

**A STUDY
OF ALTERNATIVES AVAILABLE
TO THE VILLAGE OF JUSTICE, ILLINOIS
FOR FIRE AND EMS PROTECTION**



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Submitted to the Village Board
February 2008

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INTRODUCTION

In December, 2006 the Village of Justice, IL entered into a contract with Sorensen, Wilder, and Associates (SWA), a public safety and homeland security consulting firm based in Bradley, IL to perform a study exploring the various options and related costs for Fire and EMS protection within the village. The study was to be limited to the area in the village of Justice not currently paying a real estate levee to the Roberts Park Fire Protection District.

The area of unincorporated Lyons Township that has been traditionally associated with Justice, Sterling Estates, was left as a contracted service area.

BACKGROUND

The consulting team met with Mayor Kris Wasowicz and Trustee Mike Murray on December 8th, 2007. The meeting was held in the conference room at Justice's village hall. The meeting confirmed the scope of services the consulting team members from SWA would provide and the associated content of the final report.

It was understood and agreed upon that the services provided by SWA would be focused on identifying the various types of fire service structures, costs associated with each type, and the advantages and disadvantages of each type. Another option, outside of a fire and EMS service directly operated and controlled by the Village of Justice, would be to join the Roberts Park Fire Protection District (RPFPD). The consultants agreed to explore the feasibility of that option, and address it within the report.

Another understood component of the project was that any fire service organization under the jurisdiction of either the Village of Justice or a new Board of Trustees for a Justice Fire Protection District (JFPD) would be comprised of a minimum of 1 Engine Company (pumper) and 1 Ambulance.

In the meeting, Trustee Murray asked that we extend the scope of the project to include the possibility of a merger with the Willow Sprigs Fire Department. While this issue was not understood to be a component of the original scope of services, we agreed that we would provide some feedback relative to this idea. A limitation in the discussion of a

merger between Willow Springs Fire Dept. and a Justice fire service organization would be based on developing a new fire protection district.

The consulting team set to work, even before records and documents were procured from the Village of Justice. State laws and regulations, government opportunities and mandates, local fire service statistics, and fiduciary options and statistics were researched. A series of interviews were held by the consultants with fire service, legal, and financial experts to further assist in our study.

In January, 2008 we received all the documentation that we had requested from the Village of Justice. A series of follow-up questions were forwarded to Ms. Kathleen Svoboda, the Village Clerk. Ms. Svoboda was more than helpful throughout our consulting, and we deeply appreciate her willing cooperation.

Several interviews, both telephonic and in person, were conducted with Chief William Doherty of the Roberts Park Fire Protection District (RPFDP). Chief Doherty was more than fair and cooperative with data and his opinions on the study material. In Chief Doherty's stead, Assistant Chief Fred Vollinger Jr. was equally helpful with information sought, and answered our questions quickly and honestly. Many fire chiefs from neighboring fire departments and throughout the state were asked for information and experiences and all proved reliable and accurate responses and feedback. Fiscal and administrative experts were also polled for opinions and information, and again, were extremely helpful.

On January 26, 2008 the members of the consulting team assembled with Trustee Murray for a walk-through of the Justice Fire Station and the Public Works garage, where the spare engine company and ambulance are stored. Trustee Murray was once again very forthright and helpful. He was able to answer most of our questions and when he was not, he either delegated the task or promised to get back to us with accurate information. At this meeting, we also had a chance to meet Chief Ernest Spatola. Chief Spatola was another important key to gathering not just raw data and information, but some of the nuances that are essential to understand in this study. Chief Spatola gave us an inventory check-off sheet for the 2 pieces of equipment stored at the Public Works garage (Engine 551 & Ambulance 559). We were later given an inventory, recorded in 2005, of the transition from the Justice Fire Department to the RPFDP. All this data was used in our study, and helped to control some of the costs.

At the end of the January 26, 2008 walk-through, Trustee Murray requested that Mr. Stedman, the project manager, stay for a "few minutes" for an update. Mr. Stedman agreed, and both men, joined a little later by Chief Spatola, met at the Public Works office. Mr. Stedman gave Trustee Murray an update as to what the consulting team was

doing and how far the study had progressed. Trustee Murray also requested that Mr. Stedman, and whomever else from our firm, attend a Village Board meeting On February 20, 2008 to give a progress report on the study. At the end of the meeting, Trustee Murray asked if the consultants could look into a merger of not only Willow Springs FD and Justice, but to include Summit FD as well. Mr. Stedman responded that we would definitely try.

On February 20, 2008, Mr. Steve Wilder, President and COO of SWA, and Mr. Stedman attended a Village Board meeting at 1900 hours. Mr. Wilder introduced Mr. Stedman and informed the Board that, if there were any questions, we would be glad to respond. Mr. Stedman then briefed the Board of the many options our team was investigating in relation to fire and EMS protection in the Village of Justice. After the report, two questions were asked. The first question, from a village trustee, was for clarification. He understood that our study was limited to only two options, and expressed appreciation that we were exploring multiple options to help the Board make the right decision. The second question, from Mayor Wasowicz, was based on a transition of the Village to a separate fire district or to the RPPFD. He asked if we had determined a levy rate and what figures we were using for population. We advised that we are computing a population at 50% of the village population and “plugging” that data into the current rate for the RPPFD. We also responded that at that time we had not determined a real estate tax levy rate for a new fire protection district. That rate was subsequently arrived at and is discussed in the appropriate section of this report.

The majority of our consulting is based on fact. There were times in the study where, lacking precise data, we estimated numbers to degrees all of the consultants felt would approximate the conditions for the Village of Justice. An example would be the number of village residents who are now not paying the real estate levy for the RPPFD. We attempted to determine that number, using an exhausting amount of resources, only to end up using a “safe” figure of 50%. It was anecdotal knowledge that RPPFD comprised a little more than 50% of the Village, but again, without hard data, we resorted to a number that would be accurate to somewhat conservative. This position was endorsed by Mayor Wasowicz at our February 20 meeting.

FIRE DEPARTMENT ESSENTIALS

The following section applies to all options presented in this report, with one exception. The option of the area of the Village of Justice not currently paying a real estate tax levy to the Roberts Park Fire Protection District (RPPFD), but going to referendum in an attempt to join the RPPFD is exclusive of this section.

The area not paying a real estate tax levy to the Roberts Park Fire Protection District will be referred to as “the north side” in further discussions contained herein.

