

**TOWN OF MANITOWOC RAPIDS
MINUTES FROM THE SEPTEMBER 18, 2024**

The September 18, 2024 meeting of the Town of Manitowoc Rapids meeting was called to order by Chairperson Stradal at 6:00 p.m. at the Town Hall, 8624 CTH JJ, Manitowoc, WI.

ROLL CALL

The roll was called, and members present were: Josh Stradal-Chairperson, Tom Wetenkamp-Supervisor 1, John Jost-Supervisor 2, Jessica Backus-Clerk/Treasurer, and Constable Jim Wiesner.

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion and action on Fire Department and EMS Contract

Supervisor Jost moved the Town continue contracted services with the three volunteer fire departments of Branch, Rockwood, and Silver Creek, the two first responders of Branch and Silver Creek, and the City of Manitowoc Ambulance for 2025, seconded by Supervisor Wetenkamp. Chairperson Stradal opened the floor for discussion with the one representative for each volunteer fire department and the city fire chief.

Kevin Kosinski, SCVFD Assistant Chief, requested there would be better cooperation between the board and all three fire departments moving forward and transparency. He provided a list of equipment they have to service the municipalities they contract with. The list included two engines that each hold 1000 gallons of water, two tankers totaling 5600 gallons water, a brush truck to assist with brush or car fires that holds 400 gallons of water, one gator for brush fires and search and rescue, and an equipment van that holds a system that can fill air tanks. Together they would be able to supply 8000 gallons of water when they respond to a fire. He reported they have 23 members and 6 first responders under the age of 35. There are 14 members that live within a mile of the Town and 6 work within a mile of the town. He then questioned what the town board's further plans are for the future.

Stradal questioned what the cost was for the two trucks recently purchased. Kosinski reported just under \$500,000. Stradal questioned how the new trucks would better service the town. Kosinski mentioned the other older trucks were not as dependable and were not passing standard testing. One of the trucks was located at the Hwy 151 fire department in the Town of Manitowoc Rapids. The other was at the fire department in the Town of Manitowoc. Stradal questioned how are they improving their insurance rating for all the residents they provide service to. Kosinski reported they would be working with an ISO individual from this area in the coming year regarding various tests, audits, etc. that need to be completed to reduce the ISO rating. Stradal questioned what does fully trained mean for SCVFD. Kosinski reported full trained was when an individual completes State Fire 1 or 2 through LTC or a state tech school. All 36 members were fully certified as State Fire 1 or 2. Stradal questioned what type of documentation was used showing SCVFD response times were comparable to other departments. Kosinski mentioned they didn't run numbers, but they watch response times using IM responding from joint dispatch. Stradal questioned where the 8000 gallons of water were kept. Kosinski reported at Station 2 in the Town of Manitowoc Rapids the amount of water was around 3200 gallons. Stradal questioned what the response time would be from Station 1 in the Town of Manitowoc to the Town of Manitowoc Rapids. Kosinski responded just over five minutes. Stradal questioned how many members actually live in the Town. Kosinski reported six members work here or live within the Town. Stradal thanked SCVFD for their answers.

Tom Arndt, RVFD Chief, thanked the board for taking a pause in the negotiations. He felt there was only one plan that was proposed, but there are others that could be discussed. The residents are the ones affected by these decisions. He hopes the board listens to the tax payers of the Town of Manitowoc Rapids.

Supervisor Jost questioned how many RVFD members live in the Town. Arndt reported there were three members that reside in the Town. Stradal questioned how much water would be on RVFD first truck out. Arndt

reported 300 gallons of water and 30 gallons of foam, the mixed ratio could expand to 3000 gallons of firefighting capabilities.

Stradal questioned what happens after the first truck responds. Arndt responded a tender would be next to arrive with 2000 gallons. Stradal requested Arndt explain their process to the public. Arndt proceeded to explain when the first tender arrives water is immediately going from the tender into the engine to supply 2300 gallons of water with the foam system. They also have automatic aid with Francis Creek Volunteer Fire Department, which means once RVFD responds, so do they to provide additional resources. Stradal questioned what their active roster was. Arndt reported there were 22 active members who have all received training, participated in monthly training and drills, and respond to as many calls as possible.

Todd Blaser, City of Manitowoc Fire Chief, expressed his frustration and concerns because of pride and misinformation taking precedence over data driven practices in the fire service. He was disheartened by all the name calling and needless comparisons rooted in pride versus an honest assessment of the facts. He believes that clouded judgment has overcome everyone's ability to see the challenges and opportunities being presented. He mentioned the city was not perfect and faced the same challenges as any fire service model today. However, their fire department has the support of the city mayor and city council, which allows them to be ready to respond 24/7, 365 days a year. He acknowledged there are times when this model was challenged, but he was confident in the services they would provide the township. He understands change was never easy, not for those experiencing the change or making the change. He explained the city was approached by the town to possibly service the areas being proposed and took the request seriously. He made the decision based on data driven facts and performance metrics, which are the same standards that the city used to ensure the safety of residents, visitors and businesses in the city. He believes the budget presented was fiscally responsible and the decision should be driven by the welfare of the community, not misinformation. The data speaks for itself and everyone should examine the data to make an informed decision to respond to the challenges ahead, not only for fire protection but for EMS services across the county. He acknowledged that as the board moved forward with a decision, they needed to look at the solid evidence, not on what others claim was best. He thanked the board for the opportunity and would respect the decision the board made.

