

**NEWBERRY COUNTY COUNCIL PUBLIC SAFETY AND COURTS COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

September 18, 2023

The Newberry County Council Public Safety and Courts Committee met on Monday, September 18, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers at the Courthouse Annex, 1309 College Street, Newberry, SC, for a special called meeting.

Notice of the meeting was duly advertised, as required by law.

PRESENT: Todd Johnson, Committee Chair
Karl Sease, Committee Member
Jeff Shacker, County Administrator
Tommy Long, Emergency Services Director
Brandon Wicker, Emergency Services Coordinator
Chris Johnson, Chairman of the Board Rescue Squads
Robert Dennis, Station 2 Fire Chief
Andrew Wigger, Clerk to Council/PIO

Absent: Johnny Mack Scurry, Committee Member

Mr. Johnson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and determined a quorum to be present.

1. Status of current air packs in Newberry County.

- Mr. Wicker presented to the committee the status of the self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) within the county.
- Mr. Wicker said that a loose estimate shows the county has about 150 packs, the cost of one pack with mask and two cylinders is around \$9,000. Approximately 70 packs currently need replacing, due to not meeting current National Fire Protection Association 1981 specifications.

- Mr. Wicker said that several departments used this year's Volunteer Strategic Assistance and Fire Equipment (V-SAFE) grant to purchase SCBA and cylinders. He added that departments spent \$11,300 to cover overages.
- Mr. Wicker said the SCBA repair costs by year were as follows: 2020 (\$2,782), 2021 (\$5,118.40), 2022 (\$4,977.55), 2023, as of February, (\$415.15).
- Mr. Wicker said that per the NFPA 1981 Sec. 4.4.1: "All SCBA models that are labeled as being compliant with this standard shall undergo recertification on an annual basis."
- Mr. Wicker said that annual flow tests can be performed by Anderson Fire at \$35 per air pack. These annual tests will likely cut down on maintenance costs and possibly extend the life of the air pack.
- Mr. Wicker also said that all packs with certified dates prior to the 2008 edition are being phased out, due to parts no longer being manufactured. He said some departments are still using air packs that were purchased in the late 1990s, early 2000s.
- Mr. Johnson asked how many air packs per department the county has. Mr. Wicker said that number varies depending on how many trucks they have in their fleet; he said he thinks they've had anywhere between 8-12 to about 16, so far.
- Mr. Johnson asked if they really need to keep that many per department. Mr. Wicker said that is something they are looking into, as well. He said NFPA asked they have one per seat on a fire engine.
- Mr. Johnson said he's not asking that to just save money, but to be practical because he doesn't want to put 16 air packs on a fire truck, and some aren't used because they don't have anyone to use them. He said he is trying to find common ground.

- Mr. Johnson said that is a small price to pay in the scheme of things for someone's life and a small price to pay for the coverage the county gets from the departments and what the volunteers give. He said he's an advocate for this and they need to roll up their sleeves and get into this.
- Mr. Sease said he thinks they need to do it and they cannot send someone out without the right equipment.

2. Request for reimbursement for air packs.

- Mr. Dennis said emergency incidents are steadily on the incline, making a stretch budget increasingly thin, putting more duties on first responders with fewer funding dollars to support and equip the growing need to fulfill the responsibilities of Newberry County.
- On March 1, 2023, Mr. Dennis said they came before council with the immediate need of replacements of SCBA at Prosperity Fire Department, and that was met with, "go to the Public Safety Committee." He said they had already spoken with Mr. Long who informed them there was no money they could borrow, steal, or move. He said Prosperity (station) took it upon themselves to vote and purchase four air packs, in hopes that would bring them up to where they needed to be. That money, Mr. Dennis said, came from fundraisers, donations and memorials made to the fire department. He said this is not the proper procedure for the purchase of mandatory equipment.
- Mr. Dennis said 11 departments have used their fundraising money to make purchases of equipment that Newberry County has benefited from. He added that they put in for grant funding and they do get grants, but it is not enough.
- Mr. Dennis mentioned that during the March 1, 2023, meeting, after he spoke, Economic Development asked for the purchase of a sign for Highway 773, at the Mid-Carolina Industrial Park, at the price of \$122,000. He said three trucks could be equipped for \$113,890, leaving \$8,109 for a nice sign.

- Mr. Dennis said that a sign does not attract industries to build, they want to come to a place where they know their investment is going to be protected and that sign doesn't protect their investment.
- Mr. Dennis said they cannot have homeland security without hometown security. He said that means taxpayers and the governing body have the responsibility to make sure emergency services are fully equipped to respond to emergencies.
- Mr. Dennis said emergency services are not cheap, and there will be price increases as the future presents itself.
- Mr. Dennis said they have applied for a FEMA Grant, and if awarded, that will benefit three departments, if they do not get it, they must come back to Newberry County.
- Mr. Dennis then mentioned two incidents: the Charleston 9 tragedy and following that investigation Charleston increased their emergency services budget by four million dollars. On May 26, 2023, six firefighters became victims of a structural collapse, with one passing away. Mr. Dennis said that report has not come out but feels confident that budgets will increase.
- Mr. Dennis said not only are they here to talk about the need for the SCBA, but there is also a need to replace rolling stock.
- Mr. Dennis said on June 26, 2023, they took possession of their new SCBAs, and received training, bringing that engine up to compliance. He said they are asking the committee for consideration for reimbursement of the money spent, which was about \$35,800. He said they understand the need to search for the money, but also know they've got to provide an invaluable service.

