

**Wasatch County Fire Board of Directors Meeting**

**Tuesday July 9, 2019**

**Meeting held at the Wasatch County Administration Building located at 25 N Main, Heber City.**

**Those in Attendance:**

Spencer Park

Jeff Wade

Steve Farrell

Marilyn Crittenden

Kendall Crittenden

Danny Goode

Mark Nelson

Chief Ernie Giles

BC Jason Provost

BC Gary Sessions

BC Ben Fitzgerald

Fire Marshal Clint Neerings

Fire Warden Troy Morgan

EMS Director Clair Provost

Mike Davis

Dustin Grabau

Merry Duggin

Eric Hales

Items of Business to address:

**Minutes**

The minutes of the June 11, 2019 board meeting were presented to the board for their review and approval.

**A motion was made by Councilman Goode to approve the minutes of the June 11, 2019 fire board meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilman Crittenden and the motion passed all in favor.**

### Warrants

The listing of warrants totaled \$204,288.09. This total included the added warrants and the payroll transmittals.

**A motion was made by Councilman Goode to approve the warrants as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Wade and the motion passed all in favor.**

Councilman Goode- Do you have a formalized agreement with MIDA?

Chief Giles- We had a previous one, but we are still working through an updated one. It started out as just the hotel and now it is growing in acreage, so it needs to be changed.

Councilman Goode- They said they had an agreement with the Fire Department, they must have been referring to the old one.

Councilman Farrell- So it needs to be modified?

Chief Giles- Yes. The old agreement was for the hotel only and now they are over 4500 acres and growing. Between them, Hideout and Heber there will be no Jordanelle basin.

### Chief report

Chief Giles- We cooked hot dogs at the city park on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, we did about 200 and they did 6. There was a lot more people there wanting them than we had. It was a good outing; the Mayor and Chief Booth were there. The firemen cooked and it was a good time. Other than that, we will report on the impact fee and Clair has a presentation.

Councilman Goode- The Big Hollow Fire, how did it turn out? When we have those types of fires what type of report are, we required to give to the state? What do we have to do there?

Chief Giles- Troy reports it to the state, the Big Hollow fire was all on state ground.

EMS Director Clair Provost- When we were here last time, there were some that had questions about the costs involved and how the fire/ems merger will work. I have put together some information regarding that. We have shared this information previously. We have 3 main goals, to provide the best service to Wasatch County, to do this with the best use of public resources and funds (be fiscally responsible with the taxpayer money) and maintain high morale within fire/ems. If employee morale is good, they will perform better and that is a known fact. We have outlined a basic timeline. In 2007 Jordanelle first started offering EMS services, they purchased an ambulance and started providing services in the Jordanelle basin. They then were able to help us in Heber on the valley floor. At that time EMS was strictly on call/PT. These employees would leave their jobs during the day, respond to the station and then take the call. Our call volume was a lot less back then, so it is difficult for us to do business today like we did back then. In 2015 we started doing 12-hour full time shifts in Heber (Mon – Thurs, 3 full time guys) and they would respond from 6am – 6pm. If you are a business owner, it is difficult if your employee is leaving multiple times a day because they are on call EMS. Call volume increased so we went from Mon-Thus to seven days a week (6am-6pm) with part time people still filling

the nighttime shifts. Also, in 2015, the State of Utah had an intermediate /advanced certification. Only two counties (Wasatch and Carbon) took advantage of that certification and training. 2 years ago, the state decided to go with a national registry (meaning the certification can be used in other states and areas). We went to the state and said we worked hard for these certifications and this certification is pretty close to a paramedic. We said we don't want to lose this so the state then gave Wasatch and Carbon County a waiver to maintain and bill at that level of service. April of 2018 the fire advisory board recommended that we do a needs assessment, which was a long process. In June of 2018 we went full time in Heber and Jordanelle. It was difficult because the station in Heber doesn't have living quarters. In August of 2018 Lewis and Young was hired to do an impact fee study and in November 2018 ESCI did a report on their findings for the master plan. We were a little disappointed in his presentation of that report so the advisory board asked Dennis Goudy to re-present in December. In January of 2019 we added we added EMS operations to the fire district, at that time we started housing our Heber crew in Midway because Heber station doesn't have living quarters. Eric Hales then presented recommendations for merger. Now we are trying to work on the integration of the two (Fire/EMS). Our growing number of calls, it starts in 2007 and you can see the trend and how it has increased and continues to do so. In 2018 it declined by 100 calls, which is really nothing when compared to the big picture.

Councilwoman Crittenden- What is the red?

EMS Director Clair Provost- The red is the number of fire calls and gray are the ems calls. Those aren't all actual fires; those numbers include fire alarms and CO calls. To date up to the end of June this year we have had 1,014 calls. This 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend we had 41 calls alone (just EMS).

