January 16, 1997

Dear Concerned Citizens of Meridian Township:

The Public Safety Department is managed by a team of four members. We are that team. Like you, we are all residents of Meridian Township and each one of us cares about the quality of our community's public safety services. We wanted you to know that we have combined experience of more than 98 years in the delivery of police, fire and emergency medical services. Out of those 98 years, 65 years have been in the service of Meridian Township.

As residents of Meridian Township, we are raising our families here or we have raised them here and many of our grown children have now made their homes in the Township.

As a team, we have worked together to design the unique public safety system that is now operating in our community. We are proud of it. We think it would be a mistake to go back to separate departments. We appreciate the opportunity to openly communicate our opinion on this issue to the Police, Fire and Ambulance Commission.

We believe that this report is a detailed and accurate analysis of the Township's struggles to date. It explains why we feel the way we do.

Thank you for your interest and concern. Feel free to call any one of us with your questions.

Sincerely,

[Signatures]

Jay Kohl
Director of Public Safety

Stan Schachter
Assistant Deputy Director-Public Safety

Phillip C. Johnson
Deputy Director - Fire Division

Robert Dutcher
Deputy Director - Police Division
Public Safety in Meridian Township

911

A 25 Year Analysis
PUBLIC SAFETY:

A 25 YEAR ANALYSIS
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INTRODUCTION
PUBLIC SAFETY:
A 25 YEAR ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

*Meridian Township has been studying public safety as an option to the traditional police and fire service for more than twenty-five years.*

Over the past 25 years, the Township has conducted a series of studies comparing the benefits of public safety with the more traditional forms of delivery of police and fire services. The studies accurately predicted a greater demand for future police and fire services and uniformly recommended moving to some form of public safety. Those studies also predicted the benefits of cross-training. In most cases, their predictions related to growth rates of the Township and to public safety implementation problems were on target.

This report will focus on: prior public safety and police/fire staffing studies in Meridian Township, a comparison of the costs of public safety with comparable police and fire services, the conversion costs to public safety, the collective bargaining issues that have impacted the delivery of public safety services, and the perspectives of other change agents in the fire industry.

The material in this report is presented in chronological order, although it occasionally deviates from a strict time line to more fully explain some of the complex issues that arose during the transition. While the scope of this report has been restricted to a summary of the most relevant material, more detail can be found in the Reference Book.

There are also many other reports from sources outside the Township, as well as Township Public Safety Committee and Board meeting minutes, and historic information that will be
made available to you. As your study proceeds, there will undoubtedly be more material that you will wish to consider, which we will be happy to obtain for you.

At the present time in Meridian’s Department of Public Safety, 22 members function solely in their traditional role as firefighters and emergency medical responders, and 12 members function solely in their traditional role as police officers. However, every member of the department now has a license from the State of Michigan in the emergency medical field. There are 32 members who perform as public safety officers. They are certified police officers and have also been certified by the State of Michigan up to the Firefighter I and II level. They have all the credentials necessary to be police officers and firefighters. There are also six mobile commanders who respond and are available, when necessary, to assume command of fire and emergency medical calls. More employees are now available to perform police, fire and emergency medical services.

The choice to "cross-train" is entirely optional for those officers hired before 1995. In reading this report, you will find that partial forms of public safety have existed in Meridian for some years, although cross-training between the police and fire departments is a relatively new
development. In Meridian Township, the option to refuse cross-training is guaranteed in the labor contracts negotiated with the relevant bargaining units.

*The choice to “cross-train” is entirely optional.*

The implementation of the public safety concept in Meridian Township has been difficult for every person involved. In retrospect, it is clear that the changes could have been done differently and with less conflict, but as you closely review the historical record, it will become more understandable that the changes could not have been accomplished without any conflict at all.

There are different theories on the best methods of implementing change. It was believed that corrective change could be implemented without criticizing, complaining or condemning.¹ In other words, fix the problem and move on. Other business theories discuss the importance of communicating problems to first build support for the changes.²

In the process of implementing the transition to a public safety department, the first approach was selected because it was felt that it would be the most effective, and because no one wished to openly discuss issues or situations that would embarrass employees or the Township.

In hindsight, we were wrong. It is now clear that nondisclosure of certain compelling information to the public only resulted in further confusing an already complex issue. The forming of the Police, Fire and Ambulance Commission presents the opportunity to communicate all the facts that should have been communicated earlier. It is now time to review all the information, and then move forward and focus attention on what kind of emergency services will be best for the Township.

