

Board of Aldermen Committee Minutes

Date: June 21, 2017 **Chair:** William Notte **Convened:** 5:30 **Adjourned:** 6:40

Committee: Public Safety

Committee Members Present: William Notte (chair), Melinda Humphrey, President Sharon Davis made the quorum. Alderman Larson was absent as he was still recovering from knee replacement surgery.

Others Present: Mayor David Allaire, Aldermen Chris Etori and Lisa Ryan, Public Works Commissioner Jeff Wennberg, Police Chief Brian Kilcullen, and Bill Lovett and Dan Gedney from the Rutland City Fire Department.

Agenda: 1) Storm Response Update, 2) ISO Rating

Discussion: The first item on the agenda was a run through of the city's reaction to the unexpected storm that hit us on May 5. While the general consensus in the room was that the related challenges were handled successfully, the point of the discussion was to detail where there is room for improvement in future similar situations.

Mayor Allaire started with a detailed run down of the events of the storm and the day that followed, including the decision, suggested by Green Mountain Power, to temporarily shut off power to all of Rutland City. Mayor Allaire said that one of his greatest concerns was the "false sense of security" this gave people, as even with power shut off there is still a chance of electrocution from contact with a downed wire. He noted that GMP is hosting members of city government at an electrical awareness day on July 6, better communicating these dangers to the public will be discussed.

Mayor Allaire explained that despite the city having zero warning about the storm, an emergency operations center was set up at the fire station in short order. The mayor was at the operations center for several hours as were members of the fire department, police department, and Board of Aldermen president Sharon Davis. GMP was in contact with the operations center but did not have a person present there for some time, which is something that could be changed in future events.

One problem that arose during the storm aftermath was that without electrical power on the city was unable to gas up our vehicles and gas had to be acquired from a different municipality that was not as effected by the storm. Another problem was that the fire department and public works department had communications issues as the walkie talkies the DPW had are rarely used and did not properly function. Both of these issues are being looked at to prevent repeat problems in the future. An additional problem was traffic lights not working during the power outage. The possibility of adding solar batteries to lights at important intersections is being looked into.

Alderman Etori pointed out that while Mayor Allaire gave regular updates during the storm and outage, he did so on Facebook. Because Alderman Etori does not use Facebook he was unable to see these updates. Alderman Ryan and Humphrey also talked about their desire for the Board of Aldermen to be better informed during such events so as to be better able to inform members of the public reaching out to them for information. This led to a discussion of creating rapid notifications systems that could be used in the future to get information out to both city officials and the general public.

It was noted that the police, fire, and public works departments all had members who put in long hours getting the city back in order, especially clearing roadways. Commissioner Wennberg noted that having an assistant city forester was very helpful as it meant the DPW could run two full crews at the same time. Acting Fire Chief Lovett noted that the fire department handled the emergency while facing staffing challenges as five firefighters were out of state for training.

No motions came out of this discussion. As previously noted, the general feeling in regards to this storm is that the city handled the challenges successfully. Additionally, the process has begun at the mayor/department head level to address the issues that did occur to prevent similar problems at future events.

The second issue on the agenda was the city's ISO rating. This rating is the public fire protection class the city is placed in. The city is in danger of dropping from Class 3 into Class 4. This would affect various things in Rutland such as fire insurance rates.

This problem was discovered in the process of transferring responsibilities from departing Fire Chief Mike Jones. Being ranked in Class 3 is a very good rating—there are more municipalities in Class 4 than in the top three classes combined—and the fire department is doing everything they can to remain in Class 3 on a very tight deadline, as the original date for the FD to submit information for this ranking had already past before Acting Chief Lovett was even aware of the problem.

The class ranking is determined by a series of components and how these are tallied has recently been changed. The biggest points loss was in communications and the FD is in discussion with the police department about consolidating dispatching and creating a redundant system syncing fire and police, which would gain back many points.

An additional issue being addressed is getting a better tracking system for training so the FD can be properly credited for training already taking place. The FD is also in discussion with the department of public works so that water pipe inspections and water flow testing can be properly credited.

Some issues will continue to drain points from the ranking and cannot be easily addressed. One example of this is the ISO rankings aim for eleven initial responders to a fire. The FD does not have that many initial responders available and the current number is not predicted to increase due to the large additional expenses tax payers would have to bear.

However, one area where it was recognized that there was much room for improvement was on creating the proper policies for maintenance, training, and equipment testing and then ensuring that these policies are being correctly carried out. Addressing this will occur at the mayor/fire chief level.

There was no motion coming out of this discussion. The fire department requested this issue be sent to committee so that they could give the board a full detailed update on this.

Once discussion of these two agenda items was completed the meeting adjourned.