

**Special Meeting of the Town Board
Peninsula Town Hall
Thursday, August 24, 2017
6:00 pm
Minutes**

1. **CALL TO ORDER** Manigold called the meeting to order at 6:00pm
2. **PLEDGE**
3. **ROLL CALL** Present: Wunsch, Achorn, Westphal, Manigold, Bickle, Sanders, Wahl
4. **PUBLIC COMMENTS** None
5. **APPROVE AGENDA** Sanders moved to approve; Wunsch seconded **Passed UNAM**
6. **CONFLICT OF INTEREST** None
7. **CONSENT AGENDA** Manigold asked if anyone on the Board or in the audience would like to have any items from the consent agenda moved. None.
 - a. Edit invoice list
 - b. Extend contract for Gordon Hayward for 3 months
 - c. Approve L-4029 form to the County Clerk (same millage rates approved in prior year; now for Fiscal Year 2017-18)Sanders moved to approve the consent agenda; Wahl seconded. Roll Call. **Passed UNAM**
8. **BUSINESS**
 - a. Interview candidates Fredrick Gilstorff and Randy Rittenhouse for Fire Chief.

Fred Gilstorff, first candidate

Manigold thanked Fred Gilstorff for coming back up for the interview/presentation and stated that each candidate will have an hour—hour and a half to address the 12 questions sent to them by the Board. Randy Rittenhouse will follow Fred with his presentation.

Westphal suggested that for the benefit of the audience, a little more information on the 12 questions should be provided. She stated that **Sanders** and **Wunsch** developed the questions, which were reviewed by **Wahl** and **Achorn** before she sent them to both candidates via email. Each candidate has had one week to develop their presentation and to prepare for the interview based on those 12 questions.

Bickle also stated that we also did due diligence in regards to the candidates by having **Westphal** and **Bickle** working together to contact and interview the three references that each candidate provided. **Bickle** followed through by ordering a background check on each candidate (as laid out in the follow-up letter that identified subsequent steps to be expected in Round 2 of the search). The background checks came back with nothing in the candidates' background to merit concern. These were the steps that have been followed in the process.

Manigold then turned the floor over to Gilstorff for his presentation. The discussion began by focusing on the 12 questions sent to the candidate. Wahl began by asking “what is the weakest attribute that you would bring to this position and what would you do to overcome it?” Gilstorff said it would be his unfamiliarity with the community and geographic area. He said he would secure maps and information from the other fire fighters to bring increase his understanding of the community, particularly from a structural fire-fighting viewpoint to provide the highest degree of fire-fighting protection. Other core fire-fighting activities like fire prevention, education, and emergency response, he did not think would pose a problem in terms of adapting to a new environment. He thought he could acclimate to the township within a month to 2 months.

Sanders asked “how do you motivate others”? Gilstorff responded by leading by example, by being one step up to take charge of situations, to show a passion and desire for my department, to nurture others in the department to being active contributors to the department and community. He said he has been doing this in his present geographic location for at least 20-25 years, and it is especially important in a small department where you have to have everyone on the same page. You cannot have people lacking in one or more areas. His drive and passion focuses on achieving a goal –in this case, making the Peninsula Fire Department the best. And this means bringing people along so they can realize their potential in providing the best fire protection for the citizens.

Bickle asked Gilstorff what his current supervisor would say about him and what are the key components and challenges of you—i.e., your strengths and weaknesses. He responded that if you contacted his supervisor right now, he would tell you that he is an energetic, hard-working person, who is very passionate about the fire service, very passionate about doing the job right, very passionate about treating citizens right in their time of need—whatever their need is. He would say that when it comes to training he goes above and beyond what is normal in most fire departments. He has a drive to make things the best he can with the resources he has. He would say he is trustworthy and dependable, and when he gives him something to do, it gets done. As far as weaknesses, he admits that computers are his greatest weakness. He has been working extremely hard over the past 6 months to address that weakness, and he thinks he has made significant strides to improving that weakness. **Bickle** asked if he is comfortable with the electronics in the various vehicles in the department. Gilstorff responded by saying he has gone through the various vehicles and finds them to be very similar to the vehicles in his current fire department. The program software is a bit different from his and it will take a little while to figure out the similarities and differences between the two systems.

