

# EMERGENCY SERVICES CONSULTING INTERNATIONAL

## WORK SESSION

### Meeting Notes

**November 13, 2017– 5:15 PM**

President of New Philadelphia City Council Sam Hitchcock called the meeting to order at 5:15 PM in the Council Chambers in the John Knisely Centre. The Work Session was called by Fire Chief Jim Parrish and President of New Philadelphia City Council Sam Hitchcock. Present were Councilmembers Cheryl Ramos, John Zucal, Darrin Lautenschleger, Dean Holland; Mayor Joel Day; Council President Sam Hitchcock; Clerk of Council Julie Courtright; Service Director Ron McAbier, Treasurer Tom Gerber, Auditor Beth Gundy and Safety Director Greg Popham. Law Director Marvin Fete was not able to be present for the Meeting but was available by phone.

**ITEM(S):** To provide Council the opportunity to ask Project Manager for ESCI Mike Tucker about the Fire Station, Fire Chief, or any other concerns they may have.

**PRESENTATION BY Mike Tucker, Project Manager for ESCI:** We are a consulting arm for the International Association of Fire Chiefs, so we've got experience in providing these kind of studies for Communities. The team that is part of this project has one other individual who is travelling with me as well but he is interviewing for a Fire Chief position. In addition a gentleman by the name of Stuart McCutcheon is also on the team. He's a retired fire chief out of Winterhaven, Fl. He handles all of our service delivery and GIS. The fourth person who's part of the team is a gentleman by the name of Randy Paul, a Fire Chief out of Texas. In addition to being a fire chief he's also a Certified Public Accountant. Between the four of us we have a lot of expertise on this subject and we look forward to serving the City of New Philadelphia and Uhrichsville as well.

#### **THE FLOOR WAS OPENED UP TO QUESTIONS FOR MR. TUCKER:**

President of New Philadelphia City Council Sam Hitchcock asked where we were in the assessment process. Mr. Tucker replied that we were still in the early stages, a lot of information has been uploaded. Mr. Zucal asked for an overview of the process. Mr. Tucker said this study is to form a "cooperative effort" between the two fire stations, because a merger is not in the best interest of all parties. Our goal is to figure out a functional consolidation or administrative sharing or something along those lines. Right now we're trying to figure out the services that are provided by each agency and do a comparison from agency to agency as far as call volume and call types. Mr. Tucker said the rest of report will consist of a side by side comparison of the two agencies including management components and policies and procedures. We're trying to figure out the similarities in both corporations, the financial analysis has a lot to do with that as well. Mr. Tucker said much of the report would consist of a side by side comparison on the two agencies including management components, staffing. Each section of the report will be broken down into a discussion which will include an analysis. There will be recommendations with each of those

#### **MR. TUCKER EXPLAINED WHAT THE STUDY HAS DETERMINED SO FAR:**

In New Philadelphia we have discovered that this is an area that relies heavily on volunteers. Those agencies have a challenge in recruiting and training volunteers. As a legislative body you'll have to deal with that, and understanding what's going on around you is critical. Training requirements for volunteers is a lot tougher than it used to be. Firefighters have to commit a lot of time to the job and it takes a toll on their personal life. Call volume is increasing as well. Mutual Aid partners respect New Philadelphia a lot. The New Philadelphia Fire Department can combat these issues by finding the balance. Staffing is another issue and they need to determine how they deal with this challenge. How many volunteers, paid on call, part time firefighters are needed. It's a sign of the changing times.

#### **MR. TUCKER EXPLAINED THE CONCEPT OF A FIRE DISTRICT:**

Fire districts are used across the country. They are basically special purpose governments with a mutual goal, a stand alone agency. Citizens have a direct input. When you're talking about issues like citizens needing smoke detectors and other nonemergency responses, those keep us from having to respond to fires. Non functioning smoke detectors in homes in the community are a risk. Public private partnerships are decisions that need to be made by the legislative body. Sometimes they work well and sometimes they don't. We as consultants tend to stay away from recommending these partnerships. Mr. Zucal noted that

this would be more advantageous for the City of Uhrichsville, where they have had problems recruiting and training volunteers. Mr. Zucal asked Mr. Tucker the advantages and disadvantages for the City of New Philadelphia. Mr. Tucker said the advantages for the City of New Philadelphia would be for insurance purposes. Having additional apparatus and rescue workers is always an advantage should an emergency situation occur. Uhrichsville would be considered a substation of New Philadelphia. The City of Uhrichsville will have to make some business decisions about their cost of ownership and the cost of operation when they move forward. The downside, possibly not a whole lot different than what they have now. Mr. Zucal noted that the partnership would also benefit the citizens of both communities, as Uhrichsville is located very close to New Philadelphia. Mr. Tucker added that as Uhrichsville continues to grow that will be added into the partnership, instead of having two ambulances they'll have three. Mr. Zucal said there's also a potential for increased staffing with mutual aid calls. Mr. Tucker says as healthcare in America changes there will be a domino effect on the increase of services for our fire departments. Both Uhrichsville and New Philadelphia have common management structures. Mr. Holland said that if the citizens do approve a fire district, it will be revenue neutral. If the citizens vote for a fire district they'll have to vote for the funding to support that. Mr. Holland noted that Council for a number of years has devoted a lot of money for our fire department, our department is very well equipped. The City however has not been able to provide adequate staffing. We've basically become a paid on call department. There's two very significant areas that do define overtime, the paramedic unit and the fact that an entire shift could take off. This makes no sense. I'm hoping you'll address that too. Mr. Tucker said these will be addressed. Mr. Holland also had a concern that at some point the grant will end and we'll have to decide if we want to maintain the staffing that it provided. Mr. Tucker said that one of the long term effects is that a 24 hour shift does take a physical toll on a firefighter.

ACTION: Mr. Tucker said himself or someone from his company will return and give another report to Council in 90 to 120 days.

**With no further questions or comments the meeting adjourned at 6:09pm.**