

**Special Village Board Meeting  
December 4, 2019**

Board Present: President Dobbs, Trustee Weatherston, Trustee Stillman, Trustee Wanggaard, Trustee Prott, Trustee Martin, Trustee Wishau.

Absent: None.

Staff/Others: Administrator Tom Christensen, Fire Chief Roeder, Fire Battalion Chief St. Amand, and Fire Lieutenant Leininger.

**1. Call the meeting to order.**

President Dobbs called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., at Village Hall, located at 5043 Chester Lane, Racine, Wisconsin.

**2. Presentation by Rob Henken from Wisconsin Policy Forum on its independent analysis and potential options for County and Municipal Parks & Recreation and Fire/EMS services as it relates to the Village of Caledonia, followed by questions and discussion. Public comments and questions will be welcomed.**

President Dobbs stated that after tonight's discussion, a Public Safety Committee made up of three Trustees will work with the information presented. This Committee will meet with the Chiefs, the Union, and other departments that may provide insight into the potential options discussed at this meeting.

Rob Henken from Wisconsin Policy Forum explained these series of reports are a result of the Johnson Foundation at Wingspread forefronting the initiative that involves elected officials, and administrators from municipalities in the Racine County area that form the Resilient Communities Roundtable (RCR). The RCR was formed in an effort for the municipalities making up Racine County to work together on county wide issues and feel more like a region. As these discussions have progressed, there have been areas identified that would allow these communities to work together. Service sharing is not the only way that the communities could work together; however the RCR thought there was enough to work with as a result of the studies performed and have moved forward with a more in depth analysis of Parks & Recreation and Fire/EMS services. Public Health may be discussed next year.

Wisconsin Policy Forum (WPF) is a non-partisan research organization that is fairly new (two years old) and provides research that permits more data driven decision making. WPF provides options but make no recommendations and purely provides the analytics. Service sharing within a community should not solely be financially driven, because consolidation might not impact cost. However, it does achieve a level of service by working with neighboring communities that might not be attainable without consolidation. Henken explained that there are six areas of criteria in the finding of functional service areas:

1. Is there a demand for new technology or equipment? Or are there new State or Federal regulations that are combining to cause costs to become unaffordable? (This is often an issue that arises with dispatch, which has already been consolidated in this area).
2. Is there key staff scheduled for retirement? Or is there other organizational development that may cause leaders of a particular community to look at a certain function and find if there is a new way to work more closely with neighboring communities?
3. Are there clear areas of cost efficiency or redundancy among neighboring municipalities that suggest potential for cost savings through shared services?
4. Is there an obvious benefit in terms of how service sharing might improve the mix of services or level type?
5. Is one Municipality providing a service that is benefiting the larger region?

6. Are Capital replacement needs intensive? (Although saving money should not be the motivation for consolidation, it is in the most capital intensive areas that it does tend to produce a financial benefit).

Henken spoke of the acreage of parks in the municipalities of Racine County and reviewed the spending totals. Each jurisdiction maintains and controls their parks and park assets. All of the areas have a rising demand for parks and recreational amenities, and it might be beneficial to do that jointly. In terms of maintenance, the WFP initially thought in order to generate some cost efficiency the City of Racine could, on a contractual basis, maintain all of the parks on behalf of the other communities. This does not work for every community because some Park positions intermingle with Public Works positions, and therefore could not potentially eliminate a Parks position. Because of this, the WFP decided the process should be left alone, but that joint park consolidation in the future should be considered, especially in the context of regional assets. Milwaukee County was the first to consolidate their park system, and it has worked well.

The City of Racine has many recreational programs in comparison to the other municipalities, but non-residents do make use of the City of Racine's recreational services. Mt. Pleasant also showed that more than 50% of the attendees for their recreational programs came from outside of their Village. This shows that residents want to use these services with no regard to municipal boundaries. Henken spoke of communities finding it difficult to hire recreational staff (i.e. refs, umpires, etc.) and/or find volunteers that assist with these activities. In order to move forward, the WFP has provided different options for the future, ranging from the least impact to the greatest impact. Henken thought there was potential for an enhanced coordination to occur and recommended starting small, like a joint recreational website that could be maintained by Racine County. For a greater impact the communities could engage in a county wide parks and recreation council, where each municipality is represented but could tackle some of these region wide issues.

