

**MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
SITTING AS THE GOVERNING BODY OF FIRE DISTRICT #1**

REGULAR MEETING

MAY 21, 1997

The Regular Meeting of the Board of County Commissioners of Sedgwick County, Kansas, Sitting as the Governing Body of Fire District #1, was called to order at 10:27 a.m., Wednesday, May 21, 1997, in the County Commission Meeting Room in the Courthouse in Wichita, Kansas, by Chairman Thomas G. Winters, with the following present: Chairman Pro Tem Paul W. Hancock; Commissioner Betsy Gwin; Commissioner Melody C. Miller; Commissioner Mark F. Schroeder; Mr. William P. Buchanan, County Manager; Mr. Rich Euson, County Counselor; Mr. Gary Curmode, Fire Chief; Mr. David C. Spears, P.E., Director, Bureau of Public Services; Ms. Mary Ann Nichols, Director, Personnel Department; Mr. Fred Ervin, Public Affairs Officer; and Ms. Linda M. Leggett, Deputy County Clerk.

ROLL CALL

The Clerk reported, after calling roll, that all Commissioners were present.

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES: **Regular Meeting, April 30, 1997**

The Clerk reported that Commissioner Hancock was absent at the Regular Meeting of April 30, 1997.

Chairman Winters said, "Commissioners, you've reviewed the Minutes, what's the will of the Board?"

MOTION

Commissioner Hancock moved to approve the Minutes of April 30, 1997.

Commissioner Miller seconded the Motion.

There was no discussion on the Motion, the vote was called.

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VOTE

Commissioner Betsy Gwin	Aye
Commissioner Paul W. Hancock	Abstain
Commissioner Melody C. Miller	Aye
Commissioner Mark F. Schroeder	Aye
Chairman Thomas G. Winters	Aye

Chairman Winters said, "Next item."

NEW BUSINESS

A. REVIEW OF ENHANCED FIRST RESPONDER AGREEMENT WITH CITY OF WICHITA FIRE DEPARTMENT.

Mr. Gary E. Curmode, Fire Chief, greeted the Commissioners and said, "I would like to begin with a brief background of the history that we've had with the Wichita Fire Department. It has been a very long and healthy one. We formed a Mutual Aid Agreement in 1959. It was basically an agreement that if anyone's resources were taxed, they could ask the other entity from the other jurisdiction for assistance. That was done. Each time, as I go through these years, we try to improve and build upon our relationship. The next change was in 1961, then 1962, 1964, 1976, 1982, and then 1987. Then we had a long period with a good working relationship, but there was a void in there. I don't think anyone could really see what that void was. Then we came upon a brainstorm and a vision from both City Manager, Chris Churches and County Manager, Bill Buchanan to do an enhanced responder program to use the best resources of both entities.

"I would like to, if I may at this time, read what this Enhanced First Responder Program was designed to do. The original purpose of the Agreement, to benefit the citizens by better utilization of personnel, decrease emergency response times, and more effective dispatching of units to handle an incident and to handle effectively two major or large incidents in either jurisdiction by responding the closest units, regardless of jurisdiction with combined automatic fill in of vacant stations. Again, this was the vision of both managers and they hit it right on the peg.

"What I will do now is I'm going to take you through the history of the Agreement with some graphs.

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SLIDE PRESENTATION

“The Agreement was approved and started November 15, 1995. The first major change to the Agreement came in late December 1995, when the Sedgwick County Fire Department station locations were readjusted on the CAD. What that means is, let me give you two definitions, CAD stands for computer aided dispatching. What we are able to do, since fire stations are usually permanent fixtures for twenty, thirty, forty years before they are relocated; many times they are designed to be in a certain location, but as the growth patterns change in the community we would like to move them, but they are very expensive to do that. But what can we do in lieu of that? Well, one thing we can do is move them on CAD and with the help of Diane Gage and 911 and with Wichita and Sedgwick County participation, we were able to do this. So we moved the stations on the computer. So what the computer was told, the stations are in a different location.

