

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>YANKEE SPRINGS TOWNSHIP</b>  <b>Board of Trustees</b>  <b><u>In Person</u>– Special Meeting- Stand Alone Fire Station</b>  <b>6:00 p.m.</b>  <b><u>December 4, 2024</u></b>  <b>Yankee Springs Township Hall</b>  <b>284 North Briggs Road, Middleville, Michigan 49333</b>  <b>MINUTES</b></p>	<p><b>MINUTES</b>  <b>Page 1 of 10 PC</b>  <b>APPROVED: _____</b>  Special BOT Mtg.  December 4, 2024</p>
<p>Meeting called to order at 6:00 PM by Board of Trustees Supervisor, Rob Heethuis.</p> <p><b><u>PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Roll Call:</u> Present:</b> Rob Heethuis, Larry Knowles, Dave VanHouten, Deb Mousseau</p> <p><b><u>Staff Present:</u></b> Dennis Buist-Constable</p> <p><b><u>Visitors:</u> 18</b> (not including staff present).</p> <p><b><u>Panel of Invited Guests:</u></b></p> <p>Stephanie Lehman, Director of 911 Barry County Dispatch  Bill Richardson, Fire Chief, Thornapple Township Emergency Services  Joe Miller, Retired Fire Chief, City of Wayland  Dan Miller, Deputy Chief, Yankee Springs Fire Station  Ron VandenBerg, Retired Fire Chief, Martin Township  Jon Timmers, Fire Chief, City of Wayland  Jim Stoddard, Retired Fire Chief, City of Wayland  Brenda Mays, Director of WAEMS, Wayland Area Emergency Medical Services</p>	<p><b>CALL TO ORDER</b>  <b>PLEDGE</b>  <b>ROLL CALL</b></p>
<p><b><u>APPROVAL OF AGENDA:</u></b></p> <p><i>Motion by VanHouten with support from Knowles to approve the agenda as presented. Roll Call Vote: Mousseau: Yes, Heethuis: Yes, Knowles: Yes, VanHouten: Yes. All Yes. MOTION CARRIED.</i></p>	<p><b><u>APPROVAL OF AGENDA</u></b></p>
<p><i>Motion by Heethuis with support from VanHouten to accept the resignation of Mike Cunningham as Clerk. Roll Call Vote: VanHouten: Yes, Mousseau: Yes, Heethuis: Yes, Knowles: Yes. MOTION CARRIED.</i></p>	<p><b>MOTION TO ACCEPT RESIGNATION OF M. CUNNINGHAM</b></p>
<p><b><u>Rob Heethuis</u></b> made introductions of the invited panel guests. Rob Heethuis also made introductory comments regarding tonight’s meeting as well. He noted the good service that has been provided in the past with Fire/EMS service with no complaints. He noted that what was being looked at today was: Can we get that same kind of service, and what does that look like fiscally? R. Heethuis noted that the current budget for this year is \$356,450 which is for Ambulance and the fire station. \$329,750 is for the fire station, \$26,657 is for our ambulance service (WAEMS). What we get with our mills/and millage is \$290,000. We are \$66,000 over budget, but we are getting great service too. Heethuis noted that today, we are looking at these figures, and “how do we juggle that to keep our service that we are getting and yet make it reasonable for our patrons in tax money.”</p>	

**Presentation by -Dave VanHouten, YS Trustee** who reviewed a four-page report prepared from the findings of the subcommittee: Rob Heethuis, Greg Purcell, and Dave VanHouten (See Attached).

**MINUTES**  
**Page 2 of 10 PC**  
**APPROVED:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Special BOT Mtg.  
December 4, 2024

**Fire Chief Bill Richardson of Thornapple Township noted items from his discussions with the YS subcommittee.**

**Bill Richardson** commented that there were several meetings with the YS subcommittee. A little bit of a SWAT analysis was done. They took the budget of YS and Thornapple and compared and tried to overestimate expenditures and underestimate revenues and at end of the budget process, YS had enough money to operate successfully and still maintain the operations we have now.

Question: Is service going to get worse? Richardson: It is not good for us as neighbors to have you be worse. The better you (YS) are the better Thornapple is going to be. We're all neighbors. We all work together I would never advocate for you to go on your own if I thought it were detrimental to the YS community which would be detrimental to theirs (Thornapple). None of us are in a position to be successful without helping each other (neighboring departments).

