



Fire Advisory Board Meeting Meeting Minutes June 4, 2024

Roll Call of Attendees

The meeting was called by Fire Chief Mike Heiland. Members in attendance:

Long Lake

Scott Weske
Mike Heiland
Charlie Miner
Jahn Dyvik
Cody Farley

Orono

Adam Edwards
James Van Eyll
Maria Veach

Medina

Scott Johnson
Dino DesLauriers

Minnetonka Beach

Jennifer Halverson

Welcome & Introductions

Welcome Cody Farley, Long Lake Fire Department

Assistant Chief Cody Farley introduced himself to the Board.

[Audio Recording Link](#)

Regular Business

A. Year to Date (May 2024) Expense Review

Chief Heiland reported that with a few exceptions, the budget was doing well in almost all areas. He noted that they have had to put a lot of work into the trucks this year so that was one area a bit over budget. The other area that is over budget was radios and pagers, but the Department also had been able to sell a bunch of their old used pagers which will help replenish those accounts. He reiterated that overall they were in fairly good shape for this point of the year.

Ms. Veach stated that she thought the pager sale had taken place last year.

Chief Heiland explained that there were two different batches sold and one had taken place this year.

Mr. Dyvik mentioned that the heavy truck repair had lines for the Willow Station and another for Navarre and asked for a summary of which trucks needed work.

Chief Heiland stated that Engine 22 at Station #2 had issues and at Station #1 there was a whole new power steering unit put into Engine 21. He stated that the rest of the items were just for general pump testing and annual maintenance items.

Mr. Dyvik asked if Engine 21 was the one that would be replaced.

Chief Heiland clarified that was Engine 11 and noted that he believed Engine 21 was owned outright by Orono.

Mr. Edwards asked if there was still enough funding to continue the annual maintenance.

Chief Heiland answered that they have done all the annuals and felt they were in pretty good shape. He stated that outside of potential unknowns, the fleet was in pretty good shape right now. He noted that they have been able to make the repairs on Engine 11 from the fire the other day.

Chief VanEyll asked if that had been an insurance claim.

Chief Heiland confirmed that it was an insurance claim and noted that he believed it was somewhere around \$6,000 for the new windshield and light bar.

Ms. Veach asked if that had been the only insurance claim for 2024.

Chief Heiland stated that had been the only claim, thus far.

Mr. Dyvik asked about the Long Lake Admin fee and noted that it had been budgeted for \$18,000, but was depicted as \$0.

Mr. Miner asked if it was charged out at the end of the year.

Mr. Weske reviewed the year to date budget and noted that it was usually done quarterly.

Mr. Dyvik asked about Motor Fuels and asked why it appeared to be so much less than what had been budgeted.

Mr. Weske stated that last year they ran 500 or so calls, which meant that their fuel was over. He stated that he believes that this line item had been adjusted with the idea that the trend for calls would stay the same, but in reality they were actually a few calls under what they had last year at this time.

Mr. Dyvik asked for an explanation of the State Fire Aid Pension.

Mr. Weske explained that was money that has not yet come in for 2023. He stated that it generally comes in October.

B. Duty Crew Update – May

Chief Heiland stated that out of 216 available shifts, they had 95 filled which is about 44%. He noted that some of the Station #2 calls were within the two CAD zones that the Department would be losing. He referenced the data that showed in service and on scene times as well as a description of whether it was emergency or routine. He stated that he believes this was the first time they had averaged under 2 minutes for in service times at 1:58 which they were pleased by.

Ms. Veach asked if he was only referring to last month.

Chief Heiland confirmed that he was referring to the month of May.

Chief Van Eyll stated that they did not have the information for the month of May.

Ms. Veach clarified that it had been e-mailed separate from the packet.

Mr. Weske explained that the information for March and April had been included in the packet and then the most recent information for May had been e-mailed separately.

Mr. DesLauriers asked what was meant by the term 'volunteer' duty crew.