Councilman Goode- Do we get more accurate information now that we switched the way dispatch is coding the calls?

EMS Director Clair Provost- Yes. Image trend is the reporting system we use.

Councilman Goode- Did the integration start this January (with the dispatch system).

EMS Director Clair Provost- Yes.

Councilman Parks- Do you have a chart showing which months are busiest?

EMS Director Clair Provost- The summer months (July) are the peak months and are busy.

Councilman Farrell- What changed? From 2007-2013, it looks like the fire calls were only 25-35 percent but from 2015-2018 they are about 50 percent.

EMS Director Clair Provost - Chief and Clint can answer better to that, we do have a lot of high-end homes in our community and those homes tend to have alarm systems and we get a lot of alarm calls for them.

Chief Giles- Since we have gone to full time our tracking has been a lot better so that is a portion of it as well (along with what Clair said about the alarms).

Councilman Goode- Lets track calls. We didn't implement fines for false alarms, did we?

Chief Giles – No, then people would start unhooking their alarms.

Councilman Goode - So we would rather just respond then.

Chief Giles – Yes.

EMS Director Clair Provost- We had a 17.7% increase in the number of calls from last year.

Councilwoman Crittenden - That is EMS only?

EMS Director Clair Provost- Yes, that is EMS only, but fire would be the same as well.

Councilman Goode - Is this only a product of growth or is there another factor?

EMS Director Clair Provost- Growth and recreation, we are a bedroom community. Quite honestly, we get calls today that we didn't used to get, people that feel bad or that have a bloody nose, they call the ambulance and we have to respond.

Councilman Farrell - Is that just the generation?

EMS Director Clair Provost- I think so there is a big difference in how the younger generation handles things.

Councilwoman Crittenden - Could it be the insurance issue? We aren't charging them anything are we?

EMS Director Clair Provost- Yes, we charge. We transport and then send a bill

Councilwoman Crittenden - How do those bills get paid?

EMS Director Clair Provost-The state of Utah regulates the rate that is charged. For an intermediate/advanced (we are between the level of an advanced and a paramedic) we charge as advanced which is \$1,234.00 for a base rate, then it is \$31.65/mile. The only rates that we establish is when we bill for supplies used. There is about a 50 percent collection rate. You can bill Medicare/Medicaid and they will only pay a portion and that is why the collection rates are low.

Councilman Crittenden- We have been close to 80% before.

EMS Director Clair Provost- When you put Medicaid and Medicare in the mix it is about 50 percent, if you take that out of there then yes, we are up there (higher) for our collection rates. Our billing company is out of Florida and recently we have met with other billing companies and decided to go with a new company. With the company we had we were a small fish in a big ocean. We decided to go with a local company in Utah that does strictly EMS billing within Utah.

Councilwoman Crittenden - Does the cost that you charge cover your expenses?

EMS Director Clair Provost- Yes and no, our EMS budget is 1.8 million and last year we brought in almost 1 million in revenue (including event pay). So, no. Fire and EMS is not a money-making venture it is a service provided.

Councilman Goode - Did you say how much in the red we run?

EMS Director Clair Provost- We are at about 50 percent. Addressing some service levels. Our current issue is, more calls come in during the day than during the evening. 6AM-6PM is our peak call volume time. Our medical transfers utilize both of our full-time crews (we have two full time crews). A call will

come out for a transfer and then 30 mins later we have another call for a transfer, which takes our full-time crews out of the valley. That leaves part time people only and there are times that you get 3-4 ambulances out and your scrambling to find people. So far, we have been able to make it work but with the growth it makes me nervous. Our part time people start their shift at 6pm-6am, we have a crew in Wallsburg and one in Heber. With the growth and traffic, it is difficult to get to the station in a timely fashion. It is about 10 minutes to get to the station and then from there the time to get to your house. The additional growth in the county can't be met by part time employees, we are getting to the point where we can't do business like we used to. On call employees can't leave their jobs that many times a day, we have average of 6-7 calls during the day. I did some research recently and we are averaging three transfers a day.

Councilman Goode - Have we considered when we are going to stop transferring, are we going to run out of the capacity to do that?

EMS Director Clair Provost- With our license we can't pick and choose we just have to provide the service. Chief and I have talked about some things we can do for a specific ambulance for transfers.

Councilwoman Crittenden - Explain to me a part time employee.