Question: Are we going to save money? Richardson: Yes. But what's the cost vs. benefit (to residents) analysis? Richardson listed things that could be done to save money in the department. Such as finding times where you could use more help (coverage) or less. Richardson noted that a happy medium must be found. He felt that's why it's a nice thing about the township board having the oversight to make those decisions. You're here to serve the residents and use their tax dollars wisely. You can make those kind of decisions based on evidence and research from your department and you have a little more oversight. I think Wayland has done a great job. He felt all the surrounding departments were present tonight to make sure a stand alone would be successful for YS.

Thornapple used to be the fire department that was connected to YS. Richardson commented that prior to the switch to Wayland (in 2016) it has been discussed about going alone for 20 years now. In the long run, Richardson commented that he feels it (YS Stand Alone) will be a success.

R. Heethuis noted that only \$6,000 goes to Wayland for an admin fee (annually). Some of those admin fees would be when the Fire Chief puts info into the reporting (software) system.

Richardson commented on reporting software friendly. Richardson commented that he uses an all-in-one system and payroll can be entered in township software without entering hours. \$5,000 a year was given as an estimate for the payroll/reporting software. A couple of panelists commented that this cost would probably go up every year.

Personnel has to be paid as well to enter it - on top of the cost of the software - added J. Stoddard. Further discussion took place regarding entry of records and reporting into software systems.

Officers and certification was discussed. Dan Miller commented on current officer status and education. Joe Miller mentioned life experience also being considered with certification. It was noted that YS needs to catch up in certification. J. Stoddard was willing to help because he still has his certification. R. Heethuis noted that even if we stayed with Wayland, YS would have to incur certification costs and pay the increase to Wayland.

Dave VanHouten noted that YS was kind of a stand alone already.

Joe Miller noted that YS could use cost cutting features of YS running its own calls, using mutual aid but possibly disregarding some calls. A mutual aid agreement would still be needed for structure fires. Dan Miller noted considerable savings using figures from past years' fire report statistics. In 2022, Dan Miller noted \$19 - \$20,000 possible cost savings and in 2023, \$16,000 - \$17,000 cost savings. Stoddard mentioned prior to 3 years ago, there weren't officers at YS. B. Richardson mentioned the OSHA legal requirement for officers. Dan Miller said YS could be Stand Alone with the officers that it has now.

Mutual aid was described by Ron VandenBerg as "give and take". "If Martin has a fire, they call YS and YS comes to Martin- and vice versa. Everyone pays their own guys."

Regarding Mutual Aid, Stephanie Lehman commented on the tones for mutual aid. Structure fires are always mutual aid. Both pages go out at the same time. If one gets on scene they can let 911 know to get other stuff out there. 911 has the capability to direct tone them (automatic mutual aid departments).

ISO Ratings were discussed and factors involved. There are quite a few items involved in the rating. B. Richardson felt it was important for many of these items/factors to be stand alone for a better rating. It was noted that the lower the number the better. Fire inspection was briefly noted as well.

Joe Miller mentioned that when YS started with Wayland, eventually YS would be going to be on its own.

Jim Stoddard, Jon Timmer, Ron VandenBerg, Dan Miller, Joe Miller, Bill Richardson all agreed that YS should be a stand alone station.

**MINUTES**

**Page 3 of 10 PC**

**APPROVED:** \_\_\_\_\_

Special BOT Mtg.

December 4, 2024

**AMBULANCE SERVICE DISCUSSION:**

**MINUTES**  
**Page 4 of 10 PC**  
**APPROVED:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Special BOT Mtg.  
December 4, 2024

Bill Richardson commented that with the Fire Service discussions, ambulance service naturally came up. He noted that he thought WAEMS does a great job. He felt that TTES was geographically in a better location to service YS.

Bill Richard noted that TTES used to serve YS but there was basically a conflict between two people and YS switched to WAEMS. It had nothing to do with service.

Question: What's TTES service like? They staff an ambulance 24 hours a day, every day, for emergencies. A secondary ALS ambulance is staffed everyday til 8 p.m. for transfers and in house, and they just put a 3<sup>rd</sup> ambulance on so they can have their 2<sup>nd</sup> ALS ambulance around more. Turned over 10 calls and helped mutual aid around them 200 times -about what YS has in a year. If we don't have an ambulance in service; we should always have an ambulance ready. An over the border YS fire the other day, TTES ambulance was first on site noted Richardson.

