



Village of Thiensville

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TO: Thiensville Village Board
FROM: Colleen Landisch-Hansen, Village Administrator
DATE: April 18, 2022
SUBJECT: Intergovernmental Agreement – Southern Ozaukee Fire and Emergency Medical Services

Background

Over the past 5 years, Thiensville has been making strides to address the staffing and coverage concerns experienced by our Paid-On-Call (POC) Fire Department which is no different than most other POC departments across the nation. This includes adding an incentive stipend program to improve coverage gaps, adding our first full-time paramedic, increasing pay rates and recently adding another full-time paramedic. Since becoming Village Administrator in 2019, I have been meeting regularly with many of the other Ozaukee County municipalities about their fire department staffing concerns and gaps in coverage. These meetings led to the municipalities collectively engaging the Wisconsin Policy Forum (WPF) and participating in a study that would analyze potential options for the municipalities to collaborate on fire and EMS services. This report was released in March of 2021 and outlined six (6) options, all of which recommended the addition of full-time staffing. Since the release of this report, the municipalities have continued to meet and discuss these option and next steps. One of the options discussed in the WPF study was two-way consolidation, where two departments would consolidate their operations as a means of sharing the cost of enhanced full-time staffing while also gaining efficiencies. In December of 2021, the City of Mequon and the Village of Thiensville entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to examine the feasibility of combining our two fire departments. By approval of the MOU, the Joint Working Group was formed which includes both communities' chief elected officials, administrators, fire chiefs, and deputy fire chiefs. The Joint Working Group has been meeting on an almost weekly basis since the middle of January. These meetings have focused on the framework established by the MOU (governance, administration/management, finance, staffing, equipment, facilities, emergency dispatch, response time, and future growth/needs). The product of these meetings, an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) for the formation of a new organization that combines both the Thiensville and Mequon Fire and EMS departments, is included in this packet. This is a negotiated document that the Joint Working Group believes is now ready for consideration by both the City of Mequon Common Council and the Village of Thiensville Village Board. The Mequon Common Council unanimously approved the agreement at their April 12th meeting. The Village Board will consider the agreement on Monday, May 2nd for recommendation to the Village Board. Action by the Thiensville Board would be on Monday, May 16th.

Other Interest

Beginning in late February, both the City and the Town of Cedarburg expressed interest and had representatives attending the Joint Working Group meetings. An amended MOU was approved in March to include their respective representatives in the Joint Working Group to discuss a potential larger consolidation of four (4) communities in the future.

Intergovernmental Agreement Summary

The Southern Ozaukee Fire and Emergency Medical Services Agreement establishes a joint operating fire and emergency medical services department for the City of Mequon and the Village of Thiensville. This will be a newly created organization beginning January 1, 2023 (Merger Date) with its own operating budget separate from the municipalities. Beginning July 1, 2022 (Joint Services Date) through the end of 2022, both the Mequon and Thiensville fire departments will operate under joint command. Key provisions of the agreement include the following:

- **Board of Directors:** The five (5) person Board of Directors is made up of two (2) Thiensville representatives (Village President and Village Trustee) and three (3) Mequon representatives, (Mequon Mayor, Common Council President, and a Mequon resident). Quorum consists of three (3) voting members of the Board; however, at least one voting member from each municipality must be present. The Board will meet at least quarterly, and will be responsible for approving matters related to the budget, capital acquisitions/disposals, compensation, mutual aid, fees, and amendments to the IGA.
- **Joint Fire Commission:** Comprised by all the members from the Board of Directors. The Commission shall have the conventional powers accorded to such bodies under state law, including hiring, discipline and termination of the department employees. Meetings will be held at least once a year.
- **Finances:** The department will maintain financial records separate from the City and the Village, this includes revenues, expenses, payroll, and insurance.
- **Capital Equipment:** The sale, exchange, conveyance, or transfer of assets with a market value of over \$100,000 requires approval of a majority of the Board and at least one representative from each municipality. Each municipality will allow the department to use the fire and EMS apparatus and vehicles currently owned through December 31, 2023. On or before, December 31, 2023 it shall be determined which pieces of such apparatus and vehicles are necessary for ongoing operations of the Department and shall purchase those pieces from the municipalities. The department will pay the municipality over a ten (10) year period plus interest for the apparatus and/or vehicles purchased. Apparatus and vehicles not purchased by January 1, 2024 will remain the property of the municipality for disposal as it may choose.
- **Fire Stations:** The municipalities will give the department use and control of the current buildings or portion of buildings to be used by the department. The municipalities will still hold ownership. A facilities plan should be developed by December 31, 2024 and thereafter be implemented. There is not an immediate plan to close the Thiensville station.
- **Funding Formula:** Thiensville allocation is 15.57% of the department's net operating and capital improvement expenses, Mequon is 84.43%. This ratio is based on the current budgetary proportions of Mequon and Thiensville's combined fire and EMS 2022 expenditure budgets. The funding formula can be renegotiated as of December 31, 2027 and every five years thereafter. If another municipality would be added to the agreement, the funding formula would change to a proportion of usage (call volume), population, and equalized value of improvements.
- **Term:** This agreement is in effect through December 31, 2027. After the initial 5 year term, a municipality may withdraw after providing a two-year notice. If no notice is given, this agreement shall remain in effect in perpetuity.

Staffing Model

Upon execution of this agreement the department will take a phased approach to adding full-time staffing over the next five (5) years. By 2027, the department will have a full-time EMS division with 3 fully staffed ambulances 24/7/365. This will be supplemented by Paid-On-Call staff for some EMS and all fire calls.

Exhibit A – Initial Plan

This is an outline of all the tasks that need to be completed upon execution of the Joint Services Date and the Merger Date. This plan details the implementation and the initial operations of the newly formed department. For the remainder of 2022, the aggregate cost of services described shall equal the combined budgets of both municipalities.

Exhibit B – Financial Forecast

This is a conservative forecast for the duration of the initial term of the IGA and will serve as a model for future years.

Recommendation

Recommendation considered by the Committee of the Whole on May 2, 2022