

**Minutes of the Urbana Board of Trustees Meeting  
held Monday, April 28, 2022**

The Board of Urbana Township Trustees met on this date with Paul Wright, Roger Koerner, and Blair Stinson present, in a Special Meeting to discuss the fire and ems contract with the city of Urbana.

Guests Present:

Dean Ortlieb, City of Urbana Fire Chief

Jane Napier, Champaign County Asst. Prosecuting Attorney

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The meeting was called to order by Trustee Paul Wright

Chief Ortlieb – I like the rate calculation that we have used. We used this for Salem and Concord as well. Everybody gets the same exact rate – per capita. The per capita is a nice way to do that. It is where you say, this is the population, this is what we want to do, this is where we stand. A lot of departments do it by property taxes. Since the majority of what we do is EMS, this is the fairer way.

You have three competing players here, you guys, the fire department, and the city. In the fire division we have to say where we want to be. If you listen to these other departments, they are just not getting man power.

What we do on a very limited basis is that we front end fire and ems. You guys have the best chance in this whole county, that if you have something significant incident, you have the best chance as a positive outcome.

Roger – vs what?

Chief – St. Paris, North Lewisburg. None of the others have full time staff, like we do. The EMS people, for the most part don't respond on the fire. They are EMS only.

Roger – so what is wrong with that?

Chief – well you can have a fire at your house and you are going to pull a medic.

Roger – back up, I know you are going to want to have a county wide fire department. I talked to two departments, and they are saying no way. Why should they want to?

Chief – because it benefits everyone. We still would have to add work force. People are afraid of it because they are afraid of change. Look at the State level, they are spending millions of dollars to find out that the volunteer way is going out. Volunteers get 36 hours of training – which means they are not allowed to go inside to fight a fire. They have old equipment, old stations. Look at the house fires they have, they burn to the ground.

The people they have are good people. But with that comes accountability. With that fatal fire we had, there were 5 people there within 10 minutes. We are 24/7 365 as far as minimum. Chief went on to discuss further the details of the recent fire in the city of Urbana.

Chief - I am not saying I am only chief if I am county wide department fire chief.

Roger – Paul showed me something, you have to explain to me about all of the people.

Mr. Stinson – it was the young person who had mucous.

Paul – and we talked about the dispatched vehicles.

Chief – come up and ride. It is not all of those people. They have the potential for all of those people. We have two people go out on a ride. If they need help, they call for it.

Paul – so that is all handled internally within your unit. This goes back to needing a countywide system. For 2 days we have been cutting back honeysuckle with a road closed. And I just cannot fathom the priority of not knowing whether Mechanicsburg has a squad available whenever you call them.

Chief – this is from 100 years ago. But it started out with volunteers and no way of funding. They do 36 hours of training, but now they are training with equipment that they don't upkeep, they don't have any standard operating procedures. This is a proud system.

Paul – that's true. That 50 year old fire truck, everybody is proud of it.

Chief – we need constantly to be reviewing our plans. We need to pump 2000 gallons a minute. These houses that they are building are much larger than they used to be. A 1500 square feet house used to be large, now people are building 5000 square feet houses.

We have the highest level of certification in the State of Ohio for both fire and EMS. We have a full time fire safety inspector. We are doing this to try to keep businesses and our community safe.

And we are 15 – 20 minutes to getting any help. I could bury my head and say there is no advantage to a county wide department, but I stand behind it.

We monitor Logan County just to see what they are doing. Because they have some Springfield fire fighters who are volunteers in West Liberty.

Mechanicsburg took their station out of service, and we had fire fighters die and stayed running.

Blair – my point about this is that fires are 10% of the runs. It bugs me when we are talking about things when that isn't getting anywhere on negotiations.

Jane – do you soft or hard bill?

Chief – soft bill. If they don't pay we don't go after them.

Jane – Soft bill is that you only charge certain people. Hard billing is that you charge everyone the same amount and if they don't pay then you go after them.

Chief – our billing is based on medicare rates. What we do is we send it out, and we bring in about 500,000 from EMS billing. If people don't pay then they don't go after them.

Blair – why aren't you doing that?

Chief – I think the perception is that if you do that to someone who is well off, that is fine. But when you do it to those who can't pay.

Blair – so you are eating that?

Chief – we don't bill for fires. What we can do is hold a percentage back for them to clean up the fire.

