

**KULPMONT BOROUGH
MEETING FOR GENERAL PURPOSE
MAY 3, 2016**

Opening Prayer by Councilman Clarence H. Deitrick
The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag by the body present, Kulpmont Borough Council
held the meeting for general purpose on Tuesday May 3, 2016 at 7:00 p.m.

Roll call was taken and the following members were present: Mayor Novakoski,
Clarence H. Deitrick, Bruno R. Varano, George Malakoski, Nicholas P. Goretski, III.

ABSENT: Joseph A. Winhofer, Stephen Motyka and Walter Lutz.

APPOINTED POSITIONS: Solicitor William C. Cole and Treasurer Paul A. Niglio, Jr.

PRESENT: Borough Secretary Rhonda Wilk

OTHERS PRESENT: Joe Pancerella, Barry Fetterman, Robert Nolan, Bob Chesney,
Jeff Gilotti, Robert Fanella, James Karnes, Greg Genserner, Marshall Mirarchi, III., Jeff
Sejuit, Jermaine Lahr, Timothy L. Bixler, Matt Siko and Bill Siegel.

**OPPORTUNITY FOR CITIZENS TO BE HEARD ON ANYTHING ON THE
AGENDA:**

No one spoke

PRESIDENTS REPORT (Bruno R. Varano)

Mr. Varano states that at this time he will turn the meeting over to our guest speaker Bill Siegel and states that he is going to be giving us all kind of information on how to consolidate the one fire company.

Bill Siegel states that he was asked to attend this evenings meeting to talk about Fire Company Consolidation and states that for those of you who do not know him he is Bill Seigel of SEDA Council of Government out of Lewisburg and states that they provide a range of technical assistances to municipalities and communities throughout the 11 counties of the central Pennsylvania region.

Mr. Siegel states that he has personally been involved with several municipalities as they work through the continuing challenge of the fire company's adequate volunteers and adequate revenues and various challenges throughout the industry. He states that as a result of that council had asked him to speak about the situation here in Kulpmont and what the options that council might have in addressing those situations.

Mr. Siegel asks Mr. Varano if he would like him to start with a summary of what the current situation is in Kulpmont or just start with some of the options that are available.

Mr. Varano replied that he thinks that everyone is pretty much aware of the situation as to what is going on and states that he would rather that he give us the information that we seek.

Mr. Siegel states that there is an obligation under the Borough Code as he is sure that our Solicitor has advised for the Borough to recognize or acknowledge a fire service provider for the Borough of Kulpmont. Mr. Siegel states that can be one company, it can be multiple companies or it can be an outside company, it is the discretion of the Council to do so, but there is the obligation of Council to recognize a fire service provider in the community.

Mr. Siegel added that it is also important to recognize the nature of this service, the response; personnel, training and equipment all have a direct affect on the cost of fire insurance premiums for your residents which is a ISO rating, which is an independent rating service that the insurance companies use and they access fire companies and actually determine how that impacts the fire insurance premiums for each of the residents.

Mr. Siegel states that he shares those two things to start so that you understand that first there is a responsibility in terms of your obligation under the code and second that it's a serious responsibility in that it affects every single resident in your community, even those who don't need fire protection, they are paying for insurance and are affected.

Mr. Siegel states with respect to the existing situation as he understands it, he believes that the option that the Borough has is to recognize one or both of the existing companies and states that they are both as he understands it 501C3's given the financial situation at the East End he states that he feels that what makes the most sense is to recognize and acknowledge the West End Station and develop that into one station to serve the municipality and either liquidate or reuse the East End station for other uses.

Mr. Siegel states that the benefits of that is that by consolidation the equipment in one location and having your membership join one organization the members can respond, you have all of the members in one station and all of the equipment in one station and so your ISO rating will reflect your ability to get personnel and equipment out.

Mr. Siegel states that he looks to the West End station simply because there is an excess of space. He added that immediately west of that property is the old manufacturing facility that is currently abandoned and states that he looked around that area but has not done any real estate review but by just looking around in that area there is considerable space immediately west that could be utilized either by a negotiated purchase or an Eminent domain taking for public purposes to expand the parking, buildings structures or whatever.

Mr. Siegel states that with a relatively small borough certainly you could converse one end to the other in a matter of only moments, so to him that is less landlocked than the East End Station and represents greater flexibility into the future and states that would be

his general recommendation to move the equipment to the West End station with the understanding that you would have to do some expansion and adjustment at that station, either liquidating or finding an alternative reuse for the East End station.