EMS Director Clair Provost- We call them part time employees, I don't like to call them volunteers because they are very well trained, they are volunteers and they receive a stipend. The part time people have been with us a lot of years and we need them for when we need the additional help that I mentioned earlier. They respond from home or work if they can. At night we have two part time crews and one is in Wallsburg and they take our first transfer of the night always. They take a transfer almost every night. This morning there was a call at about 5:30am for an accident on the highway near Wallsburg so the Wallsburg crew responded as they were the closest. The same thing in Heber, part time people.

Councilwoman Crittenden - They are not employees but volunteers receiving a stipend?

EMS Director Clair Provost- They are employees of Wasatch County. They receive a stipend and then they are paid the time they are on a call.

Councilman Goode – Aren't we trying to get away from that? Isn't that one of the things the ESCI report talked about?

EMS Director Clair Provost- We will address that here in a minute. We will always need volunteers because we have events (almost every weekend in the summer) and back up calls, both fire and EMS will always need part time help in case. One day we may be like Park City and have seven station and all full-time staff. Our current staffing level- we have two full-time crews 24/7 and two part time crews from 6pm-6am.

Councilman Crittenden- The full-time crews are 3 people?

EMS Director Clair Provost- Yes. When the part time crews are on, if it is a serious call, the full-time crews will respond as well to assist. Our hope is that, in the near future, we can add an additional full-time crew. What Chief Giles did recently in creating the battalion chiefs has been huge. When there are multiple trucks and ambulances out at one time, the BC becomes in charge, they get on the radio and

make decisions as to who will go where and how the crews can be split. It has helped greatly with some of our staffing issues.

Councilman Farrell- Who do we do the transfers for? Do we bill IHC?

EMS Director Clair Provost- We bill the patient. We do transports for the hospital, the Abbingdon and Rocky Mountain Care Center (assisted living centers). Protocol states we have to take the patient to the nearest, most appropriate, facility. We honor the patient's wishes in their hospital choice unless protocol supersedes that, such as in the case of a life threat. Our PT people trying to get to the station from home is too slow. The full-time crews are out of the station in under a minute and can be on scene quicker. Some of the PT people will first respond if it is close until the actual ambulance can get there. I feel this quote from Emerson is good for the situation "That in which we persist in doing becomes easier, not the nature of the task has changed, but our ability to do it is increased. These guys do this every day, you don't want me, old shaky Clair to start an IV, the firefighters do it on a daily basis and they train on a daily basis. On shift they train both fire and EMS. You asked what would it cost to be separate vs to combine? We ran the numbers and the salary cost came from David Rowley. We asked "what will it cost for a FT employee"? You can see the number and how many positions we would need to do a stand-alone EMS department. That shows what would be budgeted for our PT people. The \$28k is what it would take to get them equipped and clothed, roughly about \$1,000.00 per person. Overhead includes the money we set aside for an ambulance, operating/O&M, all of those costs. Maintenance costs are things that are not in my budget that are "hidden" costs example: If the door breaks and the county just repair it, those types of things. Basically, it would cost 4.1 million to do a standalone EMS department.

Councilwoman Crittenden - Do we currently have those numbers of personnel? 28 FT and 33 PT?

EMS Director Clair Provost- No. We have the 33 PT positions and the County contracts with the District for 5 FT positions.

Councilwoman Crittenden –So these numbers up here reflect the 28 and 33?

EMS Director Clair Provost- Yes, that is correct.

Councilwoman Crittenden – That is not what we have right now.

EMS Director Clair Provost- No. If we were stand-alone, we would need to fill 28 ft positions for EMS and Fire would need the same, to equal where we are at today.

Councilwoman Crittenden - You say we need less people because they crossover between fire and EMS?

EMS Director Clair Provost- Correct. What we would be saving as a county between the fire budget and EMS budget is 2.1 mil dollars to create a merger. Both fire and EMS would separately be 4.1 mil each. There are other things that we have talked about such as some of the savings it would create, county can only do 40 hours before OT is paid fire dept is 52 hours before OT. You could backfill for employees that want to take vacations, sick, etc... anyone could backfill for you. Our co-location of fire and EMS staff needs to be addressed in the future because we need a Heber station with living quarters. When the current FT crew responds from Midway to Heber. Part time pay adjustment, right now EMS pays a part time stipend and fire pays a stipend, that could come together as a dual adjustment. Any questions so far? I have taken a lot of time and I appreciate it.

Councilman Crittenden- Will you send us all a copy of this?

EMS Director Clair Provost- Absolutely. The Fire District, EMS, and the county manager (special thanks to Dustin for helping us put this all together) we have worked hard to do the best we can with fire and EMS. My feeling, the chiefs, the battalion chiefs and others, is we would work better together as a merged fire and EMS group. We could provide a better service; morale would be better and the cost savings for taxpayers would be better. All the way around it would be a better fit. I spoke with Councilman Goode about this today, we have worked hard to provide the best service we can to the community, but we are wearing our people out. Our call volume is increasing, and it is unfair to the employees. We have done our best to keep making it work, we have had the support of the county manager and the council. I make a plea to you, help us move forward with this merger in a timely fashion. There are a lot of little things we need to work out (how to best work with the PT employees, transfers etc...) I hope this has addressed your questions and concerns. Please consider helping us get there. Thank you.

