

# VILLAGE OF ELM GROVE

13600 Juneau Boulevard  
Elm Grove, WI 53122

## FIRE & EMS FUTURES STUDY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, October 26, 2022 \* 5:00 PM \* Park View Room

### AGENDA

1. Roll call
2. Approval of Minutes - October 12, 2022

*Documents:*

*ems fire study cmtte 10-12-22md.pdf*

3. Evaluation of the existing and future operations of the Elm Grove Fire & EMS Departments, with possible recommendation to the Board of Trustees

*Documents:*

*fire and ems future study committee findings draft.pdf*

4. Adjournment

Any person who has a qualifying disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act who requires that the meeting or materials for the meeting has to be in an accessible location or format must contact the Village Clerk at 262-782-6700 or 13600 Juneau Boulevard by 3:00 PM Friday prior to the meeting so that any necessary arrangements can be made to accommodate your request.

NOTICE: It is possible that members of, and possibly a quorum of, other governmental bodies of the Village may be in attendance at the above stated meeting to gather information. No action will be taken by any governmental body at the above stated meeting other than the governmental body specifically referred to in the above notice.

**VILLAGE OF ELM GROVE  
FIRE AND EMS STUDY COMMITTEE  
October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022 \* 5:00m**

Present: Chairperson John Schindler, Trustees Michalski, David Irwin, Wes Parkin, Richard Edwards.

Also Present: President Palmer, Village Manager David De Angelis, Fire Chief David Kastenholz, EMS Director, Jon Robinson and Sue Robinson via zoom, and other audience members.

1. Call to Order

Chairman Schindler brought the meeting to order at 5 p.m.

2. Approval of Minutes September 8, 21, 28, 2022. Mr. Parkin moved and Mr. Irwin seconded, motion passed unanimously.

3. Evaluation of the existing and future operations of the Elm Grove Fire & EMS Departments, with possible recommendation to the Board of Trustees.

Mr. De Angelis introduce Mr. Ed Henschel, former Village Manager of Elm Grove, for the purpose of providing an overview of his experience in over the last several decades of working with and facilitating service studies and consolidations.

Mr. Henschel discussed the formation of the North Shore fire department and the three main events that led to its final creation after almost 20 years of discussion. He pointed to major problems or incidents being the main driver for why these types of mergers occur. He then discussed some of the other consolidations included the several in Waukesha County and their current challenges regarding funding and finding personnel.

The Committee asked Mr. Henschel for any specific recommendations he may have at this time. He felt that the Village has been moving in the right direction and that it was time to bring the principal parties together. He also agreed with the Committee members in regard to public education and then need to get them educated so when recommendations do come forward they will be ready. He also suggested that at some point it may be helpful to engage a consultant to help facilitate the discussions and putting any type of agreement together.

The Committee thanked Mr. Henschel for his time and advice. The Committee then discussed next steps in educating the public and contacting other Communities. Mr. De Angelis indicated he and/or President Palmer would continue on with the discussions but it may take a little time.

The Committee then discussed creating an outline to facilitate discussion moving forward with materials for the next meeting.

Mr. Parkin agreed to put together an outline to move forward with public education explaining the current services and future challenges.

Next meeting was scheduled for October 26<sup>th</sup>.

4. Other Business

None

5. Adjourn

Mr. Irwin moved and Mr. Parkin seconded to adjourn at 6:29 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

David De Angelis  
Village Manager

(Working Draft 10-13-2022)

# Fire & EMS Future Study Committee

## Report for Future Communication

### Committee Overview

The Fire & EMS Futures Study Committee has been tasked with evaluating the existing and future operations of the Elm Grove Fire & EMS Departments. For the past several years, many municipalities statewide have been faced with a daunting challenge of maintaining operational staffing levels within these critical service departments. The goal of this committee is to identify viable options for the preservation of these services.

