

Improving the Efficiency of Fire Services in Seven Southwestern Cuyahoga County
Communities

A Joint Project of Area Majors and Baldwin-Wallace College

Operations Team Meeting

October 27, 2006

Attending Meeting: Jim Astorino, Bernie Benedict, Joe Campagna, Paul Duchoslav, Pam Falasco, Eric Fingerhut, Gale Fisk, Michael Foulter, Michael Frantz, John French, Terry Hickey, Pat Johnson, Jack Kafer, Nicholas Kashi, Mike Lasky, Greg Lobas, Bob Magee, Jerald Miluk, Ken Patton, Tim Potts, Mark Ramach, Oscar Skavdahl, Bryan Sloan, Joseph Stefanko, Marty Zanotti

Mary Pisnar gave a quick hello and asked that individuals from the different committees add to the presentation when their committee was discussed.

Finance Team:

The Finance Team has gathered preliminary financial information and looked at “what if” situations including what one Mill would be for the district. Put together a broad shell of budget revenues and expenditures. The team has also created financial considerations that would be unique to each community ex: debt, levies, etc. Our area is very similar financially verse other communities that have regionalized. The team has many answers that have not been answered yet: what will the millage be, how will we handle outstanding debt, etc. The team has hit a point where it needs to have meeting with legal team to find out if these things are legal. The financial officers are very helpful with getting us the numbers that we need and we appreciate it.

Q: Have you added outside expenditures? Ex. Mechanics?

A: Yes, and we can get that information on the web-site.

Q: What cities have not reported?

A: Olmsted Falls has not responded, but their fiscal officer has just left.

Operations Team:

Medical protocols sub-committee met shortly, but the meeting went well. Our job we were tasked with was to try to merge two medical protocols- Parma and Southwest. Initially there seemed to be a lot of differences, but we were looking at older protocols and both hospitals are in the process of updating. But we have found that they are both in the process of updating their protocols. The team feels that they only have five percent of the issues left to figure out. Once we are able to work out these points we will be given to the doctors to okay. The next thing as an EMS sub-committee is operations, training.

Operations team will now be working toward fire SOPs. We worked on setting up some sub-committee to work on fire ops, but we haven't even scratched the surface yet. We did make up a rough list of who would be on committee. The meeting will be November 3rd

at 8:30am because of shift changes. We have pretty much broken it down to two operations- fire and EMS.

Q: Is there a concern that there will be so many people that it could be a headache?

A: Yes and no, there are so many things that need to be done, we will need a lot of work done and the more people to help us with it the better.

Q: Have you looked at how many cities have SOPs? Do each city has SOPs?

A: Yes, that is one of the first things that we will work with is combining the SOPs. We will also look at other cities that has already regionalized, because their SOPs may help us have a starting point.

Legal Team:

Thank you for all your help, we've appreciated everyone's help. We would like to thank Tim Dobeck who has helped us with legal research so far. We have just now started the research of hiring legal council. The Legal Team has begun by doing a considerable amount of research on legal structure. The two structures that we narrowed it down to are: fire district, in Ohio it is already under the revised code, the other is a council of governments, which is an agreement between the cities and the entity would only have the power that the cities give it. The district does have the power to levy, but Council of Governments does not. Finance team likes the idea of levying to fund at least part of the entity. Members of the legal team have been doing surveys of other cities that have regionalized. We believe that if this succeeds this will be the largest regionalized district in Ohio. The areas that have regionalized say that it has been successful process. We have decided that we will recommend to the strategy team the legal structure of a fire district. The revised code does allow enough flexibility that we can build in the conditions that we want. Ex. Only 9 board members are allowed, but we can decide how the representation of the board would be. We essentially draft a contract that would contain the provisions an example is that the terms and conditions for firefighters includes civil service, we can add this into the contract.

The next step is to address issues that we will need to be added to the contract or agreement. We have already identified on issue of the structure of the board, will the board members need to be from certain communities, do they need to have a background in fire, or some kind of specialty. We feel the board members should have professional qualifications, and not be elected officials. Is this a one city- one person board or proportional? No decisions have been made, but these are some issues that have been discussed. We will begin drafting RFPs to hire some legal council. We are leaning toward a full-service law firm. We will have some kind of interview process and that we will open this up to whoever would like to join. Finance mentioned that they want to meet with legal, well legal wants to meet with finance. We will have many topics that we will have to address. Develop a way to make sure that the taxes are even for the tax payers.