Chief Heiland explained that the Department's duty crew program is not mandatory and is done on a volunteer basis.

Mr. Dyvik asked if the goal had been to get under the 2 minute mark for the in service times.

Chief Heiland stated that was the goal and noted that is something that cannot just happen overnight, but believed that they were getting better. He explained that for the duty crews it was important to have an engineer and an officer that are both qualified, because just having two people in the station did not guarantee that they will have a competent crew. He stated that they have been working really hard to make sure that everyone can drive, pump, draft and relay pump as well as working to make sure that the officer is competent and able to make decisions on their feet. He stated this is a process and noted that it had started as a pilot program but he felt it was really blossoming.

Mr. DesLauriers asked if a 'filled' shift meant that they at least have an engineer and the officer or it just meant that the slots were filled.

Ms. Veach clarified that she felt he was asking if Chief Heiland was making sure that there was a full staff when people signed up.

Chief Heiland answered that sometimes they just have one person that signs up, but noted that he had not included those shifts in this report. He clarified that he did not refer to it as a 'crew' if there was just one person.

Ms. Veach stated that in October they had an 88% fill rate for duty crews and now it is below 50% and asked what was driving that decline.

Chief Heiland stated that it is different every month and questioned why she referred to it as a 'decline'. He stated that overall, the numbers have actually been pretty consistent.

Mr. Weske noted that A.J. had filled a lot of shifts, but he now worked at Napa, so that was part of the difference. He stated that the expectation is that the numbers may decrease over the summer months as the weather gets nicer and people have other things going on.

Mr. Edwards noted that he thought that there had been a spike near the end of the year last year because the firefighters were trying to meet certain requirements.

Chief Heiland agreed and noted that towards the end of a quarter if the firefighters have not met their percentage requirements, they have the option to do some duty crew shifts to get back in good standing.

Mr. Dyvik asked what the percentages were for March and April.

Chief Van Eyll stated that March was 45.19% and April was 45.5% and noted that he would assume that did not include Saturdays.

Chief Heiland explained that Saturdays were added in as part of the percentages filled.

Mr. Dyvik noted that if he just calculated the percentages for Monday through Friday, they would be higher.

Ms. Veach asked if, when Chief Heiland tracked time for duty crews, if that was done for in service times for paid on-call as well.

Chief Heiland stated that it would be the first unit in service.

Ms. Veach asked if they knew that average would be.

Assistant Chief Farley stated that they average 6 minutes.

Ms. Veach stated that she had asked Mr. Weske for this information and it was told it was not available.

Assistant Chief Farley stated that he tracks it and could share that information with the Board.

Ms. Veach stated that she would like to see if because it would be nice to see the effectiveness of a duty crew versus the paid on-call firefighters.

Assistant Chief Farley explained that it was pretty consistent year after year for probably the last 10 years. He stated that it has generally been 6 minutes in service and 8 minutes on scene.

Ms. Veach stated that would mean that they were seeing about a 4 minute savings with the duty crews. She asked for information about a fire call on March 28, 2024 that showed an in service time over 8 minutes.

Chief Heiland stated that he did not have the information in front of him, but would say that there are times in that situation where there is a 2 person crew, but if they are not competent, they will not just send them out which means that they have to stay and wait for other people to show up. He stated that is generally the situation when those times are a bit longer and explained that they encourage this approach, especially for structure fires.

Ms. Veach asked how staff was in comparison to historical levels.

Mr. Weske stated that they currently have 48 firefighters which is the most they have had in a long time.

Ms. Veach asked about the probationary and new hires.

Mr. Miner stated that those individuals were included in the total number of 48.

Ms. Veach asked about numbers at Station #2 and noted that she believed that 20 was the goal and they were at 12, which was why they were paged out as an 'all call'.

Mr. Weske stated that it was always an 'all call'.