Richardson also noted that Wayland has VITAL CARE program. TTES had felt their TAP? Program actually decreased service. TTES felt it didn't make sense to pull for priority 3 calls for strokes and priority calls so TTES doesn't use it. What if there is a hardship? Barry County United Way helps, and TTES, at the end of the day if there is truly a hardship for people, Richardson can't understand why they would not help with the bill. It has not happened yet (as far as a financial hardsip not being met).

"No transports" was mentioned and consistency needed with Irving Township. \$5,000 or \$6,000 costs was determined by transports. TTES has a pretty small service area in comparison to Wayland, noted Richardson.

Richardson also noted that they bring people back in when they get to level 0, but it doesn't happen very often. Richardson is a paramedic and will run calls when needed.

Heethuis reviewed the non-transport amounts that YS would pay. The stipend that TTES makes is from the call itself, from their insurance. If their (patient's) insurance doesn't cover it, TTES will bill them- the co-pay. YS would pay the non-transports. Stephanie Lehman and B. Richardson commented that it (number of non-transports) is not a lot. J. Stoddard asked "Does that mean you won't have the 1<sup>st</sup> responders in YS then? Because right now WAEMS uses the YS responders. Richardson responded to J. Stoddard, "When we discussed it, the fire department is going to become their own MFR department." Stoddard added, "So they will have to get their own license for that." B. Richardson agreed that they would and it wouldn't be that challenging.

Shaw Lake, Yankee Springs Road, and M-37 is called the "Triangle of Death" or TOD, (the acronym for it). Numerous accidents were mentioned at the "TOD" and that TTES has pretty straight shots into YS.

**Brenda Mays, Director of Wayland Area Emergency Service (WAEMS) commented:**

We have staff 2 trucks 24/7 and a 3<sup>rd</sup> truck on for 12 to 14 hours a day. We are well-staffed. More than what it says here (referring to the subcommittee report). WAEMS is even with TTES or better.

Mays commented that their critical response time is better. YS has to look at the YS population base which is the west side and around Gun Lake -and WAEMS is closer to those areas. This should be kept in mind when looking at response times to the lake.

911 calls do get transferred to Allegan. Mays commented that she was not sure what your route is (Barry County 911's ?) and continued, "We have radios at the base that we get the tones for Yankee and Orangeville in our radios in our truck.

We get toned the same time the fire department or the MFRs do.

Our truck is out the door and gone well before Allegan tones. So there's no delay waiting for Allegan because we got the call when Barry set it off so there is no delay there.

WAEMS is working towards lowering the subsidy. No raise this year. It's the first time in a very long time, possibly ever (that there hasn't been a raise). Hopefully we can lower it.

First responders, if YS does their own MFR license, the equipment they have now is Wayland's and we pay them and per the state, if they are licensed, they must have a truck staffed 24/7. That's going to mean a little bit higher payroll however you have to do it to have somebody to staff that truck.

If all our trucks are out, WAEMS sends out for mutual aid immediately. They don't delay to see what the call is going to turn out to be or hold calls. We put backup on right away.

Thornapple has a millage for EMS/Fire. Mays commented, "If I lived in Thornapple and they said they were going add on another township and not charge them anything because we are paying for it, that might go until people start figuring it out, but I would keep that in the back of your mind that at some point, you have support yourselves to make up any differences."

Mays commented that she wasn't sure what the plan was for current Vital Care members. Mays added that they don't see that abuse at all with their Vital Care members. That's not been a problem. Our Vital Care members very much appreciate that they do have that. What the insurance doesn't pay, WAEMS pays- which is usually the copay or deductible. We don't do very many transfers on trucks. They are all dedicated to E calls. We pride ourselves in being a community service. We don't charge for lift assists or to do a basic set of vitals. The board just decided to charge if they do an ALS assessment which includes an EKG. But if they do have to do drugs then there is a charge.