Councilman Goode - If we do this merger into the district, everyone will be a "fire-medical" (fire and EMT) employee, is that accurate?

Chief Giles - It has been that way since 2000 on the fire side.

Councilman Goode – So we are saying that you have to both fire and EMT to be hired by our district. We could potentially do the volunteers with nurses etc... they can assist with transfers.

Chief Giles - That is a possibility as we grow but right now, we require both.

Councilman Goode- That will be what our volume dictates. Everyone will be "fire-medical". Clair, your Emerson quote is very accurate. The more you see of something the better you are able to do it. When you see something, and you do it all the time you are that much better at it and in the medical field that is the difference between life and death.

Councilwoman Crittenden - What is the cost of us having a fire district vs being a department in our county. Mike, can you answer that? Have we even looked at that? They can be merged, but is there a cost difference with being an SSD vs being a department of the county? Are there savings with being a department of the county? Mike, do you know?

County Manager Mike Davis- The only spot there might be savings is in administration. As far as the running of the department I can't see any specific savings. This is just my opinion. Where the county already has a payroll department etc...

Councilman Goode - Do we have an MOU for Dave's services?

County Manager Mike Davis - We don't charge for anything Dave does. There might not be a difference with administration costs.

Councilman Goode - Would we need to put an MOU in place for Dave? If we separate should we do an MOU for those types of things?

County Manager Mike Davis – We should have an MOU, so it is defined, even if we don't charge a fee. It is clear in the contract that we will put MOU's in place for specific services.

Councilwoman Crittenden – SSD's are very new to me. I always thought SSD's were supposed to take care of a specific group within the County instead of taking care of the whole county.

Councilman Crittenden- The fire district is a countywide SSD, as is Parks and Rec and Solid Waste.

Councilman Goode - I am not a fan of SSD's at all. I have been thinking about this very hard, I like to put everything "under one house" and the more I have thought about this, especially with the possibilities of one of our cities wanting to do their own thing, if we merge toward the district it gives us the greatest flexibility. We could dissolve it in the future (which probably wouldn't happen anyway). We have greater flexibility to go with the district, as long as the cost difference isn't so far out of line. It sounds like the cost difference would be minimal if you consider the administration aspect of it. This whole time I have been thinking that if everything is the same why not bring it all into the county? The more I thought about it with the municipal services aspect, the ability for the cities to object to us running it that way. Also, I didn't really put it together before, but it was clear today about the difference with OT, with the county OT being 40 and Fire being 52. Would we be able to avoid those extra hours if it was part of the county?

County Manager Mike Davis - Currently a fire employee can get a stipend from EMS. Once they combine you can't do that because those hours will now be eligible for OT, with the merger you could be paying more OT. The ESCI report came out and said fire has to change the way they are doing that. The other thing that was an intent when the districts were formed. The district maintains its own financial capabilities, instead of being part of the "big pie" of the county they have their own integrity and their own tax item. It was an important issue at the time, and it was important for fire and rec district so they could perform somewhat independently. In those types of situations (unified police and fire) there are struggles that a big unit can control the smaller units. There was purpose in what we did and why we formed the fire district the way that we did, so that the service to the entire county would be the same.

Chief Giles - Back in the day it was hard to finance. The big boy back in the day was Heber city. It was made up of Heber, Midway, Charleston and Wallsburg (original signers).

Councilman Crittenden- It was a county wide vote back then. It is already a taxpayer approved county wide district. If we go the other way, all of those jurisdictions would have to buy on to use that as their fire services. The other way they have already approved it more or less.

Councilman Farrell - We would end up negotiating with every city for use of fire and ems instead of the county wide service.