“Why was this done? Well, we have some unique opportunities in the County that the City doesn't have. One is, it is faster to come from the County into the City because you have higher speed limits, you have less traffic lights and normally the traffic congestion is less. So that is one of our benefits. Again, the intent was to keep this in equity as much as possible between departments. Again, to get the best citizen involvement and the best response and keep our dollars minimized. So, as you see here in the first month, this is a partial month, it shows here there was quite a bit of response activity from the City into the County and black depicts the County and the County operations was in this area. In the next month of December, it immediately flip-flopped. So this was an entire month and there was probably a couple of reasons for this to occur. We looked at several things. In the original agreement we tried to use all personnel, all apparatus, all fire station involvement. At this point, we had what we call the mobile air apparatus, it was a light refilling truck of our air bottles for fire fighters at stations. They also provide rehabilitation potential for fire fighters and or civilians and also they give us lighting in night time diversity.

“Again, as you see in January of '96, the responses from the County were a lot higher. The City made a request and we mutually agreed to keep any overcompensation of one entity over the other, to make it streamlined if you will, and fine tune it, to look at several things. Initially, the mobile air units, we had an agreement to use Central Street as a dividing line. So anything that was north to the County line from Central will be utilizing the mobile air unit from the County. If it was from Central south, we used the mobile air unit from the City, to the County line. Again, it worked pretty well.

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“Also at this time, we had the Safety Officers from the County, the City had one on an eight-hour day, we had one per twenty-four hour shift. We allowed that person to go City/County to any structure fire or major emergency involving a Safety Officer response, they were able to go into the City at any location. During the later part of that month, it was requested by the City to again maybe keep the mobile air 32, which is the County unit in County areas only and the City unit in the City. They were having some areas of problems with the command staff forgetting to call for the certain units so we agreed to do that and it worked okay. The same way with the Safety Officer. It was downgraded to where our Safety Officers only went in when the County units were in a fire emergency in the City instead of on every emergency.

“At the end of January, we took our station locations on the CAD again, the computer aided dispatch, and we involved some adjustments to four of the seven stations. Again, we watched this on a weekly basis, tried to gather the data, make sure it was proper, get an agreement between the City and the County and then move the locations back to where not only was it the closest by mileage, but also the fastest. We had to tinker with that quite a bit, but it worked.

“As we move into the next graph, you’ll see this here, this shows basically February through May of 1996. Again, the City is illustrated in the gray and the black is the County. There were no changes done in February or March. We had major meetings every week to fine tune as we would, but we wanted to make sure that we were doing the right thing when we fine tuned it. As you see in April, this was a period of drought. We had some real high winds. We had some real dry conditions. Both City and County, a lot of grass fires. This occurred through the month of April and then the first week of May we started getting some precipitation and the humidity started to go up. The alarm load leveled out fairly equal.

“What we tried to do here in late May, we took stations and again moved them back from the CAD locations to their original locations on the map, where they are exactly at. One other station was moved a little bit farther away from the City limits to account for this also. As we move into the next overhead, this will be the month of June 1996. There was primarily one main change here. Station 38 is on 143rd Street East. It is our furthestmost eastern County fire station. It is located just north of Central between Central and 13th on 143rd. By the CAD, it states that actually the closest station is station 15 in the City, but response time, we enter into that area of Central and Webb road actually a minute quicker. Why?

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“We’re responding from outside in quicker, speed limit, less traffic, stop signs, where the City has to worry about Towne East and major stops and intersections at Douglas and Central, Rock Road and on into Webb Road. So we’re able to get in there fairly quickly so we made that adjustment. Again, actual responses showed we were doing the right thing.

“As we move into the next overhead, this depicts July of ‘96 through November of ‘96. We watched it closely, we met, we discussed. Again, we worked together at this as partners and we made no major changes at this point. The alarm loads fluctuated somewhat, but again they are fairly close. I’d like to say that during that 18-month program from November until April 30, 1997, the County averaged about 70 alarms to the City per month and the City responded into the County 82 times per month. Okay. In the period of November, there was a lot of discussion, even back to April of ‘96, that the City had discussed a potential having a boundary line around the City to again stop any overcompensation of apparatus response into the County areas. We discussed it, we studied it for several months before we made that decision. A decision was made December 16, 1996, to implement a boundary around the City.

