

FIRE PROTECTION TASK FORCE
October 22, 2015

Call to Order:

Gay Dunne called the Thursday, October 22, 2015, meeting of the Fire Protection Task Force together at 6:00 PM.

Members Present:

Gay Dunne, Bellefonte Borough Council Member;
Randy Brachbill, Council Member
Brian Walker, Council Member

Members Absent:

Staff Present:

Ralph Stewart, Bellefonte Borough Manager
Don Holderman, Assistant Borough Manager
Vana Dainty, Keystone Community Grant Coordinator

Guests: Nick Lingenfelter

Approval of Minutes:

R. Brachbill made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 24, 2015 Fire Protection Task Force meeting. Brian Walker seconded the motion. On page 2 the company that produced the videos in Bellefonte is Loaded Creative. A voice vote was unanimous to approve the minutes as corrected.

Receive Information on the Keystone Community Program Grant – Nick is vice-president of the (?) Board. Ms. Dainty pointed out that there is no free money for this project. Anything that is going to be done either has to match dollar for dollar, which would only make it possible to get one building. They explored the Grant-to-Loan, which is what they are applying for. DCED told them if they get three people that will do the sprinkler system they will examine the grant, but there must be there buildings that are committed to do this. Because everything has to be done a certain way one of the first things the Community Development Committee did was look at all the buildings and make a list of what would be considered anchor buildings. The buildings they chose were the Kreider Exchange, the Bush Arcade, Petriken Hall, the Plaza, the Elks, and the old Bellefonte hardware. The First National Bank was identified, but it was already sprinkled. Vana started contacting people. She spoke to the owners of the Bush Arcade and they said absolutely no. Petriken Hall, which is owned by out-of-town people, is being contacted by Melissa Sieg. She wasn't hopeful because they are getting ready to put in a new furnace. Vana has been trying to contact Ron Wiser for the Crider Exchange. She did make contact with

Melinda today and he will be asked to call Vana. She talked to a board member of the Elks and will send them something in writing to present to their board.

Mr. Walker said he was working with the Elks about twelve years ago upgrading their restrooms and the kitchen and they were interested in upgrading their water service for possible sprinkler use in the future. At that time they understood there would be no cost for upgrading their line. They were under the understanding that they could upgrade at no charge so they could do sprinklers in the future. He said that to say he knows they discussed sprinklers in the past and were very interested in them. Bill MacMath will be speaking to the Board and Mr. Walker is willing to attend the meeting with him.

The first grant that is dollar to dollar would only be for one building, an Anchor Building Grant.

The old Bellefonte Hardware has agreed to be sprinkled. Ms. Dainty hasn't approached Herlocher's. The old Heilig Meyers building is a prime anchor building and the building next to that would be a good one also.

Part of what happens with the grant is as the money comes recirculating in you can do other buildings so there would always be money to work with for economic development in a lot of different ways. You can get up to \$500,000.00.

Nick has been working on the application and compiling how the application would work; how the credit check would be done; and filing liens. They would not be charging any interest but there would need to be an application fee to cover the things that have to happen. There would need to be an audit every year. And you would have to pay for credit checks. The liens would be held by the Borough. In writing things you have to write how you came to the decision of the buildings that are being used. You have to show the history of the fires. You have to show a budget, which cannot be done until you have the buildings that are going to be done.

Vana talked to DCED about what would be the best grant. Vana and Mr. Stewart talked about potential buildings. Every building that gets sprinkled is one less building to catch on fire and spread to other buildings. She would like to have the grant in by February 2016, but it won't be looked at until July 2016.

There is an advantage to being a Keystone Community. It puts you higher up on the list. Keystone Community programs are looked at first.

Nick said it is not an easy process to develop an application. You really have to estimate what the costs are going to be. He can't come back at the end of their term requesting more money. Everything has to be up front.

Mr. Brachbill feels every building in the downtown could be considered an anchor building. When doing the estimating he feels you have to leave room in there for change orders. He also asked what the payback schedule would be for people. Nick said that is what they are trying to decide. Mr. Holderman told them they would need to think on a sliding scale. Mr. Holderman said Mrs. Dunne's committee is working on the criteria to prioritize. He felt you could then take the ones that are highest on the list. There was a question if a pump could be shared if buildings are all in one block. Ms. Dainty said that is a question for Walt Schneider. The cost of pumps depends on the location. Along with the fire pump you need to have an emergency power source.

Mr. Holderman recommends they continue their work on this grant. Mrs. Dunne and her sub-committee have been very focused on historical value. Location is important and anchor buildings situated on...they have a map with street rankings. She will give Ms. Dainty one.

