

**LOWELL AREA FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Monday, December 15, 2014**

1. ROLL CALL

Jim Herb called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

Members Present: Jim Herb, Matt Mayer, Susan Reister, David Pasquale,

Others Present: Frank Martin, Shannon Witherell, Bob Rogers, Jeanne Hoffman, Dean Kreuger, Cory Velzen, Jim Hall, Jerry Hale, Steve Bukala and Suzanne Olin

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

IT WAS Moved by Pasquale, and supported by Reister to approve the agenda. Yes – all. Motion carried.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

It was mentioned that Mayer should be moved from “others present” to “members present” in the November 17, 2014 meeting minutes.

IT WAS Moved by Pasquale supported by Reister to approve the minutes of the November 17, 2014 meeting as amended. Yes – all. Motion carried.

4. FINANCIAL REPORT. Olin presented the financial reports. It was questioned why the “operating supply” line item was already at 78% .

IT WAS Moved by Reister and supported by Pasquale to approve the financial report as presented. Yes – all. Motion carried.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

No Comments were received.

6. OLD BUSINESS

A. SCBA PURCHASE. Jim Herb requested the letter Shannon put together in regard to the air packs be added to the minutes as follows:

Board Members of LAFESA
CC: City Manager Howe
Township Supervisor Hail
Chief Martin

Dear LAFESA,

I have been asked by Chief Martin to provide you with a little more background and information regarding our recent request to replace our Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA).

Let me first begin by explaining what the SCBA is; the SCBA is a necessary life safety piece of equipment that provides clean breathing air to our firefighters in high hazard, oxygen deficient atmospheres. This tool is needed when our Firefighters are

engaged in fighting building fires, vehicle fires, providing rescue or recovery in a confined space, as well as in most hazardous material release incidents.

The SCBA's used by our fire department, like most of our equipment has a usable life in the fire service set forth by the NFPA, as well as MiOSHA, and U.S DOT. It is recommend for replacement at ten years (or two NFPA Standards) but no more than fifteen years (or three NFPA Standards). The cylinders that hold the breathing air have an end of service life of not more than fifteen years.

When we purchased our SCBA's the manufacture, Mine Safety Apparel (MSA) offered three air pressures to choose from; 2216 psi, 3000 psi, and 4500 psi. We chose to purchase the 3000 psi.

In the NFPA 2012 Standard a large change was made in the low air indication setting of firefighting SCBA. Prior to 2012 the system triggered a low air alarm at 25% telling the user it was time to get out. Under the new standard the low air alarm trigger is set to 35%. With the low air trigger change coupled with low market presence of the 3000 psi system, MSA decide to discontinued the 3000 psi line on the 2012 Standard.

Seeing the Standard change coming, as well as knowing that we had an aging system, Captain Reed attempted to apply for a FEMA AFG grant on two separate occasions as well a third time with a number of surrounding departments. Unfortunately, all three attempts were unsuccessful.

At the request of this board, I have looked into a number of other grants for funding assistance for this purchase including; FM Global, Fire House Subs, Meijer Foundation, and AAA of Michigan and unfortunately this purchase does not fall within the guidelines of these grant programs.

To date we have had six cylinders hit their end of life leaving us with ten spare cylinders for nineteen SCBA with another six scheduled to reach end of life by 2016. Our last major purchase of SCBA's came in 2002 with an AFG grant so that would mean that our newest systems would be nearly thirteen years old.

I have received a quote for replacing our current system of \$138,936.00 it is my belief that if we purchase by the end of 2014 that price may still come down slightly.

I would ask that you consider this purchase now for the following reasons:

- The area departments that we wrote in on the last grant are moving forward with their purchase and if we chose not to buy in as a group this price could go up 5% to 7%.
- An annual manufacture price increase of up to 5% is scheduled for the first of the year.
- When we considered the cost savings of buying as a group coupled with our aging system and combined with the fact that we are the only department using this operating pressure system in the area making SCBA interoperability impossible, we felt the time to put this item before you was now.

I was also asked to explain why we felt an outright replacement of the entire system was preferred over a phase in of a new system.

As I explained earlier, our system operates on a 3000 psi cylinder with MSA no longer manufacturing the 3000 psi system. Our option would be go up to a 4500 psi system or down to a 2216 psi system.