¹The Dale Carnegie Course, Section 6-3, Rule Number One.
²See Resistance at 5.
As administrators of the Public Safety Department, we are excited about working with you and having the opportunity to be part of a process that is committed to providing balanced, efficient and exemplary professional services to Meridian Township. We are grateful for your willingness to devote your time and energy to studying this matter.
PART ONE:
THE TOWNSHIP’S PUBLIC SAFETY STUDIES
PART ONE: THE TOWNSHIP'S PUBLIC SAFETY STUDIES

ANALYSIS OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY CONCEPT - 1975

As early as 1972, Superintendent Richard Conti, concerned with the costs of delivering adequate police and fire services to the Township, commissioned a study that ended with the recommendation that the Township move to a Public Safety Department.

The Township has been studying public safety a long time, but only the most documented events have been included in this report. The first such serious study began around 1972 and is best introduced by a correspondence from Superintendent Richard Conti. On June 1, 1975, he wrote a memorandum to the Township Board. In his memorandum, he points out how the public safety concept "was studied in depth." As a result of that study, Superintendent Conti recommended that the Township take "incremental steps" toward the development of a public safety department. According to Conti, "[t]his time is now appropriate to consider filling the vacant position of Director of Public Safety."

In 1975, Steve Schultz of the Foster, Swift and Collins law firm was commissioned by the Township to study public safety. His report, Analysis of Public Safety Concept for Charter Township of Meridian, indicates that the Township Board's Police and Fire Subcommittee had begun a public safety study three years earlier. Schultz reports that after research by the Subcommittee, they recommended the following:

... that to provide adequate police and fire protection, increase responsiveness and public contact, and fully utilize our personnel, Meridian Township should dissolve its Police and Fire Departments and establish a Department of Public Safety headed by a Director responsible for both Police and Fire supervision.  

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3 See Report to Township Board - June 1, 1975.
4 See Analysis of Public Safety Concept for Charter Township of Meridian.
5 Id at 1. This is a method of reorganization that is discussed later. It is referred to as total reorganization and allows action to be taken outside collective bargaining agreements.
Schultz’s report is a detailed examination of the public safety concept and recommends a design for Meridian Township. He warns that “[a]ny Public Safety Department that develops in Meridian, while being grounded in these basic concepts, must be designed primarily to fit the organizational and community needs of this Township alone.” Schultz describes the classic types of public safety departments and analyzes the typical arguments for and against integration. The Schultz report cautions the Township that unions have halted some public safety plans and, in other cases, they have been responsible for subsequent rejection of them. However, he advises the Township that the disadvantages of public safety as stated by unions should be rejected because those representations were inconsistent with data and the experience of public safety departments. In concluding the section of his report that describes the advantages and disadvantages of public safety he writes:

The advantages discussed earlier, may be summarized again, for they are the real “selling” points:

1. More trained manpower available for either police or fire duty.
2. A single hierarchy of command resulting in less duplication and better planning, coordination, public relations, training, and communications.
3. Faster and better police and fire services, including increased patrol and increased fire prevention activities.
4. More capable fire and police employees due to more demanding jobs and better training.
5. Little or no idle or unproductive time for firefighters.
6. Higher morale among police-fire employees in the long term.
7. Long range economy resulting from a more efficient and effective use of resources.

The conclusion that a higher level of service can be obtained with fewer men and for less money under this program than with separate police and fire departments usually serves as a ‘clincher.’

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5 Id at 1.
6 Id at 9 and 10. At the time of this report, Meridian Township did not have any female firefighters and only a small number of female police officers. Many of the older reports refer to personnel as men. As a result of public safety changes, there are now more than four times the number of female firefighters that there were in 1993.
Schultz then directs the Township on the way to proceed. He recommends visits to other public safety departments and advises the Township on the importance of convincing the chiefs of the police and fire departments. He makes it very clear that the easiest task is to sell the public and explains that the general public "is not concerned so much with who extinguishes a fire or responds in an emergency situation, but rather that there is a quick and effective response. Thus, the emphasis on rapid, economical, superior service is usually enough to sell the public." The Board was then advised, if their desire was to have a public safety department, to decide at what level of integration to begin. Schultz again reminded the Board that they must consider the likely reaction to the concept by unions, and he explains that the "age and characteristics of a community's police and fire departments are important factors in gauging the intensity of opposition . . . ."