**MINUTES**  
**Page 5 of 10 PC**  
**APPROVED:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Special BOT Mtg.  
December 4, 2024

Discussion occurred regarding licensure for an MFR medical response unit. It's got a lot of medical equipment but it's not a transport vehicle. VanHouten asked, "Is that different? Do we have to man that 24 hours a day?" Currently, WAEMS carries the MFR license so YS does not have to carry their own license. Mays continued, "If you go to a stand alone, where you have your own license, that changes. Then the state looks at you - that's your license. This is your responsibility to have it staffed 24/7." Stoddard mentioned that he thinks it's a big liability that could occur if you miss a call and are sued for it. Jon Timmers commented that staffing doesn't mean you are physically at the station it just means you're available and respond to the call. Richardson agreed with Timmers' statement. "You're not staffing a vehicle. MFRs in general, (noting he's been a paramedic for 30 years working in VanBuren County), it's pretty common they can't get a crew together....they (the state) understand that these people are responding from home a lot of times. It's paid on call departments, it's not a full-time thing. So they're not out looking for it. The state is not out to be punitive. They want people to give care and they understand that these people are a lot of times donating their time. They might be getting paid a stipend, but they are essentially donating their time to their community. Further comments were made regarding volunteerism declining. Stephanie Lehman commented that every fire department in Barry County has MFR licensing. The only fire department in Barry County that checks into service (with 911) every single day is Thornapple- per Lehman. "But the other departments are available." "The state of EMS in Barry County is at times, fragile," commented Lehman. "It's that way in most communities." Lehman added that MFRs and fire department responders are their link between the call and the ambulance arriving on scene to provide care." Lehman continued to describe 911 procedures dealing with calls. She added that "none of the fire departments are staffed 24/7 where they have someone there ready to go 24/7. But everybody has people to respond when response is necessary." J. Stoddard asked what it would cost for YS to get their own MFR license. \$100 was a reply for the license. Stoddard asked about buying their own equipment, and what that typically runs. Richardson commented that most likelihood, taking out priority 3 calls, and at night, TTES would beat them to the call. Regarding equipment, Richardson didn't feel it would be a huge expense. "What MFRs use is not expensive stuff," added Richardson. B. Mays commented, "all the equipment on the truck is ours (WAEMS) except the Lucas." D. Miller commented on not having a problem because of transferring out equipment.

Stephanie Lehman gave an overview of what she has seen in her 17 years with Barry County Dispatch. She has been the director for 7 of those years.

**2023 Med & Fire = 304** runs responded to in Yankee Springs Twp.

**In 2024, as of December 2<sup>nd</sup>, = 310 runs** so YS is trending upward. Park and campground were not fully open so numbers would be probably up higher.

Fire in county for Barry County are up 18.68%

Fire outside of Barry County are up 5.97% Barry County Dispatch is looking at 24% increased need for- **fire only.**

**MINUTES**  
**Page 6 of 10 PC**  
**APPROVED:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Special BOT Mtg.  
December 4, 2024

EMS is down less than 1% and MFR calls are down 3.66%

These numbers are a little bit eschewed because of COVID.

S. Lehman felt the most important thing is that Barry County has the capability to track Thornapple's assets, such as ambulances. They can see when Thornapple goes into service, when they are moving and the direction they are heading in, how quickly they can be there, if they don't know where they are going, turn by turn directions can be given to Thornapple. This service cannot be provided for Wayland /WAEMS. Barry cannot direct tone or track WAEMS ambulances. Radio communication can occur once Wayland is in service, so Barry isn't always giving them information right away.

Lehman agrees with B. Mays that Wayland is faster on the west side of Gun Lake. However, Barry County Dispatch doesn't know where Wayland's trucks are coming from or if they are available because Allegan Dispatch sorts that out. Sometimes, if Allegan can't find an available ambulance then they will call Barry County for availability.

Lehman spoke of her subdivision on M37 which has experienced a lot of growth. Her neighbor's 6 month old baby boy was not breathing. Lehman as supervisor of that shift sent both Thornapple and Wayland Ambulance. YS went as well. Lehman commented that they would not play with politics when the baby was in distress. Unfortunately things were so tense and tumultuous that she made that decision (for both entities) and she would do it again. No cookie cutter solution is available. Bowens Mill (South East) and Peets Road is a long way to wait for a WAEMS ambulance. S. Lehman asked the board to think about those residents. Richardson commented that if there is any party not breathing, TTES is supposed to call the next ambulance if they are closer.

At this time, Rob Heethuis thanked the panelists for their contributions to the evening's discussions.

**Public Comment:**

**Pat Jamison of S. Bowens Mill**, commented that he was happy with the Wayland crew as a YS resident (with the service). Regarding a possible YS Stand alone fire station, Jamison commented, "Is it going to cost me one dime more? If it is, don't do it please. Service we have is great. The people are great. I'm OK with that...the Clerk leaving...that is a sad day. The guy in control of the money, doesn't like what you guys are doing. I don't trust you guys. I trust these men more than I trust you guys. These guys are coming to save my life. I have a problem with you guys (YS Board). Like a lot of the talks are around saving money. You've given yourselves like 9, 11% raises? In the past few years you've spent \$150,000 on a parking lot. And now you are worried about saving a few hundred bucks on a fire department? I find that a little bit ridiculous."