Manigold said that just driving around and checking the GPS system in the vehicle will help a person get to know the Peninsula. The Township Employee Handbook establishes policies, procedures, benefits and working conditions that will be followed by all employees as a condition of their employment with Peninsula Township. Gilstorff said that getting to know the area is a key component of the job. **Manigold** asked Gilstorff what he thought were the main goals and responsibilities of the fire chief. Gilstorff responded by saying he thought the responsibilities are covered in four areas: fire protection, ems services, fire prevention, and public education. These are the main topics that he will strive to achieve within the Fire Department. Everything will have a goal and purpose. His job is to ensure the fire fighters have the tools and skills to accomplish the goals/job. **Manigold** thought that getting the community involved in what you are doing is very important. Gilstorff said that getting into schools and having the community get into the fire houses is an important aspect of his role as chief.

Wahl asked what specific public information programs he would implement in the community. Gilstorff said there are multiple ways that you can enhance public education--open houses, curriculum materials, child car seat safety checks, certification programs, house inspections, etc.

Westphal introduced some of the findings emanating from the reference check. Mike Evans, Fire Chief from Metro Airport said that you were very good at insuring the safety of your fire fighters and also very good at building community support for the Fire Department. He also said “I would follow him into any situation; he is so good at detail that he direct us safely to the resolution of any problem”. Those are pretty high indications of leadership from someone who has known you for 25-30 years. He also said that you were very good at assessing the personality of individuals that allows you to

optimize their skills and interests; this trait apparently extends to the broader community as well. I would like to go back to your responses to the first question—i.e., how you plan to familiarize yourself with this community. Do you really intend to drive around the community? Yes, he will; he will take a map and drive around the peninsula. He commented on the beautiful homes on some pretty challenging topography. He said he will develop plans for handling situations in difficulty areas to access. He said he thought he could have a good assessment of the township within a month of arriving. The inner workings in government will be another area that he will work on so he knows where the Town Board is coming from on various issues affecting the Fire Department. **Westphal** asked how he would address a Board policy position with which he disagreed. Gilstorff said he would develop good rapport with the Board. This means that he would sit down with Board members to understand the policy being proposed. Then he would want a discussion to address the implication of the policy for the fire fighters and the community. After the discussion, if the Board still wants to put the policy in place, he would enact it.

Achorn asked what he thought was the largest deficiency in the department and what he intended to do about it. Gilstorff said that the biggest deficiency is staffing. The equipment and buildings are sufficient. He prioritizes the deficiency as: staff, equipment, and then buildings in that order. Staffing is a dire need, but he also wants more “pay for services” and volunteers from the community.

Wunsch asked how he will manage the fire department in terms of tight budgets and staffing. Gilstorff said that he will develop the best budget, based on facts, within his ability. Fire fighters wages are controlled by the union contract, so there is not much he can do in that area. He will monitor the FD budget throughout the year to make sure he will not overspend his budget line, using a spreadsheet. At the end of the year, he may have to reprioritize items and move some items into next year’s budget in order to stay fiscally sound. He will put directives and policies into place when the budget approaches its limits on spending.

Wahl went back to the prepared questions by asking if Fred was a self-starter, and to provide 1-2 examples of that trait. Gilstorff said he does not sit around waiting to be told what needs to be done. He characterized himself as a go-getter that is probably not going to be seen in the office much. He likes to get his hands dirty, and in this situation because of low staff, he is going to have to be out in the field a lot. As a self-starter, he basically put his department back together when the city of Wayne pulled out of the cooperative agreement. He developed a plan, knocked it out, and got the Fire Department up and running the same as it was before the separation. He is not afraid to go out to the business community and ask for support for various pieces of equipment that his FD needs—like Jaws of Life—which was outdated. He secured funding for the tool and then other equipment by soliciting 660 different companies in his area. He received over \$53,000 in the effort.

Sanders asked about resolving conflict. Gilstorff said he would put policies and procedures in place; then he would make sure they were known. He would then state his expectations for the men. Those policies and procedures cannot be violated on an emergency scene. Any deviation will from the policies and procedures will result in a data gathering effort, followed by a discussion session with those involved, come up with a solution, monitor the situation, and if the issue is not resolved, he will come up with a different solution. **Manigold** said he did not want politics to get into the Fire Department; in other words, he prefers not to have to deal with conflicts at the Town Board level. The problem needs to be dealt with at the Fire Department. Fred said that the only time the Board would be involved in a Fire Department dispute would be when a grievance had to be filed to resolve the conflict (unless of course the grievance was against him).

