

## October - December 2020 Quarterly Park Ridge Fire Chief's Report

### PRFD Calls for Service:

10-16-20

Industrial Equipment Fire

9531 Harvest Lane, Amherst Junction

4 Firefighters responded

Paged for mutual aid by Amherst FD for a large piece of industrial equipment on fire. Park Ridge FD assisted with extinguishment, overhaul, and supervision. Chief Lepper was asked by command to perform operations officer duties.

Times: Paged 9:03, Truck Enroute 9:14, On Scene 9:28, Cleared 10:23

11-3-20

Smoke Alarm Sounding

41 Park Ridge Dr.

7 Firefighters responded, 1 Firefighter on stand-by

Paged for smoke alarms sounding. Arrived at the scene to find occupants outside, with law enforcement arriving just ahead of us. Upon investigation, an extremely dangerous level of carbon monoxide was detected, with no smoke found. All building occupants reported good health, as they never made entry due to alarms. Natural Gas could also be smelled. Wisconsin Public Service (WPS) was called, and we shut gas off to the building. A disconnected vent from a hot water heater was found to be the cause. We vented the building, made several checks to ensure all areas were clear of CO. WPS verified no natural gas was present. Building turned over to management after all was explained.

Times: Paged 6:47, Truck Enroute 7:03, On Scene 7:03, Cleared 8:43

11-6-20

Structure Fire

1854 Polonia Rd.

5 Firefighters responded, 1 Firefighter in station standby

Paged for mutual aid by Rosholt FD. Initial fire was knocked down prior to our arrival. We assisted with overhaul and firefighter accountability.

Times: Paged 1:47, Truck Enroute 2:01, On Scene 2:12, Cleared 2:59

12-27-20

Structure Fire

3959 Custer Rd.

5 Firefighters responded

Paged for Automatic aid with Stockton FD for a chimney fire. It was determined we were not needed and cancelled a few minutes after going enroute.

Times: Paged 18:24, Truck Enroute 18:36, Cancelled 18:40

### **PRFD Meetings:**

Note: Due to the ongoing pandemic all Q4 meetings were held over Zoom.

10-5-20

Attendance: 14 & 1 excused

Business:

- COVID – testing and our one positive COVID case is doing well - Some compliance items on hold due to COVID (inspections/hose testing); this is acceptable per WI
- Discussion on FD building
- Cadet Program remains on hold
- Helping at WSFM

Training:

- New Carbon Monoxide detector
- Cascade use and filling

10-19-20

Attendance: 16

Business:

- Introduction of new applicant
- Santa Visit discussion
- Cadet Program remains on hold due to no activity from Village board
- Reminder on mask use

Training:

- Detailed Carbon Monoxide PowerPoint

11-2-20

Attendance: 11 & 4 excused

Business:

- Completed SCBA compressor air quality testing
- Battery change in portable equipment
- Truck Checks
- 2020 Points discussion – get class information to Chief
- Rescue training opportunity in April
- Red Kettle / Public Safety Challenge discussion

- Out of service notification reminder, especially with holidays approaching

Training:

- Blood Borne Pathogens
- Equipment location on trucks

11-16-20

Attendance: 17

Business:

- FD Building discussion
- Santa Visit – roles
- Red Kettle 12/5 reminder
- Stockton FD live burn training on 12/12/20
- Specialized Rescue discussion

Training:

- MABAS card review (mutual aid)
- Overview of commercial fire inspections

11-30-20

Attendance: 14 & 2 excused

Business:

- Red Kettle – new phone number to call for support, Kate to knit scarves
- Stockton FD live burn training on 12/12/20
- 12-14 Santa Visit date set
- COVID & PPE Discussion
- WFSM help discussion – snow removal

Training:

- None

12-28-20

Attendance: 10 & 3 excused

Business:

- None – Department was emailed day before meeting – MSTC Spring course schedule

Training:

- Review of Firefighter 1 exam questions, which covered various topics

**Additional Training Notes:**

On December 12, 2020, several members participated in a training burn hosted by Stockton Fire Department.

### **“Other” Activities/Meetings**

October: US flags removed; a few stragglers came down in November.

November: The wreath for the “Keep the Wreath Green” campaign went up.

11/5/20: Attended Portage County Fire Chief’s meeting, with emphasis in Technical Rescues.

12/5/20: Red Kettle Public Safety Challenge bell ringing for the Salvation Army at Walgreens.

We raised \$846.91 this year, compared to \$541.97 in 2019.

12/14/20: Santa visits around the village.

12/26/20: We did a birthday drive-by for a 3-year-old on Fieldcrest.

On various dates staff has helped at the Wisconsin State Fire Memorial park in Wisconsin Rapids.

Chief Lepper is also participating with COVID-19 conference calls with Portage County Public Health staying up to date on local and regional activities.

Commercial Fire inspections and other activities remain suspended as allowed by WI regulators.

### **Roster:**

We finished Q1 with 19 on roster and 1 inactive cadet due to program suspension by village board. 2 Firefighters successfully completed Officer 1 Class and attained State Certification.

### **Equipment:**

Engine 1 failed its pump testing in October. The repair is waiting budget and repair firm availability. The output of the pump passed successfully, but the vacuum failed. This is the first time in years, if not ever, this pump has failed its annual required testing.

