

New Carlisle Town Council
124 E. Michigan Street, New Carlisle, Indiana
Special Meeting, January 24, 2018 5:00 PM

The meeting was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

President Carter called the meeting to order with Council Member Vojtko, Council Member Rypma, Council Member Vermillion, Council Member Budreau and Clerk-Treasurer Susan Moffitt present.

Also in attendance were Andrea Halpin, Josh Schweizer, Ken Davis, Cathy Rea, Linda Antonucci, Chris Antonucci, Brian Gray, Mary Countryman, Bob Middlebrook, Carol Middlebrook, John Mrozinski, Lori Mrozinski, John Kobitz, Heather, Steve Hora, Steph Lloyd, John Lloyd, Nick Zarate, Allen Tindall, Joe Laureys, Clint Weisenberger, Mike Tuszynski, Bill Sutton, Oleta Kaminski, Dana Groves, Marcy Kauffman, Adam Murray, Dalton Corbett, Tom Pietrzak, Marcy Kern, Andy Myer, Jack Cook, Sharon Cooper, Ryan Blasko, Heather Mireles, Stephen Szilagyi, Matt Florian, Ann Bromley, Andrea Beale, Lisa Crawford, Mary Davis, Andrew Mars, Chuck Lehman, Larry Waltz and Marcy Kern.

President Carter stated that this special meeting is being held to determine whether or not the Town will move forward with the process to establish a fire territory now. He is personally not in favor of moving forward with the fire territory process at this time as there are too many unanswered questions by many people, including tax implications, staffing questions and loss of volunteer status of our local department. There has been some misinformation shared as well. The accounting firm has calculated the tax implications with the budget Josh prepared but to have the fire territory effective for 2019 we must have everything complete for submittal to the DLGF on April 1st. There is a lot of data that everyone needs, both the board and the public, including business owners and property owners because there would be impact. There is also circuit breaker impact information that is still needed. The cost of putting this forth will increase costs to individuals and businesses alike. We have a wonderful volunteer fire department that serves the community very well and the tax implications are not nearly what they will be with a fire territory. He would like to revisit this in the fall once everyone has the understanding of what a territory does, how it functions, oversight involved, etc.

Council Member Budreau stated that he believes this is happening too quickly. He found data reported that is incorrect, including fire department call volume, and he cannot make an accurate decision about moving forward without correct information. He feels that once we move forward the farmers, homeowners and business owners are impacted and this could have a detrimental effect on our town. He feels that the county is making their problems our problems and also doesn't feel there is enough correct data to make an informed decision at this time.

Council Member Vermillion stated that everyone here is a constituent and he sees this both ways and wants to hear what those in attendance feel. We are currently working on a 25 year plan and will see if a paid fire service is needed and justifies the tax implications. He stated that he is unsure and not knowledgeable enough and the vote tonight is to see if we want to continue to look into this at this time which might not be a bad thing but he wants to hear what everyone else feels.

Vice President Vojtko stated that we have looked at a fire territory over the last 8 to 10 years. We are currently working on that basis now and he agrees with Ken and Jordon but he also agrees that this is a place to start. He feels that if we are to continue we could get a better handle on what the public wants including added services and tax implications. We did use a consulting firm initially

that didn't do a good job but we are now using Umbaugh and he would like to see it continue for now since it could be stopped at any time. Although the TIF district is out of our control it still must be managed as far as the fire department.

Council Member Rypma stated that one issue that he has heard from very seasoned members of the volunteer department is that there is a lack of response. The fact is that we must have assurance that someone is there all of the time. With growing industry in Olive Township it will only continue to grow. Our community is growing and we can't stop it. He stated that Jordon brought up the data but historical data can't predict the future and we all know that the area is growing and the fire department is responsible for that. He would rather take a proactive approach rather than reactive. With the situation he would rather have it and not need it than need it and not have it. He stated that Ken said a lot of questions remain unanswered and that to him is all the more reason to continue with more inquiries and find out how much this is going to cost and have additional meetings to continue to explore.

President Carter stated that whether or not the fire territory proceeds at this time, the Council assures everyone that the Town and Townships will do what is necessary to continue to provide proper fire and EMS coverage when it is needed.

President Carter opened the floor for public comment.

- Linda Antonucci

Linda stated that she feels we need to move forward with the territory. She was in a car accident on SR 2 on July 3 last year that was a rollover and it took 11 minutes for the fire truck to get there and only one truck responded.

- Steve Hora

Steve stated that he understands the hard position the Council is in as he sat there for 12 years. As a 35 year volunteer fireman his heart says he absolutely does not want this. The reality is that manpower in today's world is not the same as when businesses owners in town were all here and available during the day. This has recently been addressed with the part time people and down the road in the future it may have to change but for now he doesn't think it is needed. There are new people coming on the department now and the urgency is not really there but the ultimate sign is that it will need to change sometime in the future.

- Chris Antonucci

Chris stated that we have to look at financial statistics. The ladder truck that some town businesses and the industrial area are getting credit for is out of service and those people will lose some ISO credit. He stated that if the fire territory doesn't proceed, Economic Development will pull the plug on the ladder truck purchase and they are footing the bill for the 1.2 million dollar truck. We have spent thirty thousand dollars on this and we would have to pay again next year and the fire department needs all of the money it can get. He added that when his wife was in the accident last year and it took eleven minutes and only one truck showed up it was an embarrassment.

Sue stated that we have spent approximately \$12,000 for Umbaugh's services on the fire territory and Paige estimates that to recalculate the numbers next year the cost would be approximately \$12,000 to \$15,000.

