

North Township - LaPaz Fire Protection Territory, Public Meeting
Wednesday, June 16, 2025 at 6:00pm
LaPaz-North Township Fire Station

Present:

Roger Ecker, Town of LaPaz
Cathy Welch, Town of LaPaz
Steven Davenport, North Township
Stephen Barber, appointed by Ms. Haskins, Trustee
Lisa Knepp, appointed by Town of LaPaz

Also present:

Emily Haskins, Trustee
Mathew Haskins, Fire Chief
Please refer to the sign-in sheet for additional attendees.

The meeting consisted of the following:

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Davenport at 6:05pm.

1. Approval of 4/23/25 Meeting Minutes. Mr. Barber moved to accept the minutes as printed, seconded by Ms. Welch and passed 5-0.
2. Billing service update. For EMS, Ms. Haskins indicated that she continues to establish online portals with 3rd party payors which facilitate timely payments. She provided a handout (attached) detailing billing as of 5-31-25. She reports that our first payment was received last week, reminding us that our go-live date for billing was on May 1, 2025. It was noted that about 3 calls from January were not billed because they were outside the timeline for Medicare billing. Mr. Haskins clarifies that for fire calls, they bill about 10-12 calls per year. Fire calls are not included in the report that Ms. Haskins provided for EMS calls. It was requested that we keep track of the "Treat – No Transport" calls and billing.
3. Insurance Policy Invoice for the Commercial Package. Mr. Barber moved that we recommend payment of this bill to the Township, seconded by Mr. Ecker. Passed 5-0.
4. County Grant for fire department equipment. Mr. Haskins explains that the County has indicated a willingness to provide fire departments a \$50,000 "grant" for equipment in the form of a reimbursement. Mr. Haskins is recommending the replacement of their 20 aging and increasingly outdated Self Contained Breathing Apparatuses (SCBAs). Remarkably, the most favorable option is also the least expensive through Howell. Because Howell was able to make a special acquisition, the price was quoted at \$127,000. After the devices at this cost have been sold, the cost for 20 devices will be about \$175,000. The SCBAs themselves have a 15-20 year life span and should be tested yearly (but this does not typically occur). The bottles have a life span of 15 years. We currently have 5 SCBAs that are 14 years old and 15 that are 24 years old. If we only replace the 40 "bottles" for the 20 aging SCBAs, the cost would be \$600 each, totaling \$24,000. The problem with only replacing the bottles is a) the current SCBAs include two different types and are incompatible with each other; b) they are not up to date with what is currently being used in other regional fire departments, creating a risk of filling our bottles on the scene with higher pressure filling devices; c) and the current devices are indeed aging and the usefulness in the future is questionable. While Mr. Grolich says he continues to advocate that the county continue this support of fire departments annually, he indicates that with the recently enacted state legislation, there is no guarantee that the county will continue to provide this money to fire departments on an annual basis. Mr. Barber voices his support for the purchase of 20 SCBAs because a) the new SCBAs will allow for firefighters to share air with one another in an emergency (the buddy system) and b) instead of focusing on the \$127,000 figure, he suggests that we consider the cost as being \$175,000

(in the future). As a result of that \$48,000 discount and the \$50,000 we anticipate from the county, we would be securing these devices for about a \$98,000 discount. We would be getting these devices for less than half price. Mr. Haskins did obtain two other quotes for about \$199,000 and \$235,000. Mr. Ecker moves to recommend the purchase of the 20 SCBAs at the price of about \$127,000, seconded by Mr. Barber. Motion passed 4-1.

5. Employee manual.

6. Employee Benefits Discussion. Ms. Haskins provided a handout describing what needs to be clarified (attached).

- a. Mr. Davenport moved to recommend the longevity pay as printed with a clarification to mean that at the end of year 3, the employee receives \$750 and at the end of year 4, they receive \$1,000. Ms. Knepp seconded the motion which passed 4-0.
- b. Regarding Holidays and Holiday Pay, Mr. Barber moved to recommend 10 holidays per year, removing Good Friday and election day, seconded by Mr. Ecker and passed 5-0.
- c. Mr. Ecker moved to recommend the Employee Benefits handout as modified, seconded by Mr. Barber, and passed 5-0.
- d. Mr. Barber moved that volunteers who are subsequently hired as full-time staff, 6 months after their hire date and with a positive review from the chief, they are given a stipend of \$1,000, as a sign-on bonus. This motion died for lack of a second.
- e. Mr. Ecker moved to recommend the following to the Township. For volunteer firefighters from our department hiring on as a full-time employee, the following additional vacation time will be allocated:
 - i. 0-5 years 1 shift of vacation
 - ii. 6-10 years 2 shifts of vacation
 - iii. 11-15 years 3 shifts of vacation
 - iv. 16-20 years 4 shifts of vacation
 - v. 21+ years 5 shifts of vacation

Mr. Barber seconded the motion. Mr. Ecker amended the motion such that this applies to all applicants, not just those coming from our own department and that these shifts become available to the employee 6 months after their hire date. Agreed to by Mr. Barber. Motion passed 5-0.

