

**HAMEL FIRE TRANSITION STUDY GROUP WORK SESSION MINUTES OF  
NOVEMBER 1, 2019**

Hamel Fire Transition Study Group members met on November 1, 2019 at 7:00 a.m. at the Hamel Fire Station.

**I. Call to Order**

**Members present:** Mayor Kathleen Martin, Council Member Dino DesLauriers, Hamel Fire Chief Jeff Ruchti, Assistant Hamel Fire Chief Mario Fabrizio, Public Safety Director Ed Belland, Sgt. Jason Nelson, Finance Director Erin Barnhart, Assistant City Administrator Jodi Gallup, and City Administrator Scott Johnson

**Members absent:**

**II. Updates on Assignments and Next Steps**

Mayor Martin provided an update to the group regarding her phone call with Assistant Chief Mario Fabrizio. She stated that, based on a meeting held with only representatives from Medina (no Hamel reps were invited), they had decided that at this time, there was a need to look into hiring a consultant to review this opportunity to transition the Hamel Fire Department from an independent entity to a municipal department. The Medina reps' position is that a consultant would allow the City of Medina to do its due diligence and to further review the costs of this option.

The group discussed the importance of finding the right consultant who does not use a template report. There may be a local consultant or retired fire chief that could provide this service.

Mario Fabrizio stated the Hamel Fire Board wrote their letter in June due to a request from the City. Hamel respects the decision by Medina reps to take a step back in the process, it should have taken place earlier in the process, prior to expending time, resource and effort. Further, he clarified that the steps implied in this engagement creating a proposal scope for the consultant, selecting a consultant, the consultant gathering and analyzing data, the parties reviewing the results and determining a course of action will take time. He stated that a realistic perspective is that work would not begin until early 2020, and it would be unlikely to produce actionable recommendations until after the budget cut-off for 2021, making it likely that no changes would be brought about until 2022. All of the fire departments need investments, which was well socialized in the strategy discussions held in the fall of 2018. This process will essentially put these investments on hold and cause challenges for all the fire departments. He also informed the group that the considerations that were offered by the Hamel Fire Board, essentially the willingness to transfer assets to Medina for no cost, should not be assumed in 2022. While the Hamel Board may still be willing to offer that, it will need to be revisited once the City representatives determine what, if any, course of action they want to take. Hamel Fire Department would need to negotiate this in the future.

Mayor Martin informed the group that she is intrigued by the offer from the Hamel Fire Department and did not want to end discussions. A consultant could look at this proposal and see if this makes sense. It would provide an opportunity to evaluate and investigate. A professional opinion is needed from an expert on this topic.

Mario Fabrizio respected what was stated by Mayor Martin. He shared his concerns with the analysis taking on a life of its own. Management and defining the role of the consultant would be important. Defining the governance, scope, and management for a consultant is of paramount importance in a successful consulting engagement. He also stated that, based on comments made by Council Member DesLauriers on 3 separate occasions, it was evident the City wanted to look at a scope greater than what had been agreed in the letter sent to City Council.

Council Member DesLauriers said that was a fair understanding. The City cannot just look at one option. Medina needs to review all of the options to determine what is best. Reviewing the Hamel Fire Department offer would need to be part of the consultants' scope as an option, with or without the capital.

Mayor Martin appreciated the opportunity from the Hamel Fire Department. Medina is lacking information from an expert within the fire service arena to guide the City.

Erin Barnhart also discussed the importance of determining future staffing models and addressing recruitment issues.

Mario Fabrizio understands why the City wants to take this step. Medina needs to figure this out and then come back for discussions with the fire departments. However, given that potential for a different scope, it would be wrong to assume that if the scope is beyond the simple transition of Hamel to a municipal organization, the current considerations offered by the Hamel Fire Department would still stand.

Council Member DesLauriers stated the City would need to make any negotiations in the future contingent on certain requirements.

Mario Fabrizio informed the group that the board members for both organizations will change in the future and any concessions from their June letter would also change and be rethought. The same concessions cannot be assumed in the future.

Mayor Martin said changes cannot be made in a vacuum by the City. The information from this discussion can be brought back to the Hamel Fire Board and the City's side can be given. The City needs to see if this is the right way forward and we need to go through this process.

Council Member DesLauriers explained that a public process and buy-in would be needed for residents. The City could look at the option provided by Hamel FD and other options/models for service.

Mario Fabrizio agreed to reach out to the State Fire Marshall for a list of possible consultants. He also said Hamel FD, the other area fire departments, and municipalities will be involved with data gathering. Medina, not the fire departments, needs to define the scope of what they are looking for in fire services and shop it out. Good benchmark data is needed and information on future fire costs will be needed to help educate residents.

Council Member DesLauriers explained to the group that the consultant could look at the municipal fire option proposed by Hamel FD and Medina could ask for other options including a Hamel FD without the assets. Mario Fabrizio reminded the group that while Hamel recognizes that Medina is it's only customer today, the Hamel Board is charged with representing the best interests of the Hamel Fire Department and the services it delivers and assets remain an integral component of that.

Erin Barnhart pointed out that there are many pitfalls with current fire department structures. Medina needs to look at options and determine what makes sense long-term.

Mayor Martin noted that there was not enough time to apply for a Fire Marshal grant in 2019 for 2020. A draft RFP would need to be written and brought forward for City Council discussion and possible next steps.

**Adjournment at 7:55 a.m.**