

Lawrence Township Advisory Board Meeting
October 23, 2007 6pm
Lawrence Public Assembly Room
9001 E. 59th St. Lawrence, IN

Agenda

1. Approval of additional appropriations pursuant to emergency loan
2. Public Comment on new lease for Township Assistance and Township Administrative offices
3. Public Comment on merger of Lawrence Township Fire Department with Indianapolis Fire Department
4. Vote on resolution to begin negotiations with the City of Indianapolis

LAWRENCE TOWNSHIP BOARD MINUTES

Tuesday, October 23, 2007

Time Called to Order: 6:05 P.M.

Time Adjourned: 7:50 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Michael Healy
Christie Wilmoth
Emmajean Hines
Charles McMahan
Dino Batalis
Paul Rogers
Tony Widgery

TRUSTEE: Mike C. Hobbs

CHIEF OF STAFF: Loren Heger

Mr. Healy called the Lawrence Township Board meeting to order at 6:05 P.M. He stated that there was a quorum present and asked Ms. Wilmoth to lead in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Healy stated that there were four items on the agenda and that they were going to take agenda items number three and four first because there were people who came for the specific purpose of attending the consolidation hearing.

Mr. Healy asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the September 25, 2007, meeting of the Lawrence Township Board. Ms. Wilmoth made a motion to approve the minutes. Ms. Hines seconded. Motion agreed to 7-0.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT ON MERGER OF LAWRENCE TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT WITH INDIANAPOLIS FIRE DEPARTMENT.

Mr. Healy thanked the Trustee and Board for their diligent work in putting the public hearing together. He stated that they would take statements from officials who have some expertise on this issue first, and then they would listen to comments from the public. The following officials gave statements and comments to the Board:

Mike Reeves, Indianapolis Metropolitan Professional Firefighters Local 416, stated that he supports consolidation. He has been involved with it from the beginning. Local 416 voted to endorse Indy Works where it affected the fire service in Marion County. He explained the transition with Washington Township and Warren Township. He presented a map of Marion County showing IFD service district as of this date.

Susanna Wilson-Overholt, Indy Works Transition Director for City of Indianapolis, stated that they have consolidated two township fire departments into IFD. Both of the consolidations involved a lengthy communication process between the City of

Indianapolis and the Boards and Trustees. She explained that Senate Bill 307 requires the township Board to introduce a Consolidation Resolution, the Trustee approves that Resolution, and the Board then approves the consolidation. The resolution approved by the township goes to the City County Council for approval and then to the Mayor of Indianapolis. If there are any changes made to the resolution, it starts over. A transition team is then formed to work out the operational issues.

She also stated that they saved 7.8 million dollars with the Washington Township merger and 4.6 million dollars with the Warren Township merger. The savings are largely because of differences in personnel expenses. She stated that no firefighters have been laid off because of the consolidations.

Michael McCormick, Wayne Township Assessor, stated that he is not for consolidation. He stated that township government is the most efficient government in the state of Indiana and is the most responsive to the citizens. The township budget is fixed on property taxes, but cities also collect income and sales taxes. He explained how property tax money is distributed in the township.

James Greason, Fire Chief for the Indianapolis Fire Department, talked about operational issues when they merged Washington Township and Warren Township. When they first met to discuss consolidation they looked at training, operations, special operations, EMS, resources, and pensions. They used this information as a guide when consolidating.

He explained how they blended the two townships into IFD and the changes that took place. He stated that they continued special events and programs that were held within the townships. He stated the mergers have enhanced IFD in the areas of training, fire prevention, and public education.

Mr. Healy recognized Senator Jim Merritt and thanked him for attending.

Gary Coons, Perry Township Trustee, thanked the Board for the service that they provide to the township. He stated that they are facing some tough challenges and decisions as most townships are seeing in Marion County.

The charge of the Department of Local Government Finance has changed from previous years. He stated that years ago fire departments grew faster than the tax levy would allow them so they took out emergency loans. Due to property tax issues the Department of Local Government Finance is trying to get local government out of funding services today off of future levies.

He stated that change is coming and it is up them to either manage change or it will manage them. He stated that he told his elected official that they need to represent their constituents and show them that they are the leaders in their community. He stated that the Perry Township Board has passed a resolution to look into consolidation and will be starting negotiations soon with Indianapolis Fire Department.

Trustee Coons presented the final report from the Fire Department Efficiency Commission dated September 20, 2007.