Mr. Siegel states that with regards to the organizational structure he states that he thinks you can recognize the new department and allow the new department to remain a 501C3, non-profit as they are today or alternatively what we are seeing more of is an actual cooperative arrangement where the fire service has an advisory board and the elected municipal officials, because of the amount of investment that begins to evolve over the years, the municipal officials begin to serve a roll in operations. Mr. Siegel states that is not an obligation, but they are seeing more of that.

Mr. Siegel states that he is currently involved with five municipalities and the William Cameron Engine Company in Lewisburg Area, they actually just formed a commission which is made up of fire personnel who make recommendations to a board of directors which is made up of representatives in each municipality. He states that another model would be South Williamsport Borough; they recently formed a borough fire department and states that they had three independent non profit fire departments and formed a municipal fire department and rolled two of those three, one elected not to join, into that fire department.

Mr. Siegel states that you have a lot of options and states that from his point of view probably the most efficient means would be to focus on the West End and liquidate and re-utilize the East End property.

Mr. Siegel states that with that he will now open himself up to the council.

Mr. Goretski states that the only thing he is concerned a little bit about is that the East End has a life long history and that is a hard thing for people and asks what if they get back some feed back from them that they are not willing to be part of this and asks if we can mandate that they be part of this.

Mr. Siegel states that you cannot mandate that they are part of it because they are a private not for profit. Mr. Goretski responded that is what he thought. Mr. Siegel continued on to say that however if you derecognize the East End they really have no purpose to function and goes on to say that the reason they exist under the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of State as a 501C3 is to provide fire protection and if they are not recognized to provide fire protection by anyone, they really don't have a purpose to exist.

Mr. Siegel states that there is an instance in Union County where the Attorney Generals office came in and began to withdraw the 501C3 designation of the fire department until it was resolved and they became re-recognized.

Mr. Siegel states that ideally that is not where you want to be, but the technical answer to your question is by derecognizing a fire department and their sole purpose is to serve a

community that recognized them and they are de-recognized they cease to have a purpose to function. Mr. Siegel states that also raises a whole series of other questions such as, who owns the equipment and where does that equipment go. Obviously you have expertise in the personnel and you certainly want to work to keep that, so he states that he would encourage them to join the recognized department.

Mr. Siegel states those are issues out there as well that you would want to address. Mr. Siegel states that he has 20 years personally in the fire service and knows that much of the equipment was paid for with community dollars that was made by selling hoagies and having carnivals and everything else.

Mr. Varano states that if council has no additional questions we will now open up the floor for questions from the public and comments that there are a lot of fire fighters in the audience. Mr. Varano asked Mr. Gilotti to please come up to the microphone so that everything gets recorded and he does not get heck again.

Jeff Gilotti, Assistant Fire Chief in the Borough questioned if the ISO rating is used today for insurance pricing. Mr. Siegel replied yes.

Mr. Gilotti states that he just wanted to clarify that because a member of council said it wasn't and so he just wanted to clarify that because they just had an audit this year and an ISO rating.

Mr. Deitrick states that was him and states that we got that information from insurance companies that a lot of them do not use ISO ratings like Nationwide don't use it and he thinks it was State Farm that does not use it.

Mr. Siegel asked to let him clarify that, the ISO ratings are still being done; the ISO does ratings and he states that he just reviewed the one from South Williamsport Borough and states that he cannot tell you which insurance companies use it.

Mr. Gilotti asked if in general it's used. Mr. Siegel replied that to the best of his knowledge it is.

Mr. Jeff Gilotti said that he does not know if he is informed, but that both companies since 1991 are established as Kulpmont Fire Company, so then we already have an entity if we were to build underneath one roof. Mr. Siegel replied that is good and asked if he knows if that is a 501C3, non profit, registered with the IRS. Mr. Jeff Gilotti replied yes.

Mr. Siegel stated that is a step in the right direction and added that if you have that then you already have presumably bi-laws and operational procedures etc... and added that they actually had to build some of that in South Williamsport. Jeff Gilotti stated that he just wanted to make aware that they established that in 1991.

Bob Nolan questioned that it was mentioned that the Borough has an obligation to recognize an entity for fire protection. Mr. Siegel replied yes, at least one.

Mr. Nolan questioned if they would not recognize their established organization that they have right now, their obligation would be someone outside the area. Mr. Siegel replied that they can do that and states that he does not know that the borough would elect to do that but the obligation is to designate and states that there are many municipalities in the state of Pennsylvania who do not have a fire department within their municipal boundary and they recognize them from adjacent departments. He added that in his own personal township they are covered by three different departments with each serving a different portion of the township.

Mr. Nolan questions what financial obligation the borough actually has to provide protection. Mr. Siegel replied technically the borough has none financially, they have an obligation to recognize and asks the solicitor to correct him if he is wrong but that traditionally municipalities have assumed the responsibility to turn over fireman's relief and to provide workers compensation and beyond that he is not aware of that they have any financial obligation.