Racine County has already consolidated dispatch services and this is the first step in consolidating Fire/EMS Services if the goal is to be more comprehensive moving forward. There is a difference in compensation and benefits amongst the three departments, but they are not too extreme in scale and can be modified to be cohesive. Consolidation for this area has been discussed for decades, and South Shore Fire Department can be looked to as an example for the benefits of a potential merge. The irregular boundaries of the various municipalities in Racine County can cause irregular response times that could be improved through this method. The notion of closest unit response would apply where a dispatcher is dispatching the closest unit regardless of boundary. Each department is facing significant capital needs, and could benefit from a cost sharing approach. There is a need for staffing in each department as well, and if the region were to combine resources and deployed strategically it may reduce the need of personnel. Henken spoke of the challenges of standardizing the ambulance service, and the differences of the staffing framework between the municipalities. Ultimately, the larger workforce could result in less overtime and greater recruitment and retention. A single structure for command and training could reduce deficiencies and redundancies while also producing cost savings. A possible reduction in reserve and operable apparatuses could also apply.

After the initial presentation, President Dobbs opened up the forum for a back and forth discussion regarding the topics. Below is a summary of that conversation.

President Dobbs inquired about the Cost Analysis in connection with this study. Henken explained that they hoped by the end of January to provide the possible cost savings analysis for this area. Trustee Weatherston was skeptical of consolidation and wanted to see actual dollar savings before moving forward. Christensen agreed and thought the governance model was important in making this work. If each municipality had policy control with one municipality being the fiscal agent, he thought it would be feasible. He believed we should start looking into where consolidation has worked and try to model that process. Trustee Martin agreed and thought we needed examples of successful models that showed control and revenue sharing. Henken overviewed some occurrences from neighboring communities. There was further discussion regarding how the consolidation might be formulated to fit this community.

Ron Coutts was present in the audience and spoke on both the Fire and Parks issues. He explained that he was a firefighter for the City of Racine for 23 years and taught EMS programs at Gateway. He thought three men crews should be mandatory, and did not think two men crews would work for this area. He spoke of past joint consolidation conversations in the past, and recommended moving slowly. Coutts also served on the Caledonia's Park's Commissions, and thought the Commission's worked hard for the parks.

The Fire Chiefs are in support of consolidation. Chief Roeder briefly overviewed the history behind consolidation attempts. He stated that before Act 10 was implemented there was concern that the municipalities would be unable to levy enough to keep the Fire Department staffed and equipped adequately. At that time there was discussion if the three departments could come together in order to provide those resources. He stated there have been multiple studies throughout the years that have supported this, and it has always been shot down after the preliminary studies. He thought the studies should be delved into deeper to see if this is a viable option for our community, and thought there were many areas in the department that could benefit from this. Lieutenant Leininger spoke of how financial issues and incomplete studies have impacted the process moving forward in the past, which is why they are seeking a more comprehensive financial plan. There was discussion regarding the obstacles that prevented consolidation in the past. Trustee Weatherston wanted to see where the Village of Caledonia ranked per capita for cost in relation to the Fire/EMS services, as it might not be beneficial and thought the Village should be cautious. President Dobbs thought Caledonia was behind in allocating finances to public safety and could be why costs are lower here in comparison to our neighbors. Chief Roeder thought passing an Automatic Aid agreement for Fire Protection and Rescue Services was an important first step towards shared services. There was further discussion regarding Caledonia's staffing model and how that staff is dispatched. Trustee Prott questioned how do the elected officials explain to the tax payers of Caledonia that they would harbor the cost for equipment or additional staffing for the neighboring community? Henken thought a cost sharing arrangement would need to be worked out so there would be equity to support the consolidated effort.

Henken explained that the WFP calculated the North Shore Department savings over a 20 year span. On an operational basis seven communities combined saved approximately 2.8 million dollars per year in comparison to what is being spent today to support the North Shore Department. On the capital side, the savings are 3-4 million dollars in equipment costs. Although North Shore is significantly smaller, it does show an example of cost savings. Ultimately the Board wanted to see something more comparable in terms of geography, size, etc. Christensen explained that the WFP has a tool on their website that compares costs among different municipalities that may be useful. The Board discussed hypothetical situations involving consolidating with the neighboring communities. Trustee Prott questioned if all of the municipalities are under the same Union how that might affect consolidation. Henken explained that the communities are represented by different Union's but there is a meeting scheduled for December 23<sup>rd</sup> to discuss any differences in contracts or any issues that might arise from consolidation. Henken overviewed what was discussed this evening.

Trustee Weatherston had a closing comment and thought the work the Johnson Foundation is doing is incredible. He did think that there were more important issues in the community such as Unified, and spoke about the 24/7 report that highlighted the issues in the African American community in Racine County.

### **3. Adjournment.**

Motion by Trustee Wanggaard to adjourn. Seconded by Trustee Stillman. Motion carried unanimously.

Adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joslyn Hoeffert  
Deputy Village Clerk