Q: You said that you don't want to put mayors or councils members on the board. Is there any talk about making it an elected position?

A: We believe that elected officials cannot hold more than one position because it is an ethical question of holding more than one public position. If the members are appointed by a city we would feel that it would be the member's fiduciary responsibility to the entire district rather than just their city. Yes, we have considered elections, I don't know if we are leaning that way, but it has been discussed. In the communities that have been polled the positions are highly respected, but none of the cities were close to our size. We asked them about their qualifications, but since typically since they are smaller there were no qualifications set. Members that would be eligible would be retired firefighters for example. We realize that there needs to be some representative format.

Q: You said there be certain qualifications that need to be met. Would there be an interview process? Will a union representative be on the interview panel or could I suggest that?

A: Yes, that would be a good idea. We discussed an interview process that we would give the mayors a choice to choose from two members the interviewers choose. There are many ways we could do it, but that is just one suggestion.

Community Relations:

We've been working on internal communications. We've already created a PowerPoint, a brochure, and a newsletter that are in rough draft form. We ask that this group fill out a backgrounder that would give us your opinion of the project so far. This will help us create quotes for our communications.

There will also be a form for each team will fill out that will track the progress of the team.

All-Firefighters Meeting:

Last week we did have an all-firefighters meeting to answer some basic questions that the firefighters may have.

Q: Will we have another one? There have been a lot of questions for when the next one? How often do you think we should have them?

A: How often do you think we should have them?

I would say about every three months. Every month would be over kill. What if it was scheduled for three to four times a year. Yeah that would be good. I have heard that a lot of guys who didn't go that wanted to know what happened. Hopefully our newsletter will be circulated soon that we will help keep the firefighters informed.

Budget:

\$35,000 was raised by the hospitals and community donations. The Gund Foundation funded the research the process. Each community has donated \$5,000 to help fund us

through the summer. We have a rough estimated budget for the 18 months of \$500,000. We have received a grant from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) for \$125,000. Jim invited some members from FMCS to the Strategy team who let us know of this grant. Please let us know if you have any grant resources that would help our project. Our biggest expenses to-date have been faculty members, students, and food. The bulk of the \$500,000 will be consultants and the bulk of that is the legal fees. One thing about hiring consultants is that BW is the party hiring the which leaves doors open for us to choose a firm we best fits with the project. Are there any questions with financial issues?

Q: Can the financial statement be put up on our web-site so that we can look at it.

A: Yes, we will put up what has been spent so far.

Q: Do you get a sense or have you gone to the communities to see if they want this? The communities are so proud of their fire service.

A: During the second phase of the project we did do some polling. The public was overwhelmingly supportive if the project improved service. We are happy to share that with anyone who wants it. It was only the original five communities and it was not broke down by community, but district wide it was a positive response.

Q: Oct 3rd fire protocols meeting, what standards will we be following?

A: We would like to use or at least start with NFPA. However, that is for the group to decide, the national standards should be our target but I understand we may not quite reach that. Also, once this is up and running it will be amendable for the first few years.

Q: Do we have set minimums?

A: No not right now. However, when working out manning and staffing we should not expect an increase in funds.

Q: Some trucks have 2 men riding in a truck or 3 men. I won't feel comfortable riding with 2 men, but you said that we can't expect to expand much more or additional funding. If we are working with what we have now, how are we going to make it better?

A: Better utilization, you have to look at it over the whole district. Over the whole district can you better distribute the man power you already have.

Q: Its still redistribution no matter how you look at it.

A: If a community chooses to join a district, once it has been united it will no longer be looked on a city by city basis it will be an entire district. We don't know exactly how it will be completely worked out. It will be similar to the EMS protocols, in the respect that we do not want to go backwards. So that must be one of the standards that no community goes backwards, but that all cities are moving forward. This is why we need to have experienced individuals that are on the operations sub-committee and that need to attend the November 3rd meeting.

Thank you all for attending.

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