

October 12, 2009

## **LONG RANGE PLANNING/MACHINERY & EQUIPMENT COMMITTEE REPORT**

The Long Range Planning/Machinery & Equipment Committee met Monday, October 12, 2009 at 5:30 p.m. in the Quorum Court Meeting Room, Third Floor, County Administration Building, 215 East Central, Bentonville, Arkansas

Committee Members Present: Moore, Blaty, Harrison, Stephenson

Others Present: County Comptroller Richard McComas, Director of Emergency Management Coordinator Marshal Watson

Media: Tabatha Hunter - Daily Record: Ryan McGeeney - Morning News

### **1. Call to Order**

JP Harrison called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

### **2. Fire Truck and Equipment Inspection Proposals – DEM Coordinator Marshal Watson**

Marshal Watson stated that one of the proposals had been mailed to the committee members earlier, but the other had not been received in time to mail it. He stated that he had been asked to look at potential options for consultant services to examine the fire truck fleet.

Marshal Watson stated that the two proposals they received were very similar—one was from a company called ISO Slayer out of Colorado; the other was submitted by The Ludwig Group out of Missouri. He said they both are proposing to send a consultant that would spend several days examining all of the trucks and equipment in the fire departments throughout the county, inventory and itemize, assign some type of points value indicating the need to replace, how many years of service we can expect to receive out of each apparatus, and provide recommendations on possible better locations for the apparatus. He said they will also provide a recommendation for replacement, both short and long term.

He said that ISO Slayer was started by a former ISO employee, and focuses everything as it relates to ISO standards. He said that the county not only wants to provide fire protection service to its residents, but also tries to benefit them by obtaining lower ISO ratings. He said the Ludwig Group proposal focuses more on National Fire Protection Association standards.

Marshal Watson stated that the estimate from the Ludwig Group was \$18,000, which includes all of their expenses, and the ISO Slayer made two proposals—one for \$9,000 and one for \$12,000, which would include an additional two-day seminar for all of the firefighters to better prepare them for an ISO audit. He added that the ISO Slayer estimate did not include their travel and lodging expenses.

There was brief discussion regarding the estimated travel expenses for two people.

JP Stephenson stated that he thought they were just getting a list together of fire department needs so that they could address them during budget discussions, and this process will take too long, and questioned why outside proposals had been solicited.

JP Harrison stated that these were just proposals that they requested because of the discussion about the budget cuts.

JP Blaty asked how many proposals were submitted, and if any were from Arkansas companies. Marshal Watson stated that they only received two proposals, and he was unable to locate an Arkansas company that provided this service.

JP Moore explained that he had asked Marshal Watson to get information on what it would cost to get someone from outside the county and the local Fire Protection Association to do an objective, unbiased evaluation of what the various fire departments actually need instead of what they want. He said he had thought they would be able to find someone locally that could do it in a few days time for a nominal fee.

JP Stephenson stated that he knows from personal experience that the Insurance Service Offices will send personnel in to work with any fire department that is trying to get there ISO rating adjusted, because the City of Siloam Springs utilized their services and went from a "7" to a "3". He also objected to JP Moore having a discussion with Marshal Watson outside of a regular meeting, because he felt that is where county business should be conducted. He added that he hates having something presented to him when the meeting occurs, and having to make a decision about it.

JP Harrison stated that they need to take some action about the issue, because Jimmy Thompson, the Fire Protection Association President, came to them with questions about what the county plans to do regarding fire fighting equipment in the 2010 budget. He said the proposals were just an option, but they could look at perhaps having Marshal Watson, or someone else go out and look at the equipment.

JP Stephenson stated that if a volunteer fire department has not organized itself so that it can put dues on property tax statements and collect them with tax payments, then he is not in favor of spending any county tax money to help them out.