Bickle asked if there is anything else that we needed to know about the candidate. Gilstorff said the Board failed to ask about the banker that he has for a wife; he plans to use her expertise to keep him on budget throughout the year. He also confided that he has been in contact with Chief Tuller of Traverse City, and he intends to build a strong body of fire fighters in this area of the state, over the next few years. **Manigold** stated that he was happy to hear about the contact, and would like to see more cooperation between teams in the county. Gilstorff concurred.

Westphal said that among the comments made by the individual references for Gilstorff was the statement that "he will never come to the Town Board with a problem without a solution". In other words, your reference suggested that you are not a whiner, or complainer, that you will provide alternatives to problems that need addressing in the Fire Department. She thought that comment was a positive insight to how you work, and appreciated the fact that you will work to find viable solutions...not simply state problems. You will inherit a union contract that you had nothing to do with it. Gilstorff said he already met with Strom (union representative for the FD), and that the contract is fairly generic. He is not worried that it will preclude any of the policies or practices he wishes to put in place within the FD. He thinks having a strong leader will have a major positive influence on the men in the FD.

Achorn stated that the FD, over the past four-five years, has been working under a handicap due to outside forces, which were not their fault. Achorn commended them that they could work under those conditions. She thought that Gilstorff would be able to get that support if you provide clear leadership through the policies and procedures that you put in place. Then everyone knows the rules and can be contributors to a common cause. The whole township is looking for help at this time. Gilstorff said he sensed that and that the Township's goals and aspirations are "spot-on". You want to increase the safety level of work conditions for the FD, and he said he has some plans he wants to share with the Board in the ppt presentation. He is excited to share his experiences with the fire department.

(Gilstorff then proceeded to give his slide presentation. Main topics in bold)

Staffing. He talked about the 30-60-90 day program that he included in the resume for his job. This program covers four areas: fire protection, emergency response, fire awareness, and public education. Fire protection involves staffing. He has two models for addressing staffing needs.

Model 1 involves hiring six additional full-time fire fighters, which would bring the total up to nine, and utilizing on paid on call person. This would allow two full time fire fighters to be on-duty at both stations, and still have someone to respond at the two stations, if the two are called out for service.

Model 2 involves having 3 additional fire fighters, which would give us six, and then staffing with two, paid on call individuals. This would give us one full time and one paid on call at each of the stations. This model is not as good as the first because of the concern of not having enough paid on call individuals to draw from the pool of fire fighters. It may be hard for option 2 to go forward with, given current conditions.

His preference is Model 1. With advertising and getting the word out, he thinks he can build the pool of paid on call individuals, which could relieve some of the man-power deficits currently experienced. But he is concerned that national standards will not be met for some time, until the pool is rebuilt. He worries about the potential for a liability

suit if someone gets hurt in the department because the Township is not meeting current standards in terms of man power.

It takes four people to address a fire and do an interior attack. Currently, only two people will show up initially on a fire, and the only thing they can do is pull out the fire hoses and douse the exterior of the building. To extinguish a fire, one has to dampen the interior progress of the fire; without that, it is extremely difficult if not impossible, to extinguish a fire. Some of the houses out here are very large, and it would take a force of men to extinguish them once the fire goes internal. Staffing is the biggest problem out here, in his opinion.

Fire Fighter Training. The training program would be the next part of the plan. He said he would have the men training on a regular basis. The apparatus is in reasonable shape but the trucks still deteriorate. The equipment is another matter, which he would need to look at closer. In terms of stations, he would bring someone in to evaluate them. One station may have to be replaced. He thinks he would have to have someone like an architect look at the buildings to provide an objective assessment of their future use, even with modifications. A new fire station or addition could provide an opportunity for a community meeting room that enhances community interaction in different parts of the Peninsula.

Emergency Medical Services. Initial hiring will have to be paramedics; going forward we will have to hire paramedics. Ultimately, having 2 paramedics in an ambulance is a good situation. Training is going to be increased; EMTs require 30 hours of training over 3 years. Paramedics require 40 Continuing Medical Education training over 3 years. We will probably have to share or join some other departments to secure the training we need to maintain certification. There are online training programs, but these programs are not as effective in training fire fighters as actual hands-on experience.