- Josh Schweizer

Josh stated that he is assistant chief of the department and for those that don't know, this has been his project. The board asked him to try to identify at what point we will need help. He has been at this project for the better part of a year. In 2011 another study was done and in his view, at that time, we weren't ready for a territory yet because there was solid response. That response is now starting to dwindle. He looks at the firefighters and says oh its your fault or its my fault but it isn't. The bad reality of this is that Jordon talked about some flawed data and he actually redid the numbers and in three years call volume has increased by 71% and those are hard numbers. People don't realize that when a call goes out they answer it because they want to help. He stated that he was on his way home from Indy when he rolled up on Linda's accident and questioned where the fire department was at and it was an ah ha moment and we need to fix it. We have added daytime help but have had instances where recently there was smoke coming out of a chimney and two people showed up. He knows that there are a lot of unanswered questions but if we can get to this next step there is no obligation beyond that and it is simply to include the public and let them ask questions. Let them ask if the budget is inflated or if it is not inflated. This is part of the data collection process. If you want to table it then table it for a year after the next step. Not everybody lives in Town and there are Olive Township residents and Hudson Township residents who are effected by this and this five person board should not get to decide for both townships if we are going to continue. He feels we should keep moving forward and should hold the next 3 meetings to answer some of the questions and then at the end of March if you want to pull the plug, pull the plug. He will work with anyone who has some input on how to fix it but these next three meetings are vitally important to answer questions and then move forward with whatever we come up with. The volunteers are not going to quit volunteering and will answer when the pager goes off because that is what they do.

Marcy Kern asked if we have to make a final decision on this by March and President Carter responded that yes, we do in able to become activated effective in 2019.

- Mike Tuszynski

Mike stated that he has 15 years on the department and regardless of what happens, the world has changed around us in terms of people who do this job, the numbers are down. 15 years ago the first question of any new applicant was what is the ability to make daytime calls. Five years later they asked the town board to increase membership from 25 to 30 as they saw this issue approach. They then created a firefighters assistance program, which lessened some of the requirements that full members have to have and their participation levels. The reason was because if you are trained but able to answer less percentage of calls it is still better to have them when the help is needed. Recently the department put part-time paid people on during the day. It is hard to bring good men and women in who want and are able to do the job. The other issue is finance. We can have fifty guys who want to get in but you have to have gear, equipment and be able to put them in a truck. Equipment is expensive, with the latest truck costing close to \$700,000. To equip a person with radio, pagers and gear you are talking several thousands of dollars. He does not know if a territory

is the answer but one thing that has to come out of these meetings is that there is a tipping point and it is not just manpower but the tools that are needed. Mike stated that they have been lucky and have a great community that supports them and lucky to have a good town board and trustees that support them but there is a point where other forces put them in this position..

- Tom Pietrzak

Tom asked if there was additional cost to continue with the process through the end of March. President Carter stated that right now we have the information prepared by Umbaugh giving tax implications and circuit breaker based on residential, commercial and agricultural property. If we are to proceed, Umbaugh will be here for the three public meetings to provide information and answer questions and much additional paperwork required which would be an additional cost. Cost to date is approximately 12 to 15 thousand dollars but the total cost for services will be thirty thousand dollars be if we continue through the whole process to the end of March. Tom stated that he just wanted to understand that there is a financial cost of continuing.

- Sharon Cooper

Sharon questioned why we are paying for research that was done that was not correct the first time. President Carter stated that we are using a different company. Sharon asked why the first company is not being held accountable to make it right. Andrea responded that we have not paid anything and do not anticipate paying the full amount. We were billed approximately \$8,000 for their original phase before we severed ties with that company and we are currently reviewing the billing that was submitted to see what was actual work that was done that was legitimate work and correct versus what was incorrect or not completed. This bill was just recently received and she knows that the Chief will be reviewing that and talking with whoever he worked with that was gathering information with that first company. She reiterated that at this point no payment was made. We do anticipate some payment but not the full amount of \$30,000.

- Nick Zarate

Nick asked to clarify if it was the information provided by Umbaugh that was incorrect? Council Member Budreau replied that he was referreing to the information provided regarding emergency vehicle response Josh presented a year ago and not what was presented by Umbaugh. Nick stated that everyone has said that at some point we have to go to a fire territory, but it may be one two, three, four or five years down the road. He would like to have one meeting for the public and then would respect the Council's decision after that.

- Allen Tindall

Allen stated that he is a four year member of the fire department and to piggyback on what has already been said there is diminished call turnout. A structure fire about four weeks ago in the middle of the night had only seven members of the department turn out which he states is far below what is needed. Getting mutual aid from other departments took a long time and Allen stated that there was a lot more damage to the structure because they had to wait for the additional manpower. Qualifications required by the state are more difficult every year and require sending

firefighters to training for at least six months before they can even get on a truck and go to a call. Getting folks to commit is getting harder and harder. He reports that they have been blessed that the most recent people to join already have state certifications so they can answer calls but they can't always count on that. He stated there are some shortfalls but doesn't know if it is something we have to fix now but there are some short falls that need to be addressed. He stated that the portable radios used for communication are \$3,000 each and we have to make plans and he feels if we are this far along in discussing it we should at least get the information to the people to get their thoughts.

There was no additional public comment.

President Carter asked for a roll call vote as to whether to proceed with meetings for establishing the fire territory to be effective January 2019:

Council Member Budreau	Nay	Council Member Vermillion	Aye
Vice President Vojtko	Aye	Council Member Rypma	Aye
President Carter	Nay		

The vote was 3-2 in favor of moving forward with the meetings to establish the fire territory effective January 2019.

Upon a motion by Council Member Budreau and second by Vice President Vojtko the meeting was adjourned at 5:25 PM.

Ken Carter, President

Susan I. Moffitt, Clerk-Treasurer