

**FIRE PROTECTION TASK FORCE**  
**September 24, 2015**

**Call to Order:**

Gay Dunne called the Thursday, September 24, 2015, meeting of the Fire Protection Task Force together at 6:00 PM.

**Members Present:**

Gay Dunne, Bellefonte Borough Council Member;  
Walt Schneider, Code Enforcement Officer/Logan Fire Company Chief  
Tim Schreffler,  
Randy Brachbill, Council Member  
Tom Mensch, Logan Fire Department  
Karen Harvey, Council Member  
Brian Walker, Council Member

**Members Absent:**

**Staff Present:**

Ralph Stewart, Bellefonte Borough Manager  
Don Holderman, Assistant Borough Manager

**Guests:**

**I. Approval of Minutes:**

R. Brachbill made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 28, 2015 Fire Protection Task Force meeting. K. Harvey seconded the motion. There was a question under manpower and marketing where it discussed service requirements for graduation as another stepping stone to attract volunteers. On the first paragraph of the second page where it discusses "Bring Your Child to Work Day" he said it needs to be spread out to other businesses within the Borough - more often than yearly. A voice vote was unanimous to approve the minutes as corrected.

**II. Reports of Subcommittees:**

**A. Fire Department** - Walt Schneider has been appointed as the new Fire Chief following the retirement of Tim Schreffler. There will be a new Logan Company Chief.

The sprinkler systems will be completed in the fire stations by early November. They will then go on the map as Protected Buildings. Mr. Holderman reported he is disappointed in some areas with the contractors but they assured him they have never been late with a contract completion.

**B. Manpower/Marketing/Statistics** - Karen Harvey informed the group that Senate Bill 299 is now Senate Bill 370. It is out of the Senate and is now in the House of Veteran's Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee.

She talked with Steve Bair, the fire director from State College about the Alpha's methods of recruitment and what was most effective and how much things cost. He provided her a breakdown by percent the source of the people that joined the Alphas. Nearly 50% of the people were attracted through the Alpha website. Over 25% joined through friends or relatives. They have a television ad that is used in movie theatres. They also post the videos on Facebook and their website. They got a miniscule amount through advertising in theatres and TV. If people are interested in going the video route the company that produced the videos is in Bellefonte - Loaded Creative. They did guidance, produced the video, and did a survey about what the best airtime would be for television. They provided the best package of those he talked with. He felt the best advertising comes from a good website, word of mouth, radio then television. They do not advertise on television every year. The Alphas have 125 on their roles...active based on certification is 100.

Tim reported participation is down. A program started three weeks ago has only eleven in it. This is the lowest number that has ever come out of this county for the program. It will run 176 hours. There are things being done to try to draw in volunteers, but every fire department is in the same situation. When Tim was part of the committee for the training site traveling to Harrisburg there was one word that kept coming out and that was regionalize your fire departments and the training site. He feels regionalization will need to happen in the future. He feels to have a strong bond you need to get the municipalities involved in this. Mr. Stewart stated Council does not want to do anything to offend the volunteers. Mr. Mensch reported the manpower isn't available now as it used to be because many of the factories are closed. Those businesses would allow employees to leave for a serious fire. The training requirements are much higher now than it used to be also. Mr. Holderman reported with all the challenges it would be easy to give up. The demographics have changed and the challenge is to see where things are today and what are some options that will work. Mr. Mensch feels you need to think outside the box and step out. Tim suggested exploring all the options. Mr. Stewart feels everyone needs to stay strong until the state steps in and focuses some resources on this issue. Walt said at the County level they are working on a Safer Grant Request for retention for the County and provides some incentives for volunteers. Walt suggested having elected officials meet with Jake, Kerry and the school district and talk about what is wanted and needed. Jake is head of the Finance Committee so he has the ability to make the agenda. Walt feels Don Kunkle is someone that they need to get in contact. He is head of the Pennsylvania State Fire Services Institute and has the legislative background and support piece to get in the hands of the elected officials to be able to make those talking points in the discussion. It was suggested that the auditorium at the hospital be reserved, have Don come up and have an elected officials night where all the elected officials in the County would be invited. Don could talk about what he is seeing statewide and what the elected officials could do. It is very complicated to get everybody on the same page. Mrs. Dunne would like to get local momentum and then regional momentum before a meeting is planned in the auditorium.

**C. Education** - Copies of the presentation Tim Schreffler made to the Chamber of Commerce were made available to the Task Force members. Mrs. Dunne felt it was the gold

standard of an education on fire protection for people who aren't familiar with the problem here. Tim had a diary of each significant Bellefonte fire and identified the circumstances they encountered in each fire and tactics that saved their efforts. He used those elements to discuss prevention and preparedness. Mr. Stewart feels it wasn't just the message but it was also the messenger. It was suggested that perhaps Tim could do his talk on C-NET. Tim wanted the message also to be that we measure our success by doing and you need to keep progressing.

**D. Funding** - Mr. Stewart had two main areas of importance that are being looked at. One is the CDBG Funding Program. Approximately \$100,000.00 per year is received. For the next application (2015) they would like to put a written application in for sprinkler systems in buildings as previously discussed. The second pot of funding is the Keystone Program. People said if you join there is potential to get funding for sprinkler systems.

**E. Historic Preservation** - Mrs. Dunne requested the Committee review the Historic Preservation minutes. Her committee will meet again on October 15th. On the map they are examining streets by their importance; how walkable they are; how visible they are and how the importance of buildings along those thoroughfares are reflected on the legends.

**F. Sprinkler Assistance -**

**III. Arson**

**IV. Future Meetings** - The next meeting will be Thursday, October 22, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers.

**V. New Business:**

Chief Schneider requested another time be explored for this meeting because it is never completed in the allotted timeframe.

**Adjournment:**

Chief Schneider made a motion to adjourn the Fire Protection Task Force meeting at 7:05 PM. Mr. Schreffler seconded the motion. A voice vote was unanimous.