Assistant Chief Farley explained that they have always had a mix of single station versus all calls, depending on the type of call or time of day. He stated that they have operated that way for a long time but noted that they had just recently made the switch to all calls being all calls partially because of staffing, partially because of losing the call areas, and as an opportunity to keep the Station #2 responders engaged in being firefighters. He stated that if they continued with the same paging program, Station #2 would not receive very many calls. He explained that firefighters want to be firefighters and be able to get on the trucks.

Mr. Weske stated that the responders for Station #2 were decreasing with relation to the percentages of going to fires or calls. He noted that they were seeing less Station #2 guys for the normal report.

Ms. Veach stated that she was just wondering how it compared historically with how many people were staffed at Station #2.

Assistant Chief Farley stated that it ebbs and flows throughout the years. He stated that for as long as he has been with the Department, they have never been fully staffed.

Mr. DesLauriers asked about July 1, 2024 when Orono takes over that area and if there would there be a concern that they only had 12 people.

Ms. Veach stated that was the number that Long Lake Fire Department had.

Assistant Chief Farley clarified that Long Lake Fire Department has 42 active members responding to the Station #2 call area and always has. He stated that the number of firefighters available to that call area has never been 12 and has always been the entire complement of the Long Lake Fire Department.

Chief VanEyll explained that Orono currently has 22 firefighters.

Ms. Veach asked what percent of the total calls were serviced by duty crews for any of the months they have been discussing.

Chief Heiland stated that it has been random and was also not predictable.

Ms. Veach asked how many total calls there were in March.

Mr. Weske noted that information had been sent in the report and asked if they had gotten their weekly updates.

Mr. Edwards stated that they did get their weekly updates but it only had Orono calls.

Mr. Weske confirmed that they actually wanted the total number of calls and not just the Orono calls.

Chief Heiland stated that they have had pretty average numbers for calls and were pretty consistent. He stated that for the first 3 months of the year, they had about 90 calls and noted that was about 30 calls behind last year's numbers.

Assistant Chief Farley stated that he felt it was important to point out that the duty crews are of benefit even if there are just 1 or 2 firefighters on shift because it ultimately lets them get out the door and in service much faster. He reiterated that there was a benefit even if they did not completely fill a shift because it enhances the services that are provided.

Mr. Edwards stated that one of the objectives was to improve the training readiness by using the duty crew times for additional training and asked if that had been realized.

Chief Heiland stated that they were definitely seeing that realized and noted that they were getting more competent engineers and people that are trained for the front seat. He stated that medically, the Department was in good shape and were focusing on the fire side of it. He explained that they had started testing their own hoses on Wednesdays, which can be very laborious, and noted that overall, he felt that they had good, all around, training happening.

Mr. Miner asked if anyone had anything to discuss on additional topics.

Mr. Dyvik stated that he had a question about July 1, 2024. He stated that Long Lake had asked Orono numerous times if they would be ready by July 1, 2024 but had seen e-mail correspondence between Assistant Chief Farley and Chief VanEyll regarding dispatching for Forest Lake and North Arm Bays. He stated that the response from Mr. Van Eyll was that they would be dispatched to Long Lake Fire Department which did not make sense to him because it falls completely within CAD zone 200 and asked for an explanation about this situation.

Chief VanEyll explained that in their analysis they never talked about removing any lake response and had just looked at the two CAD zones. He stated that it was his understanding that dispatch uses the lake zone sheet to dispatch the units.

Chief Dyvik asked where this had come from.

Chief Heiland stated it was made about 10 years ago and noted that he believes it was a group of people who got together with the water patrol and made the map. He stated that the circles on there indicate that each zone is overlapped by different departments.

Mr. Dyvik stated that the water coverage here is based on what fire departments are covering which CAD zones.

Chief Heiland stated that was correct.

Chief VanEyll disagreed and stated that was not necessarily the case. He gave the example of Mound covering near the Casco Point area on the water. He stated that it may have originally been based on what fire departments were covering the CAD zones, but that was not what it was currently based on.