7. Recommendation to Township regarding employees.

- a. Mr. Ecker moved to recommend hiring Chad Robertson to the Township, seconded by Mr. Barber. Passed 5-0.
- b. Mr. Ecker moved to recommend hiring Tony Shoemaker to the Township, seconded by Mr. Barber. Passed 5-0.
- c. Mr. Ecker moved to recommend base pay salaries for both of these individuals at \$50,000. Mr. Barber seconded this motion which passed 5-0.

8. Trustee update.


- a. Ms. Haskins reviewed the expenditures of the Territory to date. Noteworthy categories which are above expectations are ALS Assist and Insurance.
- b. She noted that her budget meeting with the state is on August 18.
- c. Mr. Ecker provided information from Ms. Cox regarding a possible grant for a community building.
- d. Ms. Haskins reported that Polk Township Trustee has contacted her to see if North Township would be interested in providing EMS services to Polk Township for a fee. They would like a contract that would allow their constituents to choose and of the following hospitals they want to go to: Bremen, St. Joseph Med Ctr (Plymouth or Mishawaka), or Memorial/Beacon. There was some discussion about this. Her understanding is that they are looking for a contract less than

\$100,000 per year. This is the approximate annual amount that Walkerton is offering them at this time for a 5 year contract. The age and wear & tear on our vehicles was a concern. Mr. Haskins reported that the cost of remounting one of our ambulances may be in the range of \$280,000. The Board seems to have consensus about the following:

- i. Polk's request for something less than \$100,000 would not come close to covering our actual costs,
 - ii. Walkerton currently staffs EMS in Polk Township as an "Advanced" provider (neither of which are we able to provide currently), and therefore
 - iii. We are not in a position to offer them a comparable contract at this time.
9. Good of the order announcements or updates as necessary.
- a. Mr. Barber offered a report of his informal meeting with the public and emphasizes the following:
 - i. The Plymouth medical facility is not a trauma center. Indeed, Beacon Memorial is the only trauma center.
 - ii. Mr. Barber again clarified that it is his desire to allow constituents to go to St. Joseph Medical Center in Mishawaka, but that we are not able to do this now.
 - iii. He stated that most of the 6 people at the meeting prefer to start slowly and thereby reduce the budget and taxes as differentiated from building up quickly and not lowering the budget and taxes.
10. Public Comment:
- a. Patron asked about the qualifications of the 7 people we are seeking to hire. It was clarified that we are only seeking to hire two full-time staff at this time who are dually certified in EMS and fire.
 - b. Patron advocated for a lower budget & lower taxes and starting out slowly.
11. Next meeting: Wednesday, July 16, 2025
12. Adjournment: Mr. Ecker moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Davenport, and passed 5-0. Time: approximately 8:29pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Stephen Barber, Secretary

Approved: ☒ As written ☐ As Amended ☐ As Corrected


Steven Davenport, President

7-16-25
Date

Roger Ecker, Vice President

Date


Stephen Barber, Secretary

7-16-25
Date

Cathy Welch

Cathy Welch

Date

7/14/25

Lisa Knepp

Lisa Knepp

Date

7-16-25

LaPaz-North Township Fire Protection Territory Public Meeting
Monday, June 16, 2025 at 6:00 pm
LaPaz-North Township Fire Station

Sign-In Sheet

1. Steve Barber
2. Lisa Krueger
3. Jay Hays
4. Sandy Robinson
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.
- 15.
- 16.
- 17.
- 18.
- 19.
- 20.
- 21.

LaPaz-North Township Fire Protection Territory Public Meeting
Monday, June 16, 2025 at 6:00 pm
LaPaz-North Township Fire Station

- 1. Approval of 4/23/25 Meeting Minutes**
- 2. Billing service update**
- 3. Insurance Policy Invoice**
- 4. County grant for fire department equipment**
- 5. Employee Manual**
- 6. Employee Benefits Discussion**
- 7. Recommendation to Township regarding employees**
- 8. Trustee update**
- 9. Good of the order announcements or updates as necessary**
- 10. Public comment (Limited to 2 minutes)**

[illegible]