The risk of going down to 2216 would be that one of our old 3000 cylinders would be applied to the back frame and over charge the SCBA. Also the 2216 is a higher weight system than the 4500 increasing firefighter fatigue. The 2216 is only available in a 30 min cylinder and with the new low air alarm setting we would be required to have a much shorter work time than our current system. Furthermore all of our aid departments are on a 4500 psi system so SCBA interoperability would not be possible.

The risk a phase-in of a 4500 psi system is that one of our old systems would be over charged with the wrong cylinder being applied. Also the new face masks that we wear are completely different than the old system; this would require each member be fit tested to two different types of face mask each year bringing our annual fit testing costs from about \$1200.00 to \$2400.00. It would also mean that our firefighters would be required to share face masks increasing the risk of the spread of illness. Having two different types and pressures of SCBA would also double the required amount of annual training per firefighter on SCBA use and skill testing.

It is our recommendation that the LAFESA and the municipalities of Lowell Township, the City of Lowell and Vergennes Township would consider moving forward with the approval of the purchase and replacement of eighteen complete 4500 psi SCBA's, eighteen spare 4500 psi cylinders, ten additional facepiece, one 4500 psi RIT pack, and any other adapters needed. However the total purchase, if made by January 1st 2015 will not exceed \$138,936.00

It is my hope that this letter may clear up any questions you may have regarding this request, however if you do have any additional questions, please feel free to contact me directly at any time.

Respectfully,
Captain Shannon L. Witherell
Lowell Area Fire Department
Direct: 616-826-3297

Hoffman mentioned if Vergennes Township paid their share of the air pacs now, the amount Vergennes Township will pay into the Authority this fiscal year would equal the entire township share of 2014 tax collection, which is just beginning to be collected this month. She added it was not budgeted and the township can't afford it.

Roderick mentioned having two different air pak units could leave to confusion by the fireman. He added having two units, they work differently.

IT WAS Moved by Herb and seconded by Pasquale to approve the purchase of the air paks in the amount of \$111,989 subject to the Authority being allowed to borrow and having the support of their municipalities.

Yes – all. Motion carried.

7. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Herb mentioned communications seems to be a problem among the municipalities and felt there was a lack of information generated in regard to the fire truck purchase. He said it was tough to find specifics in the minutes. Herb suggested moving the fire authority meetings to the second Monday, of the week before the municipalities have their board meetings and having minutes completed two days after meetings are held. He also mentioned the capital outlay committee document and make a record how capital purchases may be funded.

IT WAS Moved by Herb moved and supported by Reister that the minutes be completed within two days of the fire board meeting.

Yes – all. Motion carried.

- B. Herb also mentioned the fire authority be more proactive with businesses in Lowell and pursuing grants they may offer.

8. COMMITTEE REPORTS

9. FIRE CHIEF'S REPORT AND UPDATES. Martin mentioned there have been 638 fire and medicals calls. He added Ron VanOverbeek is handling the fire and medical reports. He also mentioned the training schedule has been prepared for next year. He added this has been a good year, and no one has been injured. Herb questioned the down turn in calls. Martin responded the fireman do not attend the

Laurels of Kent or Fountain view unless an ambulance requests them to. He said this makes a large impact on their call volume.

Hale mentioned he had a discussion with Shannon and the extra work he does in the hours allotted. Hale would like to be proactive if there are time issues and attempt to plan better.

10. Reister mentioned she met with Matt Mayer and Frank Martin on the 18th of November for the Chief's review. She mentioned Frank started on the department in 1971 and became chief in 1987. She mentioned Frank handles monthly, weekly and annual checks of the equipment, payroll, finance, building operations and assisting the sheriff's department with traffic accidents.. She added there are lots of details to running a department and that he oversees an entire operation. She added he meets the needs of the community and staff including meetings and conferences. She added grievances are a non-issue and the average stay is ten years.

Martin mentioned the possibility of charging businesses for inspections. Herb added each municipality would have to be on board with this. Herb suggested Frank provide backup information at the next meeting.

Roderick suggested the Lowell Area Fire Authority join the NJPA or national contract purchasing to save the authority money.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 12, 2015.

It was moved by Mayer and supported by Reister to adjourn at 4:25 p.m. Yes – all. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Herb, Chairman

Mark Howe, Recording Secretary

DRAFT