Councilman Goode – That is when you get into the possibility of a city just running their own independent fire district. Theoretically I am ok with that, the problem comes is the application of the municipal service funds. I know this is a snapshot based on today's numbers. I don't know if we will save that much money when we get down to it, but the integration is about the better service. To me it wasn't a question of merging or not, the question was, do we merge into the district or the county. In the last few weeks I have done a lot of research and I think it is better to go to the district. The thing that will stop me for my vote, is I would like to see the strategic plan. What we have is a master plan, I want to see a strategic plan. We still don't have an equipment replacement program; it does give us an outline on how to judge the condition of the equipment. I would like to see the formula we are going to

go with and then apply it to all of our apparatus. Some might need to be gone today and I am ok with that. How will we do the impact fees so we can replenish the county and transition over to the district. What is our plan and our timeline for that? When we project growth (we are at 4% growth for the last several years) how many employees will we need to bring on in the next 5 years? Those are the type of things I am looking for. So we have facts that back up what we do and we can decide to do an impact fee or a mill levy increase or hold the levy steady. So we can say "here is our plan", a plan will give us a backbone politically so we can say why we did what we did. This master plan is more of an outline, they did a good job on the study, but the presentation was horrible. You guys fixed that. The master plan talks about bringing in the stakeholders. I want to see a 3-5 year plan before we vote.

Chief Giles - Along those lines we need something from you too, this impact fee judges what that strategic plan is. We are at a crossroads, is it the chicken on the egg. I can put it into a plan but if you guys decide not to do it or change it up then it changes the plan.

Councilman Farrell - It would help with the impact fee because then we would know what you would do with it.

Councilman Goode - Don't look at what the cost is for what you need. Tell us what your needs are and why. Don't look at the money aspect. Make the plan for the district combined with ems and the future needs.

Chief Giles - We are about 70 % done on that, but I have been waiting to see what is happening with the impact fee. Like with the platform truck, do I put that in as 1,2,3 years down the road? Maybe it could be 2 years with the impact fee, without it, it may take 5 years.

Councilman Goode – What is the need? Do we need it today? Next year?

Chief Giles – We need it yesterday.

Councilman Goode -Then that needs to be put into the budget. If 1.4 is not enough then tell us.

Chief Giles – There is a lot of info in that impact fee study, it shows that our needs our great.

Councilman Goode – For the next 3 years (maybe 2 or 1) we may not be able to use impact fees to fund those things and we may have to do that with the budget. Let us know a number and we can figure out what to do with the impact fees and see how much that can contribute to it. I don't want you to wait to see what money you will have to tell us your needs. Tell us what you need, and it is our responsibility to come up with the money to take care of it.

EMS Director Clair Provost- In our mind we are trying to do the best we can with what we have.

Councilman Farrell - That is a good approach, in reality, we need to see what is needed and what it will cost us to get there.

Councilman Goode - We need to distinguish the difference of a need in year one vs a need in year two. What do you need next year, and the year after? What do you need, not things that would be nice to have but actual needs. Prioritize your needs.

Councilwoman Crittenden - To back that up, too often we look at things like this and say we should put everything in there, so we at least get something. We need to stick with justifiable needs.

Councilman Goode - Prioritize the needs.

Councilwoman Crittenden – You can look at a bigger city and say “Oh they have all these things” but we can also compare ourselves to other small counties. There needs to be reality.

Chief Giles - If you look at the district it has been duct tape and bailing wire for years. In this sense we have been our own worst enemy. I buy these old army trucks to try to save taxpayers money and in the end it has cut my feet out from under me.

Councilman Goode – People get used to the same level of service and don’t understand but they do not understand all of the maintenance that is required. Like that truck that we talked about years ago that was still in service with broken steering.

Chief Giles – Sometimes we can be our own worst enemy there.

Councilman Goode - What do you guys need from us?

EMS Director Clair Provost- We have for 2-3 years said we are getting there we are getting there to our people. Our people are getting wore out, we keep going back to them saying we have kicked the can a little farther down the road, at this point we have kicked the can in half and still no decision. If the first of the year we can make this happen that would throw them a bone to let them know they are valued, and we are moving forward. The employees are on board.

Chief Giles - I need to know if we are moving this year or not

Councilman Farrell – I am a little confused Clair, are you saying we need to make the decision whether we are going to merge or not?

EMS Director Clair Provost- We would like to do it the first of the year so we can move forward with the people and the department.

Councilman Goode - If we voted for the increase that you need you could fund Jan 1.

Chief Giles – That is our plan. I need guidance. This fireboard will need to recommend it to the county council because the council runs ems.

Councilman Goode - Have we put our official number in? Can we adjust up?

Chief Giles - We are locked in. I had to have it in 2 weeks ago.

Councilwoman Crittenden - What is the average salary for a fire ems person and how is it comparable to other communities.

Chief Giles - I have compared a lot with other counties and we are on the lower end with pay. If you look at Park City and you look at Unified and some of the bigger ones, they pay a lot more. Some of these guys are making \$13-16 an hour, I don’t have a guy (other than myself) that is over \$25 per hour. So that should give you some idea.

Councilman Goode – Mike, how are we with our ems pay compared to other counties?

County Manager Mike Davis- We are on the low end.

Councilman Goode- We are a unique county because of how much we grow in the summer and weekend.