Regardless of the type of fire service organization the Village of Justice decides upon, there are essential items and issues that must be addressed. The items and issues discussed in this section refer to a “general fire department”. Every fire service organization has its customs, traditions, and tacit cultural. Those items are well beyond the scope of this report.

The consultants agreed that the least time-consuming approach to explaining this section would be to follow the criteria for a fire department rating instrument as provided by the Insurance Services Organization, (ISO). The following is from the ISO web site ¹

The Fire Suppression Rating Schedule (FSRS) is a manual containing the criteria ISO uses in reviewing the firefighting capabilities of individual communities. The schedule measures the major elements of a community's fire-suppression system and develops a numerical grading called a Public Protection Classification (PPCTM).

The FSRS incorporates nationally accepted standards developed by such organizations as the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and the American Water Works Association (AWWA). When those organizations update their standards, the ISO evaluation changes as well. So, the PPC program always provides a useful benchmark that helps fire departments and other public officials measure the effectiveness of their efforts — and plan for improvements.

How the FSRS works

The FSRS lists a large number of items (facilities and practices) a community should have to fight fires effectively. The Schedule assigns credit points for each item. Using those credit points and various formulas, ISO calculates a total score on a scale of 0 to 100.

¹ <http://www.isomitigation.com/ppc/2000/ppc2001.html>

The FSRS considers three main areas of a community's fire-protection program:

Fire alarms

Ten percent of a community's overall score is based on how well the fire department receives and dispatches fire alarms. Our field representatives evaluate:

- *the communications center, including the number of operators at the center*
- *the telephone service, including the number of telephone lines coming into the center*
- *the listing of emergency numbers in the telephone book*
- *the dispatch circuits and how the center notifies firefighters about the location of the emergency*

Fire department

Fifty percent of the overall score is based on the fire department. ISO reviews the distribution of fire companies throughout the area and checks that the fire department tests its pumps regularly and inventories each engine company's nozzles, hoses, breathing apparatus, and other equipment. ISO also reviews the fire-company records to determine things such as:

- *type and extent of training provided to fire-company personnel*
- *number of people who participate in training*
- *firefighter response to emergencies*
- *maintenance and testing of the fire department's equipment*

Water supply

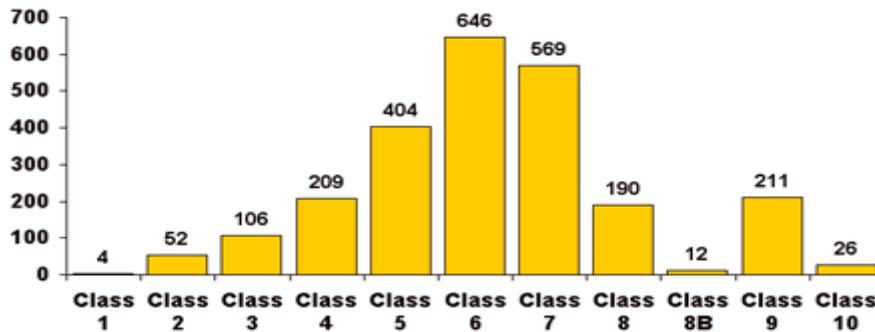
This area is above the scope of this study.

The forms for grading the individual department are available at the ISO web site:
<http://www.isomitigation.com/downloads/fire4.pdf> .

The ISO rating for the Roberts Park Fire Protection District is 3. While services are being provided by the Roberts Park Fire Protection District, Village of Justice residents and business owners living in the “north side” fall under the ISO 3 rating.

The last known rating for the Justice Fire Dept. was a 5 (the consultants never found a definitive answer to this question – it was a debate between 5 and 6). Given the needs to start up a fire service organization, it would be inappropriate to estimate the current rating of the Village of Justice.

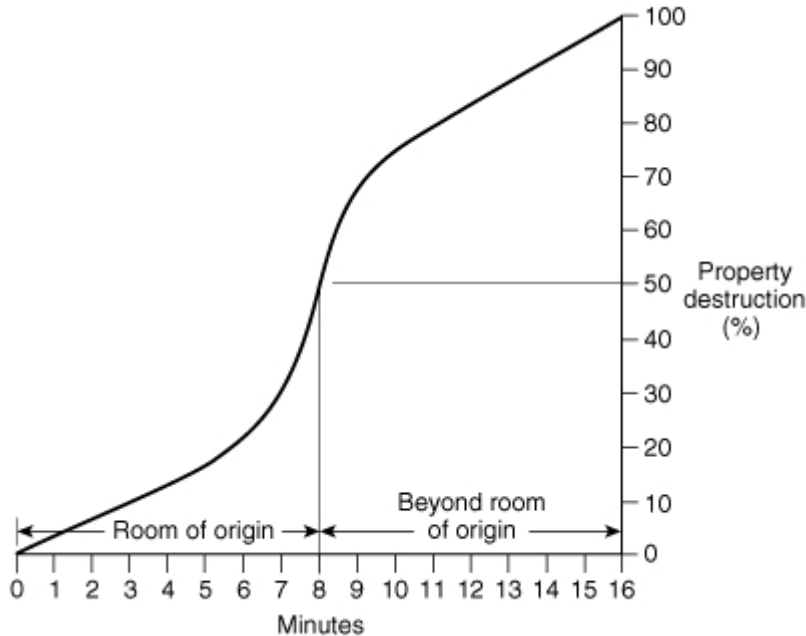
The chart below shows a breakdown of ISO ratings for fire departments and fire districts within the State of Illinois.



The authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) is responsible for determining the level and scope of services that are to be provided by their full-time fire department. In making these decisions, factors that must be weighed include available funding, desired level or quality of service provided, and local priorities. The ongoing challenge faced by government at all levels is how to provide more service with less funding. Given that, fire department funding is a challenge, especially if it means diverting limited funds from one service area to provide for another (Fire, Police, Public Works, etc.).

[Fire Suppression – Service Level](#)

The desired level of service takes into account a number of fundamental factors. One key component to the delivery of emergency services is *response time*. A fire doubles in size every 1 – 2 minutes. Consequently, given that the progression of a structural fire to the point of flashover (i.e., the very rapid spreading of the fire due to superheating of room contents and other combustibles) generally occurs in less than 10 minutes, two of the most important elements in limiting fire spread are the quick arrival of sufficient numbers of qualified personnel, and equipment to attack and extinguish the fire as close to the point of its origin as possible. As the chart below illustrates, time is a critical element that could mean the difference between minimal property damage and total destruction.



