



Solon Township Hall
15185 Algoma Avenue NE
Cedar Springs, MI 49319
616-696-1718

**Minutes of the Solon Township Fire Committee
April 9, 2018 meeting, 7:00pm**

Meeting called to order by Chairman Mather at 7:02 PM

Roll Call: (* = voting member).

1. Fire Chief Jeff Drake, Fire Department Taylor Hunt. Vice Chairman Curt Steinebach*,
 Chairman Jeff Mather*, Township Trustee Fred Gunnell*,
 Community Representative Burt Dent*, Community Representative Rick Vargo*.

Approval of Agenda: Motion by Burt Dent to approve agenda. 2nd by Fred Gunnell. Motion carried 4-0.

Approval of December 11, 2017 meeting minutes: Motion by Rick Vargo to approve minutes. 2nd by Burt Dent. Motion carried 4-0.

Business:

- 1) Chief Drake gave an update on personnel changes and roster count. By end of June the roster will include 14 active firefighters not counting Chaplin Putman. By April of 2019 that number should increase by 3 after graduation of three firefighters currently in training. There were no new resumes submitted since the last meeting. Chief Drake indicated that overall participation by firefighters continues to be good. The cumulative participation rate for the Oct 1 – Feb 28 period was 30.3% (medical) and 24.4% (non-medical).
- 2) Chief Drake reviewed the Field Training Program (FTP) checklist which is designed to verify that newly certified firefighters also understand the Solon Township FF protocol(s). All newly trained FF's must meet the requirements of the FTP checklist.
- 3) The committee revisited an older agenda item related to the stand-by duty proposal submitted by Chief Drake. The committee considered the pros and cons associated with this proposal including the use of a fire department vehicle for FF's who would be working stand-by duty. All of the potentially negative aspects (snow on vehicle if left in driveway, etc.) seemed to be manageable through administrative policy and outweighed by the benefits of allowing FF's to use the vehicle. The committee agreed with the Chief that if a stand-by duty program were implemented there would be advantages/benefits in allowing the FF on stand-by duty to use STFD vehicle (i.e., take it home and use it for incidental purposes). It was noted that several of the surrounding townships offer this option. The committee agreed this is a good idea to improve response time and generate community interest in seeing the vehicle "out and about" or in the fire-fighters driveway. There's also a pride factor for the firefighters who drive the vehicle, and we think it will be an incentive for them to sign-up for stand-by duty if/when that program is approved.

- a. At a subsequent meeting on 4/18/18 which included Chairman Mather, Chief Drake, Clerk Poulsen, and Supervisor Ellick we discussed this topic in more detail to gain further understanding and potential obstacles to moving forward with the proposal. At this meeting we learned that the Board did not pass the original proposal based on the added cost associated with: 1) increased expense of stand-by duty pay and 2) additional expense of stand-by duty use of the FF vehicle. There was further debate on whether the use of the STFD vehicle by a stand-by duty FF would improve overall response time.
 - i. At the end of this meeting we agreed there was a need for further discussion by all parties relating to:
 - 1. The Chief and Fire Committee need to provide a stronger case-for-change for implementation of a stand-by duty program.
 - 2. There is an insufficient knowledge of “customer expectations” associated with the idea of spending additional money for this purpose, i.e., stand-by duty. In other words, we all struggle with knowing if the residence of the community would support this type of proposal.
 - 3. Overall cost considerations need to be better understood by all parties. The cost of the overall proposal was the major objection, not the use of the STFD vehicle for stand-by duty... which was the committee’s understanding.
 - b. **Action:** The Fire Committee will take this up at the next meeting and decide if a case-for-change proposal is appropriate.
- 4) The committee had a broad discussion on the budgeting process for the fire department. The Chief indicated that there is a capital budget for large items, but many day-to-day operational items are required to be submitted to the Board on a case-by-case basis for approval. The committee agreed that there should be an overall budget for the fire department but did not know if there were other considerations from an accounting standpoint. At the subsequent meeting with the Township Clerk and Supervisor noted above in item #3, Chairman Mather and Chief Drake discussed this topic in more detail.
 - a. **Action:** We discussed an option that would allow the Chief to create an overall budget for his department and submit it to the Board annually for approval. The Chief and Clerk agreed to discuss this further and develop a plan for implementation.
- 5) The committee discussed the desire to better organize our meeting minutes so that they can be used by the Board to address pending items. In response, minutes will include “**Action**” items that we hope will be address by the Board during their monthly Board meetings.
- 6) We were reminded that the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of each month is firefighter training night starting at 6:30pm. All committee and Board members were encouraged to attend.
- 7) Based on the standing agenda item related to the topic of shared services (consolidation), the committee reviewed the challenges associated with this subject and agreed that the topic will be removed from the standing agenda. The consensus was that this is an initiative that is more appropriately handled by the elected officials (of multiple communities) and perhaps outside the purview of the committee. We agreed to reopen the conversation upon the request of the Board.
- 8) We discussed the topic of subscribing to cable TV at the fire house. Currently there is no cable TV. The Chief would like to have cable TV available, so firefighters are encouraged to spend

time at the fire house. The benefits would be quicker response times because firefighters are immediately available; improved comradery, more social interaction among members. The committee was in support of the fire department having cable TV.

a. **Action:** This should be discussed by the Board for resolution.

- 9) The Chief gave a demonstration on the use of the new chest compression device that was funded in part by the fundraiser dinner (Big Boy) and other donations totaling approximately \$5000.
- 10) The Chief gave the committee a tour of the fire house – showing the new breathing air compressor unit that is now fully installed (for refilling self-contained breathing apparatus air tanks).

Correspondence:

- 1) None

Additional public comments:

- 1) None

Adjourn: Motion to adjourn and accepted: Time 9:00pm

Submitted by: Jeff Mather