

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING PUBLIC COMMENTS

CARBONDALE APRIL 13, 15, AND 21

5 citizen attendees, Gene Schilling, Bob Emerson and Lou Ellers, Board members; Frank Nadell, staff; Hank Van Berlo, Chuck Torinus, and Joan Teeple, steering committee.

Over the course of three nights there was a small citizen turn out. However, Mark presented the entire slide show and discussion did occur. One citizen, George Wombwell provided written comments which are attached to these notes.

General Discussion Points:

1. Gene commented that some rural residences are rated ISO 6 due to water hauling which could be higher without the water.
2. When someone calls for an ambulance has dispatch ever said no? **Frank** said every 911 call gets a response.
3. What is the policy about transporting people home from the hospital in a non-emergency? **Frank** offered that they are an emergency service only but in reality if someone was found to be ok and the ambulance is still there they have provided a ride home. There are 2 alternative services in the valley that provide this type of transport (inter-facility transport).
4. Has Garfield County considered funding a detox facility again? **Gene** said there are conversations but tough to fund.
5. It is the Chief and staff's responsibility to tell the Board how to get out the information about the Fire District as well as what staff needs. Then it is the Board's responsibility to figure out how to provide for those needs.
6. I have not seen a proposal for a major expenditure for a major piece of equipment beyond year 5. What happens after year 6?
7. Do you buy used equipment? Yes.
8. Does ISO rating require you to replace equipment after a certain age? How advanced does equipment need to be? **Frank** responded that fire equipment is a long term investment but the ambulances get worn out.
9. It is not the fire truck that will save your house; it is the people that will save your house.
10. I think the fire district is doing a great job. I see you in my neighborhood all the time. You give us great service. I live in Crystal Meadows.
11. Volunteers don't respond to as many calls as paid staff, so paid staff are the ones that will save your life but paid staff says hopefully the volunteers will show up.
12. Provided on a separate note after the meeting: what money purchased the new ladder truck? Did that money need to be spent a certain way? By a certain period?

What do you think of present services? What services do you want in the future?

1. What is the priority for fire response vs. wildfire vs. EMS? (EMS is a major driver for costs and expenditures.) **Gene** responded that a lot of equipment is cross used and there might be equipment that they don't use very much but helps to keep ISO rating down.
2. ISO ratings and why the rates are low should be marketed better so people understand the services of the District.
3. Are you spending a lot of money to save me money (re: ISO)? How would you or do you prioritize services that benefit a few residents - say rural type services? **Gene** responded that the statute requires them to provide fire services and the mil levy of 2004 enables the paramedic level of ambulance service.
4. Does ISO evaluation help the Department? What does scoring a 4 or an 8 do for the fire department and can you identify a cost for that?
5. In the best of all possible worlds what do you need that you haven't got? Is it money? Or equipment or services?
6. Do you know what the public needs vs. what they want? What do you need for the community? **Gene** stated that this is one of the reasons they are doing the Master Plan.
7. Do you anticipate adding any other stations in outlying areas? What are your station needs? **Gene** responded that fire station 4 (West End) has plans for additional bays and that station 5 (Missouri Heights) has a long term plan to be expanded.
8. As the laws change it is a challenge for the District to maintain the high level of staffing. The public needs to know what services are provided, how much it costs and how it can be delivered.
9. Is there an end date to EMT-Intermediate level trained staff?
10. Does the district prioritize EMS over fire? If I'm having a heart attack in my front yard and my house is on fire I want you to save me as I can live in my home that is rebuilt with insurance.
11. How well do you rate your ability to achieve good training and continue staff/volunteer education? **Frank** said that they do very well with training; the Board has made it a priority. **Gene** offered there is a budgetary need for more training. They no longer have the "state of the art" training facility.
12. In looking at this map of service calls, I knew about this one close to me but I didn't know about this and this and this.....This graphic resonates. This sums up your efforts more than anything you have said. Put this on the web.
13. How will this district blow their horn?
14. You should list the runs and where and what type. Many folks have the perception that the district does not do much as they see everyone hanging out when they drive by.
15. Paramedics are important in my senior living community.
16. I was concerned my apartment was too crowded with furniture so I called the station to ask what size pathways I needed to keep clear for emergency equipment and a member of the staff came to my apartment to help me figure this out. Nice service.

17. When you make an ambulance call to my neighborhood who pays for that service? **Bob** responded that insurance does and Medicare pays for a small amount. But C&RFPD is often required to write off the balance.
18. Hank answered a question from Lou about future services: I think the master plan should have a short term and long term focus. I think ALS should be on all calls until 2020 when the intermediate is phased out. This buys time and saves training budget. I have asked to see the data for the difference between ALS and BLS calls. All of that is short term. For the long term how does the district incentivize the volunteers? Pay per call? **Frank** referred to LOSAP which awards points.
19. **Lou** asked if the district is beyond the day of relying upon volunteers. Hank said he thought volunteers did not have incentives to join a call because there is paid staff on a call and if it is an ambulance call there is not enough time to respond; which is why there should be other incentives. Also, there is a perception that the administrative staff doesn't stay on a call, manage the call, stand ready for another call or complete the paper work required to be done after a call. This perception should be changed. It would be interesting to see the data on how many calls the administrative staff go on and how many calls are run all the way through. A two hour call requires two hours of paperwork and the perception is the admin staff does not take part in that although they are all cross trained – the line guys say they don't go. **Lou** responded with the analogy of going on a call but not going back to the station to clean the truck and he appreciated the comments.
20. Do you all help out when there is a big fire? Yes.
21. Will any tax money from recreational pot sales help? Not now.