Fire Propagation Curve

As the chart below illustrates, there is a direct correlation between the expansion (buildup) of a fire and the likelihood of civilian injuries and deaths. Empirical data has proven that a rapid and aggressive interior attack can substantially reduce the human and property losses associated with structural fires. As such, time is undeniably a critical element that could mean the difference between rescue and fire fatalities.

Fire Extension in Residential Structures 1994–1998

Extension	Rate per 1000 Fires		
	Civilian Deaths	Civilian Injuries	Dollar Loss per Fire
Confined to the room of origin	2.32	35.19	3,185
Beyond the room but confined to the floor of origin	19.68	96.86	22,720
Beyond the floor of origin	26.54	63.48	31,912

Note: Residential structures include dwellings, duplexes, manufactured homes (also called mobile homes), apartments, row houses, townhouses, hotels and motels, dormitories, and barracks.
 Source: NFPA Annual Fire Experience Survey and National Fire Incident Reporting System.

Fire Suppression – Fire Station Location

The location and number of fire stations has a direct bearing on response times, which directly impacts the amount of time taken to extinguish a fire and minimize civilian injuries and property loss. Ideally, fire stations should be strategically placed so that optimal response times can be maintained throughout the jurisdiction. Factors that may also come into play include access to major roadways, impediments such as rail crossings or highways

The consultants agree that the current station location is advantageous to response in the “first-due” area. The physical plant will be discussed later. The current situation in the immediate automatic aid area for the Justice fire station and the MABAS cards all seem reasonable for response standards.

Fire Suppression – Staffing Levels

When determining staffing levels for service delivery, local needs are important to identify. Jurisdictions with industrial and commercial settings, such as Bedford Park, place added demands in staffing needs. While residential communities don’t require the same staffing levels, it’s important to note that most civilian deaths and firefighting line-of-duty deaths occur every year in single family homes.

Fire departments are now faced with an additional staffing concern. In August of 2004, The National Fire Protection Association adopted NFPA Standard 1710, “Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments.”

NFPA 1710 is a standard concerning personnel deployment and response times to fires and medical emergencies. Even though NFPA 1710 is not a law or a federally mandated regulation, it does set forth a nationally recognized standard that would be difficult to defend in the face of a tragedy. Decisions about whether and how to implement NFPA 1710 rest with local elected officials.

It is important to note that NFPA standards have been instrumental in establishing precedents in convictions for negligence.

The two most critical criteria in NFPA 1710 are:

- Requires four people (on one vehicle *or* multiple vehicles) to arrive at a fire scene within five minutes, 90% of the time. (The five-minute figure includes one minute to get into fire gear.)
- Requires 14 - 15 people to arrive at a “Full Alarm Assignment” within nine minutes, 90% of the time. (The nine-minute figure includes one minute to get into fire gear.)

When taking NFPA Standards 1500 and 1710, in conjunction with OSHA’s “two-in – two-out” rule, the number of firefighters on the scene of a structure fire within 10 minutes becomes 21 (90% of the time)

The MABAS divisional location and structure in the Village of Justice area allows for response from three (3) separate Divisions. The consultants believe the available fire suppression and EMS units surrounding the Village Justice will bring response dynamics into near complete compliance with all applicable standards.

Engine companies (fire pumpers) are recommended by NFPA 1710 to have a crew of four personnel, but are often staffed with three personnel. A two person pumper crew is inefficient at best. The 2 person engine should wait until at least 3 more fire personnel are on the scene and fully prepared for firefighting before they attempt to mount an aggressive attack. This is due to NFPA 1710, which states that every hose line used for interior firefighting requires 3 fire personnel, fully outfitted with protective gear.

The consultants are very aware of the dedication, determination, and bravery of firefighters. Anecdotally, we know that firefighters are likely to mount an aggressive attack with two members on the scene.

- The safety issue in this scenario is paramount. The fire service organization **MUST** provide for the safety of its employees, albeit by mandate or implied prudence.
- A secondary issue is liability. This can affect the administrative level of the fire department *and* the governing body of the fire service organization.
- A tertiary issue comes in the form of public relations. Many contemporary fire service organizations utilize every medium possible to bring awareness of its services to the community served. When town or district board needs additional revenue, the relationship developed with the community is a contributing factor.

Local resource hospital guidelines call for 2 EMT-P’s to staff ALS ambulances. For the entire study, the consultants have assumed that the Village of Justice was intending to remain with a staffed ALS ambulance.

Further, as is prudent in the contemporary fire service, the engine company should be staffed by a minimum of 2 EMT-P's. This assumes an ALS engine company, and again the consultants assume this to be fact as it conforms to modern fire service trends.

For the purpose of this study, we will assume that there are 4 firefighter/paramedics on duty every day. This will put 2 Firefighter / Paramedics (FF/PM's) on the ALS engine company and 2 FF/PM's on the ambulance. This staffing arrangement is what is commonly referred to as a "jump company" setting. Theoretically, if a call for a fire is received, one or both of the FF/PM's from the ambulance will "jump" over to the fire engine and the engine will respond with 3 – 4 members. This results in 4 firefighters on the scene initially, although the ambulance may be out of service and unavailable to the community. Many departments address this by automatic aid agreements with neighboring EMS providers. While it is a good thought, it is not reliable and thus affects consistent service delivery. If a fire call is received while the ambulance is on an EMS call, the engine is forced to respond to the alarm with 2 members.

Ladder trucks, though recommended to have a crew of four personnel, are often staffed with three personnel. A two person ladder crew is basically inefficient as it may lead to unsafe practices such as "freelancing", which can drive charges of due negligence and lead to allegations of unsafe work-place practices.

It is important to note that when it comes to staffing levels, the ability to furnish adequate fire suppression forces will greatly influence the outcome of a structural fire.

Fire Suppression – Frontline and Reserve Apparatus

The number of pumpers and specialized apparatus ties back into local needs (i.e. industrial, commercial, residential). For the sake of being able to provide a level of service consistently, a reserve apparatus is necessary so that service levels are not compromised when a pumper, for example, is out-of-service for maintenance or repair needs. Ideally, a reserve apparatus should be fully stocked and equipped (fire hose, self-contained breathing apparatus, radios, equipment, etc.) so that it can be placed in-service immediately as needed. At a minimum, one pumper and one ambulance should be available as reserve equipment.