Supervisor Jost questioned how many fire fighters were at Station 3 and Station 4. Blaser responded that Station 1 had four personnel, Station 3 had three personnel, Station 4 had four personnel, and Station 2 had two personnel. At any given time, they have 16 fire fighters on duty. He stated every day 24/7 365, there was personnel at each station ready to service the community. Jost questioned with the growth on the northside of the city would the fire service be affected. Blaser responded the growth has not affected them at this time and the current proposal was made with not adding anymore staff or vehicles. He believes this was an opportunity for the city. Our legislator wanted us to start looking at ways to work cooperatively and collaboratively with other departments, which could help cut expenses for each department and our area.

Stradal questioned what the city's response time was to leave the station from the time of page. Blaser responded all the statistics are on the city website, but just for the month of August the response time was 93.60% out the door in less than a minute and on scene in less than five minutes. Stradal questioned how the city was dispatched to a fire. Blaser explained joint dispatch notifies all four stations. The battalion chief at the station signals to go. The city also has an automatic response aid (ARA) with BVFD and the City of Two Rivers Fire Department for any report of a structure fire within the city. Another resource that could be utilized would be the 36 members that are off duty and eligible, would get a page that they could respond to the scene to assist. Stradal reiterated that if there were a structure fire within the city, the city could have all four stations at that fire within one minute. Blaser agreed. Stradal mentioned that the public questioned why BVFD was asked to aid the city and not SCVFD. Blaser mentioned as a risk manager he needed to look at what happens next, not the fire call happening at the moment. He needs to make sure the city can provide EMS services to over 40,000 residents, as well as the fire protection in the community. They are running into challenges with change of quarters stations coming into the community to help with structure fires. The city reached out to BVFD to look at a different opportunity with the understanding that they would respond to city structure fires through the

ARA. BVFD would be staged at the scene and could assist the city if another incident were to come in. Their primary responsibility would be to respond to that call. A majority of the fires within the city are 90% contained to room and content, which can be taken care of with one engine and water would come from a municipal water supply. BVFD would also assist with checking personnel on scene to watch for rehab of those fighting the fire. Also having another department there through the ARA was a way to address the change of quarter concerns.

There being no further discussion, the vote was called and passed with Supervisors Jost and Wetenkamp voting aye, Chairperson Stradal abstained. Supervisor Jost announced the contracts would remain unchanged for 2025.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairperson Stradal opened public comment at 6:29 p.m.

Robert Kakuk, 832 S Parkview Rd, would like to have more communication within the Town. He believes this item should be a community vote and was not happy with how this process went.

Randy Drumm, 101 S Parkview Rd, congratulated the two supervisors on making the right decision. He questioned where that \$18,000 savings was coming from after the last meeting and believes it was because the city under bid the current volunteers. The city does a good job in the city. They are not equipped to fight fires in the rural areas.

Ron Wiesner, 5701 Sampe Rd, thanked the board for another year of contracts. He explained he would like to see letters sent to residents or publicized notices because not everyone has internet. He commented that there should be a referendum if this issue were to be addressed in the future.

Paul Roekle, 2325 Victoria Dr, thanked the board for the confidence in the fire departments. He has respect for all the volunteer fire departments and the city. However, he does not agree with comparing a volunteer department to a full-time department because they are completely different. He believes all departments need to get back on track and work together.

Michelle Endries, 4000 Redwood Dr, believes the town needs better representation because the board created a problem the town did not have. She would like to know when the contracts would be delivered to the fire departments because she doesn't trust the board.

Rick Gerroll, 1631 Skyline Dr, thanked the two supervisors for voting in favor of the supporting our current fire services.

Tim Martinez, 2480 Victoria Dr, suggested when a bid was written there should be specific requirements listed. He challenged the board to review when there was a conflict of interest and how to handle that conflict. He believes the town has a responsibility to the volunteer fire departments because of all the equipment they purchase was to protect the town.

Sister Adrianna Schouten, 2409 S Alverno Rd, thanked the board for their vote.

Mike Linsmeier, 2033 Hwy H, mentioned his father always told him don't trust the city and would like the board to keep that in mind.

Jim Webb, 2421 Hwy 42, thanked the board for the vote. He questioned how many members BVFD has, how many live in the town, and questioned if the city contacted the town or the other way around.

Maggie Mies, 2615 Simon Rd, asked if there was a proposal why wasn't that shared with the public and questioned if a proposal was ever received in writing from the city. She believes most volunteers are in it for the right reasons, not for politics. She would appreciate that this would not happen in the future.

Dale Wagner, 9429 Hwy 151, thanked the board for their vote. He would like to see a little more clarity from the board and the fire departments. He questioned how much experience does the city have on a barn fire.

Peggy Raether, 7134 Dutch Rd, questioned if the city reported how many gallons of water they would bring to a fire. She expressed her frustration that the public still doesn't seem to be receiving answers. She also questioned who would pay the overtime hours for the city when they fight a barn fire.

Justin Schleis, 7134 Dutch Rd, expressed he would like to see more clarity as well. He explained last spring his neighbor had a grass fire and the city didn't arrive with the right equipment to put out the fire.

Joe Stanzel, 8516 CTH JJ, thanked the supervisors for their vote. He thanked everyone that showed up to support SCVFD and RVFD. He believes everyone needs to work together as one team to serve the community.

No one else present wished to speak, subsequently Chairperson Stradal closed public input at 6:52 p.m.

NEXT MEETING DATES

Monthly Meeting – October 9, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.

There being no further discussion, Supervisor Wetenkamp moved to adjourn; seconded by Supervisor Jost, and the motion was adopted by acclamation. The meeting was adjourned at 6:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Backus, Clerk/Treasurer