

**FIRE PROTECTION TASK FORCE**  
**September 22, 2016**

**Call to Order:**

Randy Brachbill called the Thursday, September 22, 2016, meeting of the Fire Protection Task Force together at 6:00 PM.

**Members Present:**

Randy Brachbill, Chair, Bellefonte Borough Council Member  
Tom Mensch, Logan Fire Department  
Tim Schreffler, Logan Fire Company  
Mike Facer, Logan Fire Company  
Bob (?)

**Members Absent:**

Brian Walker, Public  
Gay Dunne, Bellefonte Borough Council President  
Walter Schneider, Bellefonte Fire Chief  
Ralph Stewart, Bellefonte Borough Manager

**Staff Present:**

Don Holderman, Assistant Borough Manager

**Guests:**

**Approval of Minutes:**

Tim Schreffler made a motion to approve the May 26, 2016 meeting minutes. Tom Mensch seconded the motion. A voice vote was unanimous.

**Sprinklers:**

Sprinklers Grant – Mr. Holderman reported when the task force put together the fire protection final report the recommendation was to come up over the next ten years with \$1 million or \$1.5 million from the State Department of Community and Economic Development when the CDBG applications are submitted. The thought was to convince them to accept a project where fire suppression systems would be placed into privately owned buildings. There was one example where the CDBG is a Federal program under HUD and Bellefonte Borough is an entitlement community. Since Mr. Holderman has been with the Borough it has been averaging \$100,000.00 to \$135,000.00 a year. The last several years it has been around the \$100,000.00 mark. Mesa, Arizona used CDBG money just for this type of project for their downtown historic structures. Last year when the state transferred the Borough used to try to administer the whole program, but it is a very difficult program to try to administer when you aren't doing it every year. The Borough would do multi-year projects because it was difficult to

come up with a project for \$100,000.00. By the time you did all the things they required you to do including the advertisements you are usually left with approximately \$70,000.00. The Borough would wait and do multi-year projects. This money was used for the Streetscape Projects on Allegheny Street. Because the state then wanted to consolidate and bring the program under the Counties to administer, fortunately Centre County and Matt Milliron, who runs the program for the County, didn't really have the staff to completely administer it so they said Bellefonte could continue to do the work, but they will submit the paperwork so that is how it works. They provided some of their expertise when the project was submitted for 2015. Mr. Holderman had submitted for the sprinkler system two or three years ago and ran into roadblocks. When he had the support from the County it was tried again last year and it turns out that no County has received their contract for the 2015 year but he was told that it went through. They are waiting on the contract to see what conditions they may levy with it. The plan that Council is on board with is using this funding long-term. The other thought was when the Keystone Community Program began it was thought that Bellefonte would get a \$500,000.00 grant just for the suppression system effort. They have changed those grants for that funding. Mr. Holderman feels there is a very good opportunity and Bellefonte could be a leader in the state if they can make this program work and use the \$100,000.00. It's hard finding programs to work with their guidelines. It is tied to another committee. They were supposed to look at the other criteria. The task force just wanted to look at the downtown buildings and preserve the downtown. The committee wanted to expand it to the historic homes as well. Mr. Holderman feels sure that the priority will be looking at the Crider Exchange, Petrikin Hall, Bush Arcade, and the building across from the Exchange. Mr. Holderman feels you get through three years and you get one big building completed. Then you start again. There is a map of all the buildings in the downtown that have sprinkler systems. The Historic Preservation Committee is going to come out with a list of the top ten buildings that should be funded in that order if that path is chosen. Rodney Beard spent approximately \$36,000.00 to get a sprinkler system in the Brownstone building. Because these projects are being done with public money the owner will need to contribute to the project. It will not be considered a loan to the building owner. Bellefonte is an entitlement community and has received funding since back in the 80's. You have a three-year contract where you have to spend the money. Mr. Holderman suggested possibly \$200,000.00 would be enough to do the Crider Exchange and then show the success of what has been done with the CDBG. Mr. Holderman said fire suppression systems do not bring down the cost of insurance on them. Another success over the last seven years is a lower ISO rating. It was suggested that something could be put together to put on the website showing things that have improved regarding fire safety in the Borough. Mr. Holderman said when codes were trying to be implemented it was a difficult time for the Borough. People complain about COG but there has to be a common thread between the Borough code system and enforcement. People need to understand that the code official looks at a manual and that determines how things should be. Mr. Holderman said the education part should never stop. He feels after time it will get easier in Bellefonte because the contractors begin to know what they can and can't do. The architects know Bellefonte is the same as any area in the Centre Region. Regarding fire equipment, when you look at the box alarm system that was changed to improve response, there is more equipment coming to the area than ever.

Mr. Brachbill will condense the committee report to say Grants/Funding. He then would like to do a marketing/branding promotional thing. That could be done as a group or a few people could get together and write something up to be put on the website. He has never seen any minutes from the Historic Preservation Committee. Mr. Holderman said the sub-committees don't take minutes. Mr. Holderman does not feel there would be any grants found that subsidizes what the CDBG funding provides. Mr. Brachbill thought there was a grant listed in information that came out from the Nittany Valley Joint Planning Commission regarding fire protection. Mr. Holderman said Sue Hannegan sits on that and she and Randy could be alert for something.

Mr. Brachbill feels the priority of this group at this point is to get something done in town. Mr. Holderman knows there is only a small impact of window that you can have so his focus is really on the CDBG and trying to get \$1 million and get some of the downtown buildings sprinkled. There was concern expressed about the YMCA and the safety of the children that go there. There was concern expressed about the children in town and the disappointment of the YMCA moving out of Bellefonte. The YMCA asked the Borough to supply a support letter for a grant they were applying for. Council struggled with the importance of a building in the downtown and what it would mean for it to leave the Borough.

The Bellefonte School District is now considering just renovating the football field in its current location and putting the track field around the football field.

Mr. Holderman said the 2015 CDBG money is already obligated for sprinklers. In the next month or two it will be known whether the 2016 funding will be going for that.

Mr. Brachbill is going to ask if someone from Station 2 would be willing to sit on this task force. He already railroaded Mike to be on it. (?) had an open house scheduled for Sunday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, from noon to 4:00 p.m.

Mr. Holderman will make copies of (?) for the members of the committee.

#### **Fire Hydrant Flushing:**

Mr. Brachbill asked if this could be put on the agenda of the Water Authority. Mr. Holderman said they do flush the hydrants. Mr. Brachbill would like to have a report on this.

#### **Next Meeting:**

The next meeting of the Fire Protection Task Force will be Tuesday, November 22<sup>nd</sup> at 6:00 p.m.

#### **Adjournment:**

Mr. Brachbill adjourned the Fire Protection Task Force meeting at 6:55 PM.