

CITY OF CANAL FULTON

January 25, 2005

SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING

Mike Mouse, Council President, called the January 25, 2005 Special City Council meeting to order at 7:00 PM in Council Chambers at City Hall, as Mayor Grogan was delayed.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CALLING OF THE ROLL

Present: Victor Colaianni, Nellie Cihon, Mike Mouse, Diane Downing, Linda Zahirsky, and Bob Szanto

OTHERS PRESENT

Mayor John Grogan, Chief Ray Green, Assistant Chief Mark Stewart, Glenn Boyd, Canal Fulton Fire Department; Chief Bill Mutersbaugh and Matt Mossor, North Lawrence Volunteer Fire Department; Chief David Stull, Assistant Chief Randall Powell, Captain. Arvin Eller, Trustee Michael Stevens, Lawrence Township; Terry Kroeger, Scott Tillman, Chell Rossi, Bob Hill (residents)

CITIZENS' COMMENTS ON AGENDA MATTERS - None

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion of Joint Fire Efforts

Mr. Colaianni summarized the current situation: Early in 2004, there was talk from Mayor Grogan about a Joint Fire District option or enhancing current fire and EMS services. Reasons given were potential cost savings, duplication of services with the current Mutual Aid Agreement, duplication of equipment purchases, and demand for funding (school, City and Township taxes, etc.). Concerns since May 2004 have arisen. There have been a lot of newspaper articles, talk among each department, and Council members have taken calls about slow response time issues (15-minutes or longer). Mr. Colaianni said, "Moving forward . . . we've got to look at something that is going to enhance, at minimum, the EMS services we have." He said there is a Mutual Aid Agreement between Canal Fulton and the Township, but there are still weekend and night services gaps and stated, "The priority here is the safety of our residents."

Chief Mutersbaugh said that starting January 9, they expanded their services from 7 AM to 5 PM, seven days a week. He said that they hoped in the near future they would have three personnel and explained how tones/response time worked. He said they are at SCD (which is closing), so they are going to have to switch to somewhere - hopefully the RED Center. Mr. Szanto was concerned about having emergency issues where it was "toned out" three times without response. He was told that was when the stations were un-staffed on off hours. When the three stations are staffed, their out-the-door time is usually less than a minute; data is kept on response times.

Chief David Stull stated it would help if they go to RED Center because they can talk "right into the radio," and tell everyone they have the call. He felt things would be different because RED Center does not currently have Lawrence Township's streets/addresses. The RED Center can list North Lawrence as a recommended unit for whatever address typed in to dispatch service.

There are plans to work on mutual responders for structure fires. Mr. Colaianni asked if it was functional to do some sort of flowchart that outlines who responds to what, and was told it was. Mr. Szanto asked the three Fire Chiefs if they agree there are "holes in the system" and how would they address fixing same, and what kind of cooperative effort can be attained; "We've taken steps 10 years ago, we didn't have anything. And, now we've got a manned daytime." He was told the next step would perhaps to go 24/7. Mr. Colaianni said the hole we have is the weekend that is not being currently covered. City Council has budgeted for weekend coverage, and he asked if the Township has budgeted for same and was told they have not. The Township budget is based on levy funds; last year the Township put nearly three-quarters of a million dollars into the Township Fire Service (new building, pump, and ambulance). Mr. Colaianni was concerned about the large amount of people who come into the area on the weekends (EXA: Varsity Club, Clay's Park) - occasionally numbering up to 3,000 people during the summer.

Chief Green said Canal Fulton's coverage is 6 AM to 6 PM with the day crew. One week they are at Canal Fulton; the next week, they're staffing the Township station (with three personnel). Canal Fulton also has a night squad program currently running 10 PM to 6 AM; there are three people on call to be initial responders for EMS runs. They are in process of taking that from 6 PM to 6 AM with personnel on call. They also have in their Policies & Procedures that each member of the Fire Department signs up for at least three nights per month for night on call.

Chief Stull stated they are currently working a 6 AM to 6 PM, Monday through Friday, every other week staffed. For the 6 PM to 6 AM, it is dependent on the first people that show up at the station. He stated that what North Lawrence does and whatever plan they come up with is between North Lawrence and the Board of Trustees, not North Lawrence and Canal Fulton, and Lawrence Township (North Lawrence is a contracted and private fire company). He added that

CITY OF CANAL FULTON

January 25, 2005

Sunday is no doubt one of the busiest run volume days of the week.