**MINUTES**

**Page 7 of 10 PC**

**APPROVED:** \_\_\_\_\_

Special BOT Mtg.

December 4, 2024

**Joe Jandernoa, Unit manager of DNR Recreation Area** for 28 years. J. Jandernoa noted that he is familiar with both Wayland and Thornapple services and they are fantastic. “Their response times are fantastic. Since Yankee Springs re-opened the doors, they’ve I can’t tell you what an asset they’ve been to us... Getting to know the park, we have 5,300 acres and responding to a broken neck on the 7 mile of a mountain bike trail, if you don’t know that can be a critical thing if you’re not familiar with the area. They’ve been fantastic with learning all of that. Jandernoa agreed with S. Lehman that the numbers are going to continue to go up at YS Recreation area. Jandernoa noted that they were up to 1.2 million visitors this year without the campground being open. He expects the numbers to be extremely high next year. And when thinking of about call volume, Jandernoa feels S. Lehman is absolutely right with her remarks.

**Dave Laansma, of Payne Lake Road**, thanked the invited guest speakers for their service. D. Laansma noted concern for “just being certain of what these expenses are going to be. We still have a lot of questions. I am positive that if we go stand alone there’s going to be some added expense somewhere that suddenly becomes obvious. It’s just not being discussed tonight because maybe it’s significant. We are trying to figure out does this fit into the budget we already have? I’m sure it won’t. It’s going to be more. I just want an honest assessment/evaluation. Recognizing that we have to plan for the future and more service.”

**Al Bouma with YS Fire Dept. and YS Resident**, commented, “As firefighters, we understand that emergencies don’t wait- they test us at the most critical moments. But what defines a community’s safety is not just how we respond, but how prepared we are before the alarm sounds. Tonight, I want to talk about a vision to make Yankee Springs not just a beautiful place to live but one of the safest communities. In the fire service, we adhere to state-mandated training requirements that establish the foundation of our readiness. But we believe Yankee Springs deserves more than just the minimum. Our unique jurisdiction- with its 19 lakes, 53 miles of trails, and over 23,000 acres of forest – presents challenges that require specialized training and collaboration. To address these needs, we propose going above and beyond with the following initiatives: Collaborative Training with Park Rangers and DNR – Our partnership with the Department of Natural Resources and park rangers will help us understand their emergency management plans and improve our response capabilities in wooded area, along trails, and around the lakes. This collaboration ensures seamless coordination during incidents in these environments. Training with Local Law Enforcement and Specialized Units - Working with the K9 unit, the marine division, and the dive team will enhance our ability to respond to water rescues, search and rescue missions and other critical incidents. Learning from their expertise strengthens our overall readiness and fosters trust between agencies. Mutual Aid Coordination - Training alongside our mutual aid partners, including Hastings, Thornapple, Orangeville and Wayland, allows us to understand what resources we can call upon and ensure cohesive teamwork during multi-agency emergencies. Equally important is building safety through education and prevention. We aim to connect directly with our community by offering: Fire Prevention Education, Free Smoke and Carbon Monoxide

**MINUTES**  
**Page 8 of 10 PC**  
**APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_**  
Special BOT Mtg.  
December 4, 2024



Alarms, and Community Safety Outreach: Hosting workshops and events to empower our residents with knowledge and tools to stay safe. With your support, we can move forward on this ambitious plan to make Yankee Springs a leader in fire safety and emergency preparedness. By investing in our training and community programs, we ensure that our fire department doesn't just respond to emergencies- we prevent them, mitigate their impacts, and make Yankee Springs a safer place for everyone.