For this study, maintenance records for Justice-owned equipment were analyzed, when available. Engine Company 555 appears to be a reliable and serviceable unit. A question comes to the consultants about the over-all condition of the spare engine company, 551. An honest appraisal must be obtained to determine costs required to bring 551 up to serviceability. The worth of the apparatus must be considered before any outlay. An

option available is to purchase a used apparatus. This would only be a stop-gap measure as the used engine would only be reliable for a finite time period related to the cost

The spare ambulance, unit 559, is a 13 year old piece of equipment. The RPPFD states that they have no future plans to use this unit. If the Village of Justice is to develop its own fire department, an estimate of repairs must be obtained.

We have developed a figure of \$50,000.00 to equip each ambulance, assuming that 559 would be able to serve as a spare apparatus. Another option open to the village would be replacing the spare ambulance with a used ambulance. Low mileage ambulances in relatively good condition can be found in the \$20K - \$30K range.

The consultants agreed that if the Village of Justice opted to develop its own fire department, it would be a good idea to have an aerial apparatus at their disposal. Based on the team's knowledge of reciprocal response agreements we feel that at some point a response capability of an aerial truck from Village of Justice would be necessary. Using estimates from the 2005 inventory from RPPFD and the team's own knowledge based on the on-site inspection, we have entered an estimate of \$40,000.00 to put the current aerial ladder truck into compliant service. The village would need to weigh the cost of repair against the purchase of a low-mileage used aerial ladder truck. It is possible for a new Village of Justice fire service organization to admit to others in its automatic aid area that it is not economically feasible to supply an aerial ladder truck for responses, but that a fund has been initiated for future purchase. Based on the fact that the current aerial ladder does not respond, the aforementioned statement to neighboring departments/districts would be, in our opinion, justified.

The consultants strongly recommend that if the Village of Justice moves to its own fire service organization, leasing of fire trucks should be considered. Given the initial cost versus resale, leasing becomes an attractive alternative.

Support Services – Maintenance and Repair

It takes an ongoing effort to keep emergency vehicles operational and ready to respond. It is necessary to have a means of securing fuel for vehicles at any time of day or night. The consultants assume that any fire service organization develop by the Village of Justice will have a fueling agreement from within, using Public Works fueling sites.

A preventive maintenance program is the preferred means of caring for emergency vehicles. This proactive approach involves routinely inspecting the vehicle and changing critical components before they need to be replaced. Serious accidents have occurred as a result of brake problems or tire failure during an emergency response. For liability

purposes, brakes on emergency vehicles should only be worked on by certified brake specialist. Regardless of where maintenance and repairs are conducted, it is strongly encouraged that only Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) and Emergency Vehicle Technician (EVT) mechanics be utilized. Emphasis on preventive maintenance enhances vehicle reliability and the state of readiness. While preventive maintenance and repairs may be available locally, it may be necessary to utilize a vendor who specializes in emergency vehicle maintenance.

Several fire apparatus dealers in the area offer a variety of preventive maintenance packages. Some of these packages include annual UL compliance testing, which can be considered a cost saving compared to calling in UL itself for apparatus testing. Equipment carried on fire apparatus (saws, generators, tools) will need repairs from time to time. Local vendors should be identified for repairs.

Fire Suppression – Automatic Aid

Automatic aid is a system of utilizing the resources of neighboring agencies when the need exceeds the capability of local resources. Since it is impractical and financially impossible for smaller communities to staff a fire department with manpower and equipment that can handle any type and level of emergency that may occur, automatic aid becomes a vital element in the delivery of services in a large scale incident. While fire departments staff for the most likely scenarios, automatic aid is necessary when confronted with challenges such as fires involving more than one structure or large structures, major vehicle accidents, plane crash, derailments, chemical accidents, floods, tornadoes or terrorism.

Illinois is fortunate to have in place a mutual aid system known as M.A.B.A.S. (Mutual Aid Box Alarm System). The MABAS program, which is now a statewide program in Illinois, is considered to be the model for successful fire service mutual aid systems across the country. Under the MABAS program, fire departments sign a mutual aid agreement that indicates a willingness to respond with personnel and equipment to other jurisdictions on an as available basis. In turn, those that offer to share resources with others in their time of need are also able to request resources in their respective time of need. Under the MABAS program, additional resources can continue to be requested until the incident is mitigated. As such, it is conceivable that twenty, thirty or more fire departments can send manpower and equipment resources to one incident. MABAS utilizes common radio frequencies and terminology so that confusion and miscommunications are kept to a minimum. There is a minimal charge to be part of a MABAS agreement. The benefits far outweigh the cost.

Support Services – Fire Administration

Fire administration provides direction and leadership to the fire department. Fire administration is responsible for local risk analysis and prioritizing resources into programs to meet local challenges. Fire administration then manages and evaluates those programs to ensure that they meet the desired outcome in the most efficient and cost effective manner possible. Fire administration recommends program modifications (added, reduced, or eliminated) to the administrator or elected officials (depending on local government structure). Fire administration focuses on strategic planning in the development of programs and priorities over a period of time.

A five-year or ten-year plan may be developed as a blueprint to give direction to the future of the department. While this plan can be updated on a regular basis, it provides the framework for future programs as well as staffing and equipment needs. This translates to budget needs to fulfill the department’s mission.

Since the tragic events of September 11, 2001, and the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, there has been a greater emphasis placed on emergency management. At one time, emergency management was primarily focused on man-made disasters (tornadoes, floods, etc.). However, emergency management is now a contemporary, broad-based topic that continues to receive attention. Local government is now faced with how to deal with emergencies of any kind, so that life safety is maintained and property loss is minimized. The end result has been an “all-hazards” approach to planning, preparing for, and recovery from all types of local incidents. The public has traditionally turned to the fire service in time of need. As such, the addition of emergency management responsibilities to the fire department is quite common.

Risk management is an important role for Fire Administration. Since there are inherent risks associated with providing emergency services, Fire Administration is tasked with how to minimize risk to fire personnel and how to minimize liability exposure. Losses (injuries, lost time, property damage) can be very expensive. As such, this is an ongoing challenge that will always be present.

Fire Administration has to have access to legal counsel for a number of reasons. Those include everything from code, ordinance, and state statute interpretation to labor relations.

Support Services - Communications

A vital link in the delivery of emergency services is the link between the public calling for assistance and the fire department being notified. The 9-1-1 dispatch centers fulfill

that role as the receiving point for the 9-1-1 calls. Those calls are dispatched to the appropriate agency for response. Due to technology advances in radio equipment and computer aided dispatch (CAD) software, the only cost effective means of emergency dispatching is through a 9-1-1 dispatch center that provides for multiple jurisdictions.