Gateway Commercial Corridor is Water Street coming into town; Bishop Street and Allegheny Street. Then there are primary streets that go through the downtown business district. The buildings with the primary facades on those streets would get a higher ranking. It is not complete yet. They are trying to work it into an application. This may be where they come together. They would ask property owners for information about their property. Nick said that needs to be included in the application. Mrs. Dunne is trying to make it so clear that the property owner could fill it out and it wouldn't need much jurying by HARB. The Fire Risk factors are also there that will be put together with the other information and then get a score from a building. She feels there should be a joint meeting with the application. She feels Sue Hannegan would be a good asset. She interprets what is said and puts it into clear language with historical accuracy. Ms. Dainty needs to be included in that meeting because there are specific things that need to be included in the application. The applicants will need to have their work done in a timely manner. Ms. Dainty and Nick would be the ones that would check on the work being done.

On Mrs. Dunne's committee are Sue Hannegan; Brian Van Sweeden, PHMC; and Glenn Vernon.

Ms. Dainty feels it would be nice if Council would put an ordinance together that gives owners a certain time to get their buildings sprinkled.

Mr. Holderman feels there could be more help with the CDBG money. Mrs. Dunne feels it would be better to use the same application regardless of the funding source.

For the budgeting purposes you have to know how much the sprinkler system will cost; how much money is coming back in; and how you will handle the money that comes back in.

Vana has been downtown trying to meet the owners face-to-face to explain the process. No matter what financing, unless you are paying 100%, you have to have a cooperative owner. Mr. Stewart said it may come to the point one day that you say all the downtown buildings must be sprinkled within a certain period of time.

Mr. Holderman asked if there could be an ordinance that would require building owners to have replacement insurance of 100%.

CDBG funding cannot be given out at 0% interest. The CDBG Funding could be used for check valves on the water system side. You cannot use CDBG money for government property.

The water lines are like a grid pattern. You try to avoid a dead end line on a water system. The mains are not all the same size or the same material.

Mrs. Dunne's Historic Preservation Committee will meet again on Thursday, November 19th, at 3:00 p.m. Their subject is Historic Criteria.

Mr. Holderman was part of writing the final report that is always fresh in his mind. The way the report was drafted is they would try to push the CDBG program into this direction, which would be \$300,000.00 - \$400,000.00. The report discussed the Keystone Community program in the report and the hopes of getting \$500,000.00. The goal was to get near one million dollars. In the report if the money wasn't obtained it is unclear where the program would go. Mr. Holderman would like Mrs. Dunne to let them continue working on the funding and she can work on the criteria. In ten years if five buildings are sprinkled then a goal is met. Mr. Holderman feels Vana and Nick should continue coming to the meetings to provide monthly updates and then allow the committee to review the application before it is sent in.

Mr. Walker feels Vana and Nick has a much better feel in putting together the application as the funding agency wants to see it. He is happy to be a resource if they need it.

Recruitment & Retention of Volunteer Firefighters – Mrs. Dunne reviewed the report from Karen Harvey. She visited the websites for the Alpha, Logan, and Undine Fire Companies. She feels both Bellefonte Fire Departments could use some improvements on their websites for more direct marketing. Mr. Brachbill feels it could be on Bellefonte Borough’s website also. The Borough staff updates the website. Mr. Holderman said the Logan and Undine Fire Companies can be linked through the Borough website.

Mr. Brachbill feels the new fire fighters need to be treated with respect rather than making them feel like a lower class person. Mr. Holderman recommended bringing it up at a Fire Executive Committee meeting.

Mrs. Dunne said there is a meeting set up with Kerry Benninghoff and Jake Corman simultaneously next Friday, October 31st, at Jake’s office to discuss the Companion Bills in the senate and the house authorizing municipalities ordinance allowing some income tax credits (Senate Bill 299 and House Bill 1376). There will be a representative from Spring Township there also. There will also be a discussion time set with Mike Hanna.

Local Incentives – Mr. Schneider said you have to wait until the legislation allows them to be incorporated. Mrs. Dunne felt there were other unnamed incentives. Walt Schneider reported Indiana County offers life insurance policies, but those were provided through a Federal Grant. Bellefonte Fire Fighters have life insurance policies through Fireman’s Relief. Mr. Schneider is looking at an annuity policy at the county level. They anticipate the grant being written in March/April 2016 and the results won’t be known for a year or so after that.

Meeting Time – This meeting is just to be an update meeting. The work is supposed to be done outside the meeting. Mr. Holderman reported this is a long-term sustainable group and changes won’t be made overnight. Mr. Holderman agrees if the work isn’t being done outside the meeting this group will have to push more.

The next meeting will be announced. It will begin at 5:45 p.m. Mrs. Dunne will need to be sure the meeting is completed on time.

Adjournment:

The Fire Protection Task Force meeting adjourned at 7:25 PM.