3. Update and questions regarding Newberry County Gun Policy.

- Mr. Long said he does not have an update at this time, as he is still waiting for a draft copy of the policy from the attorney.

- Mr. Johnson said it needs revisiting. He said they wanted to acknowledge that public safety officials do carry concealed weapons and they want to a nice safe place to put them and do a policy that is compliant.

4. Mutual Aid Agreement with the City of Newberry.

- Mr. Long said he wanted to bring this to the committee for information and they are in the process of updating that agreement with the City of Newberry.
- Mr. Long said the document still needs to be reviewed by the attorney and once he gets those back, the county administrator will be able to sign.
- Mr. Johnson said as long as the attorney is fine with it, he's fine with it.

5. Updates from the Rescue Squads.

- Mr. Chris Johnson provided an update on what they have been doing at the Board of Rescue Squads and Rescue Squads throughout the county.
- Mr. Chris Johnson said they are in the final stages of the training of their new portable ultrasound units and once that is approved, they have a group to test the training out to see that it meets the county's needs and as long as it does, they will be pushed out to the rest of the county.
- Mr. Chris Johnson said by the end of the month the new data point that they must complete and send to DHEC every time they treat a patient, that report has been updated and pending approval.
- Mr. Chris Johnson said they had some meetings with Spartan Race officials. He said that will be out of the Newberry Rescue Squad District and they have worked through their staffing commitments, they will have two ambulances staffed with volunteers for both days.
- Mr. Chris Johnson said the remount for the ambulance out of Newberry Rescue Squad has been completed and is on the road.

- Mr. Chris Johnson said from the board standpoint, they completely support developing a rolling stock replacement plan.
- Mr. Chris Johnson said switching roles, not speaking on behalf of his board, that he knows the lease for the building in front of the fair grounds is coming due in the next six months. He said Newberry Rescue Squad would strongly suggest that the lease not be renewed. By doing so, he requested the original plan for the Training Grounds for emergency services go back into place.

6. Consolidated 5 property transfer/building demo.

- Mr. Long said the attorney is working on the property transfer, and that this property is split between the department and the county, and the department wants it transferred to the county.
- Mr. Long said the department also requested the county find a way to tear the old building down. He said he thinks they would be satisfied working it into next year's budget. However, he said they would like to go ahead and get it tested for lead and asbestos.
- Mr. Johnson said that was the only concern he had, they accepted the building and got ready to tear it down and find out it has lead and asbestos. He also said that should be a simple thing to take care of.

7. Rolling Stock Plan/Fire Apparatus Status

- Mr. Wicker said that rolling stock has been an issue for several years, because of the way the county purchases apparatuses. He said he is just going through the fire engine side of this, but he has a 20-year replacement plan for all fire engine rolling stock, all EMS rolling stock, and all rescue squad rolling stock.
- Mr. Wicker said per NFPA 1911, it is recommended that all frontline apparatus be moved to reserve status when it reaches 15 years of age and be removed

from service around the 25-year mark, due to safety concerns for the individuals operating the apparatus.

- In Newberry County, Mr. Wicker said the average age of Frontline Engines is currently 20 years: one is from 1994; one is from 1995; six are from 2004; one is from 2006; three are from 2012; and one is from 2018.
- Mr. Wicker said the Newberry County Fire Service currently has seven fire engines in immediate need of replacement with three due in roughly three years. He said they are looking to update the engine fleet with custom cab trucks due to various needs, including safety and storage.
- Mr. Wicker said currently, a dealer has nine Custom Pumpers that will be available around the first quarter of 2024. The prices of these trucks are around \$700,000 which includes loose equipment. He said these trucks, if purchased later, could be around \$1,000,000.
- Mr. Johnson said he didn't want to look a gift horse in the mouth, but sometimes if something is too good to be true, it can be. He asked why no one else isn't looking at these trucks. Mr. Wicker said the dealer ordered them and took a chance knowing they would not be hard to sell. He said other departments are looking at two of these trucks now.
- Mr. Todd Johnson asked Mr. Shacker if the county has any money set aside in capital purchase for fire trucks. Mr. Shacker said not for fire trucks.
- Mr. Shacker said he thinks it's a pretty good deal to get some of these trucks and save some money and get them on the road sooner. He said they must be able to protect the residents of Newberry County.
- Mr. Johnson said they would have to look at funding resources because they'd have to borrow money.
- Mr. Shacker said they would probably go lease purchase because the debt levy is set.

- Mr. Shacker said in a couple of weeks, he'd like to see a protective revenue stream on the change they've made to the multi-county park. He also said Parker Poe is working on that and that could be a funding vehicle.
- Mr. Johnson said this is a pro public safety county that wants to work with public safety, but they had to go up two and a half mills on the budget this year and it will continue to go up if they must fund these kinds of purchases.


Other discussions:

- Mr. Shacker gave an update on the projects from the Capital Project Sales Tax. He said the goal is to have architect recommendation for approval during the October 18, 2023, Newberry County Council meeting.
- Mr. Sease made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Johnson. The motion was approved 2-0.
- Mr. Johnson declared the meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

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Todd Johnson, Committee Chairman



Andrew Wigger, Clerk to Council

Minutes Approved: 10/24/23