Businesses with fire alarm detection systems utilize a transmitted fire alarm so that fire department response can be immediate, thereby keeping fire damage reduced to a minimum. Though local requirements may vary, it is preferred that fire alarms be connected directly to the dispatch center so as to avoid any delay in response.

Radio communications are the vital link between the dispatch center and responding apparatus. Mobile radios are utilized in emergency vehicles so that communications can be maintained during response. At the scene, personnel utilize portable radios to receive orders and share information.

In-unit computers are going to become necessary to communicate with other fire units at a MABAS incident. State and county emergency protocols are being developed and are likely to spawn unfunded mandates. While the consultants agree that there is not an immediate need for in-unit computers, they must be planned for in a mid-range economic plan. Funding for items of this nature is often available through a variety of grants.

The consultants assume that any fire department developed by the village would use the Village of Justice dispatch center.

The consultants also assume and believe that it will be necessary to buy new portable radios and dispatch equipment for the fire station.

Support Services – Ancillary Services

Personal protective equipment includes fire gear and self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA). Fire gear, SCBA and station uniforms must be compliant with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standards. The applicable standards are:

- Protective clothing – NFPA 1971
- Helmet – NFPA 1972
- Gloves – NFPA 1973
- Boots – NFPA 1974
- SCBA – NFPA 1981
- Station/work uniforms – NFPA 1975

Support Services – Safety and Training

Approximately 100 firefighters die each year in the line-of-duty. Approximately 100,000 firefighters are injured each year. A significant portion of these deaths and injuries are preventable, which can best be addressed through safety and training. Safety takes shape in the form of policies, procedures, accepted practices, and safety awareness. The proper use of apparatus and equipment contributes to overall safety. Safe practices are best adopted through ongoing training. Since the fire service routinely deals with high risk situations, the best approach is to identify the tasks associated with high risk frequency and then train for them.

NFPA 1500, *Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program*, provides information on training, education and professional development, protective clothing and equipment, risk management, emergency vehicle response, emergency operations, facility safety, and medical and physical requirements. Relevant standards include:

- NFPA 1403, Standard for Live Fire Training
- NFPA 1404, Standard for Fire Service Respiratory Protection Training
- NFPA 1410, Standard on Training for Initial Emergency Scene Operations
- NFPA 1451, Standard on Fire Service Vehicle Operations Training Program

A complete list of *mandatory* training items and hours can be obtained through the Illinois Society of Fire Service Instructors (ISFSI). A request will need to be made. The web address is: <http://www.ill-fireinstructors.org/>

The Illinois Department of Labor (IDOL) requires fire department personnel who utilize self-contained breathing apparatus to annually receive a medical evaluation. Under the OSHA/ IDOL Respiratory Protection Standard, personnel are certified to utilize self-contained breathing apparatus.

Support Services – Fire Prevention

The approach a fire department can take to promote fire safety in the community can be minimal or significant. Fire safety programs can be targeted to certain age groups or they can be generalized. (The age groups that are most prone to fatalities due to fire are the very young and the very old) Safety programs include kitchen fire safety, use of fire extinguishers, what to do if clothing catches fire, campground safety, family plans for evacuation from the home, etc.). These programs are generally well received by the

public and prove to be an extremely effective avenue of public relations enhancement within the community.

Code enforcement involves compliance with existing building and life safety codes. The degree to which existing codes are enforced is critical in fire prevention. This function appears to be handled currently by the Building Department. For the sake of economic conditions, this service could continue to be handled as is. It is important to note that all records must be kept in compliance with ISO guidelines.

There is to be expected a certain amount of overtime in Fire Prevention public education. As previously discussed, it is important for the fire service organization to maintain a positive image in the community. A firefighter (or two) should be “hired back” to teach and lead CPR classes, school visits and lectures, and present informational representation to civic groups.

For financial considerations, the consultants added a 5% adjustment

Support Services – Fire Investigation

Fire investigations provide for the determination of cause and origin when a fire occurs. While routine fire investigations may be conducted at the local level, the Office of the State Fire Marshal is called in for fire investigations involving death or large loss of property. MABAS Divisions typically have their own investigations team. At start-up it is understandable that the Justice fire service organization will probably not contribute a member to the Arson Investigation team. This will entail that at least 2 members begin training towards certification as arson investigators so that, in time, Justice could lend physical support to the team.

Emergency Medical Services

The decision to provide emergency medical services (EMS) by the fire department is strictly a local decision. There are a host of models in place that range from EMS being provided by private ambulance services to fire departments that utilize cross-trained firefighter/paramedics to respond in paramedic equipped ambulances from fire stations. Again, it is assumed by the consultants that the intent by the village of Justice is to provide an ALS ambulance.

For any fire department offering paramedic level treatment and transport services, another consideration that enhances ALS care is to equip pumpers with ALS equipment (defibrillator/monitor, airway equipment, etc.) and paramedics (known as an ALS

pumper). If an ambulance is not readily available, an ALS pumper can respond, treat and stabilize the patient until an ambulance arrives.

In an effort to control costs, the common approach used by fire departments that offer paramedic level service is to utilize cross-trained firefighter/paramedics. Since they are cross-trained, personnel can be rotated so that they maintain paramedic skills levels while avoiding burnout on an ambulance.

A benefit of providing ALS ambulance service is in ambulance billing. The consultants have settled upon the figure of \$120,000.00 per year based on EMS runs responded to by the Justice fire station. The figure is arrived using the formula of runs x average of \$500.00 per call, with a reimbursement rate of 60% (an industry standard). This assumes that the Village Justice will do its own billing for ambulance service. Should the village decide to employ an outside contractor to bill its customers, a fee ranging from 7% – 9% should be taken from the gross amount. The consultants also wish to note that outside billing agencies often result in a much better reimbursement rate, as their billers are commonly better trained and more familiar with reimbursement requirements of set forth by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), and are able to honestly and legally code EMS bills to generate a higher rate of reimbursement.

Another overtime consideration is the need for an EMS Coordinator. This position is vital and it is essential to have only one person act in this role, although an assistant is very prudent, both for stand-in and succession planning.

Special Services

The decision to provide special emergency services by the fire department is strictly a local decision. If there is a history of major accidents or if response is provided to a highway or toll way where truck accidents occur, heavy rescue services may be needed. This involves specialized equipment, specialized training, and possibly a heavy rescue vehicle to transport personnel and equipment to the scene.

At this point, and in light of the economic limitations placed on the Village of Justice, it is safe to say that any newly formed fire service organization could rely on the resources of MABAS for special situations. Again, this largesse from other MABAS entities would entail that members of the Village of Justice fire service organization begin training to obtain certifications at the various levels of special operations. Eventually they would need to contribute manpower to the MABAS special rescue units.