**Mike Cunningham, resident of YS Township**, commented that coming into the meeting he was not sure why YS wanted to get out of the contract with Wayland. No reason was given to the whole board per M. Cunningham. "I was told I might agree when I see the numbers." As a board member, he commented that he never did see the numbers. As of four days ago while he was still on the board, Cunningham commented that unless he was left out, the board wasn't provided with these numbers either. Cunningham commented that he didn't recall any reason for getting out of the contract except for it was something that "we should look at." "The Board looked at this and renewed the contract less than two years ago after the fire committee spent a fair amount of time reviewing it. Since numbers are mentioned, I assumed that getting out of the contract was based on cost so I looked at the last fiscal year's cost related to the fire station operation. 2.2% of the cost is due to the admin fee of \$6,000. 37.2% of the variable costs for utilities and mowing, repairs, that sort of thing. 60.6% of the cost is due to payroll and training," commented Cunningham. He felt the only cost that could be avoided by getting out of the contract was the admin cost. Cunningham questioned the cost of what it would be for the township to take that on (administration cost). "The variable costs, which are operating costs, are invoiced to us and paid by YS Township, they are already under our control, there not part of the contract. If we can save money there... (M. Cunningham gave an example when the YS Township put in its own fuel tank for cost savings), We should do it. We don't have to get out from under Wayland to that. Payroll and training costs are not likely to go down unless you are planning to cut hours or wages. I don't know that the hourly rate has increased in the last four years. I wouldn't be in favor of reducing it. The board should be allowed to have input in the fire station staffing. The fire committee has never requested any board involvement in this area. I as a past board member have not heard any complaints about the quality of the Fire and EMS service in the township. I was in the office almost every hour of every day for the last four years. I think I would have been aware of these complaints. I think I've heard tonight, that there aren't any. What I have seen in the last year and a half, is a possible labor problem. Fire department personnel are not township employees. They are the City of Wayland employees. We contract for a service. I think we receive good service from the firefighters and the City of Wayland. I think I've heard that repeated here tonight, too. The township should not get into the middle of something that's not the township's business. Should emergency services in the township become impaired due to labor problems, and Wayland is not meeting the contract obligations, the township would need to get involved. And by the township, I mean the Board. Not the fire committee or one trustee alone. The Yankee Springs Township ended a contract with Thornapple 8 or 9 years ago when in my opinion the supervisor created chaos for his own reasons and now we are ending a contract with Wayland for what looks like similar reasons. This is one of the reasons that I resigned

**MINUTES**

**Page 9 of 10 PC**

**APPROVED:** \_\_\_\_\_

Special BOT Mtg.

December 4, 2024

from the Board. I did not want to be any part of this. I think the decision's already been made and I wasn't invited to any meeting when it was made. I just think this is wrong," concluded M. Cunningham. Loud clapping occurred from one audience member.

**Mike Anders of Middleville** commented about the "white elephant in the room"- "From what I've heard, the casino gives Wayland their money and then they trickle it down to YS, the left over. From what I understand, YS would like to have more of that which would make the YS people not have to pay as much tax as what people think. That's what I've heard. I've met Dan Miller. He's a great guy. I think they should be on their own to get some of that money to run properly.

**MINUTES**  
**Page 10 of 10 PC**  
**APPROVED:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Special BOT Mtg.  
December 4, 2024

**Board Comment:**

**Larry Knowles:** Thanked those who came this evening. It gave a lot of insight.

**Deb Mousseau:** Thanked the subcommittee Dave (VanHouten), Rob (Heethuis) and Greg (Purcell) for their work interviewing people and thanked the panel that was present at the meeting. The information is very valuable. Appreciated everyone coming this evening.

**Dave VanHouten:** Ditto the previous board comments. Dave wanted to emphasize that whatever happens with the fire department, YS pays for it. Stand-alone or not be a stand-alone, YS pays for it. I would rather have control as employees rather than sub-contracted out so we would have a little better control and can offer better service to the community.

**Rob Heethuis:** Thanked everyone. He felt it was a tremendous evening. The people up here (panel) gave a tremendous amount of information. It will help as we evaluate where we are going in the future. Rob Heethuis asked everyone to be careful driving home because of the nasty weather.

**BOARD COMMENT**

**ADJOURNMENT:**

***Motion by VanHouten with support Knowles to adjourn at 7:31 p.m. All AYES. Motion Carried.\****

Approved by: Rob Heethuis 12-19-24  
Rob Heethuis, Supervisor Date

**ADJOURNMENT**

***\*After adjournment, Brenda Mays commented that she was disappointed that this has gone on for months. And she just made an offhand call (to Rob) yesterday, to find out about the meeting today.***

***Attached: YS subcommittee's 4 page report.***

December 4, 2024

Information for the Board of Trustees

A review of Our Fire Department and Ambulance Service

**Where are we Now:**

**Fire Service**

- For the last 9 years, YS has had an Inter-local Fire Service agreement for fire protection with the City of Wayland. Last 5 year agreement was dated March 6, 2023. This agreement is available to anyone who would like to review it. Our township attorney reviewed the agreement.
- The arrangement enabled YS to provide fire service to our community and time to build up our equipment and personnel.
- YS has an Emergency Services Millage of .75 which is very low. This millage nets the township \$290,000 per year. It does vary every year due to Headlee reductions and property value increases.
- Our current estimated costs are \$356,450 per year. The difference is made up from the general fund. These expenditures are provided to you every month by account number.