“What I’ll show you here, originally on the document, if you can forget this little box around the City of Wichita, the original agreement showed response regardless of jurisdiction without this boundary. To try to make this as equitable as possible to both City and County and maintain the efficiency of both departments, keep the best customer service we could do, it was mutually agreed to provide a boundary line at this time. Now as you notice, the boundary line now is inside several major cities inside the Sedgwick County area. One is Maize, Kansas, it is just inside of that. Goddard and Garden Plain no longer on a first response other than a squad, and I’ll explain that concept in just a minute on response. Also, the City of Haysville and Kechi. Also Park City at one time, but now since the annexation July 2 of 1997 of the Riverview area, that has been adjusted up to 61st Street. Now what this does is any major response, per the original agreement, the closest units regardless of jurisdiction will go in this boxed area. Once the alarm is just outside the box, the City on the west half of the City going out will respond either a squad and attender or attender to the west side of the County. On the east side, from this half this way outside the box line, they will also respond a squad. A squad is a mini-pumper type concept. It carries jaws, provides quick attack capability, gets people there quickly and that’s what we need. The command staff came up with those recommendations, that’s what they could live with and both departments agreed to it.

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“We also still have the mutual aid agreement in operation. That means that if one of our stations responds out here and we have County stations responding from another part of the County and there will be some delay in time because of our large distances that we have to cover, that the officer from either the City or the County has the ability to request a mutual aid assistance and can request an engine, two engines, an aerial platform, whatever they would like to do. That is still in operation. The enhanced part is what the Managers came up with to improve the system and utilize the jurisdiction’s ability even better and it is working.

“What this one depicts here is basically December 16 was the changes and again the alarm load was fairly equal. We monitored it up to the month of April and as you can see, the alarm load is almost identical. I think there are two differences in the month of April, City and County. So again, it is working and we’re monitoring it on a weekly basis. We have meetings still to make sure we’re getting the best bang for the buck. I’d like to say as we move to the next one, we’re trying to meet the Mission of the Agreement and I think that’s being done and also we have agreements with McConnell and they’re getting very active into the picture of responding as partnerships in Sedgwick County. Also, the other County volunteer fire departments, we’re working in tandem very closely.

“What this shows here is the eighteen-month entire response for the County and the City. As you can see, there has been some high fluctuations and that again as you look back at our weather history, that’s when we’ve had some real drought conditions. High peak loads of fire alarms, both City and County. Again, we monitor this on a weekly basis. We meet weekly to make sure that everything is working properly. We listen to our customers out there. If they have questions we try to answer them, calm their fears. The customers are telling me, the citizens of Sedgwick County and Wichita is when I need help, I don’t care what you have on your patch, I don’t care what it says on the door, I want help now and they’re getting it quicker than they ever have. I think that is a compliment to you for supporting this program, the Managers for allowing us to continue to pursue it. I am available for any comments or questions if you have any.”

Chairman Winters said, “Thank you very much Chief. Commissioner Schroeder.”

Commissioner Schroeder said, “Chief, I appreciate the overview and the work that you’ve done with the City trying to come up with the best enhanced first responder agreement you can.

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“However, in your estimation, wouldn’t it be much better if we just had a County wide fire district, so it didn’t matter where the boundaries were and how many trucks rolled where? Are we any closer to getting down to the table on that kind of discussion or in your estimation have we stalled out and the City is not willing to look at that?”

Chief Curmode said, “Well, that is a question that I’d like to address to Mr. Buchanan if I may.”

Commissioner Schroeder said, “Good pass.”

Mr. Buchanan said, “I could easily pass that back to the Commission. It is a political decision. This system seems to be working. It worked before it was modified, it continues to work. The Chief is absolutely correct, citizen want . . . it doesn’t matter what patch or what color the fire trucks are, they want service and they want it immediately. This system could last for a long time. Would one system be more efficient? Probably.”

Commissioner Schroeder said, “Well that’s great. The reason I asked the question is that I want people to be aware that this government has pursued that concept of a County-wide fire district which makes sense. It is like any other department that has responsibilities to both people in the City and in the unincorporated areas and it seems like to me the easiest way to handle that is to give that responsibility to the government that has that jurisdiction by-law to do those kind of services on a County wide basis. I just don’t understand what the problem is and Mayor Knight has decided that maybe the consolidation issue needs to be brought to the forefront again, but yet they haven’t made any real efforts to work with us on functional consolidation. The only thing we’ve accomplished in the last three or four years is 911 being consolidated under the County and the consolidation of our fire department maintenance departments into one. My understanding is that works well.”