Other general fire service organizational essentials would include recruitment, promotions, possible unionization, shift commanders, accident review, standard operating

procedures review and edit, budget considerations, and many other issues intrinsic to the particular organization.

FIRE SERVICE ORGANIZATION ALTERNATIVES

This section describes, in detail, the options available to the Village of Justice to provide its citizens with fire, rescue, and EMS protection. Individual styles of fire service organizations are individually discussed and a list of advantages and disadvantages follow. The financial aspect of each style of organization is broken down in the appendices.

The consulting team, buoyed by 3 members with a collective fire service experience level of over 100 years, decided to explore every style of fire service organization existing in the nation. Bearing in mind the financial situation present in the Village of Justice, the consultants settled on the following list of options that we feel are worth serious consideration.

1. A full time Village of Justice Fire Department
2. A part time Village of Justice Fire Department
3. A combination Village of Justice Fire Department
4. A contracted Village of Justice Fire Department
5. A Justice Fire Protection District
 - A Justice/Willow Springs Fire Protection District
6. Joining the Roberts Park Fire Protection District
7. Staying with the contract for services currently in use

It is important to note that the consultants have not included a POC Fire Department as a stand-alone option. With due respect to the nation's POC's and true volunteers, it is imprudent to attempt to provide consistent fire and EMS service with a completely POC/Volunteer Fire Department. The realities of the economy, job locations and availability, and housing affordability have impacted the volunteer and POC firefighting corps of the nation. The public, especially in larger urban and suburban areas, demands a consistency of service that is just not possible with a POC/Volunteer FD.

Another reason for the regrettable loss of volunteers and POC's is the cost of purchasing and maintaining compliant firefighting gear (PPE's).

The consultants strongly recommend that if the Village of Justice were to develop its own fire service organization, a POC program should be maintained. Eventually, compliant gear could be amassed in creative ways, e.g. grants, buy-out from leasing, etc. While the POC's could not guarantee consistency, their response would be a welcome augmentation to area coverage and great assistance at protracted incidents.

FULL-TIME FIRE DEPARTMENT

A full-time fire department utilizes a paramilitary organizational structure as the framework for delivering emergency and non-emergency services. The most common model is for three shifts, with personnel working twenty-four hour shifts followed by forty-eight hours off-duty. This averages 2,912 hours per year, or a 56-hour workweek. Based on some determination of the minimum staffing level needed to meet service demands, a minimum staffing number is identified. Again, for the purpose of this consulting, we have used the number of 4 FF/PM's per shift. While our number may be altered to allow for 1 FF/EMT, the average returns when an officer is designated. Also, the cost of educating the FF/EMT at paramedic school is a factor when deciding how to staff.

Based on a number of factors (vacation time, sick leave use, on-the-job injury, comp time, personal day, bereavement, etc.), a full staffing number is identified using 4 firefighter paramedics for each position occupied. For example, to furnish a 2 person unit would require 8 full-time people. This hiring would allow for 2 of the 8 to be hired a maximum of 1 year after the first 6 were hired.

The intent is for daily staffing to be consistent.

ADVANTAGES:

- Stand alone, not reliant on nearby resources (for normal operations).
- Sufficient funding based on local economy allows for control of the department.
- Ownership.
- Pride and Service – has an unquantifiable contribution to the entity the department serves.

DISADVANTAGES:

- Expensive.
- Can require an undue amount of attention from Mayor and or Village Manager.
- Tail can “wag the dog”.
- If resources do not exist for mutual aid, then both full staffing and minimum staffing levels for a full-time fire department would have to be higher.

PART-TIME FIRE DEPARTMENT

The consultants looked into the option of developing a part-time fire department for the Village of Justice. The terminology can be misleading. This option provides for consistently staffed, 24/7, 365 days per year fire department. This option is separate from the option of a combination department.

A part-time department is a cost-effective method of supplying village-controlled fire and EMS protection while saving a considerable amount of money by not offering fringe benefits to employees. For the Village of Justice, most of the essentials for a fire service organization, discussed earlier in this report, would be required. Additional expenses would be for capital equipment and liability.

Based on the essentials discussed previously in this report, the consultants polled several fire departments and protection districts in the metropolitan Chicago area. Based on responses and staffing requirements for the resource hospital in the area, a salary range was devised to include the following staffing:

- 2 Firefighter Paramedics for the ambulance
- 2 Firefighter Paramedics for the ALS Engine Company

It must be noted that the figures presented in the appendices contained herein are based on 24 hours per day, in a 365 day calendar year and do not include overtime for on-duty personnel, nor any adjustments for holidays, sick days, etc. The consultants found that many fire departments and districts offer their part-time employees over-time on an agreed amount of national holidays.

Costs associated with part-time pay for fire departments range from a low of \$11.00 per hour to \$26.00 per hour. This is driven by the employer's desire to develop and retain a professional department, using highly experienced and educated members.

ADVANTAGES:

- Provides a creative and cost effective staffing alternative to hiring full-time firefighter/paramedics.
- If the decision is made to increase daily staffing, additional part-time personnel can be added instead of hiring full-time firefighter/paramedics.
- Part-time personnel who work as full-time firefighter/paramedics elsewhere bring their training, expertise, and experience to the part-time employer.

- Higher pay rates will allow a high degree of selectivity when making employment decisions. Scheduling would also be much easier, as members would appreciate the fair pay.
- Overtime is less of an issue and can be distributed throughout, enhancing morale.
- Part-time employees are at-will employees.

DISADVANTAGES:

- PT salaries will reflect the quality and motivation of the PT staff.
- The PT staff will require at least 24 members to ensure last-minute coverage for unanticipated position vacancies.
- Costs associated with providing uniforms and PPE's to a large group.
- Part-time employees work when they are available, which may not always be when they are needed for shift coverage.
- It is possible that a part-time employee may have to cancel a scheduled part-time shift on short notice to work overtime at their full-time fire department. There may be a need to develop premium pay for part-time employees to work select days (i.e. holidays, day shifts, weekends, etc.).
- If there are mandatory annual training topics (safety, SCBA use, driving, blood-borne pathogens, etc.), there needs to be a mechanism that evaluates and recognizes identical training that is offered at the part-time employee's full-time fire department.
- Part-time personnel may be required to maintain continuing education hours in two EMS systems (primary EMS system as full-time employee and secondary EMS system as part-time employee).

