



**Town of Cedar Lake**  
**Board of Safety Public Meeting Amended Minutes**  
**Wednesday, May 26, 2021 at 6:00 PM**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Kaper called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**BENEDICTION:** Fr. John Kowalczyk provided a benediction for the public safety workers and board.

**ROLL CALL:**

Present	Joshua Govert, Member	Present	Ralph Miller, Town Council Liaison
Present	James Olthoff, Member	Present	William Fisher, Police Chief
Present	David Villalobos, Member	Present	Todd Wilkening, Fire Chief
Present	Norman Stick, Vice Chairman	Absent	Carl Brittingham, Deputy Chief Police
Present	Lester Kaper, Chairman	Present	Nick Mager, Deputy Chief Fire

It was also noted for the record that Town Attorney David Austgen was present for legal counsel.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** Kaper called for Public Comment three times; none received.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES for Wednesday, April 28, 2021:** A motion was made by Norman Stick, seconded by David Villalobos, to approve the meeting minutes of April 28, 2021.

Govert	Olthoff	Villalobos	Stick	Kaper	Vote
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5-0

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

- 1. Jane Ball:** Chief Fisher read an email from Ryan Eckart, Principal of Jane Ball Elementary School, regarding the work of Corporal Jason Allande. Eckart noted Allande's excellent work as one of the school's SROs, noting his assessment of situations, investigating incidents, dialoguing with the kids and reporting any information to Eckart for follow up. He expressed his appreciation for Allande's work.
- 2. Good Samaritans from May 14, 2021:** Chief Fisher noted an incident that occurred with a car in the lake where two Good Samaritans assisted in recovering two vehicle occupants submerged in the lake. Fisher indicated certificates of appreciation were presented to Chris Witter and John Guzzo, who was unable to attend but certificate sent to him, during the Town Council meeting on May 18, 2021.
- 3. Flag:** Chief Fisher read a letter of appreciation from Bill & Elaine Edwards noting someone had driven over their 20-foot flagpole and noted Officer Chris Matson not only carefully pick up their flag, but folded it military style and placed it on their front porch.

**STAFFING:**

**1. Fire Department:**

- a. Promotions:** Chief Wilkening presented promotions of Battalion Chief Matt Sella, Lieutenant Chris Craft and Lieutenant Larry Stenger, Jr. Wilkening indicated Sella is a shift supervisor as well as full time firefighter for the department, a go-to individual in the department, runs a strong and solid shift and takes on projects while trying to help others.

Wilkening indicated Stenger is one of his hardest working guys, a very dedicated volunteer POCs, takes a lot of calls and comes from a father who was an Assistant Chief with the department. Wilkening indicated Craft is a career firefighter with the department, extremely great work ethic, willing to take on project and assist with other things within the department. Wilkening stated Sella and Craft are partners on the same shift and tend to do a lot of projects together to help out the department. Chief Fisher endorsed all three promotions.

A motion was made by Josh Govert, seconded by Jim Olthoff, to approve the promotions as presented.

Govert	Olthoff	Villalobos	Stick	Kaper	Vote
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5-0

- b. Update (new recruits/new hires):** Chief Wilkening stated the overtime issues have been discussed with the Clerk Treasurer and Town Council Affairs committee. There will be an additional appropriation made to assist the fire department in making it through the end of the year due to the high call volume and staff turnover. Wilkening confirmed for Villalobos that the additional appropriation would be for approximately \$30,000-40,000. He indicated the Council has approved to put raises set forth, possibly effective as soon as July, to allow the community to be more competitive in salary. The extra person he had requested will not take place until next year. Wilkening noted he took part in discussion regarding the building of a new public safety facility. Wilkening noted the overtime budget was cut.

## 2. Police Department:

- a. Approval for Offer of Employment of Two (2) new officers, Benjamin Tomko and Richard Sterk, pending PERF approval:** Chief Fisher was seeking approval to start the recruitment for the two officers on the list. Fisher presented Benjamin Tomko and Richard Sterk to the Board, noting Tomko would be replacing Lieutenant Forsell and Sterk would be the additional hire for the department. Fisher clarified for Stick that in accordance with the State of Indiana as of July 1, 2021, the officer is not required to live in the Town, would need to have adequate vehicle to get him to/from work and would not be allowed to have a take-home vehicle.

A motion was made by Jim Olthoff, seconded by David Villalobos, to approve the offer of employment of two (2) new officers, Benjamin Tomko and Richard Sterk, pending PERF approval and Favorable Recommendation sent to the Town Council.

Govert	Olthoff	Villalobos	Stick	Kaper	Vote
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5-0

- b. Acceptance of Retirement – Lieutenant Robert Forsell:** Chief Fisher read the letter provided by Lieutenant Forsell, noting 36 years of employment, indicating his last working day to be June 30, 2021. Stick stated it was a privilege to make a motion, as he was part of the Commission to hire Forsell.

