



Solon Township Hall
15185 Algoma Avenue NE
Cedar Springs, MI 49319
616-696-1718

**Minutes of the Solon Township Fire Committee
November 30, 2016 meeting 7:00pm**

Meeting called to order by Chairman Mather at 7:05 PM

Members Present: Fire Chief Jeff Drake, Vice Chairman Curt Steinebach*, Chairman Jeff Mather*, Township Trustee Fred Gunnell*, Fire Department Representative Dan Spangenberg, Community Representative Burt Dent*, Community Representative Don Hamblin*.

(* = voting member)

Members Absent: None

Approval of Agenda: Motion by Fred Gunnell to approve agenda. 2nd by Don Hamlin. Motion carried 5-0.

Approval of September 14, 2016 meeting minutes: Motion by Curt Steinebach to approve minutes. 2nd by Burt Dent. Motion carried 5-0.

Business:

- 1) Discussion on the purchase of a new battery powered rescue tool to replace current tool that is 20+ years. The Chief discussed the advantages of the new tool compared to the current tool that is 20+ years old. Representative Spangenberg gave an overview of the recent demonstration describing how it outperformed the current hydraulic tool in all aspects including speed, portability, speed of start-up, ease of use, maintenance, cutting strength, etc. After questions and answers the committee provided unanimous support for the purchase of the new Genesis tool.
- 2) Discussion on the potential role of “stand-by duty” as a means of ensuring adequate staffing is provided during known low call-response periods of certain days, and when the Deputy Chief is on vacation or sick leave. Chief Drake provided this as a partial solution to the low roster count which is currently approximately 40% lower than our goal (upper 20’s). The Chief indicated that there is strong interest in this type of program among the new firefighters and moderate interest among the more veteran members. Approximately 10 members are currently fire and medical certified and thereby eligible to participate in the program. Approximately six of those new(er) firefighters.
 - a. All agreed that the stand-by duty program does not replace the need for a continuation of an assertive recruiting effort to build the roster.
 - b. There was a full discussion on pros and cons, funding considerations, potential cost savings, improved response times, etc.

- 3) Discussion on the proposed monetary incentive for firefighter call response based on % of calls made. Trustee Hoskins gave an overview of the proposal which provided a review of the incentive schedule as follows: 40-49 responses = \$175, 50-59 = \$225, 60-100 = \$300 (paid annually at the fire department banquet).
- 4) Discussion on the need for additional information on the website to spotlight the fire department, officers and members. All agreed there would be PR benefit for the fire department. Discussed other avenues for promoting including Facebook, STFD Association, etc.
- 5) Discussion on the vacant Lieutenant position. Chief Drake indicated that there are currently no qualified and/or eligible members on the department. Further discussion on whether the eligibility requirements can be amended to allow senior members, who may be lacking certain qualifications, to post for the position. The Chief indicated he would take it under advisement.
- 6) Follow up on our earlier discussion on the current drug and alcohol policy. There has been no further decision making on this topic. Currently the screening policy includes pre-employment, annual, and possibility of reasonable suspicion. Random and post-accident/injury are not part of the policy currently. No formal training for reasonable suspicion has been provided for officers. Chairman Mather suggested that there is a need for some emphasis in this area to better understand the features and advantages of each screening level, and to provide appropriate training to all levels of firefighters. Needs further Board review to include post-accident and random screening.
- 7) Trustee Hoskins gave an overview of the proposal to conditionally reimburse firefighters for training and gear based on passing certification completing a term of service. The current policy has no conditions for reimbursement. The proposal is for the Township to pay \$400 upon successfully passing the firefighter certification, and \$400 after two years of service.

Correspondence:

- 1) There was a roundtable discussion on Chief Drakes performance as fire Chief and acknowledgement that the role continues to be challenging due to the part time aspect, logistics (face time with staff), and difficulty recruiting and retaining dedicated firefighters. All comments acknowledged the positive contribution and commitment that is being made by the Chief.

Additional public comments:

- 1) None

Adjourn: Motion to adjourn and accepted: Time 9:5505pm (approx.)

Submitted by: Jeff Mather