Paul – I can remember a couple two or three years ago that was available here too.

Jane – the fire chief actually holds that. It is basically to get a property to a place where it is not a hazard. If somebody else is going to do that then the fire chief gives them back their money. We have that in place.

Chief – we can do that. We would have to write rules, and the city would not want to administer the money. The city director of administration holds that money.

Paul – until when?

Chief – until they fix up the property.

Jane – I don't think that is an issue here.

Blair – explain this to me, if my house burns down, why aren't you billing State Farm for fighting my fire?

Chief – the two things we can bill for if Hazmat and rescue.

Blair – lets talk about EMS, you run out to Vancrest to pick someone up, are you billing for that?

Chief – we don't bill unless we take them to the hospital.

Trustee Stinson and Chief entered into a discussion about the problem of Vancrest calling 911 when someone falls instead of using their own staff.

Chief – we don't have the capacity to determine if they fell and hit their head if they need to go to the hospital.

Blair – 26% of your runs are to Vancrest. Can we refuse? Can we do that?

Jane – I think we can say to Vancrest that they have to sign a refusal. You can say to them that if you call 911 and you refuse, then they are responsible for payment. I didn't know that we had this problem.

Chief – I don't know how people don't know it, but this happens throughout the county, throughout the state, of people fall and they can't get up.

Paul – we see that 2-3 times a day where they call for an assist.

Chief – that is where the community paramedic comes in. But most of them just don't want to go in to a nursing home. County people don't want to use social services like they do in the city.

Jane – I am concerned that you are going out to places to pick people up and you have people that may need services that aren't getting it.

Chief – We would divert them if something more important came in.

Blair – what does it cost to get your squad out there, 2 guys, and not transport.

Chief – we do have a cost. It's 3 million dollars to run our department.

Jane – what does a run cost?

Chief – we get back \$387 on an ALS advanced life support run. Those runs can go up to \$1,000. The average is \$387.

Jane – what is the minimum?

Chief – we have mileage. We try to take everyone to Mercy Urbana. If someone is 25 weeks pregnant, we will take them to where their doctor is.

Chief – in the city, we have 3 million dollars, we have 16,000 people roughly, which is roughly \$187 per capita.

Jane – do you feel that the majority of your runs are to nursing facilities?

Chief – here is 25 %

Blair – lets say we could knock out those runs, wouldn't that be the same as getting a raise?

Chief – but we are charging per capita.

Chief – this is where the issue is the city pays \$187, the township pays \$82.

82% of the total EMS runs are in the city. We have close to 3000 runs a year.

Blair – well let's figure this out based on the runs. So if you are talking runs, we are about 10% off the runs.

Chief – we did everything to try to separate everything. We have 24 in place.

Jane – and your salary, support, and benefits is \$2.5 million? That is over 100,000 per capita.

Roger – really that is a pretty sweet job.

Chief – come ride with us. These guys work hard.

Jane – I fire people for sleeping on the job, but you get paid for sleeping on the job.

Chief – if you are going to charge and make fun of our people for sleeping on the job. I am done. This is the job that we do, you can change that all that you want, but I it is not going to change what we do. I will have our attorney contact you.

Blair – I understand your passion.

Chief – If you have no more questions I am done.

Blair – I have more questions but I understand.

Jane – I apologize if I offended you; it wasn't my intent.

Chief – I will answer questions but I am not going to have you make fun of my people.

Blair – I am a numbers guy, and by looking at percentages, I have us at about 9%.

Blair – just a question, do we need a ladder truck?

Chief – I agree it is a big investment, but there are reasons why. I think you have to take this with a grain of salt, but this is the tax rates on the levies, and you guys are the lowest in the tax rates.

Blair – Just the other day there was a notice in the paper that taxes were going up by 25%. So now do we have to go back to our voters and ask for more money?

Chief – we are working with our nursing homes. They have the bare minimum. At night, they have one nurse and the rest are patient care assistants. Some of these people have a language barrier.

Blair – I see where you are coming from, but something has to give on the runs to the nursing home.

Chief – We are looking at EMS billing of charging people more that use our service.

Blair – One last thing, you have got to agree that just raising prices can't be the answer to this. When there is no money in the well, there is not money in the well.

Chief – As I told you last time, I hate this stuff.

Jane – the EMS countywide, everyone has their fiefdom.

Chief – you can set this by state law.

