The special meeting on February 19, 2024 for the Town of Manitowoc Rapids was called to order by Chairperson Stradal at 6:30 p.m. at the Branch Fire Station.

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

GUEST SPEAKERS ON BEHALF OF THEIR MUNICIPALITY
County Executive Bob Ziegelbauer informed the Board the County was willing to assist municipalities, but it any consolidation needs to start at the municipal level. Also, the County would not provide funding for anything related to fire or EMS services.

Town of Franklin Board Chairperson Gerald Korinek informed the Board their town had information gathering meetings with their four fire departments. Three out of the four had adequate staffing and budget. The Town does not see any territory or contract changes in the future.

Town of Kossuth Board Chairperson Ralph Schuh provided the history of funding for their town's fire department and EMS services. Since the State has increased shared revenue, the town plans to share that with the departments and if they want to change territory lines their Board will listen.

Town of Newton Supervisor Kevin Benke informed the Board they have one fire department that services the whole town. The Town purchase trucks for the department when needed. The Town Hall is the housing facility for the department. They appreciate their fire department and are willing to listen to what they need. Behnke mentioned that if consolidation happens in other towns, the location of the building needs to be a big consideration due to ISO ratings for home insurance purposes.

Village of Valders Board President Devin Schneider informed the Board how their Village funded Ambulance and full-time paramedic services function and who pays the expenses. It is tough on the Village because when there is a budget shortfall, the Village must cover the financial shortage.

NEW BUSINESS
Chairperson Stradal opened the discussion to the rest of the municipalities or emergency services departments in attendance.

Village of Mishicot Board President Bernie Samz provided information as to how the Mishicot Ambulance works with each municipality. Their ambulance service is a private organization, which helps not to have budget shortfalls.

Town of Eaton Board Chairperson Rick Christel questioned how to increase the volunteer fire department memberships, along with inflation of the rising department levy costs.

Kiel Fire Department Representative Scott Hastreiter informed the Board that they recruit through an explorer program through the Kiel School District. They have a positive success rate with that program. They also cross-train EMS and Fire services.

Schneider mentioned be reviewed over 12 municipalities with referendums throughout the state this election to increase their levies due to shortfalls.

Newton Fire Department Representative mentioned they have a full roster with at least 14 volunteers that can respond to an emergency throughout the day. All volunteers must attend their drills once a month.

Town of Meeme Representative informed the Board they have 5 fire departments and have no issues with any of them.

Kiel EMS Representative Bob Hennings mentioned the fire departments used to receive funds from the County.

Behnke informed the Board that the County will not provide money for fire or EMS services.

Christel mentioned that everyone should reach out to their County Board Supervisor for further discussion around County funding.

PUBLIC COMMENT
Chairperson Stradal opened public comment at 7:22 p.m.

No one present wished to speak, subsequently Chairperson Stradal closed public input at 7:23 p.m.

There being no further discussion, Supervisor Wetenkamp moved to adjourn; seconded by Chairperson Stradal, and the motion was adopted by acclamation. The meeting was adjourned at 7:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Backus, Clerk/Treasurer