Attempts to implement public safety plans of all levels have been most successful in smaller, progressive, suburban communities with small or nonexistent police and fire departments. The forward looking nature of the community and the lack of political clout in smaller police and fire departments have made opposition to the concept less vehement. It should be noted that as these communities have grown, public safety departments have continued to function well and none have been abolished. This lends credence to the contention that opposition to the concept arises not so much from the faults in the concept, but from the "conservative" nature of the police officers and firefighters affected. (emphasis added)\textsuperscript{9}

In 1975 Schultz predicted some resistance in Meridian Township, but less than in other communities due to the characteristics of the Township. He felt "the best approach for the Township to use in implementing a public safety plan would probably be the incremental approach of partial integration which gradually becomes complete."\textsuperscript{10} Schultz acknowledged he had spoken with police officers and firefighters and an immediate switch would be opposed

\textsuperscript{9}Id at 10.
\textsuperscript{10}Id. It should be noted that this is the approach that the Public Safety Department is currently taking.
vigorously. Schultz described what he felt would reduce resistance to implementing a public safety plan.

The gradual development of a Public Safety Department through voluntary training, and specifications that new police officers and firefighters be trained in both police and firefighting skills, would move the Township toward a completely integrated department several years hence while not displacing any personnel presently on board. Individuals presently on board would be able to move into positions of a strictly police or fire nature if they did not want to take the additional training necessary to become a public safety officer.¹¹

Earlier in 1973, the president of the firefighters local union wrote the Township Board a letter addressing his concerns about an on-going public safety study. This is the study that was referenced by Superintendent Conti in his June, 1975 memorandum. The union’s letter recognized that public safety was only in the planning stages but demonstrated the firefighters’ concern and announced their interest to be “involved in the development of a better and more efficient concept of public safety.”¹²

The Schultz report concluded by stating that under an incremental approach, “a completely integrated public safety department would be in service by 1985 with a minimum amount of difficulty.”¹³ It also referred to a series of projections that were made to the Township Board in March of 1975. The department’s future recommended size was based on a predicted population of 40,000. At that time, it was presumed that it would require 119 full-time public safety officers to adequately staff operations of a department serving 40,000 people. You will note in some of the studies that are discussed later that 40,000 was again used as the predicted population. In a later study, the number of full-time employees recommended under the public safety officer option was 125.¹⁴ This is very close to the Schultz estimate of 119.

However, that later study called for staffing of 167 full-time employees if the public safety

¹¹Id at 12. Again, this is the practice that public safety, in Meridian Township, has followed.
¹²See Letter from International Association of Firefighters.
¹³See Analysis of Public Safety Concept for Charter Township of Meridian at 12.
option was rejected and the traditional separate police and fire option was maintained. Although the current population is consistent with the projected level of 40,000, current budgeted strength is 77 full-time positions, or 62% of recommended public safety levels and only 46% of the recommended staffing levels if traditional police and fire services were maintained.

The recommended numbers of 119 and 125 for public safety operations and 167 for separate operations are not inconsistent with the staffing of other comparable communities. Those communities are discussed later in this report. The prediction in the study that it would take 35% more employees for a separate police and fire department is also consistent with the cost comparisons that were made most recently by the Public Safety Department. In those reports the cost for comparable personnel coverage was estimated to be 35% higher than in a public safety department.

REPORT OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON POLICE-FIRE CONSOLIDATION - 1977

"The public is demanding better protection, especially from criminal acts. Public officials are now obligated to evaluate their total safety program. . ."  
- Subcommittee Report

In March of 1977, the Report of the Subcommittee on Police-Fire Consolidation of the Ad Hoc Select Committee on Public Safety in Meridian Township (hereinafter referred to as "Subcommittee Report"), was presented to the Township by the two co-chairmen, Kenneth E.
Christian, Ph.D., Michigan State University and James Nelson, referred to in that report, as the retired Public Safety Director of Meridian Township. Five other members referred to as research assistants also participated in this subcommittee study. The actual committee report, as distinguished from this subcommittee report, is very detailed and is in excess of 100 pages. The condensed version of that report, entitled Summary Report, Ad Hoc Select Committee on Public Safety, presented by Chairman Adam Zutaut is included in the study package. The committee was broken down into subcommittees. Each subcommittee performed a detailed analysis of public safety. Dr. Christian, Mr. Zutaut and some of the other members of the committee are still living in the area and would be available to discuss this report with the Commission.

The subcommittee report explained the concept of public safety and researched more than 20 other public safety departments. Recommendations were then made to the Township’s Public Safety Committee. The subcommittee’s report recognized that the unification of police and fire forces was an innovative concept that could assist communities attempting to fulfill their obligations to provide adequate protective services, but the subcommittee warned the Township that the actual efforts to unify municipal protective services have generated immediate opposition.¹⁵

Adversaries of consolidation are numerous and often have welded themselves into well-organized resistance groups, demonstrating the capacity to rise to any challenge in their efforts to avoid or discourage proposals for consolidation. (emphasis added)¹⁶

The subcommittee’s report documented the struggles that were faced by public officials attempting to find progressive ways to meet expensive public safety challenges.