**Ambulance Service**

- Yankee Springs joined the Wayland Area Emergency Medical Services on Feb 11, 2016. A copy of the agreement is available if you would like to review it.
- Our cost for services to WAEMS in 2024/2025 is \$26,657
- WAEMS is a Vital Care Partner that provides medically required transportation to a medical facility. Cost is \$45 per year if the resident signed up for a 1 year membership plus your Medicare, Medicaid or private insurance reimbursement
- WAEMS has 4 – 5 ambulances, but staff only 2 until 10 PM to cover the 10 townships and 1 city.

**Why Are We Having This Meeting?**

- Since this spring questions have been cropping up. What level of service are we receiving in both our fire department and ambulance service?
- In July, 2024, the fire committee of Yankee Springs requested the BOT to appoint a subcommittee to take a look at our agreement with Wayland Fire.
- While discussing fire service, it very quickly became evident that since medical service is so closely tied to the fire department, we should include WAEMS in this study.
- The subcommittee consisted of Rob Heethuis, Greg Purcell and Dave VanHouten.
- We spoke with current and past fire chiefs from Wayland, Orangeville, Leighton, Martin, Thornapple and Freeport (no information from Freeport was considered as their department is a unique entity). We also had discussions with the state fire marshal.
- We also spoke with our Deputy Chief Dan Miller, retired Chief Joe Miller, retired Chief Ron Vandenberg and the state fire marshal.
- Discussions were held on facilities, trained personnel, officers, experience, training, equipment, communication, safety, maintenance of building and equipment, record keeping requirements, payroll, insurances, hazmat training, current payment of EMR's, written policies and procedures and licensing.
- We asked "in your opinion, should Yankee Springs continue with the Wayland contract or form our own standalone station". With no exception, all chiefs feel that Wayland has provided the support for Yankee Springs to now be a standalone department.

**Possible Advantages to establish a Yankee Springs Standalone Fire Service**

- Will be covered by the fire chiefs

**Possible Concerns expressed to us for a Standalone**

- Do we have enough properly trained personnel for fighting fires and the mgt to make sure they operate safely, effectively and efficiently?
- Would our service/response time increase or decrease?
- Will the service provided be as good as or better than we now have?
- How would we work with other departments?
- Who will take care of all accounts payable and payroll?
- Why are we considering changing services after 9 years of working with Wayland?

**Changing our Ambulance Service – Advantages**

- Thornapple has better staffed full time service
- Critical response time will be quicker to majority of YS
- A 911 call would be transferred to Thornapple quicker than a 911 call going to Wayland.
- Thornapple bills \$850 to Medicare, Medicaid or to private insurance. They accept what is paid.
- Much cheaper. We pay Wayland Ambulance \$ 26,657. Thornapple will handle our service for no charge if we pay for non-transport. Estimated cost is \$4,500 to \$6,000 per year.

**Changing our Ambulance Service – Disadvantages**

- None noted

**Financial Snapshot at a Moving Target**

Emergency Services of Yankee Springs for 2024/2025 budget year.....\$356,450  
Reduced cost of ambulance service (used \$6K for non-transport).....\$-20657  
Better manage standby policy.....\$-16,580  
Subtotal.....\$319,213

NOTE: For year 2023/2024 the BOT made the decision to better staff the fire station during day shift to provide better emergency

Medical service (taken out to compare apples).....\$ 40,000  
Subtotal .....\$ 279,213

But, keep in mind we did increase budget by \$40k AND

We will have some startup costs:

Programs and licensing - \$8K

Total Start Up est at \$8K

Total est cost of fire and ambulance service.....\$287,213

NOTE: Add the \$40K BOT improve the service decision..... \$40,000

TOTAL .....\$327,213

Don't forget our emergency services millage nets township .....\$290,000

Transfer from General Fund .....\$37,213

Total Balance.....\$327,213