

August 13, 2018

The Ellettsville, Indiana, Town Council met for a work session at 8:23 p.m. on Monday, August 13, 2018, at the Ellettsville Town Hall Meeting Room located at 1150 W. Guy McCown Drive.

Roll Call: Members present were Scott Oldham, President; Brian Mobley, Vice President; Kevin Farris, and Scott Thomas. Brice Teter was absent. Sandra Hash, Clerk-Treasurer; Darla Brown, Town Attorney; and Mike Farmer, Interim Town Manager; and were also present.

Supervisors present were: Mike Cornman, Jimmie Durnil and Kevin Tolloty.

Scott Oldham announced the work session concerns the Fire Department and future planning either being a fire territory or consolidation.

Fire Chief Mike Cornman informed the paid staff that employees would be receiving a \$2,000 raise and they told him they would rather have more people. One option is to do nothing. They can change the way they do things and be less aggressive but they can't, continue what they're doing. The problem is two different entities. They get along but don't budget the same and do the best they can separately. This is one of the reasons for their predicament and they need to be unified. A fire territory would be fine but would result in a tax increase. Mr. Farris asked about the westside Tax Increment Financing District ("TIF"). Chief Cornman explained that money is locked up tight. A year ago, he asked the TIF and Cook Group to remodel or build a new station to replace Station 8 and has not received a response. Mr. Oldham asked if the decision to go with a fire territory would have to be spread out with so many townships to make it economically viable so the Town doesn't risk raising its own property taxes. Or, Ellettsville Fire Department could ask to consolidate with the City of Bloomington but the tax variable is unknown so it would be the same as entering into a contract. Chief Cornman is of the opinion they have to have a significant amount of assessed valuation to make it work. All he wants is eight people. Mr. Mobley asked why Ellettsville can't join Northern Fire Territory. Chief Cornman is uncertain but their assessed valuation is not that great. A fire territory will not take care of the situation long term. Ms. Brown commented Washington Township saw a huge increase in their taxes which were fairly low to begin with. A suggestion would be to authorize Chief Cornman to get with H.J. Umbaugh & Associates ("Umbaugh") to determine the impact it would have before approaching Northern Monroe Fire Territory. The budget for the Northern Fire Territory is Bloomington Township pays 70%, and Washington Township pays 30%.

Brian Mobley suggested closing Station 8 and moving their personnel to Station 7. Mr. Oldham is concerned about losing control of the Fire Department and the possible redistribution of assets. Which direction do you prefer? Chief Cornman wants civility for the firefighters. He prefers it be the Ellettsville Fire Department or something the Town authorizes the operation of the department. Main concern is long term because of the impending threat of annexation because of I-69 and thinks a relationship with the City of Bloomington is the better option. Mr. Oldham asked how long it would take for Chief Cornman to put together a summary of different options. Chief Cornman can provide an answer in two weeks. Mr. Oldham asked if the City of Bloomington is interested. Chief Cornman only knows from the firefighters and the firefighters' union who told him the Mayor of Bloomington is aware they're looking at it and nothing official has happened. Mr. Mobley asked for the savings in shutting down Station 8 and moving their personnel to Station 7 and to contact the Northern Fire Territory. Chief Cornman thinks it's something they can do to increase personnel. Mr. Oldham asked if there were options other than consolidation or a fire territory. Chief Cornman believes a consolidation would be a cleaner path with the City of Bloomington. However, there may be political or business influences that may have an affect on it. Richland Township has agreed to increase the fire contract by \$102,000 but it is for equipment. Umbaugh has suggested those funds could be put in the Fire Department's General Fund budget under Capital Outlays.

Scott Oldham asked what is needed from the Town Council to start gathering information. Chief Cornman thinks there are three paths: The possibility of Northern Monroe Fire Territory, increasing automatic aid with the City of Bloomington and closing Station 8 and transferring their personnel to Station 7 or consolidating with the City of Bloomington.

Closing Station 8 would require an amendment to the Richland Township Fire Agreement. There was a discussion on procedures for joining and forming a fire territory. Mr. Oldham suggested the Fire Chief contact the Township Trustee and try to consolidate Station 8 for 60 to 90 days. How long can they continue before they're risking a firefighter's life? Chief Cornman answered they're there now. After a discussion it was decided Chief Cornman was to ask the City of Bloomington if they're interested. Mr. Oldham asked if Bean Blossom Township would join in on the consolidation. Chief Cornman doesn't know the answer. Another option is training students from Hoosier Hills and Ivy Tech. All agreed for Chief Cornman to begin discussions with the Richland Township Trustee to close Station 8 and discuss consolidation with the City of Bloomington. If consolidation with the City of Bloomington is not an option they will have to look at other ideas.

Public Comment

Ed Bitner spoke with several people in Bean Blossom Township and they will not support a wheel tax but would be willing to pay \$200 a year to be assured someone will come to put their house fire out. If a fire department would respond to a fire at his house, it's his understanding they would get paid if they bill insurance. Chief Cornman said they could not do this because of a court ruling in 1987 regarding the paid to volunteer firefighter ratio at the scene of a fire.

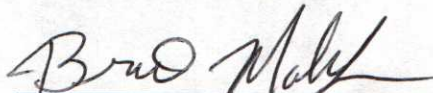
Russ Ryle thinks it appears the smaller fire departments on the northern side of Monroe County have the same issue being they don't have enough assessed valuation to have a full time paid or volunteer staff with the number of personnel required to meet safe state standards. Adding three or four parts together that don't have a sufficient budget to get the job done will make a bigger entity with an insufficient budget. Social change is why they can't get volunteers. He thinks they're on the right track.

Adjournment

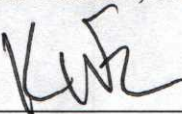
Scott Oldham entertained a motion to adjourn. Kevin Farris so moved. Scott Thomas seconded. Scott Oldham adjourned the work session at 9:23 p.m.



Scott Oldham, President

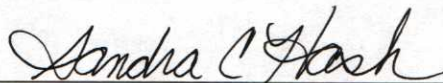


Brian Mobley, Vice President



Kevin Farris

Brice Teter



Scott Thomas

Sandra C. Hash, Clerk-Treasurer, IAMC, MMC