¹⁶Id.
The public is demanding better protection, especially from criminal acts. Public officials are now obliged to evaluate their total safety program, the goals of which are difficult to accomplish within the confines of progressively severe budgetary limits. Because of these representative factors, police and fire budgets in many municipalities are being scrutinized, particularly for personnel costs.\textsuperscript{17}

The subcommittee's report outlined five different public safety choices and defined them. It also highlighted the importance of designing a public safety department that best suits the individual and unique characteristics of the community\textsuperscript{18} and emphasized that the goal of public safety is to deliver services with an optimal return on tax dollars.\textsuperscript{19} A list of elements was then cited to encourage Township officials to consider public safety.

1. Personnel costs constitute 80 - 90 percent of police and fire costs.
2. Public safety maximizes the utilization of personnel.
3. Police and fire services have more functional similarities than differences.
4. The public is demanding better protection which is difficult to accomplish within the confines of progressively severe budgetary limits.\textsuperscript{20}

The remainder of the subcommittee's detailed report focused on the suggested way to hire public safety officers and pointed out that their hiring could be accomplished through attrition. They also recommended that training should attempt to be accomplished when service calls are

\textsuperscript{17}Id at 6.
\textsuperscript{18}Meridian Township is recognized as the only public safety department that provides paramedic service as part of the public safety service. This demonstrates the flexibility of public safety and is consistent with flexibility observed by this study group. Meridian Township has made the paramedic service the "flagship" of the Public Safety Department. Medically licensed vehicles and personnel more than doubled, and response times to medical emergencies were significantly reduced.
\textsuperscript{19}Id at 8.
\textsuperscript{20}Id at 8.
low.\textsuperscript{21} The subcommittee report lastly discussed the issue of productivity. They cited the traditional ratios of members needed to the populations that are served. They concluded:

This is probably the greatest aspect of productivity in government service, to utilize personnel as you need them on a twenty-four hour period and yet have them available for another function that doesn’t occur as often as police service, but may require more personnel when it does occur.\textsuperscript{22}

In the conclusion of their report, the subcommittee found that “[t]he concept, with proper care and management then, is capable of delivering a superior quality of service to the community in an efficient and economical manner.”\textsuperscript{23}

Chairman Adam Zutaut wrote the \textit{Summary Report - Ad Hoc Select Committee on Public Safety} to the Township Board on May 13, 1977. He summarized the above Police-Fire Integration Subcommittee Report as well as the other three subcommittee reports for the Board. He advised the Board that there was no “information which would negate or preclude the establishment of an integrated police-fire department.”\textsuperscript{24} The main concerns expressed by Zutaut were the absence of the necessary financial base for the purchase of the equipment and personnel. His report points out that three of the four subcommittees recommended integration of the police and fire departments. The fire subcommittee did not. However, even the fire

\hspace{1cm}

\textsuperscript{21}Id. This committee recognized that training could and should be conducted while members were on duty. This was the method by which the preliminary training of firefighters was accomplished and most of the medical and fire training of public safety officers. Individual trainers were paid overtime and employees were trained on duty. The result was that 10 employees were paid at straight time and one at the overtime rate. In the past everyone was paid at the overtime rate. This action was the basis of one of the earlier conflicts with the firefighters. It also resulted in an inquiry in late December of 1996. Public safety administrators were questioned about training on-duty firefighters in hazardous materials. In that instance, half the firefighters were trained at one time, and the other half were kept available in stations to respond to emergencies and were later trained when the first group finished. One week later, the East Lansing Fire Department conducted similar training on campus for all on-duty employees. They closed all their stations while conducting the training. Remember, in Meridian Township in the past, firefighters usually did this kind of training while off-duty and at the overtime rate.

\textsuperscript{22}Id at 12 and 13.

\textsuperscript{23}Id at 13.

\textsuperscript{24}See \textit{Summary Report - May 13, 1977}, at 3.
subcommittee did recommend integration of many areas that were then separate in the Township’s departments and in other traditional type agencies.\textsuperscript{25}

\textbf{CITIZENS RESEARCH COUNCIL OF MICHIGAN REPORT}

\textit{That full or partial police-fire consolidation is a proven concept is demonstrated by the Michigan cities which maintain such departments.}

During this same period of time, the Citizens Research Council of Michigan published a booklet entitled, \textit{Saving Taxpayer Dollars Through Consolidated Police and Fire Services.} This report stated:

The contention that police-fire consolidation is a practical, alternative means of organizing public safety services in many Michigan communities is based on two facts: first, public safety officers can be successfully trained to perform police patrol, fire fighting, and fire prevention tasks; and second, it is necessary to man a fire station with only as many officers as are needed to drive the apparatus to the scene of a fire. That full or partial police-fire consolidation is a proven concept is demonstrated by the Michigan cities which maintain such departments: Beverly Hills, Farmington, Fraser, Grosse Pointe Woods, Huntington Woods, and Oak Park. Grosse Pointe Woods and Huntington Woods, have operated consolidated police-fire departments for over 30 years.\textsuperscript{26}

The Council’s report concluded by saying that public safety would “provide better protection man for man” and that “through consolidation it is possible to provide equal service with fewer personnel, or better service with the same personnel.”\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{25}Id at 4.