Mr. Dyvik stated there are 2 large bodies of water located in the middle of CAD zone 200 and asked if Chief VanEyll was saying that the expectation is that the Long Lake Fire Department would be dispatched for fires or medical calls on the lake as well as shoreline fires. He stated that this expectation completely surprised him because it meant that Orono would not cover the water within their CAD zone. He stated that if that is the case, then he feels that they need to recompute how the contract formula would be reduced because this means that there will be calls that he was not anticipating where the Long Lake Fire Department would be responsible, or at least dispatched.

Mr. Miner stated that North Arm Bay was completely inside that CAD zone.

Mr. Dyvik stated that there are also bays that it borders and there are a lot of homes on the shorelines. He stated that if Orono was taking over that CAD zone, it does not seem like this is the way it should go because if they are taking over a CAD zone, he felt that they should actually take over the CAD zone.

(Long pause) Mr. Miner asked if Orono had a response to that?

Chief VanEyll stated that he did not think there have been many calls that have happened in those bays. He added he felt it was next to zero.

Ms. Veach asked how the meetings between the Chiefs have been going.

Mr. Miner stated that before that question is answered, he would like to finish up the discussion on the current topic because he felt it was very important.

Ms. Veach stated that they will get back to them on that issue.

Mr. Edwards explained that it was the first time they had heard the question.

Ms. Veach reiterated her question about how Chief Heiland felt the meetings between himself and Chief VanEyll had been going.

Chief Heiland stated that they were totally one-sided, but were going well.

Ms. Veach asked for clarification on what he meant by them being totally one-sided.

Chief Heiland explained that Orono has asked for a lot and continues to ask for things. He stated that the Long Lake Fire Department does not need anything from Orono which was why he considered it essentially a one-way street because Orono was trying to take over Long Lake's area, but then asking Long Lake to help them, which makes it a somewhat difficult conversation. He stated that he was doing his best to try to find some common ground.

Ms. Veach asked for confirmation from Chief Heiland that he felt the meetings were going well, but Long Lake did not currently have an 'ask' for Orono at the current time.

Chief Heiland confirmed that Long Lake did not have an 'ask'.

Ms. Veach asked if that meant that there was nothing that Long Lake would need from Orono.

Mr. Miner stated that he thinks that operationally they may but with the mediation coming up where they are talking about big picture assets and things, but that would be above the Chief level.

Ms. Veach referenced the article about Minnetrista in the Laker Pioneer and stated that there was a comment by Long Lake about the intended definition of a partnership being that they would be sharing staff and sharing equipment. She asked if they did not think that there would be anyway that there would be sharing of staff or equipment.

Chief Heiland asked if this was a partnership.

Ms. Veach stated that is what a partnership is.

Mr. Dyvik noted that the letter that Orono had sent to Long Lake defined partnership as Orono providing service to Long Lake, so he felt that the two cities had different definitions of what would be deemed a partnership.

Ms. Veach stated that she felt that sharing staff was something that could still be explored.

Mr. Miner stated that he felt the context in the Minnetrista article was that the two departments were considering merging as one, unified department.

Mr. Dyvik agreed that was the context of the article because it was about St. Bonifacius and the Mound departments merging and serving the City of Minnetrista.

Mr. Miner stated it was about Mound Fire and St. Boni fire serving the City of Minnetrista.

Ms. Veach stated that she just thought that this may be something helpful to talk about in upcoming meetings. She asked about the culture of the Department and how things were going.

Chief Heiland asked Assistant Chief Farly if he wanted to take this one.