Bob Hill said Sunday is the biggest priority, with Saturday high also. Mr. Hill spoke about an October 23 call, where there were three women from Canal Fulton Fire Department that handled the call in the Township because nobody in the Township was around on that Saturday to handle it. He said that the Saturday following Thanksgiving, the same thing happened. Nobody from the Township responded. On Sunday at 1 PM, Ray Green responded to a call; one of the Township firemen showed up to assist. Mr. Hill and Glen Boyd responded to that same call to help Mr. Green out with a woman that is in bad shape (no other firemen showed). He said, "That was his call, and none of his firemen showed up, except his two captains." On Monday, he called Mayor Grogan and told him he wanted firemen in the firehouse on Saturday and Sunday for the rest of the year, and was told to go ahead, and that's why there were firemen 6 AM to 6 PM in the Canal Fulton Fire Department covering the station. He said he wasn't picking on the Township, he was just saying these are incidents that happen on Saturday and Sunday. He said that people have things to do on weekends, but if they're not scheduled and you schedule them, they'll be there. On Monday nights, he posted a sign-up sheet. Three days later, he had seven or eight people signing up for three shifts.

Mayor Grogan thanked everyone for attending and said to the chiefs, "I want to say, you guys are doing a Hell of job communicating with each other. I know it's difficult for three areas to try to stay in touch, but you guys have really gone out of your way to try to make this process work, and I'm sure everybody appreciates it, especially the community." He asked the three Chiefs, "What do you see as some of the foremost issues that we, as an elected body, could probably begin to focus on? Let's set aside, first off, the Joint Fire District." He was answered, "Working more like a gear, things meshing better; more automatic response on calls, enhancing the staffing." It was stated the automatic aid is simple, and it's just a matter of the three chiefs sitting down and saying, "On this call, this call, and this area, this area, and this area, we need you to come help us, no matter what." Chief Stull stated there was a lot of communication between himself and Chief Green, and they switched to Canal Fulton's frequency. They are lacking equipment. Canal Fulton has some dead spots in their system, and Chief Stull is researching moving equipment to their 150-foot site on their tower. They have excellent communication now, after spending \$43,000 on their radio system. Their tower is an old railroad tower on Alabama Avenue; the antenna is on top of it. Chief Stull stated it would be advantageous for all three departments to be on the same band range. Chief Green said Canal Fulton is on the same band range as North Lawrence's; they have UHS system also; he said their problem is they need to move (fine tune) their antennae to enhance their coverage. There is an agreement with the tower company for 150 feet on the tower, which is over 250 feet. Mr. Mouse asked if we could get away with one on the tower. Chief Green said that if we moved to that tower, that would cover anything in town. It would be Canal Fulton's antenna going on the tower and using our repeater, and this is what is currently happening. Chief Stull said he would talk to the Board about possibly some of the funding of the expense of putting the antenna up there because it would be used for both the Township and Canal Fulton. Cost will not be significant, as the equipment is already purchased.

Mr. Szanto asked, "If the funds were available with both departments, could we expand the existing system to 24 hours a day? In other words, we're working now. We've got a shift of 6 AM to 6 PM. Could we rotate another shift 6 PM to 6 AM and then alternate weeks? If the money were available, would you have enough people to do that?" Chief Green answered there were enough people; "We don't have facilities in Canal Fulton to do it." Mr. Stevens interjected that with over 90 people on the roster between the fire departments, is there a way to work out 24-hour staffing? Mr. Mouse reiterated that we currently do not staff from 6 PM Friday until Monday 6 AM. Chief Mutersbaugh staffs Saturday and Sunday from 7 AM to 5 PM (this started January 9, 2005). Chief Green stated that for three people, wages alone would be \$315,360 to cover 24/7 – 52 weeks each year. Due to some of the travel distances, his recommendation would be to staff two stations with three people each – one on the south end and one on the north end. ("Then you're looking \$630,720 in wages.") Mr. Mouse asked the cost surrounding 6 PM Friday until 6 AM Monday morning (60 hours). Chief Green told him \$112,320 for 52 weeks, so each department would have to come up with about \$57,000 if they would split weekends (doing 24's on the weekend, it would be \$2,160 per weekend).

Mr. Mouse asked where the best location would be to service effectively. Mr. Colaianni stated geographically, they don't currently have a center. Mr. Szanto stated the west side is probably centrally located for the three. Mr. Terry Kroeger said what they should look at is where the number of calls is, not where the population is, to decide where the best location is. He feels anything you do to add people is going to help, but they don't necessarily have to be at the fire station, as long as they're available; but you need to put them in a station where they're going to have the quickest response time. Mr. Colaianni said that what they need to agree to do is for the three chiefs to get together, as everybody needs to be on the same page, and figure out a way where we've got staffing on the weekends. He stated that you don't put a dollar figure on somebody's life, and that is time to move forward.

