

# **SCIO TOWNSHIP FIRE SERVICES GUIDANCE COMMITTEE**

## **Regular Meeting of the FSGC**

**November 16th, 2022**

**9:30 AM**

**Meeting Hall with Remote Participation**

**827 North Zeeb Road**

### **MINUTES**

1. Call to order
  - a. Chair David Read called the meeting to order at 9:32 AM.
2. Roll call
  - a. Secretary Ryan Yaple called roll. Present: Goodsitt (remote), Groden, Hyde, Perry, Read, Baird, Yaple. Ex Officio member Chief Houde was also present along with Assistant Chief Armstrong.
  - b. Arrived late: Flintoft
3. Adoption of the agenda
  - a. Agenda approved without objection.
4. Public comment
  - a. Kathleen Brant – I just wanted to thank you for a fantastic job. This is the most professional, well run, data driven, thoughtful insightful meeting I have ever seen in Scio Township. It is everything I'd hope for in a meeting. I also want to say that I will do everything in my power to support your recommendations whatever they may be. I have full confidence. I will do everything I can to make sure it is fairly heard and represented. That there is fairness for firefighters salary and benefits that is reference for comments made last night. I will be there when you do your public hearing. Thank you.
  - b. Pam Boyd – Scio Resident. Ditto everything Kathleen said.
  - c. Rob Pattinson – Ditto everything Kathleen said and Ditto everything Pam said, well done gang.
  - d. Public comment closed without objection.
5. Approval of minutes
  - a. Moved by Hyde, seconded by Baird to approve minutes as presented. Approved.
6. Communications and/or Correspondence
  - a. None
7. Presentations
  - a. Scio Township Fire Department Option 1.5 was presented by Chief Houde
  - b. Mark Perry presented financial projections based on Option 1.5 as presented by Chief Houde.
8. Old business
  - a. There was no old business
9. New business
  - a. Chief Houde requests committee members to email him a copy of their recommendations by end of day Monday 11/21/2022. This will allow him to compile and deliver our individual recommendations at our meeting on Wednesday November 23<sup>rd</sup>.

## 10. Public comment

- a. Pam Boyd – Being option agnostic think about what you want to market to residents. Thinking of marketing as to what you want to present to residents. Be careful of voter information fatigue. If you go with option 1.5 well we have already done upgrades to Zeeb Road station. If we come back and do more to the Zeeb Road station but then we need another station, you will starting getting residents eyes glassy. Go with your best option for the best goals hit with this next proposal to residents is my recommendation. As you were all talking that was my knee jerk reaction personally. Stepping away to the firefighter who does not work in Washtenaw County and could not work in Washtenaw County as a lot of places in Washtenaw County don't offer him what other counties will offer him. Mark, I am really glad that you brought up the firefighters contract. I think we need to have a good understand of where our firefighters are in relation to other counties in order to understand that it anything we choose are we going to be able to staff it quickly. There is competition in other stations and a lack of people going into this business. I really do think that looking at do our fire fighters need a raise before we can get people to staff a second station or even the 1.5 station. That's probably all I want to say other than Lance thank you so much for the breakout of the cost. I appreciate that.  
I like to look at the smallest number as that's sometimes all I can handle in the moment.
- b. Rob Pattinson – Bob Groden at the beginning of the meeting you said you felt outnumbered. That is unfortunate as your perspective to this committee is absolutely critical and to make the best decision ultimately. The only difference between traditional business and the fire department for instance is the data that we see that 60% of the calls is medical. That data is generated after all of the calls are over. We do not know the extent of the call when it comes into 911. We would be derelict if we didn't send enough equipment and personnel to handle an emergency. In many ways that 60% of medical is kind of a false flag in terms of we need to send enough people/equipment to handle whatever the emergency is. Your questions and your perspective on this issue have been critical to this committee. Well done all and thank you Bob for having the courage to speak up and ask those questions. Cheers Gang.
  - Mark Perry responded to Rob about his previous question regarding the 1.5 million dollar loan. Last week you asked me a question to ponder relative to the 1.5 million dollar intercompany loan. I did have the time to think about this. It boils down to other capital projects that Mark has worked on in the private sector. A business unit asks for capital to build something. The business unit asked the Board of Directors for the loan. The comptroller promptly said absolutely not. We are taking money out of one pocket and putting it into another pocket. All of the money comes from the coffers of the corporation. Let me take that thought and bring it back to your question of the 1.5. It seems it was unfair for the taxpayers to have to pay the 1.5 million dollars back. Keeping in mind taking out of one pocket and putting it in the other. The township executed a construction agreement in it's name to build/renovate Zeeb for 1.5 million. The question is how are we going to pay for it? To pay for it is this, we took 1.5 million out of the general fund reserve in the form of an intercompany loan to the capital fund. The fire department is a

restricted millage rate funded department. The general fund is funded by the general law 1 mil. Through prudent fiscal management the township had grown to \$8 million. The township will pay the 1.5 million back from a restricted fund to an unrestricted fund. It strikes me as on the surface as I don't know the details that this is inappropriate. How can we take restricted funds and put it in an unrestricted fund? If anyone asks me my opinion so that we get rid of the 1.5 million dollar debt so that can get rid of the loan is to forgive the loan.

- David read – So basically forgive the loan as it's Scio Township property.
- Rob Pattinson – Thank you for that answer. One modification I would make is not that it's unfair for the taxpayers to pay it back it's unfair that it puts the Scio Township Fire Department in debt. That is the information I was looking for. I would be hugely appreciated if you would be the Budget and Finance Committee meeting and shared this answer with them. I would be hugely appreciative if you (Mark Perry) would be there to share this information. There was a previous discussion at the prior Budget and Finance Committee meeting and there was no answer to this question. One of the critical aspects of this committee is to resolve that debt that was incorrectly placed on the fire department.
- Clerk Flintoft hoped that the place we would resolve this is by budget time or at budget time. At the time that the board made the decision in November 2020, David Read and Clerk Flintoft were on the board. It was the recommendation of the finance staff to not bond for the fire department construction. It was recommended that Scio Township Fire Department take a loan from the general fund. It was an elementary written motion to make a loan of 1.5 million to the fire fund, it was the only fire fund that existed as we weren't starting a project yet. It was recommended. The Chief was working with the then Finance Director. Shame on us, never did the Chief or any of the Board of Trustees members question this motion. It was just this last spring when a staff member raised this and said actually you should move it from the capital fund where it's not cramping the style of the fire department back over to the fire department. It was a policy decision that should be made by the board and not in some journal entry that's made six months after the end of the fiscal year. It's a policy matter.
- Mark Perry responded that just going to the crux of this is that the taxpayers paid it once going into the unrestricted general fund. If we are asking the taxpayers to pay it a second time is an increase. Spirit of complete disclosure Mark Perry has been a taxpayer advocate for over 40 years. Rob, in option 1.5 in the workpapers I took the line item of debt repayment and zero'd it out. The 2.6 mills assumes no payment of debt. Mark could not locate the \$75,000 intercompany transfer in the existing fire department finances.

Terry would like to remind everyone that the Zoom link and all documents for the Fire Services Guidance Committee are available on [sciotownship.org](http://sciotownship.org), under both the Fire Department as well as Township Board, Commissions, and Committees.

#### 11) Adjournment

- a. Meeting adjourned at 12:11 PM.