### Elm Grove Fire & EMS Core Issues

- A. Elm Grove Fire and EMS services are experiencing difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified personnel to adequately fill roles and shifts these services under the current volunteer/paid on call model for staffing.
- B. Qualified, highly-trained, licensed personnel to provide emergency services are in short supply, and often seek to be paid at market rate to provide these services.
- C. Neighboring communities, facing similar issues, compete with each other to employ qualified personnel.
- D. Fire & EMS equipment, along with providing adequate quarters required for 24/7 response, is and will continue to be very expensive to repair, maintain, and replace.
- E. All local governments in Wisconsin suffer under severe state-imposed restrictions on how they can raise revenue, and state provided revenue has been declining for years. Increasing spending above state limits requires approval of a referendum by residents.

### Committee Task

**Review study materials** from other communities who have faced or are currently facing similar issues, **hear from Fire and EMS service leadership**, and **identify both long and short term options** for the continuation of **providing quality Fire and EMS services** over the next **5 to 10 years** and beyond to **recommend to the Elm Grove Village Board for action**.

# Findings

## Review of Materials Summary

The committee was provided with documentation of several separate Fire and EMS consolidation projects involving dozens of communities of varying sizes in Wisconsin, along with a report from the Wisconsin Policy forum entitled “IN NEED OF RESUSCITATION? Wisconsin fire and EMS agencies face Looming Challenges” dated September 2021.

### Key takeaways from the WPF Report:

- Recruitment is a major issue for all types of departments but is reaching a crisis point for many volunteer and combination departments.
- In many cases, consolidation does not produce immediate financial savings, but it offers advantages when looking toward future financial challenges.
- While consolidation may be beneficial, the odds are against it in most cases.
- **Unless fire and EMS financial and staffing challenges are appropriately addressed, they may soon have a real impact on public safety**

**[Any other findings that you'd like to add from the review materials]**

## Fire Service Report Summary

- FUNCTIONS: The Fire Department provides fire prevention and suppression, light and heavy rescue, and hydrant maintenance.
- The department currently operates the 6 vehicles.
- PERSONNEL:
  - The department consists of approximately 38 volunteer members who are paid-on-call for response to emergency situations. The department's current membership includes
    - Fire Chief- position is a .5 FTE paid position
    - 1 fire inspector – paid an hourly wage
    - Volunteer Paid on Call Members
- Through the years the department has kept pace with changing technology in fire service by continuously upgrading volunteer training, personal equipment and apparatus. Each month the department trains on a different aspect of fire service operations, ranging from Hazmat Awareness to Rapid Intervention. The EGVFD has strong relations with its neighboring communities through joint training and Mutual Aid Response Agreements.
- MISSION STATEMENT:
  - The Elm Grove Volunteer Fire Department shall be comprised of a proficient team of fire service professionals, providing a quality service to the Village of Elm Grove, stressing safety for residents and department members.
- [Information on Demographics/# of FD members]
  - Average age of FD members is 47.
  - Average tenure is 16 years.
- [Information on new recruit #'s over past years]
- [Some calculation of the \$ value that volunteers have provided in 2021]
- In 2021 Elm Grove Fire Department Responded to 159 Calls [Add Chart?]
  - 71 Daytime; 88 Night/Weekend
  - 39 False Alarms; 35 Mutual Aid
  - Calls up 31% from 2020
- Mutual Aid Responses[Add Chart?]
  - City of Brookfield- 11
  - Town of Brookfield- 6
  - City of New Berlin- 5
  - Village of Menomonee Falls- 4
  - City of Pewaukee- 3
  - Village of Butler- 2
  - Village of Waukesha- 2
  - City of Muskego- 2
- Goal is to have a minimum of 14 members respond to all calls
  - Average Turnout by Year [Add Chart?]
    - 2017- 11.9
    - 2018- 12.3

- 2019- 12.2
- 2020- 12.0
- 2021- 11.4

## Key Issues Facing Elm Grove Fire Department

- Increasing # of calls YOY
- Decreasing # of respondents per call YOY
- Low recruitment level for new members of past years due to the following:
  - Limited # of qualified people willing to volunteer at POC and incident response rates.
  - Qualifications requirements are high including
    - Shift commitments of 6 PM - 7 AM on weekdays; 24 shifts on weekends
    - Level II qualification for all members
    - Reside close enough to the village to respond in a timely manner
  - Neighboring communities provide better union and pay benefits for similar work.
- Demographic shifts show firefighters will be leaving faster than they can be replaced over the next 5-10 years.
- [Any issues and impending needs over next 5-10 years for equipment or quarters?]