Chief Green said Canal Fulton is currently working on things to remedy the situation. He is going to meet with Chief Mutersbaugh to work out automatic and mutual-aid responses - especially during the day - for auto accidents and cardiac arrest-type incidents. For structure fires, the first

CITY OF CANAL FULTON

January 25, 2005

alarm is the initial call, which is automatically Lawrence Township, and Canal Fulton dispatches for full response. They can easily include North Lawrence in it; it requires a change in the computer program at RED Center. Second, if it's a fire they can't handle with the personnel or equipment on scene, they go to second alarm. That brings in a ladder and an engine company from Jackson, North Lawrence, or Clinton. If the "lowliest fireman" ends up being the incident commander, all they have to do is call the Dispatch and say they need a second or third alarm. It's a structured response, so the dispatcher doesn't have to sit there and wonder who they want or what should they do, as there are a million other things going on that the dispatcher has to concentrate on at that time. Chief Green would like to move North Lawrence up to the first response (automatic aid), especially during the day. If we had an auto accident, they would bring an engine that has the rescue tools, if Canal Fulton's didn't get out; structure, grass and vehicles fires, the more responding - the better. In addition, Chief Green would like to see more joint training to include North Lawrence, such as the water shuttle, tanker operations, etc.

Mr. Mouse asked that the three chiefs discuss working together options and possibilities and to get back to Council as soon as they can with their ideas. He thanked all three chiefs, saying everyone appreciates all they do. Mayor Grogan stated that they've already been talking to one another and looking at productive ideas, and he thinks the fact they've opened up the lines of communication the way they have is admirable and benefits everyone; he thanked all again for attending. Mr. Tillman stood up and thanked everyone for attending the meeting; he said he was happy to hear about tonight's meeting. Mr. Tillman said, "When it comes to money and when it comes to the public knowing what's going on, you need to put the issues out there. If it comes down to you guys, form a plan. Whatever that plan may be, my point is very simply this: the weekend's got to be covered because that's what happened to me. You form your plans because you - the three of you gentlemen (chiefs) - know best about your own business, and there's no question of integrity. You form your plan, you put it to all of these people and the two gentlemen who aren't here this evening (referring to elected officials). Whatever the dollar amount is, whatever can be afforded or can't be afforded - then you need to put it out to the people because the people need to know. Let them decide. Let them know all the facts."

There was a discussion concerning day crew pay rates. Chief Stull had researched the issue. There is a mutual agreement on how the daytime staff is running. Anytime there is a change in the daytime staff (whether it is hours, personnel numbers, or pay rate), the contract between the two communities has to be altered. Chief Stull thought they had that issue resolved amongst themselves at the last meeting to change the contract and take it to the elected bodies for vote. The figures discussed: \$12 for paramedics/\$9.75 for "the basics." Mr. Mouse said Council will talk to Lawrence Township to resolve the pay issue within a month, after Chiefs Stull and Green review same. Mr. Szanto asked for current and proposed rates.

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Colaianni said Canal Fulton was presented with a lease agreement from Stark Parks regarding the Visitors Center. Council needs to review a couple of paragraphs at the next meeting, and invite Heritage Society members and other town organizations. Since there is some "broad-scope wording," Council needs to make sure they're not excluding anyone

Mr. Kroeger stated he was surprised the 911 issue with the Stark County Sheriff's office situation wasn't addressed. He said he knew the chiefs would like to eliminate the Sheriff's department and have the 911 calls go directly to the RED Center or SCD. Mr. Mouse asked the chiefs to include in their comments any thoughts or recommendations regarding same. Chief Green said he would like to see all of our 911 calls go right to the dispatch center it goes to, eliminating that middle man, time delay and potential for lost calls. Chief Green said, as he understands, the Fire Chiefs Association has made their case well known to the County Commissioners, and Stark County Fire Chiefs are fighting the Commissioners to get it switched. A LOGIC Board member stood up, saying there is in the works efforts to get the 911 system brought into the RED Center and in the new dispatch center that Nimishillen Township is looking at in the next few years. There is a lot of controversy there with the Commissioners, as to whether or not they want to do that; money and equipment issues are months away. Mr. Mouse was requested to attend the next LOGIC Board meeting (February 3, 2005 at 9 AM) or to talk to someone there. He was given the LOGIC Board President's number.

ADJOURNMENT

The January 25, 2005 Special City Council meeting was adjourned.

Patricia A. Schauwecker, Clerk of Council

Mayor John Grogan