Assistant Chief Farley stated that he has regular conversations with firefighters where he has mentioned how impressed he was with how well they are holding the Department together. He stated that he felt a lesser group would have self-destructed by now, but they are not simply a group of co-workers and are a group of friends who trust each other implicitly, including with their lives, which creates a different bond. He stated that there is a lot of stress amongst them, especially in Orono versus Long Lake with relation to who serves on both or who only serves in one. He stated that they are able to acknowledge that it is not personal, but it is hard when they are watching the whole thing unfold and that the thing they care so deeply about is potentially unraveling. He noted that because of that, they have to put forth effort to ensure that this is not happening within the membership. He stated that there have been a lot of open and honest conversations that have happened where they can talk about their feelings and come to an understanding that they are walking this together. He stated Ben Veach and he recently had one such conversation and they sat down and talked. He stated that it's taking a lot of effort and that just being part of a fire department brings a lot of stress to the lives of the firefighters and their families, but this situation has enhanced that stress.

Ms. Veach stated that, in the past, the FAB had talked about complaints or terminations in this forum and asked if that was something that they wanted to do today?

Mr. Miner stated that if that was something she wanted to talk about, she was welcome to bring something up.

Ms. Veach stated that she was just wondering if the group had any of those types of things to discuss and if they felt that talking about it amongst a partnership would be helpful.

Mr. Dyvik asked her to say that again.

Mr. Edwards stated that they would have to be careful with that because it would be talking about Long Lake employees which means there would be some confidentiality issues. He noted that if it was an Orono employee they would not talk about that type of things in an open forum.

Ms. Veach stated that she knew those types of things had been discussed at past meetings.

Mr. Edwards stated that he felt that they could discuss themes, but cautioned against talking about individual employees.

Mr. Miner thanked Mr. Edwards and stated that he agreed.

Mr. Dyvik stated that he had not brought up the bays and the CAD zone issue as a 'gotcha' moment and explained that he had just learned about the expectation a few days ago.

Ms. Veach stated that they had talked about it last week at their meeting, so she did not feel that was truthful.

Mr. Dyvik stated that they had not talked about it.

Ms. Veach stated that it had come up multiple times at their meeting, which was why she felt saying that he only knew about it for a few days was not accurate.

Mr. Miner stated that the lake had come up during their meeting, but he had not learned about the bay areas being carved out until a day or two later on Thursday.

Mr. Dyvik explained that it was not information that he had simply been sitting on. He stated that it surprised him because Orono is "The Lakeshore City" and the expectation that he had was that if they were going to have a fire department that they would cover the lakes within their service area.

Assistant Chief Farley stated those that have been involved in this have understood, for quite a while, that the lake was not to be included in the transfer of call territory. He stated that the most recent confusion was on behalf of dispatch because these bay areas are subzones within CAD 200. He stated that he felt that those who needed to know who was responding to the lake and who was responding to the land did know, but dispatch had not put those pieces together.

Mr. Dyvik stated that helps answer his question and noted that because he had not had this conversation with Assistant Chief Farley, this was the first time he had heard that information so maybe that's the answer.

Ms. Veach asked when Assistant Chief Farley knew about this.

Assistant Chief Farley stated that Orono has never had boats in their budget and noted that he felt it had always been a casual point within conversations that Long Lake Fire Department would continue to cover the lake because Orono would not buy a boat. He stated that it is the same reason that they cover Big Island, because the Long Lake Fire Department can get out there. Ever since the Needs Assessment came out.

Ms. Veach asked that when this had come up at the meeting last week whether that meant that Assistant Chief Farley did not know the answer at that time.

Assistant Chief Farley asked what meeting she was referring to.

Ms. Veach clarified that she was talking about the Long Lake meeting.

Mr. Miner stated asked if she was referring to the follow-up forum/open house meeting.

Ms. Veach reiterated that this issue had been brought up twice at that meeting.

Mr. Miner stated he remembered Gabe Jabbour bringing it up.

Assistant Chief Farley stated that it did dawn on him but things had kind of quickly moved past it. He clarified that it had not been neglected out of intent.