Chief Giles – Going back to Marilyn’s Countywide SSD questions, I visit with chiefs all over the state and they would love to have our set up that is county wide, because they deal with turf wars and it effects service. That is one unique and special thing we can say; we handle everything for all of the townships in the county and that is a huge plus.

Councilman Goode - I need a strategic plan to vote.

BC Ben Fitzgerald - About the merger we have been hearing about it for years and it is to the point that when employees ask me about it I say” I will believe it when I see it”. The attitude of the employees is: who knows if it will ever happen.

Councilman Farrell - I’m fine with the merger but I agree we need to see a road map. How will you merge without someone being hurt?

EMS Director Clair Provost- We are past that as far as employees. All ems employees are on board. The thing is we are “Wasatch County Fire and EMS” and have been working together for years. We work better than ever together. There was a point we had turf wars. When employees are happy, they provide a better service. I have not heard one employee say I wish we wouldn’t do it.

Chief Giles – The frustrating thing is that we have been working hard on this and we are getting to budget time, and in August our tax thing will have to go out. Are we doing it this year or waiting another year? If you need a strategic plan to make that call, then I will fast forward the strategic plan. It is almost done

Councilman Goode - Dennis has been working on that hasn’t he?

Chief Giles- The BC’s, Dennis and I were going to sit down next Tuesday to finalize it, but I will fast track that meeting. I need something done by August, if this goes another year, from the fire districts point of view we have been subsidizing EMS for the county. If that goes down there it will be about a million to run EMS which is what it costs the district. I am just wondering what street to go down. I need this board to support me.

Councilman Goode – Does everyone else agree that we need a strategic plan before we make our decision?

Councilman Nelson- A strategic plan is needed but we just need to make this decision and get it done. In my mind the decision is already made and we need to get it done. We just need to figure out how to implement it.

Councilman Wade- I am with mark. My biggest worry was, will the employees be good with it. Whether it costs more or not we need to provide the best service possible. I know they will not want to pay more, but when they make that phone call and the ambulance rolls up to their house, they will be grateful. In the long run I don’t really think it will cost us that much more, it is one hand or the other. The strategic plan would be nice so when we get questioned, we have something to backup our decision. So we can explain why we are raising it and what things we need. In my opinion it isn’t an issue of whether we do it or not, it is an issue of having the info to back up our decision.

Councilman Parks - I'm ok with the merger. I don't think there is a situation where fire is subsidizing ems or vice versa. We are just going to combine the two pots. The strategic plan will help me figure out the amount of the tax increase that is needed. Will the tax increase just get us one more FT shift? What are we getting with the tax increase? Where the tax increase is going and how we will run these changes administratively.

Councilman Farrell - The tax increase is to get the county out of the EMS business so we aren't subsidizing \$450,000.00 per year.

Councilman Parks – Right now the county is only paying \$900k and we are asking for 1.4 million. What is the extra half for? Are we decreasing on the county end?

Councilman Goode - The total amount the district has to anticipate that they have to pay 100 percent and then they get reimbursed through charging and billing and that sort of thing (about 50%). The strategic plan would show equipment replacement policy so we can see how many of the old trucks we will keep, and if we can relocate old trucks or get them off the books completely? That is what the plan is for.

Councilman Parks- We can't get them off the books in 1 or 2 years, it will take time.

Councilman Goode- Right, and that is what the plan is for, we have a formula in mind, without that we are blind.

Councilman Parks- I am totally for the plan.

Councilman Farrell - I don't think we need the strategic plan to do the merger, but we need the strategic plan to justify the tax increase to show what the people will get for their money.

Councilwoman Crittenden - If we are doing this the taxpayers should be able to see the county tax go down.

County Manager Mike Davis -The agreement is a 3-year commitment to continue to pay \$900k per year, there is no tax cut from the county in the agreement.

Councilwoman Crittenden- I think that is a hard sell to the public. We will increase our taxes to make 1.4 million, but we won't adjust what is coming to the county for ems. These are the money issues, I don't think the merger is a problem, we just need to make sure that the public knows transparently where the money is going.

Councilman Farrell - The two can't be simultaneous. We can't take it out of the county budget and say we will go down that much on the assumption that the increase will pass for the fire district. It may not come down this year but in 2 years it may come down.

Councilman Parks - The merger isn't the issue.

Councilwoman Crittenden - We have to justify the increase. I want to know, even for my own personal self, are we doing this correctly or am I having my taxes raised and won't see an adjustment.

Councilman Goode – Mike, what is the \$900k for?

County Manager Mike Davis- that is the difference between what the incoming revenue into EMS is and what we spent. We currently subsidize the EMS department approx. \$900k/year with general fund taxes. It may take the district 1-3 years to incorporate their increase to cover the difference, the county would subsidize this merger for up to 3 years. That was the council's direction to the subcommittee.

