eliminate any fire protection that currently services the town, and the goal was to have a collaboration to improve the fire protection for the town. However, there does not seem to be any collaboration, and this discussion seems to be very different than the discussion back in October. He understands budget seemed to be the issue and if negotiations can take place with the city, why not with the current fire departments. Response times are important as well, but why has BVFD been responding to the city. He questioned where the resources were going to come from when the city was responding to another call. Jess Schwalbe, RVFD member,

informed the board that if all the areas had hydrants it would be a different story, but there are a lot of area without full water supply.

Arndt thought there should have been further discussion with the volunteer fire departments to inform everyone that this was what the board may have been considering. Stradal mentioned that back in October this was not what the board was considering. This discussion started in January/February when ambulance rates started to increase, which was the reason the board held the meeting in March for towns and villages. The fire department discussion has been on the Town Board agenda for the past few months, but nothing was ever discussed due to no new info to discuss. It was on last week's monthly meeting agenda again and discussion took place when the city was able to provide a contract amount. The board was not hiding anything from the public. The current contracts would continue through the end of the year. Then in 2025, the board would extend a contract for RVFD and SCVFD for the first 3 or 6 months, then the city contract would start at 9 months or 6 months and continue for the next five years. This would allow the city to get acclimated with rural fire fighting. Nothing has been finalized and discussion will continue. However, the discussions need to be on the positive and negative effects on a town's people and businesses. Not the negative impact on the fire departments. Stanzel believes the people should be made aware of what could happen if the volunteer fire departments are no longer able to assist. Also, the homes that are within 1000ft of the hydrants in the town are already receiving the lower rate as long as the homeowner contacts their insurance company.

Stradal believes by locking in the five-year contract with the city this would save the town taxpayers money because the ambulance service would be included in that cost. Right now, we are on an annual contract with the ambulance, which will be increasing. This contract would lock in the same rate for five years.

Klosinski questioned how the city taxpayers feel about the city fire services working outside the city boundaries. Blaser hopes everyone realizes there is a benefit in public safety. Blaser mentioned the city does not have any interest in BVFD because that territory is rural. The territories we are discussing right now, the city can serve, and the local government supports it. Stanzel questioned the possibility of only the ambulance locking in a five-year contract. Blaser could not answer that question.

Supervisor John Jost questioned what each department's response time was during the week. Stanzel responded SCVFD could have someone respond in three to five minutes from the station. The truck will go out with two volunteers, the rest of the volunteers follow and suit-up at the fire. Stradal mentioned if only one person responds and gets to the scene, that one person would still have to wait until a second guy arrived to do an interior attack. Arndt responded RVFD would gear up before they leave the station, so they are ready to fight the fire once they get on scene. This takes roughly four to six minutes. Then additional volunteers and equipment follows.

Stradal projected the savings would be \$1,191.51 by contracting with BVFD and city for 2025. He also mentioned there is an Innovation Grant through the State that if a town or village contracts with another service that could save the town money over time, the town could apply for grant money. The largest amount the town could receive would be \$100,000. If the grant goes through, the town must contract with another service and show there was a saving of 10% over time. This would be another way to save the town money.

Stradal mentioned there will be more discussion to come.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further Town business, Supervisor Wetenkamp moved to adjourn at 6:34 p.m., seconded by Supervisor Jost. Unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jessica Backus, Clerk/Treasurer