Mr. Miner stated that he would say it was essentially just an assumption, that because Orono did not have a boat Long Lake Fire would have to cover it. He stated that Mr. VanEyll is probably correct that there are not a ton of calls on those bays, but it would not be fair to Medina and to Long Lake to be subsidizing those calls. He stated that if this area is removed from Long Lake's service area, but they take calls there, they just have to be cognizant of that. He explained that he also did not understand why dispatch is carving out Forest Lake Bay but were not asking who would respond to North Arm Bay. He stated that he would like to know why that was being treated differently with dispatch.

Assistant Chief Farley stated that he had pointed out North Arm to them, because they had not pointed it out yet. He stated she had reached out to him to make sure that Long Lake was okay continuing to cover that area through June before the switch happened and he had to tell her that Long Lake Fire would be covering that area going forward, which was when they brought Chief VanEyll into the conversation to confirm this information.

Ms. Veach stated that mean that Long Lake did not need an answer from Orono then .

Assistant Chief Farley explained that he knew the answer, but was not going to provide the answer, because it was not his decision to make.

Mr. Dyvik stated that he had basically known the answer by default simply because Orono does not have a boat. He stated that he felt this situation needed to be factored in when Mr. Weske and Mr. Edwards work out the cost change for the second half of the year. He stated that he would also like to know when Orono will get a boat so that they could cover the areas within their CAD zones.

Mr. Edwards stated that they would have to take it over on January 1, 2026.

Mr. Dyvik questioned why they would 'have to' at that point.

Mr. Edwards explained that it was because they would not have a contract for anybody else to do it. He stated that meant that they would have to have a contract with some entity to do it, or do it themselves.

Mr. Dyvik stated that meant that the lake coverage would change on January 1, 2026.

Ms. Veach clarified that all coverage would change on January 1, 2026.

Mr. Dyvik reiterated that this situation needed to somehow be factored into the formula.

Mr. Edwards asked if Assistant Chief Farley thought that Orono needed to engage with dispatch about this issue.

Assistant Chief Farley stated that once they pulled Chief VanEyll into the loop, he believed that they were able to get it figured out.

Chief VanEyll stated that dispatch actually told him that doing it this way will make things simpler.

Assistant Chief Farley reiterated that it had not been pointed out to dispatch that the subzones were being broken out differently.

Mr. Dyvik mentioned that he saw the boundaries that had been drawn.

(inaudible side conversations)

Mr. Miner suggested that the meeting should wind down and asked if there was anything else to bring up.

Ms. Veach noted that if, in the future, Long Lake wanted to give a presentation again like they did last week, they could reach out to Orono, because some of the information they shared was hypothetical on what they 'thought' Orono was doing. She stated that they could reach out to Orono so they could help Long Lake prepare something if that is what the presentation is going to be about, hypothetical on budgets.

Mr. Miner stated that there should not have been any hypothetical information and explained that Long Lake Councilmember Feldmann had put that information together and it was all based on numbers from Orono, your budget.

Mr. Dyvik asked if she meant cost per calls.

Ms. Veach stated that there were questions about how the calls would be serviced and hypothetical answers were given. She reiterated that in the future, if Long Lake ever wanted to present something, they would be happy to help.

Mr. Miner stated ok.

Wrap-Up / Adjourn

Mr. Miner asked if the Board usually meets in July.

Mr. Weske stated that they will need to meet, because there will need to be a budget discussion because a preliminary budget needs to be approved by August.

Mr. Dyvik noted that he would be out of town until July 9, 2024.

There was consensus to schedule the next FAB meeting on July 17, 2024 at 4:00 p.m. and also on August 7, 2024, if needed.

Mr. Miner stated that he understood that Mr. Johnson would no longer be with Medina by the next meeting because he was moving to Blaine. He thanked for him working with the Board for the last few years and noted that he had enjoyed working with him and wished him the best.

Mr. Miner adjourned the meeting at 4:48 p.m.