

SEMCOG UNIVERSITY

Fire Department Consolidation and Efficiencies

Presented by:

Ray Riggs, Asst. Fire Chief, WBFD



A Tale of Two Cities

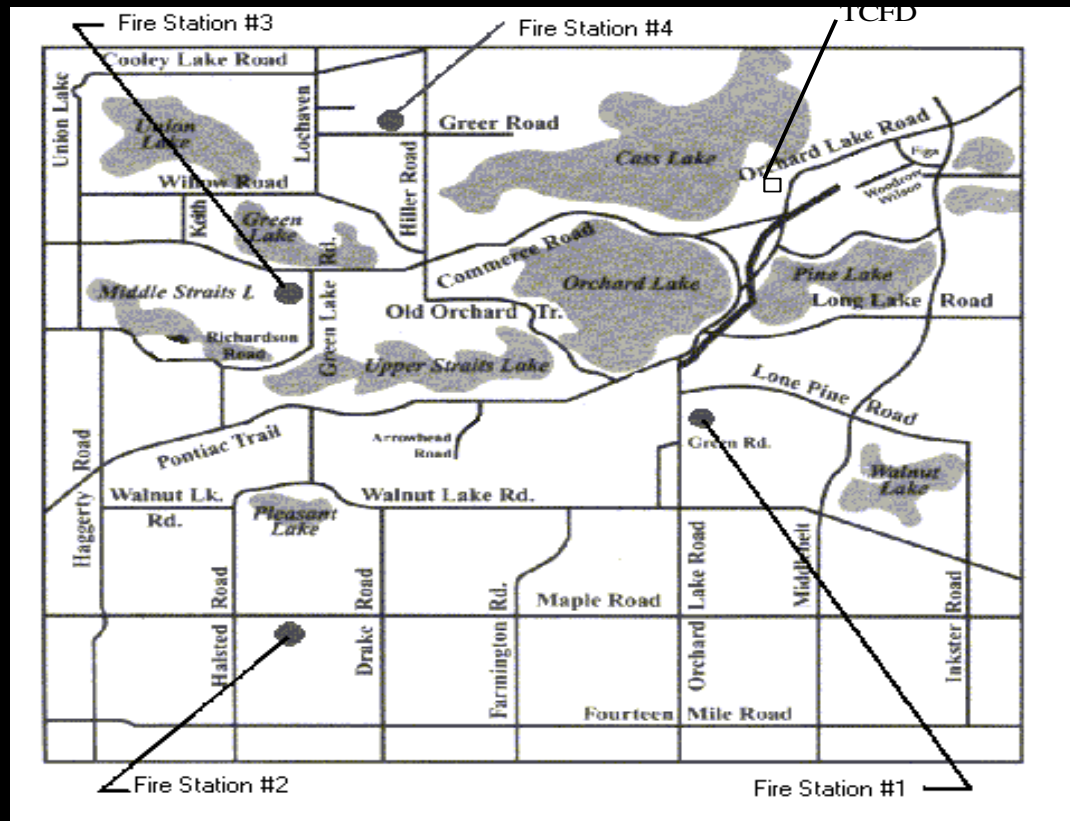
(Apologies to Charles Dickens)

Actually, a tale of three cities and a township

- City of Keego Harbor
- City of Sylvan Lake
- City of The Village of Orchard Lake
- West Bloomfield Township

Station Map

West Bloomfield & Tri-Cities



First, a little history:

- 1920's - West Bloomfield Fire Department Established
- 1968 - Tri-City Fire Department Established
- 1978 - WBFD begins ALS
- 2003 - WBFD provides service to the Tri-Cities

Everybody's got problems

- West Bloomfield's problems:
- Prolonged response times to the North-East and South-East areas of the Township
- Prolonged back-up response

Tri-Cities' Problems

- Long turn-out times
- Inadequate response
- BLS system, private ambulance ALS
- POC issues (recruitment, training, retention, daytime response, etc.)
- Difficulty in handling “the basics”

West Bloomfield's Plan (2001)

- Pass a 10 year millage in 2002
- Build and staff new station in the SE corner
- Pass another millage in 2012
- Build and staff new station in the NE corner



Problems with WB plan:



North-east corner not addressed until 2012

Tri-City Plan

- Hire a full-time chief
- Hire enough personnel to staff an ALS unit

Problems with Tri-City plan:

- Resistance from POCs
- Buy-in from all three communities
- \$\$\$\$



Alternative Plan

Have WBFD assume operations of the TCFD, using their trucks, station and equipment.