COMBINATION FIRE DEPARTMENT Full Time & Part-Time

A combination fire department has the potential of providing services in a creative and cost effective manner. A combination department uses more than one source for staffing and response purposes. The model to consider is a combination of full-time (FT) shift personnel along with part-time (PT) shift personnel.

In this model, both FT personnel and PT personnel are on-duty at the station, available to quickly respond to any emergency. The only difference is that, unlike full-time personnel, part-time personnel cost less since these employees do not receive benefits (i.e. pension, health insurance, accrued time off, etc.).

The consultants found a wide difference in pay for PT personnel. The lowest, \$11.00 per hour was for a FF/EMT-B. Those organizations paying at that level were unanimous in telling the consultants that they would need to raise that figure to at least \$12.00 per hour soon.

It is understood by the consultants that there is much competition in recruiting and retaining competent PT resources. Thus, it appears that the more that is paid, the better and more reliable the product when it comes to PT fire/EMS staff. This statement is not to suggest that FF/PM's possess a mercenary attitude. Most of the experienced FF/PM's seeking to augment their full time income are family men and women who are attempting to provide for their loved ones.

While a combination of full-time and part-time personnel provides a number of creative opportunities, there are two great challenges. One is the availability of part-time personnel to cover daily staffing needs. Daytime shifts, weekends, and holidays are often difficult to cover. The other challenge is assuring that part-time personnel are trained to the same level as full-time personnel. Some combination fire departments require part-time personnel to attend fire department training on days when they are not scheduled to work part-time.

For the study, considering the aforementioned disparity in wages, we used a figure of \$16.50 per hour when computing PT wages.

There are both advantages and disadvantages to this model:

ADVANTAGES:

- Provides a creative and cost effective staffing alternative to hiring only full-time firefighter/paramedics.
- Part-time personnel who work as full-time firefighter/paramedics elsewhere bring their training, expertise, and experience to the part-time employer.
- Part-time employees are at-will employees.

DISADVANTAGES:

- PT Salaries will reflect the quality and motivation of the PT staff.
- Part-time employees work when they are available, which may not always be when they are needed for shift coverage.
- It is possible that a part-time employee may have to cancel a scheduled part-time shift on short notice to work overtime at their full-time fire department. There may be a need to develop premium pay for part-time employees to work select days (i.e. holidays, day shifts, weekends, etc.).
- If there are mandatory annual training topics (safety, SCBA use, driving, blood-borne pathogens, etc.), there needs to be a mechanism that evaluates and recognizes identical training that is offered at the part-time employee's full-time fire department.
- Part-time personnel may be required to maintain continuing education hours in two EMS systems (primary EMS system as full-time employee and secondary EMS system as part-time employee).
- In a fire department that has organized labor, part-time employees may be looked upon adversely as a means of avoiding hiring additional full-time personnel

CONTRACTED FIRE DEPARTMENT

The consultants looked into the option of developing a fire department staffed through a third party provider. The consultants discussed costs with several metropolitan Chicago fire departments and districts that use contracted services.

The cost associated with staffing an ambulance and ALS engine company was dependent upon whether the contract provider includes firefighting gear (PPE) or not.

The cost for 12 full time contract firefighter paramedics follows:

- Cost for 12 FF/PM's
 - \$1,200,000 with PPE included
- Cost for 12 FF/PM's
 - \$840,000.00 without PPE

A contracted fire department will still need basic necessities as described above in Fire Service Organizations.

ADVANTAGES:

- Staffing is assured
- In most cases, the same staff is assigned.
- No scheduling problems
- One less budgetary item to contend with.

DISADVANTAGES:

- Staff can change abruptly, affecting experience level
- Questions arise as to the contract FF/PM's dedication to the whole community.

DEVELOPING A FIRE DISTRICT

The consultants looked into the option of the Village of Justice developing its own fire protection district. A subsequent request to investigate the possibility of developing a fire district in cooperation with the Village of Willow Springs and the Village of Summit will be discussed later.

In order to perform an objective analysis of this issue, the consultants turned to State of Illinois laws and regulations. Taxing authorities operate under the discretion of the sovereign state. The only village in Illinois history to convert its fire and EMS department to a fire protection district is Bensenville, Illinois. This switch occurred after a referendum in November of 2006 was approved by the voters. Bensenville Fire Protection District's Chief Michael Spain was interviewed in our process to determine measures required and costs related to the referendum.

Considering that the village is currently split between a municipal area that previously provided fire and EMS (the north side) and the area protected by the Roberts Park Fire Protection District (the south side), an analysis of tax bills would be necessary to pinpoint the impact this measure would have on residents of the north side of the village. The tax levy for fire department related expenses in the current north side property owner's tax bill would need to be, at the origin of the Fire Protection District, abated by the village.

The matter of changing to a Fire Protection District would require filing a request for inclusion on the voting ballot at the Cook County Assessors office. On the ballot, the referendum would ask two questions of the voters. One would ask if the voters approve of the development of a fire protection district to provide fire and EMS coverage. The second question would ask the voters to approve a specified rate, equal to the estimated budget required to operate the District for one year. Both questions require a simple majority for passage.

In regard to the second question, an advantage is given to the "start-up" district. The proposed district needs to develop its estimated budget, based on current or past performance, and is not limited to previous collections (the tax cap imposed on existing districts). The amount specified is then divided among the property owners and a levy rate is developed. The final levy amount will then be stated in total dollars on the ballot question. This rate will impact the new district in subsequent tax collections.

The process after filing the request for inclusion on the ballot requires a tremendous amount of human effort. A group must be organized to promote the advantages of a fire district to public that is increasingly averse to voting for tax increases, regardless of the benefits the tax increase will bring. Funding must be developed through allocation in the village's budget. The costs related to the referendum campaign can range from \$50,000.00 to \$75,000, depending on the cost of advertising the issue (placards, hand-bills, local print media, etc.) and attorney fees.

Should the referendum be successful, a Board of Trustees will need to be named. The Board must be a minimum of three members and may be appointed by the Director of the Township, as the proposed District would be entirely situated within the boundaries of one township. Past practices have had the initial Board of Trustees named by the village mayor in cases where the village occupies a majority of the district.

A distinct complication arises upon passage of the referendum. The tax extension would then take effect on the subsequent tax bill and the collection of funds will be delayed up to 18 months. In order for the new District to operate in that time period, the village must abate an amount, at minimum, equal to the amount spent previously to maintain the Fire and EMS department. In the case of the Village of Justice, an approximated budget would need to be developed to equal the last known budget adjusted upward to reflect inflation. Any short-comings in the new district's budget would require tax anticipation loans unless extra funds can be found in other departments' budgets.