Ambulances are in relatively good shape. Equipment is hard to estimate. The heart monitors are the most expensive piece of equipment, and we already have them. It will probably cost about \$15,000 to equip the ambulances.

Going back to staffing, if we can get paramedics to staff the ambulances, we will have ALS service out here. If not, then we will have one ambulance with ALS and one with BLS, which can then get the patient into town to the hospital

Fire Prevention. This is the side of fire-fighting that emphasizes inspections. Gilstorff is a state certified inspector. He can train the guys to look for basic things that if remediated could prevent fires at businesses and in homes.

Plan reviews relate to new buildings as they are built; he wants to look at the plans before a building is built to reduce fire hazard conditions.

Pre-Incident Surveys. This gets fire fighters out in the community looking at structures as they are being built and knowing what types of materials have gone into a building's construction. Very important survey for a community.

Investigations. He is a certified fire inspector, which means he could do most of the work out here unless it involves arson. Arson would require that the State Police be involved.

Public Education. This is not a big dollar cost for a community. Fire safety classes, CPR classes (cardio-pulmonary resuscitation), first aid classes, public service

announcements, etc. are good awareness programs that could save lives. Opening up the fire stations would also enhance the public knowledge about the work that we do.

(This concluded the ppt presentation given by Gilstorff).

Randy Rittenhouse, second candidate

The Town Board began the interview with the same set of questions that were given for the first candidate.

Wahl asked Rittenhouse what was his weakest attribute and how was he going to address it if he became Fire Chief. Rittenhouse said his greatest weakness is public speaking.

Sanders asked how you motivate others. Rittenhouse said that he thought this question goes with the next question "what type of leadership do you opt for". He said that he believes in leadership by example. He gives praise; he works with the guys. Some guys pick up a point easily, others take longer, but he always sure they are proficient in their work to the best of their abilities.

Bickle questioned how to operate a fire department in times of tight budgets. He responded that everyone has to work within a budget. Right now, he operates the fire department on a tight budget. I live within my means and that is how I operate the fire department. If we wanted to, we could go out and accomplish all of our tasks in 6 months, but that is not reasonable on a tight budget. Sometimes I and the other guys have to step up to the plate and cover the department when staffing is low; we just have to do it.

Manigold "How would you deal with a policy change that you would disagree with?" If it is a safety concern, I would push back and explain why I am pushing back. If it is a policy change or vision change, I would accept it.

Westphal asked what he saw was the single most important deficiency in the fire department now, and what would he plan on doing to alleviate the deficiency. Rittenhouse said that the greatest deficiency is not going out in the community more, and seeking volunteers for the fire department. We are covering day to day, but not prepared for a large scale emergency. More community involvement would allow us to cover large-scale emergency event.

Achorn stated that the last 5 years we have experienced leadership changes and lack of power to establish policy and procedures because of the conflict that existed in the township [governance]. She commends the Fire Department for working through that. If you had the full power, such as at budget time, what would have been your approach? Rittenhouse said he would have moved ahead and already had money in the budget for additional staffing and ALS.

Wunsch asked if Rittenhouse was a self-starter, and asked if he could give 1-2 examples of this. The candidate responded by talking about when he started as an EMT/fire fighter, Don Smart retired as the asst. fire chief, Woody Flatman took over and worked from home. Rittenhouse took over recording stats and doing other paperwork that the asst. chief did not do; he billed for additional revenues. He also has initiated a number of community involvement activities.

Bickle asked about transition. You have served the Township as Interim Chief faithfully for some time; if you are officially made the Chief, dynamics will change with the people you have worked with in the Fire Department. Have you thought about how this transition will take place? Rittenhouse said the guys come to him right now as Chief, and sometimes, he has to discipline if something is wrong. **Bickle** asked how he perceives others who will have certifications higher than his. Rittenhouse said respect and understanding their job, but also when we do go to ALS, he would look at appointing a medical director. It means being a good leader; having the guys walk behind you. **Bickle** went on to ask, if we were to ask other fire departments or the people you have interacted with, in your current role as interim, what do you think they would say about Randy Rittenhouse? Rittenhouse said they would say that I am a hard worker; they give me respect just as I give them respect; I go the extra mile to help them out, just as they do for me. It is about relationships that I have worked hard on. How would you say those relationships would be useful in your new role as Fire Chief [**Bickle**]? Rittenhouse said that he can tap other departments for their strengths, like grant writing, that he may not have; that is building relationships with other departments.

