

FIRE & EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES TASK FORCE
CITY OF TOWN & COUNTRY, MO
February 18, 2021
Via Zoom Videoconference
8:00 AM

Members: Alderman Ryan Mortland (Co-Chairman), Alderman Sue Allen (Co-Chairman), Don Sanders (absent), George Tarlas, Todd Solomon, Amber Walsh

OTHERS PRESENT:

City Administrator Bob Shelton, Communications and Administrative Assistant Morgan Kuepfert.

1. Call to Order

Alderman Ryan Mortland called the meeting to order at 8:02 a.m. and the roll as noted above was taken. There was a quorum.

2. Approval of Agenda

Ms. Walsh moved to accept the agenda as submitted, seconded by Mr. Tarlas and approved.

3. Approval of January 21, 2021 Minutes

Ms. Walsh moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Tarlas and approved.

4. Discussion – Fire House Options and Staffing

Mr. Shelton stated, as a follow-up, that at the direction of the Task Force, Mr. Tarlas and Mr. Solomon met with Chief Sadtler and Mr. Shelton to look more in depth at financing and operational expenses of all options previously discussed. Mr. Shelton noted they did a walk-through of the current fire house.

Mr. Solomon stated that a breakdown of all expenses was provided and while the Town and Country station is the smallest within the West County Fire District, it costs 2.5 times more to run it annually compared to other houses. Various expenses were discussed such as retrofitting equipment, gear for the firemen, washing the gear, etc. Mr. Solomon believes that the Task Force needs to focus the majority of its efforts on a funding mechanism.

Mr. Tarlas echoed Mr. Solomon's statements, and added that if $\frac{3}{4}$ of the City's overall budget is for public safety, the City needs to do it right. Mr. Tarlas believes that based on discussions with Chief Sadtler and data collected, it is clear that the City needs two well-positioned and fully functional stations.

Chief Sadtler reminded the Task Force that the estimated cost for a new station is about \$5 million, with variables in land acquisition, architectural aspects, etc. Discussion ensued relating to funding mechanisms. Mr. Solomon stated that if a property tax for fire safety was imposed on the residents, it would cost the average \$600,000 household about \$1,000 additional in taxes per year. Questions were raised as to how to educate the public on exactly what the tax would provide to the City and its residents.

Mr. Tarlas stated he feels that enough assessment has been done to conclude that the City needs two stations, and that discussions now should be centered around funding. Mr. Shelton explained there are some inherent challenges with the current operation where the City owns the fire house, but it is unclear who is responsible for certain capital type expenses. Chief Sadtler stated that the Task Force should focus also on operations such as data driven infrastructure, an example being that the server room is not temperature controlled, and the same room currently holds the boiler as well.

Chief Sadtler, in response to questioning, explained that in order for the City to join the Fire District, a petition drive would be needed with at least 25% of previous voters in favor of the ballot initiative to get the tax on the ballot. The proposal would then be taken to the voters. With the current rates, if Town and Country joined the district, the residents would be paying .98 cents on the dollar. He further explained that in 2024, various bonds would retire and the rate would drop again to .88 cents on the dollar. Deputy Chief Fraizer, in response to questioning, clarified that no additional bonds would be required for the construction of two new houses, and reminded the Task Force that Town and Country would no longer be obligated under the current contract. Alderman Mortland explained that current operations are funded out of Town and Country's budget, and the extra \$4 million would open up for other Town and Country expenditures. Chief Sadtler also explained that any time the Fire District needs a tax increase or bond issued, it is required to be taken to the voters. He added that if Town and Country is a part of the District, residents can run for seats on the Board.

5. Discussion – Police Department and Public Works Considerations

Chief Cavins explained that there is currently an office at the fire house for the Police Department, however, it is not conducive to what is truly needed of a police substation. He explained that strategic location and infrastructure is needed to allow a fully operational substation. He gave examples of situations that a substation would improve, such as visibility, access to both directions of I-64, etc. Chief Cavins further explained the benefit that an Emergency Operation Center would have to the City overall. A dedicated place for such operations would allow the Police Department to work in conjunction with the Fire and EMS personnel and operate at its fullest potential.

With regard to the Public Works Department, Mr. Shelton stated that the current salt facility is not optimal for equipment storage for a few reasons, examples being the geographical

location, and that the salt is corrosive to the equipment. Mr. Shelton stated the Public Works Department would benefit greatly from a standalone facility for equipment storage.

6. Next Meeting Date – March 4, 2021, 8:00 AM via Zoom.

The Task Force discussed allowing Staff additional time to put together requested information, and the consensus of the Task Force was to move the March meeting to March 10. The Task Force will also meet on April 15 at 8:00 AM via Zoom.

7. Adjourn

At 9:16 a.m., Ms. Walsh moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Tarlas and approved.