The costs associated with the development of a fire and EMS district, the estimated initial budget, and the estimated cost per property owner are attached in the appendices at the end of this report.

ADVANTAGES:

- Fire District becomes an autonomous taxing body, dismissing the responsibility of the village to provide Fire and EMS protection
- Tax collection simplified
- The Board selects its fire chief
- The village retains a fire service identity (Justice Fire Protection District) while incurring none of the administrative liabilities

DISADVANTAGES:

- Taxpayers will be averse to any tax increase
- Negative publicity can arise from Board of Trustees appointments
- Initial hiring can become an issue in the public

DEVELOPING A FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT TO INCLUDE WILLOW SPRINGS

To satisfy the additional services requested beyond the original scope statement by Trustee Murray, the consulting team met with Chief L. Moran of the Willow Springs Fire Department. Chief Moran has compiled some information as the costs associated with developing a Fire Protection District in his area. Chief Moran was kind enough to share any and all information we requested. The consultants leave it up to the Village of Justice to confer and plan with Chief Moran and the Village of Willow Springs.

The consultants agree that this is an option that the village should seriously consider, should they want to develop a Fire Protection District. Staffing at Willow Springs is identical and their equipment is in very good condition.

The problem with this option is discussed at length in the previous section. The current mind-set of the public is definitely anti-tax. Quite frankly, in 2008 the idea of trying to persuade voters to pay more property taxes is near folly.

ADVANTAGES:

- Larger pool of resources
- Cuts many administrative and some operational costs in half.
- Builds a cooperative atmosphere between two municipalities.

DISADVANTAGES:

- Taxpayers will be averse to any tax increase
- Negative publicity can arise from Board of Trustees appointments
- Arguments can arise between the municipalities
- Sharing individually owned items may cause dissension
- Human Resources may have internal strife (Justice v. Willow Springs)
- Initial hiring can become an issue in the public

BECOMING A PART OF THE ROBERTS PARK FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

An option that we cited earlier as not relative to the Fire Service Organization Essentials is for the village of Justice to become part of the RPPFD. The consultants agree that this option is very attractive. The reasoning for that statement is that by moving all responsibility to a fire district, as discussed above, the village removes a department from its rolls, thus reallocating funds for other essential services.

The enhanced advantage of moving into the RPPFD is that the village would be totally exonerated from hiring decisions, accusations of meddling, liability, etc.

ADVANTAGES:

- Removes the idea of providing fire and EMS from village's responsibility.
- Releases budget dollars to other funds, enhancing public service projects.
- Members are already familiar with the area.

DISADVANTAGES

- As above, persuading property owners to pay increased taxes will be difficult.
- There will be some residual "hard feelings" by some of the former Justice firefighters.
- Most if not all of the costs to run the referendum will probably be borne by the Village of Justice.

CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATION

The consultants have worked diligently to discover different varieties of fire service organizations. We eliminated most of the “newer” ideas such as altering hours and using combined forces of fire, EMS, and police. The options that remained were researched using a multitude of methods. One of the most successful tools of research is personal interviews with individuals who are a part of one of the options. Although their observations are not always supported by empirical data, they are invariably accurate.

The Village of Justice is now at a crossroad. The Mayor is committed to reducing costs and bringing the budget to balance. He and the Trustees and Clerk should be commended for their intent to consider all possibilities in an effort to bring high quality services to its citizens while demanding efficiency for money spent. The decision of the previous Administration to shut down and disband the fire department was neither a popular nor a wise decision, but it was done and must now be lived with.

We feel that the options have been accurately described and their associated costs have been made as realistic as possible.

The SWA team carefully considered all of the options presented in this study. The economic health of the Village of Justice is a considerable factor. Given only anecdotal information about the short term strategic goals of the village, we are aware of the effort by the Mayor and the Board of Trustees to eliminate municipal debt. We have proposed what we consider the two most feasible actions that will result in prudent use of the publics’ funds.

Recommendation 1: Continue the current contract with Roberts Park for 2 to 3 years. At the end of the contract, schedule a referendum vote to join the Roberts Park Fire Protection District. All fire equipment should be transferred to the RPPFD.

The current contract with RPPFD is economically attractive. Anecdotal information given to the consultants regarding service levels provided by RPPFD needs to be addressed in the contract for fire and EMS service. It is strongly recommended that the Village of Justice retain an attorney intimately familiar with the fire service to assist in the contract development and its implementation.

The VOJ and the RPPFD can agree to terms of the service contract at 2 to 3 years and then begin strategies for a referendum at the end of the contract term. Of course, language in the contract must dictate that the contract remains in force until the District is augmented or a new contract is agreed to by both parties.

This strategy will allow for the national economy to correct. The main advantage is that this option will allow both entities to pool resources and “sell” the referendum in the north side of the village.

By divesting themselves of all fire equipment, to include the fire station, the VOJ will reduce the village’s costs and problems. In a cold manner, it signals a final severance from the fire department. In a sensible and prudent manner, it eliminates liability and on-going maintenance expenses incurred while no actual department exists.

The consultants prefer this solution, with the deepest respect to the countless men and women who have given their time and passions to the Justice Fire Department. If they truly want what is “best for the Village”, they must know that their village is in financial difficulty and needs to adjust to maintain service levels to the public from other village departments.

The Sterling Heights contract could be adjusted higher to reflect rate increases from RPPFD.

Recommendation 2: Renew the contract with RPPFD and plan to join Willow Springs and possibly another municipal fire department in an effort to establish a new fire protection district.

The consultants discussed forming fire districts in the body of the study. Thus, we again recommend entering into a new contract with RPPFD for fire and EMS protection. All of the points of the new contract discussed in Recommendation 1 above also apply here.

By joining with at least Willow Springs, a sensible action is undertaken. The pool of resources becomes greater and, theoretically, administrative costs are cut by a minimum of 40%.

The difficulty with this option is in the voters’ approval. Also, an agreement has to be reached between at least two municipalities. Historically, these negotiations have been prorated and tenuous: often times giving the resultant body a staff with feelings of loyalty in two directions.

The purchase and maintenance of equipment still remains a condition in the negotiations for forming the cooperative district.

Another financial burden that would need to be anticipated is the initial operating budget for the District. An agreed upon prorated amount of money would need to be generated to fund the village's share of the District unit's real, estate tax revenue is received.