A motion was made by Norm Stick, seconded by Jim Olthoff, to approve the acceptance of the retirement of Lieutenant Robert Forsell.

Govert	Olthoff	Villalobos	Stick	Kaper	Vote
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5-0

- c. **Acceptance of Retirement – Darlene Sund:** Chief Fisher read the letter provided by Darlene Sund, noting 35 years of employment, indicating her last work day to be June 11, 2021. Stick stated it was an honor to make a motion, as he was part of the Commission to hire Sund.

A motion was made by Norm Stick, seconded by Josh Govert, to approve the acceptance of the retirement of Darlene Sund.

Govert	Olthoff	Villalobos	Stick	Kaper	Vote
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5-0

#### **FINANCE:**

##### **1. Purchase Orders - April 2020:**

- a. **Police Department:** Chief Fisher reviewed the April purchase orders noting two officers Sulski and Meyer being sent to drone flight school. They will take a test and receive FAA certification. He noted chaplain yearly dues paid to the International Conference of Chaplains to maintain the certifications. He noted other expenses from purchase orders including cases of gloves, hotel stay for Pennington for Accident Reconstruction training and department photo on June 9 at 9 am, with the department inspection at 8 am.
  - b. **Fire Department:** Chief Wilkening reviewed the April purchase orders noting a document scanner for purging old medical reports and routine air pack replacements. He noted motor work to Engine 1213, front two tires on the engine replacement, window work scheduling program annual charge and will be replacing a thermal image camera.
2. **Grant Updates:** Chief Wilkening stated he had sent correspondence to the Council and Board requesting to write the Safer Grant for firefighter personnel. He stated he had been provided some feedback, including that from Town Manager Rick Eberly, expressing budgetary concerns for absorbing costs, noting the Sustainability Plan currently does not support that, but also told the Plan is a guideline and they would be discussing this with their consulting firm to see if the 4 staff would be able to be absorbed by the Town, or suggesting dropping it down to 2. Wilkening explained to Kaper that the Safer Grant is a FEMA where they pay 100% for 3 years then on the 4<sup>th</sup> year, the Town's budget would absorb all 4 salaries. If there is a default on this, all of the funds would need to be repaid. Wilkening felt this would be a good grant to apply for with the continued growth of the community. Wilkening confirmed for Villalobos that with the increase in call volume, the justification is there.

#### **OLD BUSINESS:**

##### **1. Lexipol Policies Update:**

- a. **Police Department:** Kaper indicated the Board has not had enough time to review them and will table them until the next meeting.
- b. **Fire Department:** Chief Wilkening stated they had a meeting today and would be ready by July 1 for the Board's approval. Wilkening explained to Villalobos that Lexipol took policies from other departments and made a template for them, where state and federal

law would be following along with any modifications, best practices and common practices. They have made some modifications to best suit the CLFD's needs.

## **2. Equipment Updates:**

- a. **Police Department – Purchase & Repairs:** Chief Fisher spoke with the Dodge dealership and the Durango vehicles have VINs and are in progress, no update on the truck and largest item holding up production is the fire in the warehouse in Japan that produces the computer chips along with COVID. He's anticipating middle to end of July. Fisher noted repairs to radiator on #52, air conditioning on #54 and front brakes on VIPS vehicle.
- b. **Fire Department – Purchase & Repairs:** Chief Wilkening noted photos had been sent to the Board of the new ambulance and it is expected to be completed by the first week in June. They will drive there to do the final inspection. The dealer will be delivering the ambulance because it will not be insured. He indicated an ambulance went down of the weekend regarding a broken pipe. It was able to be fixed. He noted engine 1213's repair, previously noted. He noted a new light bar needing ordered for the brush truck because of the age, it is draining the system. The tanker is on schedule for February/March 2022. Building renovations update included an update that \$40,000 was provided to Henn & Sons to order materials and they are awaiting products arrival. They may need to look into a storage facility for a temporary period of time.

## **3. Training Updates:**

- a. **Police Department:** Chief Fisher reviewed the May training report, noting training including an instructor in Active Shooter Response, 3 in MDC, 2 in drone training and 2 members in SWAT training.
- b. **Fire Department:** Chief Wilkening reviewed the May training report, noting everyday training including 2 in dive team for Emergency Response Team and training for operation of the police boat, noting their boat is currently down being repaired for a steering mechanism. Wilkening stated he, Fisher and DNR met to discuss response plans for the lake. Wilkening noted that the State of Indiana is now offering training similar to that for the Police Chiefs for new chiefs, so they plan to send the Battalion Chief, Deputy Chief and himself to sit in on this training to learn more of what is new. He was asked to be part of the committee that would be putting together the curriculum for the that training.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