Why Mil levy failed

1. **Gene** offered that if another question was to be asked of the voters that he believes they would look to get back up to what has been lost due to the decrease in property valuations and once back up to that level they would sunset the mil. Previously they didn't include a sunset because they didn't want to go out to the voters every 2-3 years. If you asked me what we would go for we would go for 2-3 mils. We have deferred maintenance so will have to catch up on maintenance.
2. Asking the voters what they want and if they would support the mil levy is not what I want to hear. Your consultants should tell you how to campaign, tell me how and what you need to keep me alive. The general public is not aware of what you do. You have been to my property many times but you do not pump out the information to the general public. Tell us what you need and how you can do it better.

How do you get your information?

1. It is difficult to find what I am looking for on the current web site.
2. Maybe develop a simple app that folks can download to see current fire district activity.

Revenues

1. Has the question been asked to Garfield County whether they would help support the Fire District to help make up the tax difference? **Gene** responded that it has not been asked but was a good idea and the Board will discuss.
2. Have you ever told the public what money you need to raise the rating 1 notch? Do you know what money has to be expended to raise or lower ISO one notch? **Chuck** responded that ISO is general parameters or guidelines and generally speaking really could not go below a 5? Do you have any ideas? The citizen that raised this issue stated that his district lowered theirs from an 8 to a 4; it can be done.
3. What is the cost to replace 1st line equipment? 2nd line of equipment? When do you expect to replace the 1st line of equipment? What are the expenditure requirements to keep those up in order to respond? What does it cost to bring them back up? What do you need to maintain with growth in the District? **Both Frank and Gene** responded that the fire district administration have these replacement plans. But Almont is working on this aspect of the Master Plan.
4. Is there a way to adjust the mil levy as property valuations rise and fall?
5. Have you considered de-brucing? Yes they have and did. But the levy itself cannot float up and down depending on valuation levels.

April 15, 2015

Thoughts on long range planning for the Carbondale and Rural Fire District from a 15 year Carbondale resident and former 10 year chairman of a large suburban and rural fire district east of Louisville, KY.

My casual observation is that our department does and is recognized for doing a creditable job upon arrival at fires and other emergencies. Less so is my own and the public's perception of financial management and public relations. The questionable acquisition of a 100 ft. ladder truck so far in advance of need raises questions of priorities. I will add that in my prior experience a 100 ft. ladder truck acquired just before I came on the board was justified because a 13 story condominium building was erected near our boundary of an expanding suburban area. The truck had one marginal use of its ladder length during its entire service life. A nearby fire district sold their emblematic 100 ft. ladder truck in exchange for something more useful. Even 100 ft. ladder trucks wear out and become obsolete for insurance rating purposes. Keep in mind they get a lot of wear of maintenance just from training exercises. Special equipment should be planned on a regional basis with mutual aid districts.

Demographics and related aspects can as we experienced caused our volunteer base to all but evaporate. We missed the opportunity to provide low cost housing adjacent to our stations for singles and small families. Our traditional volunteer source could no longer afford to live near our stations and we became forced to rely almost entirely on a paid full time force. The result is a smaller turnout offset by faster response and more dependency on mutual aid backup. Volunteer subsidized housing can be especially valuable at remote stations. A quick response from a remote station also helps keep the main station from needlessly committing resources. Forecasting and reacting to the outlook for maintaining the volunteer force is essential.

Another observation from my experience is that the districts that paid their board significant money were the poorest run and had the weakest finances. I think this speaks to empire building. My former district did not pay board members and candidates were recruited based on geographical, professional and socioeconomic balance.

Based on a realization of inevitable population density growth I recommend the fire district get involved in new development to ensure emergency access and building standards. Don't be passive relative to planning, building codes and

water supply. Remember one responsibility, especially for the board, is to promote the best fire insurance ratings feasible for the district or sub-districts within the whole. Lower insurance rates is an asset that is salable to the public in justification of increases in revenue.

Be proactive about publishing the numbers of runs. Publicize genuine financial needs. The general public often thinks of firefighters as people who sit around all day.

Carefully consider the separate but complementary roles of the board and the chief. The chief has the handle on the day to day. After reviewing his recommendations and adopting a current budget a financial plan for future years should be adopted by the board and the revenue needs communicated to the public.

Respectfully

George Wombwell
1189 Heritage Drive
Carbondale