Wahl asked about resolving conflicts. Rittenhouse said he uses communication; one cannot resolve a conflict without communication. Westphal asked that he expand on that answer a little more. Rittenhouse said get both sides to a conflict--what went wrong and what went right; then discuss this with both parties together to get agreement on how to resolve a situation in the future. One may not get everyone to agree, but at least one can communicate how to avoid a conflict in the future.

Westphal stated that Brad and she had the opportunity to contact the three references that he supplied in his resume. She reviewed one of the statements furnished that basically characterized Rittenhouse's strength as follows. "Give him a task, it is always done and all the loose ends are tied". We talked to three people and they all said you communicate well with people; your positive attitude allows you to work well with others—both professional and lay people. **Bickle** added that one reference said "he would follow you into a fire"; that just hit me in a good way. I think that is a pretty powerful statement.

Achorn said she could go back to one glaring deficiency in this department, and that is essentially having a part time person being interim chief. If you were to chief, what would consider the one deficiency, as a full time person. I talked about community involvement and volunteer fire fighters that can help us out on large scale emergencies; something that we have not hit that hard.

Westphal asked Rittenhouse about his personal rating of his performance as interim fire chief, which was a 3 or 4 on a scale of 10. Why did you rate yourself so low? Rittenhouse said that he was not able to give 100% as he would as a full time chief, because you always have set-back. But I am always learning, and working on relationships. I am gaining the trust from community members, but I am not as far as I want to be. **Westphal** followed with how would actually implement the ALS program that the Town Board has talked about, not having personal experience with ALS yourself. Rittenhouse said when we hire full time ALS fire fighters, we should appoint a medical director and work closely with him or her through a strong working relationship.

Manigold observed that there are always conflicts in any organization. He is looking for the person that can handle conflicts internally and resolve them so the conflicts do not have to come to the Town Board for resolution. He wants a hands-on person who can handle conflicts in-house; how do you think you would handle something like this. Rittenhouse said as he is currently doing—and we have a chain of command, which starts with the lieutenants and goes up to the chief; from the chief it goes to the Town Board, but it should be handled in-house by the chief. Sometimes I come in and talk to you, Brad and

Joanne, because I like that working relationship. When I first started, there was no relationship; you guys [Town Board] were the enemy. I have worked hard to change that.

Westphal asked if the Town Board was to pass a policy that you thought was detrimental to the fire department, how you would approach us to rethink that policy. If it is safety concern, I would stand behind the guys. I also would explain to you why I thought the policy is a bad so no one would get hurt. If it is a division or policy change, I would respect it. **Manigold** stated that our door-to-door campaign revealed a lot of support for the fire department; we need leadership to get there. Rittenhouse said that he has started the community dialogue by meeting with neighborhood associations and offering open houses at the fire stations.

Bickle asked if there were any other questions that you have of us. Rittenhouse responded no.

(The meeting turned to the ppt presentation that Rittenhouse prepared).

Rittenhouse introduced the fire department via a photograph. He then identified the topics that he thought were important: housing, staffing, faster response time, advanced life support, community involvement, vehicle updates and building additions.

Housing. He introduced a temporary housing solution using a trailer system that currently is used in Acme Township. The modular structure can be leased and brought on-site, and can house up to four fire-fighters for \$1200/month. This could be a housing solution at Station 2 (south end). He showed a video of the structure, which costs \$4000 to set up. It would allow interns from LLC to come and work at the fire department as part of their internship requirements. The modular housing comes fully equipped; 2-3 bedrooms.

Additional Staffing & Faster Response Times. By putting additional staffing down at Station2, we could achieve faster response times. Otherwise, it takes 8-10 minutes to get down to certain areas on the south end of the peninsula.

Advanced Life Support. We are already heading that way. The ambulances are slowly being equipped.

Community Involvement. We offer CPR training every month. Medical CEU's would be offered in the fire department, which would avoid travel to get them downstate, and could get the CEU's in their own township. This would get the community involved in fire department activities, further. At the same time we could also talk to people about volunteering for the fire department. We do blood pressure tests now that actually saved a life this past week. [He told the story in detail].