### **1. Police Department**

- a. **Monthly Activity Report:** Chief Fisher reviewed the monthly call report noting over a 1000 calls for service in the month indicating a lot being traffic related, a total of 3663 service calls for the year to date, 104 state violation citations issued, 289 written warnings, 13 total arrests and 32 total charges filed – 12 misdemeanor, 5 felony and 15 warrants. Fisher confirmed to Villalobos that the number of calls is continuing to increase.
- b. **Department Inspections & Group Photos June 9, 2021 – 9:00 AM (including Board of Safety):** previously covered in Purchase Orders.
- c. **Other:** Chief Fisher reported he, Chief Wilkening and DNR regarding emergency response on the lake. Mager confirmed to Fisher that six fire department staff have been trained on the boat. Fisher explained that the fire and police boats will be dually utilized as the fire department's boat is better suited for search and rescue where the police department's boat is better suited for recovery with having a platform. DNR department phones have been added to our system so that when there is a lake rescue or water

related incident, they will receive a HIPlink Notification to alert them of the incident once it is paged out. Lieutenant DeAdam, co-chair of the local dive/rescue team MABAS 207, has been working with them. Wilkening confirmed for Villalobos that the fire boat steering mechanism was being worked on and repair was to be completed within the next week.

## **2. Fire Department**

- a. Monthly Activity Report:** Chief Wilkening reviewed the monthly all report noting 137 calls for the month and a total for the year of 551, noting an increase in overdose, full arrest and unconscious calls, which are considered high-level calls requiring more personnel on scene.
- b. Other:** Chief Wilkening indicated anticipated retirement of some volunteers upcoming. They will be having a retirement party, letting the Board know who they are and when, once confirmed. He also noted they would be doing their fundraiser through the Firefighters Association for their annual raffle. Wilkening confirmed to Stick that the fundraising collection boxes have been deployed.

**VIPS REPORT:** Lt. Layer reported a total of 90 hours of calls between the 4 members. They had one call out on April 16, 2021 for agency assist on a fire, where Sergeant Yaeger worked 8 hours and Layer relieved for 2 hours afterward. On May 15, 2021, they were able to collect \$831.00 for their Tag Day. Wilkening thanked Layer for their work. Fisher noted recruiting efforts needed to attain more members.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Father Senior John Kowalczyk (10717 W. 134<sup>th</sup> Pl, Cedar Lake, IN) noted the growth of the Town and inquired if there was a minimum standard of staffing for the Police and Fire Department per the State of Indiana NFPA and if so, what are we doing to meet the minimum staffing level of those departments? He stated he has had the privilege of serving as the Chaplain for these two departments for 11-12 years and noted they are the finest men and women in the State. He acknowledged their dedication, professionalism and caring demeanor. Multiple discussions ensued and Wilkening noted the International Firefighters Association would do a study for the community for free to determine a staffing recommendation. Fisher stated the FBI suggested in the past 1 officer per 500 residents, which would give us somewhere in the area of 40 officers, but does not feel that is feasible. Fisher felt the ratio is closer to 1 per 1000. Wilkening confirmed to Villalobos that results from that study would assist in support for the Safer Grant he is apply for. Fisher stated that Technology Director Wroe had confirmed ratios for the fire department 1.37-1.82 per 1,000 residents and for law enforcement 3.5 per 1,000 residents.

Douglas Scott Ferguson (13330 Edison St, Cedar Lake, IN) stated he has not heard from anyone regarding his sealed letter provided to the Board. Ferguson asked for any progress and a timeline, stating he received a letter after the last meeting indicating 14 days, but noting it was not dated. Wilkening told Ferguson he had the wrong email address, as he had previously indicated. Ferguson asked for Kaper to clarify Austgen's role. Kaper indicated Austgen was the attorney for the Town and advises the Board when they have questions. Ferguson asked Kaper why legal advice would be needed. Kaper indicated that other than Ferguson's case, there are others the Board would need legal advisement and interpretation for. Ferguson asked again for a timeline as he reiterated lack of response. Kaper explained that everything is under investigation at this time. Ferguson stated where he realizes there needs to be an internal investigation, he inquired as to why he is not been made privy to the information since he is the noted complainant against an officer as a citizen. Ferguson requested he be given a timeline as he feels he has only received pushback.

Kaper called for additional Public Comment three times. When no others were received, Kaper called the Public Comment portion of the meeting closed.

**ADJOURNMENT:** A motion was made by David Villalobos, seconded by Jim Olthoff, to adjourn the meeting at 7:07 pm.

Govert	Olthoff	Villalobos	Stick	Kaper	Vote
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5-0

#### TOWN OF CEDAR LAKE BOARD OF SAFETY

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Lester Kaper, Chairman

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Norman Stick, Vice-Chairman

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Joshua Govert, Member

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James Olthoff, Member

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David Villalobos, Member

ATTEST:

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Sarah Moore, Recording Secretary