



Knollwood – Lake Bluff
Joint Fire / EMS Concept Proposal
An Alignment of Efficiency & Culture

Situation

The Village of Lake Bluff (“Village”) and the Rockland Fire Protection District (“District”) have partnered for many years to train, respond, attack, confine and extinguish fires when they occur with a minimal loss of life and property in the greater Lake Bluff community, including both incorporated Lake Bluff and the unincorporated Knollwood area.

To avoid capital and operating costs, both agencies have contracted for emergency medical services. The District recently entered into an agreement with the Village of Libertyville for ambulance services, and the Village remains in a long-term service agreement with the City of Lake Forest. In these arrangements, we are both at the mercy of an outside agency’s management capacity, performance, priorities, and organizational values.

Fortunately, both the Village and the District have successfully provided Fire and EMS support through very capable and well-trained volunteers, paid-on-call, and/or paid-on-premise personnel. These arrangements have allowed us to avoid “legacy costs” such as pension and health insurance expenses that would be unworkable for communities our size. Yet, despite our prudent approach to providing these services, the cost of emergency medical service continues to be a significant and ever-escalating burden for our community. There is little opportunity to control these expenses due to the absence of competitive pressures or revenue opportunities to defray the cost of service.

We owe it to the residents of our communities to continually re-examine how to best serve them and provide them with the long-term sustainability they deserve. With this in mind, we write to set forth a new alternative for the District’s consideration. This proposal explores a District/Village joint service agreement that provides:

- A phased, three-year approach to realize joint fire and emergency medical services
- 24-hour, 365-day staffing by four regular paid-on-premise firefighter / paramedics, supplemented with additional paid-on-call and volunteer personnel
- Demonstrable cost savings while providing the same or better quality of services
- The opportunity to continue and expand our proud and shared tradition of fire protection by local volunteers

Goals & Objectives

In making this proposal, we seek to create and build on the conditions necessary for excellence:

- Alignment of organizational and cultural values that lead to effective decisions and practices
- Customer-centric service and governance that reflects our interests
- Implementation of industry best practices that are most possible in a nimble organization
- Striving for efficiency that demonstrates our respect for our taxpayers and residents
- A collaboration mindset that continues to realize the best outcomes for the greater Lake Bluff community

Importantly, this proposal is consistent with the Village’s 2023 Strategic Plan in that it strives to “*deliver high-quality cost effective municipal services that meet community needs by supporting volunteer Fire/EMS service provision.*”

Background & Qualifications

The Village provides fire protection services to an area of approximately 5 square miles, including contractual arrangements with the Arden Shore North Fire Protection District; the Arden Shore South Fire Protection Districts; and the Shore Acres County Club. The Village anticipates continuing services to these areas under this proposal.

The Village's 45 members are trained to respond to and control hazardous material situations, provide underground and underwater rescue activities, and provide medical services in order to stabilize the condition of the sick and injured. The Village Fire Department has attained an Insurance Services Organization (ISO) rating of Class 3. (A Class 3 rating is among the best for volunteer agencies in the State.) The Village receives dispatch services from the Village of Glenview through an intergovernmental agreement. We anticipate that these services could be extended to include the Rockland service area.

The District's service area includes the community of Knollwood and the Sanctuary subdivision of the Village of Lake Bluff. Under this proposal, the boundaries of this District would be maintained.

The District has 40 members who frequently train with the Village's department at the Lake Bluff Fire Training Facility and jointly respond to calls alongside one another. Identical to the Village, the District has obtained a laudable ISO rating of Class 3. The District receives 9-1-1 and Communications functions service through the Village of Libertyville, whose services are provided by the Vernon Hills Police/Countryside Fire Consolidated Communications Center. District administrative duties are managed by a Volunteer Fire Chief.

Scope of Services

We anticipate that the joint services would include:

- ✓ Residential and commercial structure fire response
- ✓ Carbon monoxide response
- ✓ Vehicle fire response
- ✓ Wires down response
- ✓ Rubbish, grass, trash, and all other fire response
- ✓ Fire alarm response
- ✓ Elevator rescue/alarm response
- ✓ Smoke investigation response
- ✓ Hazardous material response
- ✓ Underground and underwater rescue activities
- ✓ Confined space response
- ✓ Dive rescue response
- ✓ Swift water response
- ✓ Ice dive response
- ✓ Wildland fire response
- ✓ Active shooter response
- ✓ Motor vehicle accident response, including extrication
- ✓ Advanced Life Support (ALS) Transport Ambulance Service (Paramedics)
- ✓ Dispatch services
- ✓ Smoke detector installation or assist
- ✓ General public assist response
- ✓ Special event planning and coverage
- ✓ Fire prevention and education programs
- ✓ Fire investigation
- ✓ Fire inspection and re-inspection for commercial and multifamily occupancies
- ✓ Plan review services
- ✓ Cooperation with Lake County's building department
- ✓ Administrative support (Executive Assistant)
- ✓ Leadership attendance at Board meetings
- ✓ Periodic activity reports (operations and financial)

It is noteworthy that both agencies currently have personnel whom are Technical Level trained and participate on county special response teams and we would expect many of these professionals to be responders under this proposal.

