

VILLAGE OF HOMEWOOD



BOARD AGENDA MEMORANDUM

DATE OF MEETING: January 14, 2025

To: Village President and Board of Trustees

Through: Napoleon Haney, Village Manager

From: Robert Grabowski, Fire Chief

Topic: Updated MABAS Automatic Aid Agreement

PURPOSE

Staff requests the Village Board approve the amended Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) 24 master agreement to allow the addition of the Village of Matteson, Village of Richton Park, and the Village of Park Forest to MABAS 24.

HISTORY

A group of innovative fire captains and chiefs seeking to automate mutual aid responses in their regions created the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System, known as MABAS, in Illinois in 1970.

What is a “box alarm?”

Simply put, “box” refers to a fire. The term “box alarm” originally described the fire alarm boxes found on the street corner of many cities across North America. Simply put, each box had a unique number assigned to it, and within the physical box was an electronic system that transmitted a specific number to the firehouse. When pulled, bells in firehouses immediately rang the unique “box number” and the firefighters counted the bells and compared it to a chart indicating the box location. Firefighters would respond based on the location of the box and what types of structures were located in the area. In communities with on-call volunteer firefighters, a fog-style horn (or several horns) would blast the box number, turning out the members to respond to the fire.

Today’s Box Alarm

In today’s firefighting world, the term “box alarm” has been refined and now refers to a pre-set level of resources (*engines, trucks, ambulances, squads, etc.*) needed to effectively respond to a specific level of emergency. In MBAS 24 there are roughly eight (8) levels of box alarm responses: Still, Full Still, Box, 2nd Alarm, 3rd Alarm, 4th Alarm, 5th Alarm and an Interdivisional Request Alarm for major disasters. MABAS 24 has three distinct and separate “box cards” for structure fires, vehicle extrications and ambulatory events.

If someone activates a fire alarm, only Homewood would respond to this “minor response.” Once on site, the incident commander makes the determination on whether to escalate to a higher

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“box alarm.” a smaller home/structure fire would include a Homewood response. If our department arrived and realized that the fire was larger, spreading, difficult to contain, the lead officer on-site would call for a “STILL.” This callout would bring the following to resources to the fire: Additional engines from Glenwood, Country Club Hills and Hazel Crest; trucks from Flossmoor and Thornton; and an additional ambulance from Markham.

MABAS

From its inception in the Chicago suburbs, MABAS has grown to a statewide, non-discriminatory mutual aid response system for fire, emergency medical services (EMS) and specialized incident operational teams. There is no cost to join MABAS, however once joining MABAS an annual dues requirement exists on a sliding schedule based on a member departments annual operating budget. Local MABAS Division dues may be self-imposed by and at the control of each individual MABAS division.

PROCESS

In the current mutual aid agreement, the cooperating municipalities in MABAS 24 are the twenty (20) Villages of: Burnham, Calumet City, Country Club Hills, Dolton, East Hazel Crest, Flossmoor, Glenwood, Harvey, Hazel Crest, Homewood, Lansing, Lynwood, Markham, Munster, Oak Forest, Phoenix, Riverdale, South Holland, Thornton, and Tinley Park.

Earlier this year, MABAS allowed Park Forest, Matteson, and Richton Park to exit MABAS 27 and join MABAS 24. This move enhances collaboration by allowing MABAS 24 and the departments to benefit from shared organizational training sessions.

Additionally, the three (3) additional departments are part of SouthCom, which is currently merging with E-COM, further strengthening this partnership. The agreement has been reviewed and approved by both the MABAS attorneys and the Village Attorney.

OUTCOME

The Village of Matteson, the Village of Park Forest, and the Village of Richton Park will become members of MABAS 24.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

- **Funding Source:** N/A
- **Budgeted Amount:** N/A
- **Cost:** N/A

LEGAL REVIEW

Completed

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RECOMMENDED BOARD ACTION

Approve an amended MABAS 24 master agreement to allow the addition of the Village of Matteson, Village of Richton Park, and Village of Park Forest to MABAS 24.

ATTACHMENT(S)

Agreement