

**VILLAGE OF NORTH PRAIRIE, VILLAGE OF EAGLE, TOWN OF EAGLE
SPECIAL JOINT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 26, 2019**

The meeting was called to order by President G. Nickerson at 7:00 p.m. in the Village/Town Board Room in the Village of Eagle, 820 E Main Street, Eagle. Roll call was taken with the following Village members present, along with the Town of Eagle and Village of Eagle Board members.

President G. Nickerson

Trustees: F. Rewasiewicz, J. H. Taylor, D. Stellpflug, K. Singh.

Clerks: R. Bagley (NP) and C. Zindars (VE)

Absent: Trustees D. Hall and A. Pellegrino

Village of Eagle Board members: President R. Spurrell, Trustees M. Lepperd, M. Schoessow, P. Jones, G. Scheff, G. Hein and M. Rice.

Town of Eagle Board members: Chairperson D. Malek, Supervisors J. Davis, S. Muth, A. Rasmussen and D. West.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Village of Eagle President R. Spurrell opened the joint meeting to Public Comments at 7:03 pm:

R. Kwiatkowski, Town of Eagle, mentioned that it is a great idea to consider consolidation, however, it has to be fair to each community. He feels the proposal should mirror North Shore Fire Dept., which provides that the rates for each community would be based on population, property value and usage. The North Shore Fire Dept. would be a great resource.

D. Latinovich, Town of Eagle, would like to know the effect of a merger on property taxes and the total costs involved.

J. Weedman, Town of Eagle, is interested in the timeframe for how this merger may happen and how the information will be disseminated.

With no other public comments, Village President R. Spurrell continued on with the joint meeting at 7:08 p.m.

R. Spurrell indicated that he, along with the Town of Eagle Chair D. Malek and Village of North Prairie President G. Nickerson have met several times to conduct some preliminary work to determine if it is worthwhile to continue further with a possible merger.

Eagle Fire Chief B. Hein stated that fire departments are merging all over the County at this time. Scarce resources can be combined to provide personnel, apparatus and equipment to safely function at an emergency scene. Combining the current personnel will balance the numbers of EMT's and firefighters and will create a level playing field. The Fire Dept. will concentrate on services, however, the Boards will have to work out the financial aspects of a merger. The largest gains will be achieved when purchasing large apparatus.

North Prairie Fire Chief P. Buchholtz mentioned that the two departments already share personnel as calls usually do not come in to departments at the same time and everyone works well together. They already train together with EMS and fire emergencies. They share equipment to provide a high quality of service for the communities. Upon merging, some duplication of services will be eliminated saving costs.

Capt. S. Kugel, Eagle Fire Department indicated that he works for both departments, as a Captain for Eagle Fire Dept. and EMS member for the North Prairie Fire Dept. Both depts. have been training and working together already for years. Capt. Kugel gave a brief overview of what the merged departments could expect to see. The financial contribution from the municipalities would be divided by equalized value as calculated by the State. It seems to be the least volatile as most formulas use

calls for service which can sway the budgets by thousands of dollars per year. North Prairie has agreed to match the reserve funds that have been placed in savings by the Eagle Fire District. The Inter-municipal Agreement will have a ten year term and a two year back-out term. The Fire Board is the governing body (seven members) of the district which oversees the operation of the fire district. The Fire Commission (three members, one from each municipality) will be responsible for the hiring and termination/grievance procedure for employees. Capt. Kugel listed a number of advantages to merging:

- Personnel staffing is the biggest reason for consolidation
- Improved response times
- Unified training structure
- Financial stability
- Eliminate duplication of equipment/apparatus.

The financial operational projections provided are based on 10 years of history projected 10 years into the future utilizing formulas. Equalized values were projected out for 10 years. **Capital expenses were removed from the projections.** This tool is being used to create a forecast of future operating expenses for a merged district from actual expenses for 10 years. The fire buildings maintenance costs will remain with each municipality and will not be merged. Roughly, in 2020, Town of Eagle would support 54.42% of the merged operating expenses, Village of Eagle at 19.88% and Village of North Prairie at 25.7%. This is a long-term, stable proposal where all the municipalities will eventually save funds in the future.

The duplication in vehicles has not been researched at this time but there is potential overall savings for all involved.

Supervisor D. West indicated that the Town of Eagle has a much lower tax rate than the Villages while 40% of the Town of Eagle is conservancy and State forest lands. The North Shore formula uses more than just equalized values. He believes merging is the way of the future, but it needs to be fair for everyone.

President G. Nickerson mentioned that including the number of calls to the formula may create significant fluctuations per year in some municipal budgets in those years when the calls spike or when the population changes.

Trustee J. H. Taylor asked about an exit plan from the merger (expected to be 2-years notice), reimbursement of funds contributed, and projections on recruitment and retention of personnel. G. Nickerson mentioned that this meeting is just to determine if we wish to move forward. The details are yet to be determined. J. H. Taylor is also wondering how the members of the Fire Board and Fire Commission will be chosen.

Chairperson D. Malek would like to meet with North Shore FD to investigate why their formula works so well for them.

Fire Chief B. Hein handed out a projection utilizing the North Shore formula based on population, equalized value and calls. North Shore has 1,000's of calls each year. (In 2017, North Shore had 7,934 calls.)

President R. Spurrell mentioned that personnel stay an average of 2 to 5 years on Eagle FD. This is difficult to project. Staffing is different with full and part-time members. Fire Dept.'s are no longer Volunteer. If the municipalities cannot agree on a formula, the merger will not happen. The capital equipment purchases in the future are where the huge savings will be realized.

Supervisor S. Muth believes the formula does not work for everyone, but is in favor of merging. The Committee needs to put more effort into a fair formula based on percentages.

Chairperson D. Malek believes that new vehicles will not need to be purchased immediately. He would like to continue meeting with the Committee.

Trustee J. H. Taylor is prepared to move forward and summed up the issues:

- Valuation/Formula for operating expenses (3 municipalities)
- Penalty on withdrawing from merger
- Future capital equipment projection for purchase and elimination
- Personnel/Staffing to answer calls

The consensus is to continue with the Village Presidents and Town Chair to meet and continue discussions.

Waiver of Compensation- Motion by G. Nickerson, seconded by F. Rewasiewicz, to waive compensation for all Board members for this special meeting. Motion carried. Opposed: J.H. Taylor.

Motion by G. Nickerson, seconded by F. Rewasiewicz, to adjourn at 9:18 p.m. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Rhoda Bagley, Village Clerk/Treasurer