Operations and Implementation

We assume that these services can be delivered through four (4) regularly staffed paid-on-premise members cross-trained to serve as firefighters and paramedics. Their services will be supplemented by paid-on-call and volunteer personnel. All in, we expect that a roster of 40+ will provide an adequate number of responders to fulfill staffing needs.

Starting as soon as Year 2, initial responses for any call may come from both, either, or neither station (dynamic deployment from a predetermined location in the service area depending on the nature of the call and time of day). Operations will rely on MABAS response for back up and ARAs for certain structures and/or uses.

Year 1

1. Maintain existing operations and staff (begin sharing paid-on-premise expenses), deployment of resources, and ambulance contracts.
2. Provide 12-month notice to existing ambulance service providers.
3. Recruit and hire certified paid-on-premise personnel.
4. Develop and adopt a joint governance/management model.
5. Develop and adopt an asset and fleet management plan.
6. Obtain licensure for non-transport advanced life support (ALS).
7. Transition to shared dispatching services.
8. Create response framework to / from other jurisdictions (e.g. ARAs, MABAS cards).
9. Solicit proposals and enter into ambulance billing services agreement.
10. Acquire used ambulance for Year 2 commencement of ambulance services.

Year 2

1. Begin to provide ambulance services.
2. Assess effectiveness to new staffing model.
3. Begin dynamic deployment of response assets between the Lake Bluff and Knollwood stations to reduce response times.
4. Begin training and maintenance certification for paramedics.
5. Implement strategies from asset and fleet management plan.

Year 3

1. Continue to assess/develop and adjust to new staffing model.
2. Study and monitor dynamic deployment of response assets between the Lake Bluff and Knollwood stations to reduce response times.
3. Consider liquidation of excess capital assets consistent with plan.
4. Assess possible expansion of service areas.
5. Evaluate administrative staff support.

Financial Considerations

The Village and District collectively spend approximately \$1.3 million annually on fire and emergency medical service, as shown below.

Today

<u>Function</u>	<u>Village</u> (Avg. using FY17 basis)	<u>District</u>	<u>Total</u>
Operating	\$ 335,161	\$ 390,000	\$ 725,161
Capital	\$ 120,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 220,000
Ambulance Contract	\$ 307,135	\$ 120,000	\$ 427,135
Total	\$ 762,296	\$ 610,000	\$ 1,372,296

An estimation of expenses with a joint approach shows long-term financial benefits, as seen in the table below. We assume:

- o Acquisition and outfitting of a pre-owned ambulance in Year 1 that is ready to operate in Year 2, at an estimated cost of \$150,000.
- o Each paid-on-premise member receives \$17/hour, resulting in a ~\$150k per year expenditure for the two 12-hour shifts.
- o Funding of one (1) regular administrative staff member in all years.
- o Operational expenses will increase at rate of 5% annually.
- o One-time \$50,000 total joint contribution in Year One for capital.
- o \$120,000/year total joint contribution to vehicle and major equipment replacement (under a sinking fund model)
- o \$25,000/year total joint contribution for other capital expenses.
- o Contracts for ambulance service with outside agencies will be honored for Year 1 only.
- o The projections below do not include ambulance fee or asset liquidation revenues, which would both increase the financial effectiveness of the proposal.

Future – Joint Approach

<u>Function</u>	<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>	<u>Year 4</u>	<u>Year 5</u>
Operating	\$ 935,306	\$ 982,071	\$ 1,031,175	\$ 1,082,734	\$ 1,136,870
Capital	\$ 325,000	\$ 195,000	\$ 195,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000
Ambulance Contract	\$ 450,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total	\$ 1,710,306	\$ 1,177,071	\$ 1,226,175	\$ 1,282,734	\$ 1,336,870

**Assuming an annual increase in combined current expenses of 3%,
 we anticipate a cost savings of about \$522,550 over five years.**

Asset Management

This joint model presents an opportunity to reduce our capital footprint and eliminate redundant major capital assets. We anticipate that both agencies can reduce their fleets and other equipment, resulting in additional savings and revenue not accounted for in the prior Financial Considerations section. For example, the reduction of a single pumper truck from a joint fleet would eliminate a future \$500,000 capital outlay.

A joint asset plan should also consider the future of the Knollwood Fire Station after the planned reconstruction of the Route 41/176 Intersection, which will require the closure of the existing Station. While best practices would dictate that only one station would serve a joint service area as envisioned in this proposal, either station is geographically placed to meet or improve current response times; additionally, dynamic deployment of resources would undoubtedly result in improved response times.

An equitable approach would suggest that each agency would realize any revenue from the dissolution of their respective assets. Certainly, this partnership would have the District retain the proceeds of any sale of the Knollwood Fire Station. Other assets could be managed through a jointly developed asset and fleet management plan.

Next Steps

1. Hold meeting to discuss joint concept
2. Consider modifications to joint concept
3. Determine if consensus exists to engage in negotiations

Summary

This proposal offers the communities of Lake Bluff and Knollwood the opportunity to continue their traditions of providing high levels of Fire and EMS at responsible costs. The communities would achieve assured response by professional personnel and, importantly, both departments would continue to maintain their identities and service districts.