Mr. Nolan questioned if they have an obligation to buy equipment and clarifies that he is talking about trucks. Mr. Siegel replied no, and stated if you think of how many of the fire companies are involved, they are a non-profit they are separate and independent and because of that independence there are even some municipalities that were of the opinion that they could not make contributions to the fire department.

Mr. Siegel states that there is fire or emergency service tax today that can be accessed by the municipalities and that can be provided for fire service, but generally speaking there is not an obligation for municipalities with the exception of designating the fire service provider.

Mr. Nolan questioned that they have an obligation to designate a provider and asks if they must provide a station. Mr. Siegel replied no, and they often don't. Mr. Siegel added that as he thinks of various examples around the region he can think of very few where a municipality provides a station and adds that most of the fire departments around the region would be pretty much financially independent with the exception of a contribution, sometimes a very small contribution.

Mr. Nolan questioned if Mr. Siegel has been working with anybody else in our area and is talking about Mount Carmel Twp, Mount Carmel on consolidation. Mr. Siegel answered no and said that he has been involved currently with Lewisburg and has been involved with South Williamsport, Warrior Run fire department, Northumberland and Northern Union and states those are the most recent.

Joe Pancerella questioned if his organization provides any financial assistance for consolidation. Mr. Siegel replied that they have assisted municipalities in obtaining funding for those kinds of services and generally speaking there are some funds available through PEMA, there is some technical support through the commonwealth for

consolidations but states that he will tell him that they have not accessed tremendous amounts of funds in that process.

Mr. Pancerella questioned that without you providing funds or having access to grants to take over the manufacturing building site with eminent domain or whatever that situation may be, currently there is a single fire department with trucks at the East End truck room and trucks at the West End truck room and questions if there is anything wrong with keeping it that way.

Mr. Siegel replied that ultimately that is a decision of Council and adds that his understanding is that getting equipment out, getting response, rolling equipment and getting personnel out if it is not a challenge today it will grow into a challenge in the future as you have less and less volunteers. He stated that he can share what happened in South Williamsport Borough, they had a situation where they had three stations and were each an independent not for profit and what would happen is that all three would be dispatched on a call and some personnel would go to A, some to B and some to C and they would not have enough personnel to roll a piece of equipment and so their ISO rating fell drastically because they were being dispatched and they were waiting for response, response didn't occur so the city of Williamsport was dispatched.

Mr. Siegel adds that one of the dilemmas as volunteers become less and less available and as the training levels increase and the expectations of the volunteers increase and the community becomes more transient working away from the community rather in the community and as industries are less able to relieve their personnel when the fire alarms go off what happens is that you end up starved for personnel and by having one company in one building in a small community such as Kulpmont you certainly have a better likelihood of getting personnel on the equipment. Mr. Pancerella replied that he agrees and thanks Mr. Siegel.

Mr. Goretski commented that it is actually a little bit of a liability to us if we don't though, because if we can't put out the personnel to get out there, if they are still split companies then we have a liability problem because we can't provide the service that we really need to provide.

Mr. Siegel replied that you are certainly not providing the best quality.

Mr. Goretski stated that is what we need to worry about.

Mr. Siegel states that generally in terms of performance you lose very little by combining into a single station, you lose a certain amount of pride and frankly the thing that makes volunteers do what volunteers do and adds that the reality is that they do not do it for the pay and the people that provide that service deserve a tremendous amount of respect and they worked very, very hard for what was created.

Mr. Siegel states that he also thinks that there is a time when you have to say, what is in the best interest of the community.

Mr. Goretski commented that he is a member of the East End for years and likes his company but he does see the liability issue becoming a real demanding thing in the future and it is something that you have to look at.

Mr. Siegel states that he will tell you William Cameron is actually going to paid personnel just to get people into the vehicles.

Mr. Goretski commented that we cannot afford that. Mr. Varano thanked Mr. Bill Siegel for all of the information.

Mr. Siegel states that he will be happy to remain for your meeting if you would like further discussion.

Mr. Varano states that basically that was all that was on the agenda. Mr. Varano states that he had one item that he got delivered to his home last evening but states that he does not think this should be discussed in an open forum.

Mr. Varano questioned if any one in the audience has anything more to say on this.

Mr. Varano states that he will need a short executive session at the end of the meeting for a personnel matter.

The Borough Solicitor William C. Cole states that the board met in executive session for approximately 30 minutes for personnel matters.

THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT THE CALL OF THE CHAIR

RHONDA WILK
BOROUGH SECRETARY

DATE OF APPROVAL