Chief Curmode said, “Yes, it does Commissioner, it works very well.”

Commissioner Schroeder said, “I just don’t know why it wouldn’t work well in another area or in the same department but overall combining the two departments into one County wide fire district. Seems like to me we’re making a mountain out of a mole hill. There are some easy ways to get things done that will serve the community better, but we would rather take the tough road and do it the hard way and stir people up and getting city pitted against city and I just hate to see us go down that road in order to satisfy a few peoples need for power. I’d like to see you keep pursuing it.”

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Chief Curmode said, "We'll do our best."

Commissioner Schroeder said, "Thank you."

Chairman Winters said, "I think it is one of those things that Commissioners need to pursue. I've had some discussions within the last thirty days on this very subject with a number of people across the street and I would encourage all of you, if you have feelings about that, to contact the Council people in the district that you represent cooperatively with them. I know that I've had some discussion with them. I won't say they've been real fruitful, but I think discussions are what's needed and I certainly have been active in doing that and I hope the rest of you do too if you think that is important. I think we need to do that communication level."

Commissioner Schroeder said, "To follow-up and I don't necessarily mean that I want to assign that responsibility to management and staff, it is just that you folks meet on a regular basis, see each other on a regular basis. You know the ins and outs of the operation, what works and what doesn't and I just simply, the comment was, if at the staff level, if that conversation is taken up, I think it would be healthy. I know we have to do it at this level. I know it is a political decision, but I think it is also a safety decision too for the residents of this entire County. I think if we do our job and staff does theirs, including yours Chief, that maybe we can get it resolved and get something done that is beneficial to everybody. I hate to see us go down that road where you've got to get the legislature involved, have a public vote, and educate the people and there is disagreement, discourse, things written in the paper that people will regret. I think there are some simple solutions to our problems if we could all sit down at the table and get it down. Thank you for your overview today, appreciate it."

Chief Curmode said, "You're welcome Commissioner."

Chairman Winters said, "Thank you. Any other discussion? If not, what's the will of the Board?"

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MOTION

Commissioner Gwin moved to receive and file.

Commissioner Miller seconded the Motion.

There was no discussion on the Motion, the vote was called.

VOTE

Commissioner Betsy Gwin	Aye
Commissioner Paul Hancock	Aye
Commissioner Melody C. Miller	Aye
Commissioner Mark F. Schroeder	Aye
Chairman Thomas G. Winters	Aye

Chairman Winters said, “Chief, thanks for that update. Next item.”

B. REVISIONS TO THE SEDGWICK COUNTY AND FIRE DISTRICT PERSONNEL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL.

Ms. Mary Anne Nichols, Personnel Director, greeted the Commissioners and said, “I am here to request your approval of the revisions to the Sedgwick County and Fire District Personnel Manual. Those policies and procedures cover Fire District employees. Where there are differences addressed in the contract, we address those in our manual. I would request that you defer to the presentation that I made on the Regular Agenda and therefore not go through that dissertation.”

Chairman Winters said, “Okay, thank you. Commissioners, what’s the will of the Board?”

MOTION

Commissioner Schroeder moved to approve the revisions.

Commissioner Hancock seconded the Motion.

There was no discussion on the Motion, the vote was called.

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VOTE

Commissioner Betsy Gwin	Aye
Commissioner Paul Hancock	Aye
Commissioner Melody C. Miller	Aye
Commissioner Mark F. Schroeder	Aye
Chairman Thomas G. Winters	Aye

Chairman Winters said, "Thank you. Is there other business to come before this Board? If not, the Meeting of the Fire District 1 is adjourned."

C. OTHER

D. ADJOURNMENT

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There being no other business to come before the Board, the Meeting was adjourned at 10:49 a.m.

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF
SEDGWICK COUNTY, KANSAS**

THOMAS G. WINTERS, Chairman
Third District

PAUL W. HANCOCK, Chairman Pro Tem
Second District

BETSY GWIN, Commissioner
First District

MELODY C. MILLER, Commissioner
Fourth District

MARK F. SCHROEDER, Commissioner
Fifth District

ATTEST:

James Alford, County Clerk

APPROVED:

_____, 1997