Vehicle Replacement. Two engines are getting old—one needs to be replaced in two years. One of the ambulances will need to be replaced. Working within a tight budget, we can look at leasing options and other suppliers of fire equipment.

Building Additions. I do not believe in knocking down both stations. Station 1 we currently have a money-maker in it with the cell tower. If we build a central station, we would have to put money into land, etc.; we have a good station, let's just put additions for a couple more bays, and office space. In Station 2, let's go out to the community to seek support for new additions through donations.

(He concluded his presentation).

Manigold asked about the building in Acme. Rittenhouse said that it is a temporary housing solution. They would like to build a new fire station, but do not have the funds right now.

Westphal asked if Rittenhouse had any questions for the Town Board. He said no.

Wunsch then asked if it was okay to stay in open session as the Board goes into discussion and deliberation.

Manigold asked if they wanted to vote tonight or wait to think about it. All Board members agreed to vote tonight.

Westphal kicked off the discussion, saying that these interviews show a win-win situation with the candidates. Both are very qualified individuals, but for different reason. The question will come down to which individual will raise the fire department up to the standards we are seeking, in a manner that is efficient and effective, in cooperation with the Town Board. Each person had stellar references.

Bickle followed with a reflection of his professional experience in hiring. He cited that both individuals had amazing credentials, as supported by their references. Their presentations also highlighted the critical needs of the fire department.

Sanders shared the fact that Randy has been living some of the deficits currently in the fire department, so he is aware of the problems here. Fred on the other hand was not privileged to live through some of these deficits. However, on further digging, I learned that the situation down state in the Westland/Wayne area has had similar difficulties, and Fred has in fact lived through similar disruptions in the fire department down there. That leveled the playing field in terms of dealing with unfavorable political times, and both were able to wade through the waters and keep the departments moving forward during difficult times.

Manigold reiterated his perceptions of both men were “hands on” individuals who give their all to the departments they are a part of. I would hire both of them if we could make it work. I guess we are down to a decision if there are no other questions.

Wunsch said that he was ready to make a decision.

Westphal drew attention to the fact that Fred has already successfully put together an ALS program for the City of Wayne from BLS. He has worked through difficult financial times and has achieved the goal that we desire for our fire department in terms of ALS. This experience is invaluable; plus, he is already at a paramedic level. He can appreciate the difficulty of recruiting other paramedics into the community as well as into the fire department as new viable and equal partners with our current fire fighters who are at the BLS level. He will work with the BLS individuals to bring them up to the ALS level.

Bickle said that the whole process has been beneficial to the Town Board and community because we have been forced to understand what we are looking for.

Westphal observed that as I look around this Town Board, I see a group of individuals who have a diverse set of skills. We ran on this fact, as a unique asset. In considering the Fire Chief position, we need to think about this individual expanding this set of skills even further, so that all of us become a whole package of skills that serve this community.

Achorn said when we started out as a team, it was planned to bring in [people with] the experience that would prepare the youth [-ful members of the Board] to carry on once we [the older members] are not here. As difficult as it is for me to say, I think that I would recommend Fred as Chief, working very closely with Randy because they each have a great deal to give to each other...but mostly to the Township, and our fire department. If we want the very best fire department, we will go with the best, and in my opinion, it is the experience that will lead the youth to carry on.

Bickle asked the clerk how she wanted to go about the voting.

Westphal said that she would prefer a paper [secret] ballot for this vote. She then distributed envelopes and paper ballots for each Board Member to indicate their preference for Fire Chief. The Board wrote the name of the preferred candidate on the ballots and placed them in the envelope to be read by the clerk. She directed the envelopes to the supervisor who then read them to the audience. The vote was 5-2 in favor of Fred Gilstorff.

Manigold congratulated Gilstorff and asked the Board for a motion to select Fred Gilstorff as the new Peninsula Fire Chief. Wahl made the motion; Sanders seconded.

Passed Unam

9. **CITIZEN COMMENTS** None

10. **BOARD COMMENTS** None

11. **ADJOURNMENT** Sanders moved to adjourn; Wunsch seconded.

Passed Unam

Joanne M. Westphal, Clerk and Recording Secretary, 08-24-2017