Jane – and you don't have separate fire and ems?

We have everybody fire and ems.

Jane – Urbana led the discussion on that, but Urbana would be the hardest with that.

Chief – this is why we stopped in Salem and Concord. I think Salem would like us to cover them as well but it makes more sense for us to Urbana. West Liberty covers Salem as well, and they are a great volunteer department.

Paul – is it true that Vancrest will call for a pickup because that reduces their workers comp?

Chief – no I don't think that is true. If we were out there everyday for something that is not medical, I would go out there and talk to them.

They will say this person is not "in code" what then dispatch will interpret that as in code. Those are things that will keep you up at night.

Chief – part of what we do is work with one another.

Jane – since I came here a little late, what is the city wanting to pay?

Chief – we haven't come up with anything.

Blair – But you kind of have given us a number.

Chief – well, yes I have.

Jane – well if there offer is they will pay what they are currently paying.

Chief – well the city would say no.

Blair – you are saying Urbana township and Urbana city in population we are 25%, but we are less than 10% of your runs.

Jane – well, without Urbana Township you still have a 3 million dollar budget. So even if we aren't giving the same per capita, we are giving more per run.

Chief – by law, every city can levy without going to the voters for one mill. Before my time, they had the fire and police levy at .4%. You can say that what we get from EMS runs and from your contract, it goes in to the general fund. We don't get any of that. But that's what saves lives, manpower.

Blair – so you are saying that we give you \$250,000, that your department doesn't get that?

Chief – I am saying that they will then take from the other side and give us less on that side.

Jane – perhaps I misunderstood the purpose of the meeting. I thought we were discussing what we can charge?

Chief – I think we are looking at about an additional \$80,000 in vehicles. I know you guys aren't going to want to go out for a new levy. But this is what you get for your service. Let's try to look at a way to maintain service without doing a new levy. The key is this. I am not going to agree to anything without talking to the city. Because if you remember we had approved stuff verbally, and then one other person said in the group that we want more.

Blair – well I am not done. I would like to meet with you.

Jane – I do think it is an interesting question about Vancress, because there are a lot of new senior housing coming in.

Chief – we are 911. If someone calls then we respond.

Jane – what would you do if someone calls 911 every day.

Chief – we have had that everyday in the city. We have a 90 year old who calls 911 every night when it gets dark. We have quit going on those runs. When in truth they are abusing 911.

Jane – you hate to have a crying wolf situation, where that one time they need help...

Chief – then we get involved with Adult Protective Services.

Jane – But in regard to Vancress, you are getting a lot of calls where you are just picking them up.

Chief – I can tell you that if we were getting called just for pickup, then we would take care of that. A lot of times we transport and don't provide a service so we don't get paid.

Blair – you said something about new rules. That is going to come down to this, new rules. You can't be the guy they call to decrease liability. If you are being used for pickup alone...

Chief – I am saying that I believe if we charge one person something, then we are going to have to charge everyone something.

Jane – I think you can charge private more. Because you charge them the same high rate and medicare says, no we aren't going to pay that.

Chief – the key is to reduce runs. That is why we have the community paramedic. Mercy's goal is to have more. Why else would they want a community paramedic?

Blair – going back to this, when you send out a squad and truck, you are going to be pretty successful on getting full bill.

Jane – but you transport on a fatality, and I talked to Chris Logan in the squad in the parking lot.

Chief – we had a battle with the coroner because the coroner wanted us to transport. We have law enforcement call the coroner.

Blair – you are saying that two cars hit and have two insurances, you can't bill anyone?

Chief – you have to determine what you base income on. We are not here to make money.

Blair – you are providing a service. Let's talk about recovering money. Insurance companies can't get off scott free.

Chief - there are certain departments that charge for rescue services. That could be litigated as Hazmat. I am not aware of anything that is out there that can do that. This is a service that provides fire service. You don't have to provide EMS.

Fiscal Officer – I need to wrap this up. I have to get back to work.

Blair – we need to adjourn this meeting.

Chief – you can write down some questions and get them to me and we can get you some answers. Remember that I will need to look at each run.

Blair – I am only going to look at the first quarter.



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Being no further business, Mr. Stinson moved to adjourn the meeting seconded by Mr. Koerner.

Paul Wright Trustee Paul Wright, President

Sandi Perry Sandi Perry, Fiscal Officer