Councilman Farrell - I thought it was the \$450k.

County Manager Mike Davis – It is the difference between the revenue and the expenditures of the current EMS department. The 900k is what we put into EMS from general fund.

Dustin Grabau- the \$450k is to help pick up that other FT crew. It is two separate issues.

Councilman Farrell – We have been paying that for the last 4 years.

Chief Giles - The \$430k is included in the \$900k.

County Manager Mike Davis - With the new crew it will go up whether it is within the county or the district.

Councilman Goode – What is the 1.4 for? How much for EMS coming over and what is the other amount?

Chief Giles - \$900k is a wash of what it is costing the county for EMS. Me looking at it, I don't know if it is altogether the \$900k or if it is closer to 1 million, I need protection in case there are more expenses than planned for. In my 2019 budget I had 3 employees I was going to hire which I haven't done. This has put it on hold because with this I will end up hiring 6 new employees. Part of the money will go to hiring and some will go to apparatus replacement. If you look at that budget, it started off at \$500k a few years ago and we changed the mill levy, since then I have hired guys and that is where the money has come out of. That fee is actually lowered.

Councilman Goode - I thought we were putting away \$300k a year for equipment replacement.

Chief Giles – That was on the first tax increase.

Councilman Goode- Have we maintained that?

Chief Giles- The last increase, we went after \$500k but it dropped to \$430k because we took the money for the ESCI report and the impact fee study out of that. Since I have hired employees to take pressure off of the volunteers and the money to do that has come out of the apparatus replacement fund.

Councilman Parks - I always understood the \$900k would be subsidized by the county for at least a year because you won't see money from the tax increase for a year. Can we cut it down in the agreement to a year?

County Manager Mike Davis- I would propose that but that was not the direction I got from the council.

Councilman Wade- The agreement says up to 3 years so if the tax increase goes through it could be done in the first year. It doesn't matter because we will have to do it next year no matter what even if we pass it, they won't see any money until 2021 so next year we will have to cover the \$900k anyway. If we do that and the next year, we can drop county tax rate if we need to and it will wash out.

County Manager Mike Davis – We could not have to pay \$900k to the fire district, I can't commit to drop the county rate because I don't know what else will be happening in the county,

Councilwoman Crittenden – In our budget, that budget line will disappear though. That needs to be transparent to the public.

Councilman Wade- It is actually fairly simple.

Councilman Goode- Is it a hard \$900k in the agreement or can it flex down? Say next year they only need \$700k

Dustin Grabau- It flex's down in the agreement. What is not included in the agreement is what the county will do with its tax rate. The contribution is up to \$900k with the intent being that if they were ramping up to the \$900k over that time frame the county would be ramping down. Merilyn was talking about contemplating what we do with the tax rate. We could include an intent statement, not actually going to bind future councils to prevent them from adjusting the county tax rate up or down. There is nothing wrong with including the intent. We do need to look at it holistically though, like Mike was saying, we don't know what else is going to happen.

Councilman Goode – So would it be accurate to say that this a 3-year agreement that the county would subsidize the district up to \$900k per year. Not necessarily that maximum amount per year, it could be that we only need to pay \$700k next year and then down to nothing. Is that what the contract allows?

County Manager Mike Davis - If I can read this, it says “the set amount may be changed as mutually agreed upon by the parties”. Technically it doesn't say it's a maximum. There is some protection there because we want this to succeed and if for whatever reason, there was an issue, I would hope that we would put what is necessary forward to make it succeed.

Councilman Goode- So it could come to a decision from the council as to what the amount subsidized would be each year.

County Manager Mike Davis- The intent of the agreement is to say: “Here is the \$900k, go do it and let's see where we fall in that”. If there were firm justifications for needing more than the \$900k, we would have to look at that issue. On the other hand, if the tax increase goes through/kicks in then there is no reason to fund that \$900k any longer.

Councilman Parks - I would like to know what it costs to add a crew FT for a year.

Chief Giles -\$100k a person. \$600k/year.

Councilman Parks - So that is where the \$1.4 is coming from, the \$900k plus the \$600k for the new crew. If you kept getting the \$900k a year you could still do the merger? The merger can happen without a tax increase. The county would still need to subsidize the \$900k a year.

Chief Giles – No. I need to hire.

Councilman Farrell - There is no advantage to the merger if the county is going to continue paying the \$900k

Councilman Parks- It is not costing us more to merge is what I am getting at here.

Councilwoman Crittenden - Why to merge do we have to have a crew? Can we not merge without a new crew?