Same as previous reports – Engine 2 remains a challenge for the FD. We intentionally do not use the truck much for fear of failure.

Also, a repeat of Q2 & Q3 2020 reports - The Squad is over-due for a new clutch. We are trying to stretch out this costly and challenging repair for as long as we can. Parts are not readily available for a 1974 vehicle. Repairs generally take longer than a desired amount of time, mostly due to challenges with parts. Vendor has requested that the existing clutch be removed from squad, requiring it to be out of service, and shipped to them to ensure that they provide the correct parts. This truck will probably be down for a week or longer. Since this truck sees the most use, this is a bit concerning. We tentatively plan to replace the clutch in early 2021.

Repeat of Q3 - The FD laptop is beginning to fail and will need to be replaced.

Repeat of Q3 - MSTC is possibly going to offer a Driver/Operator class in early 2021. This class is needed before we can add drivers. Chief Lepper recently followed up and is awaiting word from MSTC.

### **Morale**

Department morale is a concern for the first time. Due to the repeated lack of commitment to the FD by the village board, negative and delayed action is wearing on staff. Quitting, resignation, discussions of joining other local fire departments is at an all-time high.

2008 - "Long Range Planning Committee" to look at future of FD. Members: Tom Gludemans, Jim Lamar, Ken Vogel, Steve TerMaat, Jim Vollmer (last met April 2008). City Contract to cost village in millions (water, curbing, etc.), also discussion with town of Hull for fire protection contract.

July 25, 2014 - [Park Ridge could ask voters to pay to replace fire truck \(stevenspointjournal.com\)](http://stevenspointjournal.com) / [Park Ridge looking to referendum to get new fire truck \(stevenspointjournal.com\)](http://stevenspointjournal.com)

July 2015 Board Meeting – formed FD long-range planning committee

October 2015 - A Village Board approved timeline to replace Engine 2.

Village Board determination to look at buildings – money spent in 2016 on Lampert Lee & Associates – Money spent in 2020 on Ratsch Engineering.

2 Public hearings held on FD needs (2016 and 2018)

1 Referendum held on FD needs - 2018

These discussions began before Chief Lepper became Chief. The above timeline is a very abbreviated history of FD/Village Board work on the fire department. During Chief Lepper's interview in 2014 with then Village President Tom Gludemans and Trustee Jim Lamar, who conducted the interview, both agreed that a focus on updating equipment needed to occur. To date not a single truck, with ages of 1974, 1980, and 1994 has yet to be replaced. All 3 Village Fire Trucks are out of compliance with NFPA 1911. Specifically, Annex D.1 under NFPA 1911 (which Chief Lepper would be happy to explain to anyone).

The single largest piece of equipment replaced since 2014 has been our breathing air compressor, which cost the FD budget next to nothing. This was a used compressor, for which

a firefighter wrote and was awarded a WPS grant for nearly half of the unit's cost, in which the remaining cost was paid for by FD fundraising efforts and private donations. In addition, shipping costs were eliminated for the department and village as a firefighter drove to MN to take delivery of the compressor and hauled it back in his personal truck. David Rowe used his equipment to unload the compressor for us.

The amount of misinformation being spread, leading to decisions being made, is shameful. The FD would be eager to work with the village board to best determine how factual information can be disseminated.

The December 28, 2020 Village board meeting was very disheartening. The word "compromise" was used by a trustee, who then presented the idea of a small garage. Why is anything a compromise? The decision to even look at buildings was a village board decision, not a FD decision. If the village wants to continue to buy spec-built apparatus to fit in our small bay, that is a board decision, not a fire department decision.

At more than one point during the December 28 board meeting it was stated that only one resident is a member of the fire department. This is a factual statement. The disturbing point is that the board does not seem to recognize they have any responsibility in this. Around 20 minutes was spent on village committee memberships, and getting younger people involved was a key theme. Not one minute was spent by the board discussing more village involvement with the fire department; not even 2 seconds. Could residents be hesitant to become involved because of our dismal working conditions?

While the board ponders the next steps, if any; other restrictions should also be considered. The floor drain in the apparatus bay is an old French drain that has filled solid. We had a plumber look at it in the spring of 2020, and not much can be easily done. Does the village want to spend high dollar amounts to buy new apparatus and then not have the salt washed off following use?

What about room to train or conduct village board meetings? Due do the Clerk and Treasurer needing more space (a very legitimate village need), the meeting space has a maximum capacity of 10 people, set up as is – this is just over half of our FD staff; average meeting attendance is over 10. Since 2014 over half of our meeting/training space has been taken away. Following the pandemic, 5 board members with the Clerk and Treasurer present, only leaves room for 3 residents to attend any board meeting.

Again, the Fire Department remains eager to work with the board. We work for the residents, yet somehow things are seemingly viewed as “us versus you”. Why is that? Why does the word “compromise” get used when the village board has full control of major decisions?

Being a firefighter, especially a volunteer firefighter, involves pride; there is not much to be proud of as a Park Ridge Firefighter right now. Things are not healthy. The FD has done more than our part over the last 6 or 30, or 50 years.