WBFD provides the staffing, the Tri-Cities pay all or part of the staffing costs.

How do we start?

- One individual devised a plan, and put it on paper
- Submitted to supervisors, went nowhere
- Plan was discovered by a member of the Tri-City Fire Board, who then brought it to WB Township
- Negotiations began (11-02)

The Next Steps

- Memorandum of Understanding drafted that spelled out concepts and some specifics to be used as a template for negotiations
- MOU approved and signed by the WB Township Board and the Tri-City Fire Board(12-02)
- Negotiations begin in earnest based on MOU

Next Steps cont.

- Negotiations produce a document entitled “Fire Station Operating Agreement”
- FSOA taken to the municipalities for refinement (legal counsel enters here)
- Town Hall public meetings held to explain the concept to the public

Key Elements

- WBT will lease from the TCFB the building, vehicles, and equipment of the TCFD for \$1 per year
- WBFD will assign 12 firefighters to the Tri-City station, and will maintain a minimum daily staffing complement of 4 personnel on duty each day

Key Elements, cont.

- Provision for current Tri-City POC firefighters to be given preferential status in hiring for 3 years
- All resources of the WBFD (back-up station response, mutual aid agreements, haz-mat and technical rescue teams, etc.) are available to the Tri-Cities

Key Elements, cont.

- TCFB will pay WBT \$555,000 in quarterly payments for service
- This payment will be increased by an amount of 5% per year
- The term of the agreement is 8 years, which shall be automatically extended for up to 4 terms of 5 years
- If either party terminates, 2 years notice must be given

Is it Working? WB perspective

Adding the Tri-City station completed the infrastructure of the Fire Department. This enabled us to begin an EMS transport cost recovery system that makes up for the difference in cost of the Tri-City payment and the cost in staffing.

Is it Working? WB perspective

- Access to grant monies
- ISO rating reductions from a class 8/5 to a single class rating of 4

Is it Working? WB perspective

Plante & Moran analysis:

“From a financial perspective, the issue before West Bloomfield Township hinges on how strong the need is to improve the response time in the northeast quadrant of the Township. If this is not a high priority to the Township, then the current proposal to consolidate fire departments would appear to cost the Township approx. \$300,000 per year.

Is it Working? WB perspective, cont.

“If, however, this is a high enough priority to consider building and operating our own fire station, then this proposal represents an opportunity to accomplish the same objective for one-third the cost. The remaining issue of equalizing the cost between the four communities may or may not be a lingering issue at that point.”

Is it Working? Tri-City perspective:

- Resources are available that far exceed what the communities would be able to provide.
- ISO rating reduction from 6 to 3
- Ask the experts:

The Police Departments!

What Should You Do?

- Don't be afraid to write a plan, even if you think it's crazy
- Have the parties agree in writing early on as to the concepts. Do this WITHOUT legal counsel
- Make provisions for the current employees that will be effected
- Maintain representation from the entity being absorbed to address local control issues
- Spell out conflict resolution procedures
- Spell out termination procedures

Finally,

**Wear a helmet and grow
thick skin!**

Efficiencies Enacted by WBFD

- What does it take to “enact efficiencies”?
- The people in leadership positions must be:
 - The right people
 - In the right place

Efficiencies

How does that happen?

- It must be recognized that good fireground leaders are not always good fire service leaders

Efficiencies

- Promotional systems for line personnel that are based on seniority, coupled with required training, make sense and are supported by research.
- Promotional systems for staff personnel based on a like system will doom you to mediocrity and a failure to implement progressive policies.

Efficiencies

- Promotional systems in volunteer or POC systems that are based on member votes are dangerous, and will select the most popular candidate, who in most cases will not be the progressive leader the organization needs.

Efficiencies

- Give the membership almost anything they want in order to rid yourself of an undesirable promotional system for staff positions.

Efficiencies

Typical member concerns when changing promotional systems:

- Favoritism
- Competence
- “Yes man”
- Jumping back to the line

Efficiencies

When the right person is
at the right place with the
right support, great
things happen.