## EMS Service Report Summary

- This department is responsible for the emergency medical care of Village residents, business employees, and visitors 24 hours a day.
- The department is licensed at a paramedic level to provide advanced life support in medical emergencies.
- The department is operated by volunteer paid-on-call personnel. In 2008 due to difficulty in staffing the department 24 hours a day and competition from neighboring communities for trained people the Village began paying volunteers \$84 per night to commit to being available in the 12 hour overnight period from 6pm to 6am 7 days a week.
- The department operates 2 ambulances. Patients and/or their insurance companies are billed for services through a medical billing service.
- Personnel:
  - EMS Director/ Medical Doctor 1
  - EMS Assistant Director/ Paramedic 1
  - Paramedics/ RNs 11
  - EMTs 11
  - Drivers 2
- Elm Grove police officers, all of which are EMT's, respond to ambulance requests in advance of the civilian ambulance crew. One village employee EMT and one employee driver, respond to ambulance calls during their workday when possible.
- Department Responsibilities
  - Provide medical assistance as needed
  - Scheduling of personnel
  - Ambulance equipment stocking and maintenance
  - Monthly training
  - Coordinate license refresher courses with WCTC
  - Pager and radio maintenance
  - Completion of run reports
  - Recruiting and training of new members
  - Maintenance of attendance records for on call pay
  - Community relations

## Key Issues Facing Elm Grove EMS Department

- Increasing # of calls YOY
- Decreasing # of respondents available to staff shift
  - Currently only 7 active members
- [Any issues and impending needs over next 5-10 years for equipment or quarters?]

# Actions Already Taken

1. The Formation of the Fire & EMS Future Study Committee
2. Establishment of Sleeping Quarters for (?)
3. Recommendation to the Board to increase POC Pay for Fire and EMS to at least \$1/hr.

# Potential Additional Actions Identified

Some of these are mutually exclusive while others can be done in combination to achieve our goals.

- A. Investigate and start planning for consolidation of Fire and EMS with neighboring communities
  - Share equipment and administration to decrease future costs
  - Decreases competition for paid staffing
  - Formalizes cooperation/mutual aid already occurring
- B. Increase pay and benefits to improve recruitment and retention efforts which may lead to the creation a FT or PT Fire department for the Village of Elm Grove
  - Costs
  - Sidelining of volunteers
- C. Increase effort (spend) to inform village residents of current status of Elm Grove Fire and EMS services and the need for more qualified POC volunteers to sustain the current model
  - Need for a message or a plan/vision for future of departments before going out with message.
- D. Recommend a Referendum to increase tax levy to support future needs for Elm Grove Fire and EMS
  - Almost any action (including inaction) will eventually require an ask of the village to support a referendum to fund Fire and EMS services
  - Volunteers are have provided these services to Elm Grove historically, and this is likely a model that is unsustainable given demographics and recruitment rates
  - This committee along with Fire, EMS and Village Board will need to communicate the finding
- E. Do no additional changes and re-evaluate at a future date TBD [will need help from leaders describing scenario if nothing changes]
  - Continue to lose personnel to aging and neighboring communities
  - Increased response times with inadequate staffing causing negative public health and safety outcomes as well as property damage from uncontained fire emergencies.
  - [Legal concerns from state/fed for not providing adequate services]
  - [Potential increased costs for dealing with these problems as an emergency 5-10 years down the road]

# Committee's Recommendation for Further Action by the Village Board

[TBD]