Mr. Healy stated that he had extended invitations to Trustees to several townships including Decatur and Pike to attend and they both declined. The Decatur Township Trustee did submit a letter that he would make available to the Board. The Decatur Trustee is against consolidation. Chief Blackwell was available to answer questions.

Mr. Healy thanked the officials for their participation and opened the hearing to the public.

Kevin Buchanan, former Warren Township firefighter, stated that he has lived through the merger. He stated that he was against consolidation at first, but the more he learned about it the more he thought it was for the best. He stated that he now has four people on his engine instead of three and no one has been moved that did not want to move. He stated that for the most part it was a smooth transition for them.

Mike Reeves stated that he has an agreement with the Mayor of Indianapolis that all merit ranks will be guaranteed. There is a merit law in place at IFD and it goes back to the merit board to approve.

Chief Greason stated that he has 38 years on the Indianapolis Fire Department and has served in many capacities. He stated that he has an obligation to the citizens and to the firefighters for their safety and health. His job is to make sure that the commanders on the scene have gone through the proper merit system for promotion and that they meet the qualifications and experience required.

A. David Vasquez, Lawrence Township firefighter, congratulated the Board on what they had accomplished in Lawrence Township. He stated that they have done things that have put Lawrence Township ahead of other townships.

He stated that consolidation will cost money. NFPA 1710 is the national standard to protect firefighters and citizens by making sure that the firefighters who respond can immediately go in and do their job. They do not have to wait for additional personnel to get there to start the initial attack.

He stated that he is assigned to Station 334, which sits inside the City of Lawrence. He stated that every citizen of the City of Lawrence is also a resident of Lawrence Township. He asked that if consolidated Station 334 becomes an IFD station and stays fully staffed.

Ron Ryker turned his time back to the board and had no comment.

Richard Craig, retired Washington Township firefighter, stated that he was President of Washington Township Fire Department Local 416 during the initial merger process. He stated that the consolidation was good. Washington Township Fire Department's apparatus was not staffed fully to comply with NFPA 1710.

IV. VOTE ON RESOLUTION TO BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE CITY OF INDIANAPOLIS.

Mr. Healy recommended that the resolution be approved with the following amendments:

Paragraph 1 - to state: "consolidation may or may not offer".

Paragraph 3 - delete due to opinion.

Paragraph 5 - change "President" to "Chairman".

Paragraph 6 - delete "drafting of resolution" and insert "decision making".

Paragraph 8 - to state "consolidation may or may not serve".

Section 1 - change "President to Chairman".

Section 2 - delete "to assist in the drafting of a resolution of consolidation".

Add Section 3 to state "This resolution is not to be construed to be as a commitment to consolidate."

Ms. Wilmoth made a motion to accept Resolution 16, 2007, to begin negotiations with the City of Indianapolis as amended. Mr. Batalis seconded. Motion agreed to 7-0.

I. APPROVAL OF ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATIONS PURSUANT TO EMERGENCY LOAN.

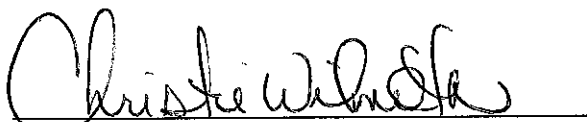
Mr. Heger requested approval of additional appropriations pursuant to the emergency loan. He stated that this is the conclusion of the emergency loan process that was started several months ago. Ms. Gregory stated that the additional appropriations are for the emergency assistance and firefighting fund. Ms. Hines made a motion to approve the additional appropriations. Mr. McMahan seconded. Motion agreed to 7-0.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT ON NEW LEASE FOR TOWNSHIP ASSISTANCE AND TOWNSHIP ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES.

Mr. Hobbs stated that one of the ways he was looking at cutting costs for the township is by moving out of the government center. He stated that they are looking at different locations including one at 42nd and Mitthoffer. Mr. Heger stated that they are not operating under a lease right now. Mr. Healy asked three times for comments from the public. There was none. Ms. Hines stated that a new location on a bus line would benefit the citizens of Lawrence Township who use the township assistance program.

There being no other business to discuss Ms. Wilmoth made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Widgery seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 P.M.

I hereby certify that the forgoing minutes are accurate and true to the best of my knowledge and have been approved by a majority of the Lawrence Township Board.



Christie Wilmoth, Board Secretary