Chief Giles – If fire is going to continue to run EMS, I need another crew, as you see the call volume is going up and we are wearing these guys out.

Councilwoman Crittenden – I understand. What I am hearing is that we have to have this big amount to make this merger happen because we want to add a new crew right now. We can merge without a new crew, the merger doesn't hinge on the new crew.

Chief Giles- That is the \$500k

Councilman Parks- The new crew and the merger are independent things.

Councilman Goode - I genuinely don't believe there will be cost savings with the merger, we will have a higher quality of service and a more modern district. That is the advantage there won't be a cost savings.

Chief Giles - If the county were to do a standalone Ems department there is a huge savings to be had with the merger. The county budget for ems would roughly match the fire district budget. All along my goal has not been to run ems, my goal in hiring more fireman and getting the equipment is to get our insurance rates from a 6 down to a 3. It would save millions throughout the county.

Councilman Farrell – We need to make that a key point with this next tax increase, that with extra staffing and equipment it will actually save the taxpayers money because it will make insurance rates go down.

Chief Giles – That has been my goal for the last 8 years, to get our ISO rating down. When ISO came before that is what killed us, lack of staffing and equipment. Even with the little bit we have done we could be a 5 if not a 4.

Councilman Goode - That ISO argument is difficult to explain to the average voters.

Chief Giles - Some folks are paying \$700-\$800 a month for home insurance when the same home in Heber city is below \$100 because they are considered a 10 and they are over 5 miles away from a station. ISO is complex but if they see it on their insurance rates, especially on the commercial side of things, those folks will really save a lot of money. That is what my goal has been, EMS coming on is just a better use of resources and my men to the taxpayers. EMS is a loser money wise, there is no advantage to the district bringing on EMS, other than it saves the taxpayers money long term. Bottom line it is a better use of your resources, rather than run 2 parallel tracks that are doing the same thing. Doing that would cost the taxpayers another 2 million, actually if the county did FT EMS it would cost the taxpayers about 4.1 million because that is about what my budget is.

Councilman Farrell - It is a win -win on both sides because you can increase your staff and keep them active all the time. They are very good at what they do.

Chief Giles - My goal is not to work in EMS. By doing this we are saving the tax-payers money. My guys are already dual trained, instead of have staff for EMS and staff for fire.

Councilwoman Crittenden -I don't think it is a bad thing to merge but I have to ask this question- you are telling us that it would cost 2 million for us to run ems but we are running parallel right now and it only costs us \$900k to run ems. Your quote says 2 million.

Chief Giles- That is because right now the fire district is running all of the FT positions and EMS is only part time. If that was the case I would pull back and just run fire.

Councilwoman Crittenden- Is EMS only part time right now?

EMS Director Clair Provost- Yes. The county subsidizes 5 positions for the fire district.

Councilman Goode - Back to the strategic plan. The most powerful thing for the public during a tax increase is to be able to say this is what we are doing and what we are buying with the money and then do it. It is so much easier long term. The strategic plan is the most valuable tool to show to the taxpayers our reasoning. This includes the impact fee studies that will need to be done periodically. The strategic plan is the most valuable tool we can have.

Chief Giles - When can I get on the county agenda to do it?

Councilman Goode - Next week

Chief Giles - Put me on, I'll have it ready.

Merry Duggin- We have been talking about the strategic plan for a while and had set a date on the 18<sup>th</sup> to finalize it. They were already thinking about that and working on getting a completed copy to you.

### **Fire Marshal Report**

Fire Marshal Neerings- I don't have anything pressing. Any concerns from you guys that I can answer?

### **Fire Warden Report**

Fire Warden Morgan- We had our first big fire this year, the Big Hollow Fire started on Friday afternoon above the gun club. It burned 78 acres, 77 of those were in wildlife management areas and 1 acre on private. It is pretty much wrapped up now, we had a couple of hand crews, some fire district employees and a state of UT engine on scene.

Councilman Wade- What started it?

Fire Warden Morgan - It is still under investigation. I will let you know more at the next fireboard meeting. We have had some good community events recently. We did a community day in Timberlakes a few Saturdays ago and were able to meet with homeowners there and do some lot assessments. 65 assessments. We had a great turn out and ended up doing about 65 lot assessments that day. We met with the Town of Daniels and talked to them about fire mitigation, so they ended up being well prepared for the fire that happened there on Friday. We did a chipping / burn day out at 40 dam acres a

few weeks ago. Next Saturday we will be meeting with Strawberry Lakeview Estates and going over fire mitigation. We have been doing some good preventative footwork lately.

Councilman Farrell - Anything else we need to address tonight?

**A motion was made by Councilwoman Crittenden adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilman Goode and the motion passed all in favor.**