

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

A Joint Project of Area Majors and Baldwin-Wallace College

Finance Team Meeting
September 22, 2006

Attending Meeting: Gregory Cingle, Pierre David, Eric Fingerhut, Gale Fisk, Marty Healy, Ken Kleppel, Kim Lammers, Joe, Pope, and Jason Stuart.

Introduction and overview of other committees.

At the last meeting it was decided that the Finance Team would first investigate into what each city currently has and how much it their department(s) cost to run. The team heard from five of the seven cities.

A packet of three forms were handed out to the team and explained. The Operating form shows what each city is operating at. Some figures seem off so the team will be looking closer into the numbers and fixing any problems. Please let Joe know if the numbers for you city are not correct. This form will be updated as time goes by. The team looked at depreciation schedules and noticed that some have cities have equipment completely depreciated.

Q: On these numbers are there some costs that are sunk in police budget, ex. Dispatch.

A: Dispatch is not in these particular numbers.

Q: Buildings where more than fire is housed will that show in budget?

A: We need to look at any joint assets. Or a formula that will tell us what percent belongs to fire. We will also need to find out if the cities own the land or lease the building or a combination.

The second form is a total break down of EMS, which was created to help the Community Relations Team in creating a pamphlet. This will show how over the last 20 years EMS expenses have grown.

The third sheet show problematic issues that the team will need to work out at a later date. An example of this is: we will need to know if current levies can be moved to the new district. There are a lot of issues such as levies, leases, etc.

Q: What is the difference between inside/ outside?

A: Outside means that when you pass a levy that levy can not collect more than what it collected the year it was passed. This is funded through property taxes.

Inside means that the city is limited to 10 millage that the schools, city, parks, etc. collectively must split between themselves. This means tax payers could have a tax increase with inflation.

Q: What if city collected the taxes generated by the levies and then remitted it to fire district?

A: The faster that the legal structure is decided the easier it will be to see how that would work. This form is just items that we felt may cause problem and will need to be gone over down the road.

Everyone is a charter community except Parma which is statutory which means they follow state law. That is why there is an elected treasurer in Parma.

We have just completed a new truck and fire station, so the city may not want to give it up.

That's why there has been some discussion of purchasing the assets, so in that way the tax payers do not feel cheated.

If the district is created it may not want seven different ladders, so there may be some income by selling these over equipped things.

Q: On the equipment side, if the equipment is purchased from the cities how will the district pay to purchase the equipment?

A: We will need to figure out how much it will cost to run the district and some way of allocating finances from each city. There may be a levy. We will have to look to see if the current levies will be able to move over to the newly formed district. It will be interesting to see if we can use outside levies. We would need to know the property values for all the communities in case we go with the levy option or we could go with a billing route. Current levies do not pay for the entire fire services some comes from city's general fund.

Q: Are there any federal dollars that will assist this?

A: Most likely there is, perhaps from homeland security. We have recently been notified that our grant proposal through FMCS has been accepted. This grant is for our current process of creating a model district. Perhaps we will get grants for the transitional period. It will be a large transition period.

The transfer of current funding to new funding is sticky issue. Operating or maintenance may be absorbed into general operations. One mechanic may fix all fire/plow trucks for the city, so maintenance may not be in these current operating budgets. There are two kinds of repairs: critical to the mission and not critical to mission. Repairs may need to be looked at through operations, but not finance.

Dispatch is expensive and material, but other issues, such as the mechanic example, are too little to be worried about. Dispatch and joint assets will be the real issues.

If we embrace this district from the finance perspective it will be great, but from the council stand point they will not want to compromise any safety.

The project theorizes that it will help efficiency. For example, if the firefighters are out on a call and can't get to a second call or if we had a major catastrophe we don't have a system that would help. With the mutual aid system set up the help will come eventually,

but with a district and central dispatch a second department would be there right there with no delay. It will also help because of border or housing placements some homes may be closer to a different station than their city's fire department.

The district will be able to operate at a lower cost because instead of having seven different things the district would only need one or two. For example negotiations, instead of seven there would be one. Hopefully overtime will decrease which would be a major price cut. Often fire departments have lite duty firefighters. Perhaps dispatch would be staffed with those firefighters. EMD dispatch would provide a better service because of better communication. It will enable the dispatch to discuss the situation to firefighters on the truck to better prepare them. In the next few years there will be an increase in runs because an aging population. Fire services will be one of the first things to regionalize or have to joint fire and police force or part-timers which are less safe.

Q:What is the target date?

A: We want to have things ironed out by December 2007 then it will be presented to the city councils and hopefully passed. So that from there we can start operating from 6-12 months later.

Q: What happens if a centralized city does not join?

A: There is something set up so that other cities can drive through, but would lose some of the capital and trucks. It is not want we would want.

Q: What does one mil cost a \$100,000 house in Cuyahoga County?

A: Approximately \$31

What we will work on for the next meeting....

- dispatches
- joint assets costs
- add in missing cities
- health care
- capital thresholds and overtime

We'll have Joe send out a request of information for anything that may be needed.

Next Finance Team meeting will be on October 13, 2006 in the Colony Room at 11:30am.

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