

**THE CITY OF KENT, OHIO  
HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE  
WED., MARCH 3, 2010**

This meeting of the Health & Safety Committee of Kent City Council was called to order by Jack Amhrein, Vice Chair, in the absence of John Kuhar Chair, at 8:15 p.m. on Wed., March 3, 2010. He explained the only item on the agenda dealt with the Regional Fire Study.

**PRESENT:** MR. AMRHEIN, MR. DELEONE, MR. FERRARA, MS. SHAFFER, MR. VALENTA, MS. WALLACH, AND MR. WILSON

**ALSO PRESENT:** J. FIALA, MAYOR; D. RULLER, CITY MANAGER; J. SILVER, LAW DIRECTOR; L. COPLEY, CLERK OF COUNCIL; W. LILLICH, SAFETY DIRECTOR; AND J. WILLIAMS, FIRE CHIEF.

**ABSENT:** MR. TURNER & MR. KUHAR

**Dave Ruller, City Manager**, explained that **William Lillich, Safety Director, and Jim Williams, Fire Chief**, were present to update them on this issue. He reminded them they completed Phase 1 of the study, and moved into Phase 2. He said Chief Williams has told him there has been a fair amount of activity among the chiefs, and Chief Williams wanted to update everyone at this time.

Chief Williams said he wanted to bring everyone up to speed. He said they have slowed down somewhat in the last month, but have been busy gathering data for Phase II.

He said in Phase I, they reviewed many items. He said they surveyed Fire and EMS services, and wanted to look at mutual aid and auto aid programs. He said they wanted to evaluate the various stations to evaluate their conditions. He said they looked at communications and dispatch operations. Chief Williams said they reviewed the station location study, to see if they meet current standards.

Chief Williams said they looked at staffing, recruitment, and personnel practices. He said they surveyed management, administration, and command components. He said they reviewed the planning for Fire and EMS protection, and analyzed emergency disaster plan. He said they surveyed the community demographics, and evaluated the finance and income levels. He said all of these components have an impact.

Chief Williams said they ended up with 160 recommendations, and are looking more in-depth at levels of staffing and response time. He said they are reviewing how each department operates, their communication and administration. Chief Williams said they are starting to look at how to blend the services, for more efficient delivery of services.

Chief Williams explained he is the chair of the Chief's Committee, and distributed his report to the PAFERS Steering Committee. He said he would not read the entire list, but wanted them to see some of the things they are doing. He said the other packet he distributed contains the recommendations. He said the recommendations highlighted in gray are the ones assigned to a subcommittee. He said the blue highlighted recommendations are currently being done or going to be made at the next steering committee. He said the highlighted yellow items are the ones the chiefs feel they can handle without a subcommittee.

Chief Williams said they are working on thirty-three recommendations at this time. He said they decided to look at firefighter safety. He said they wanted to take those recommendations that would improve the firefighters' safety so they could get more of a buy-in from the firefighters. He said the recommendations dealing with the Insurance Services Offices (ISO) would benefit the community. Chief Williams said if they lower the ISO ratings, then insurance rates will be lower.

Ms. Wallach asked if the recommendations that were not highlighted (the white ones) would eventually be

assigned to a subcommittee, and Chief Williams said would be, but they have a lot of work to do and are short-staffed. He said it would be nice to dedicate all of their time to the project, but that cannot be done. Chief Williams said that the subcommittees are set up with representatives from each department. He said they take information back to the various departments, reviewing it with the shifts and other personnel. He said they get all of the opinions and return to the Chiefs Committee Steering Committee.

Chief Williams said that working on thirty-three recommendations is quite hectic. He said they have developed a website where they can view all of the meeting minutes from all of the subcommittees, etc. He said it was developed to keep everyone informed.

Chief Williams said he wanted to review some of the things they are working on, such as how they should staff and how many personnel they should send. He said they are classifying buildings, and working with Kent State to host a website, so that all communities can share the information. Chief Williams said that pre plans help with fires, adding they are aware of what chemicals are onsite, the building layout electrical and gas shutoffs. He said they are moving forward with how they respond to calls, and did some other safety things, making it easier for the firefighters to operate.

Chief Williams called for questions on Phase 1 at this time.

Ms. Shaffer said this is a lot of information to digest, adding she is having some difficulty sorting out the main criteria. She said she has heard them speak of safety, but asked about cost savings, and Chief Williams said they have not gotten to that part yet, adding he would get to those recommendations.

