

THE MORGAN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS AND MORGAN COUNTY COUNCIL MET IN A JOINT SESSION ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 12, 2021 AT 4:00 P.M.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT WERE DON ADAMS, KENNY HALE AND BRYAN COLLIER. COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT WERE KIM MERIDETH, VICKIE KIVETT, PAUL PRATHER, KELLY ALCALA, JASON MAXWELL, TROY SPRINKLE, AND CHIP KELLER. DEB VERLEY, EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT; JOSH MESSMER, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR; AND DAN BASTIN, COUNTY AUDITOR. ALSO PRESENT WERE MIKE JACKSON, HARRISON TOWNSHIP FIRE DISTRICT; STEVE DUKE BARGERSVILLE FIRE DISTRICT BOARD; KEVIN WALLS, JOHNSON COUNTY COMMISSIONER AND ERIC FUNKHOUSER BARGERSVILLE FIRE DISTRICT CHIEF.

Pledge

Prayer – *Vickie Kivett*

Kim Merideth and Don Adams called the meeting to order.

Introductions

PRESENTATION – FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Don Adams stated that this meeting is to gather information regarding a proposed fire district.

Vickie Kivett asked what the difference is between a territory and a district. Chief Eric Funkhouser stated that there must be a governmental entity for a territory, a district is a special taxing district in the state. The Bargersville Fire Protection District is not affiliated with the Town of Bargersville, they cover a much larger area (62 square miles) and do not report to the town; they report to the county. The Commissioners appoint the board; there are five members. Harrison Township is also a fire protection district that covers nine square miles.

Chief Funkhouser stated that the Harrison Fire Protection District Board approached them about a year ago to ask if they would contract with them to provide fire services, which includes EMS services, but not transporting ambulance service. They came up with an offer to provide service out of Station 202 on Smokey Row Road/Mullenix Road in Johnson County at a rate of \$36,000 for six months. The rate for 2021 increased to \$8,335 per month and they are under contract and have been providing service since July 8, 2020. They are dispatched through Morgan County 911 Dispatch. Chief Funkhouser stated that they are trying to determine the best way to move forward for the long-term and a year-to-year contract is not the best for them; however, Indiana Code 36-8-11-23 allows fire protection districts to merge across county lines. Reedy Financial Group presented information in May 2021 showing that the Commissioners of both counties could merge to form a single district if at least 1/8 of the aggregate external boundaries of the districts coincide, which they do. Harrison Township's assessed value for 2021 was \$90.5 million. That assessed value would be captured for the Bargersville Fire Protection District if the districts are merged. The certified rate is .0636 per \$100 of assessed value for the General Fund and the EMS Fund is approximately .04. Taxpayers in the Bargersville Fire Protection District are paying approximately .26 per \$100 of assessed value but this includes EMS transport service and excludes the debt service. A merger would need to work towards getting everyone paying the same amount for the same services. The budget is approximately \$7 million for 2022. A residence assessed at \$300,000 would see an approximate increase of \$190, an agricultural parcel of 75 acres would see an increase of \$120 and a commercial parcel assessed at \$400,000 would see an increase of \$492. If the Bargersville Fire Protection District would provide transport instead of EMS, the impact to EMS would be a loss of \$36,927.

Fred Roberts, Harrison Township Trustee, stated that he started on the Harrison Township Fire District Board in 1992, in 1988 the fire district was established under IC 36-8-11-4 and they have had trouble since day one because they broke the fire department into a separate entity as a 501(c)3. Because of a lack of maintenance on equipment, the Harrison Township Fire Department dissolved. Bargersville has been an asset. Mr. Roberts felt that the EMS service should stay in Morgan County as county-wide fire protection is coming in the future along with growth.

Mike Jackson stated that there was no back up plan and they suggested forming a fire territory with Madison Township but residents were not receptive; there is no option but to contract with Bargersville. Mr. Jackson stated that county-wide fire and EMS would require several entities to give up their “piece of cheese” for the benefit of the greater good. Before contracting with Bargersville, the ISO rating was 8 heading to 10, now it is a 4.

Dan Bastin stated that there is no immediate fix for 2022. Chief Funkhouser stated that they are asking for some movement towards everyone paying their fair share.

Kevin Walls stated that he has been working with the Johnson County Attorney and the fire protection district attorney to discuss merger options but they need to find a way to fund the contract in the meantime.

Mike Jackson stated that all the other board members have resigned and did not believe he could enter into a contract as one board member. Dan Bastin stated that there are several legal questions that need answered before making a decision.

Kenny Hale stated that they are working on getting four more members appointed to the Harrison Township Fire District Board. Mr. Walls stated that they are looking for a long-term solution and what's best for everyone.

Kim Merideth made a motion to appoint Kelly Alcala to a subcommittee. Motion seconded by Chip Keller. Don Adams assigned Bryan Collier to the subcommittee. Josh Messmer stated that there will probably be legal fees involved. Mike Jackson stated that they have \$3,000 in the budget for legal expenses.

Don Adams stated that they will follow up with a future meeting date.

ADJOURNMENT

Bryan Collier made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion seconded Kenny Hale by. Motion carried.

MORGAN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Don Adams

Attest:

Kenny Hale

Dan Bastin, Morgan Co. Auditor

Bryan Collier

MORGAN COUNTY COUNCIL

Kim Merideth

Vickie Kivett

Paul Prather

Kelly Alcala

Troy Sprinkle

Jason Maxwell

Chip Keller

ATTEST:

Dan Bastin, Morgan Co. Auditor