JP Blaty asked about contacting the ISO to see about having them do the evaluation, because if that is a service that they provide, then why are they looking at outside proposals. JP Stephenson stated that their work is more specific than that, such as for a city, and he does not know if they could look at an entire county. Marshal Watson stated that the ISO is the regulatory body that comes in and assigns the ratings, and although they would most likely give a department a few pointers, they are not in the free consulting business.

JP Moore stated that they still need to get some idea of what the firefighters really need versus what they want. He said they cannot afford what they want, but hopefully they can try to meet their needs, and he does not know anyone in Benton County who can tell us that.

JP Harrison stated that revenue is down, but they have to figure out how they can be reasonable as far as needs go, without getting into the wants.

JP Blaty asked if they are talking about every fire department in the county. Marshal Watson stated that they are talking about every county-owned piece of equipment, some of which is staged at city fire departments. JP Stephenson stated that as an example, the City of Siloam Springs has two or three county-owned fire trucks, and in return for the use of them, the city houses them, maintains them, and make runs outside the city limits into the unincorporated area when needed.

In answer to a question from JP Moore, Marshal Watson stated that every fire department in the county has at least one piece of county-owned apparatus, and the cities of Siloam Springs, Bentonville, Rogers are very limited on county equipment, but the more rural departments have more of the county-owned equipment.

JP Blaty asked who in the past has been in charge of figuring out who needs what. Marshal Watson stated that the County Judge is in charge of properties, and in the past, he has managed the

Fire Protection Program on behalf of the County Judge, in consultation with the Benton County Fire Protection Association's Executive Board. He said they provide him with information on budgeting matters, and they use that information to develop the budget. He said that historically, they have purchased one tanker every year, with the high point being 5 years ago when the county purchased 14 fire trucks with a five-year note. He said the annual purchases have caused a trickle-down effect in the equipment, by which they try to eliminate the very worst equipment.

JP Blaty asked if the county has received requests from the fire departments yet. Marshal Watson stated that the departments make their requests to the Fire Protection Association Board, and the board examines the requests and places the new tanker that is purchased each year in one of the departments based on those requests. Marshal Watson stated that in addition to the tanker that is purchased, they try to provide funds to rebuild one, because they have a significantly aging fleet of tankers.

JP Moore stated that the board would like for the county to get another 5-year note and purchase 14 trucks as they did 5 years ago. He said that while he does not feel like that is feasible, they do need to purchase some, but he has no idea how many.

JP Stephenson commented on the economy and the proposed budget cuts, and said they should notify the board that they are going to purchase one truck, and that the various departments should get the process in place to get their dues collected before they come back with any more requests. He added that he did not think they need to be spending money on outside consultants.

JP Harrison asked Marshal Watson if he, the County Judge, and the committee could visit some of the departments that are really in need. Marshal Watson stated that he is confident that the board can make their way across the county and report back to the committee.

JP Moore stated that at the last Fire Association Meeting he attended, County Judge David Bisbee asked the board for a list of the equipment along with their opinions of its conditions.. He said it did not seem to him that the list was being pursued in a timely manner.

JP Harrison asked Marshal Watson when he thought they could get the information on the needs, not the wants of each station. Marshal Watson stated that he thought it might take 30 to 45 days, because they are dealing with volunteers who will have to take time off work.

JP Moore asked what time frame had been discussed with the two consultants. Marshal Watson stated that he suspected they would try to accommodate, but the conversations had centered on sometime before the end of the year.

JP Stephenson made motion to disregard the two proposals presented, and to request Marshal Watson and the Fire Protection Association Executive Board to get a list of needs together as soon as possible, seconded by JP Blaty.

Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

### **3. Other Business:**

JP Moore initiated a discussion of the Fisher Ford Bridge. After a brief discussion regarding previous comments made by County Judge David Bisbee, JP Stephenson stated that he would add discussion of the Fisher Ford Bridge to the October 13, 2009 Committee of Thirteen agenda.

### **4. Public Comments**

None

### **5. Adjourn**

Meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m.