He said they have spoken about combining their communication centers, adding he is unsure of the cost savings as it is a very complicated issue. He said they will look at how they purchase equipment, and possible cost savings. He said the hospitals provide supplies to the various EMS units, but because of the economics, the list has changed and they are responsible for another thirty-six items. He said they will review group purchasing. Chief Williams said all of that is in the recommendations, but they cannot deal with all of them at one time.

Ms. Shaffer questioned the issue of safety and delivery of services, and Chief Williams said an example is how many people should respond to the scene of a fire. He said a residential fire is different from Kentway. He said for a residential, they may send twelve to fifteen firefighters, but for a high rise, they may send twenty-five to thirty-six. He said they do not have that many, and the question is how they do it. He said they now use Mutual Aid, which means they wait until they get on the scene. He said they are looking at changing that to be automatic aid, where a staff would automatically be on the way. He said they can be turned around if not needed.

Mr. Lillich said this is meant to clarify and refine the large book they received. He said it will take years to fully implement. He noted he needs to get one to the Mayor. Mr. Lillich said it is important to all members of the Steering Committee to be sure the elected officials are up-to-date with the activities, which is the reason for this presentation. He said they can visit the website, and update themselves. He said they will return periodically with updates, and may discuss funding also.

Ms. Shaffer said they initially paid a fee for this study. She asked if they are still paying that fee or is that portion done, and Mr. Lillich said they paid up-front monies for Phase I, the large report. He said in November they approved an additional \$19,000 for Phase 2 of the study, which is the analysis and collection of information. He said in this phase, they will see more concentration on the blending of services, where they will consider erasing the jurisdictional lines, in terms of fire services response. He said they are still seeing how all of the pieces will fit, but noted that one way or another, it will improve services. Mr. Lillich said it may not save money, but may reduce the amount of expense in terms of increase, while they increase their efficiency of services.

Chief Williams said the costs are going up dramatically. He said their last engine purchased in 2004 cost \$389,000, and today it would cost \$585,000. He said their costs have gone up dramatically. Chief Williams agreed with Mr. Lillich that while they may not reduce their overall cost, they hope to limit those

increases. He said it is a lot of work, but very exciting. He said the level of participation of the firefighters, and their comments on how to deliver the services is exciting to them.

Chief Williams moved onto a review of Phase II at this time. He said this includes a further in-depth study on the fire department's organizational review. He said it includes the development of a loss potential survey, where they look at all structures and facilities in community and determine what happens if they burn down or have a major chemical spill. Chief Williams said that study shows that for 85% of the businesses, if a building burns down, the companies do not rebuild in that community. He said they are looking at what they can do to prevent that from happening.

Chief Williams said they are surveying their apparatus, equipment replacement, and maintenance programs. He said Kent has a fire truck replacement fund, and do the maintenance to extend their life. He said they are trying to get the other departments to the same level to help extend the life. He said they will review the potential of shared vehicles. He said the City is required to have a reserve engine, and the question is how can they share that so they do not have to spend the money.

Chief Williams said they are reviewing their fire prevention and public education programs. He said they need to take advantage of Kent State and improve their education. He said they are reviewing their training programs, and are working together to provide better training. He said they are reviewing how they contract for different services. He said that four communities contract out their ambulance billing, and are all paying a different rate. He said they are studying the blending of services, which means doing away with the boundaries. He said they may see a Streetsboro unit responding to Kent, or Ravenna or Brimfield responding. He said they are providing a capital improvement plan, so that the apparatus at the various stations is cared for. He said the question is how to do it and how to pay for it. He said they are developing an implementation strategy for those recommendations.

Ms. Wallach said it seems like most of the points covered deal with fires, fire prevention, and fire calls. She asked if a majority of their calls are paramedic calls, and Chief Williams said that is part of this, adding it is all inclusive.

There were no further questions, nor audience comment at this time.

Ms. Wallach asked the cost of an EMS truck, and Chief Williams said the last one was purchased in 2008 and cost \$189,000. He clarified that is for the vehicle only, with no equipment.

Hearing no further business before this Committee, Vice Chair Amrhein adjourned this meeting at 8:35 p.m.

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Linda M. Copley, Clerk of Council

**ACTION RECOMMENDED:**

- 1) UPDATE OF REGIONAL FIRE STUDY PRESENTED; NO ACTION NEEDED.**