\textsuperscript{26}\textit{Saving Taxpayer Dollars Through Consolidated Police and Fire Services}, Citizens Research Council of Michigan, October 1975 at 12.

\textsuperscript{27}Id.
The staff's Concept Report recommends a "partially integrated" public safety organization.

On September 12, 1977, the Report on Public Safety Concept (hereinafter referred to as "Concept Report") was prepared for the Township Board. The writer of this report is not identified, but it appears as though it was prepared by Township Superintendent Richard A. Conti with the assistance of staff personnel. This report cited the earlier reports and laid out the steps to implement a modified public safety operation. Estimated costs for implementation from 1979 through 1988 were included.

The report stated that all members of the Township's police and fire departments who have been hired since the early 1970's were asked at the time of hire if they were willing to become a public safety officer. It reveals that "all of them" were at the time of hire "comfortable taking on the role." However, the report later acknowledged that "[o]bviously, they have been in the organization a number of years now so not all of them may still feel comfortable with becoming a Public Safety Officer now." Deputy Director Johnson confirms that this practice of asking if candidates would be willing to consider becoming a public safety officer continued with all of the members that he had hired. Additionally, when the chief of police was hired in 1990, applicants were questioned about their knowledge of the public safety concept.

In 1977, it was estimated that at least six firefighters, some with criminal justice degrees, and 10 - 12 of the patrol officers would be interested in becoming public safety officers. In 1980, four police officer/paramedics were hired as the first cross-trained firefighter/paramedics.

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29 Id.
30 Id. It is interesting to note that in 1996, 13 of the firefighters requested to be cross-trained; and more than 75% of the police officers have expressed a desired to be cross-trained.
paramedics. This report actually laid out the implementation of the public safety department and began with the assumption that the Board would approve the concept on July 1, 1981. It provides for a public safety department of 125 full-time employees by 1988.\textsuperscript{31} An organizational chart also accompanied it. This is the same study that was referenced earlier.

The Township’s current departmental staff is 77 full-time members, or 48 members less than the 125 recommended for the 1988 public safety department. It should be pointed out that the concept report’s recommendation of a “partially integrated” public safety organization is very similar to what now exists in the Township. While today’s department is much smaller than what was recommended, the ratio of total employees assigned to each of the three divisions is similar.

Attached to the Concept Report is an appendix that attempts to estimate the number of police and fire employees it would take to provide the traditional type of police and fire services to the Township if it was decided that the public safety concept was not to be implemented.\textsuperscript{32} It was estimated, in that study, that it would take 167 personnel to provide the same services that could be provided by the partially integrated public safety department of 125 employees.

**MAY 19, 1981, PUBLIC SAFETY REPORT**

*Superintendent Conti believed public safety could succeed if the Township could overcome fears that jobs were in jeopardy.*

On May 19, 1981, the Township Board received a memorandum from Superintendent Conti entitled Public Safety Department (hereinafter referred to as “May 19th Memo”). This memo stated there was “considerable controversy about a true public safety department.” Conti believed that a public safety department could be successful if the Township was able to

\textsuperscript{31}Id.

\textsuperscript{32}Id at Appendix A.
overcome fears that jobs were in jeopardy. He attempted to address these fears by establishing that there would be jobs for those employees who wished to remain "hard core policemen or hard core firefighters." The memo specifically recognized that the police department was "under manned." It pointed out that the Township was managed, at that time, either by crisis or by the old saying, "[t]he squeaky wheel gets the grease."

Conti was concerned about police understaffing and frustrated with being forced to deal with a squeaking wheel. You may want to consider whether the public safety department is still struggling with that squeaky wheel today. Township administrators and policy makers, like other business leaders, must be careful that the distracting noise of the squeaky wheel does not prevent the organization from observing the warning light that indicates the much larger problem of the engine running out of oil.

The May 19th memorandum was written almost ten years after the Township began its study of the public safety concept. It is apparent that the administration, at that time, recognized the potential difficulties of implementing public safety. With those concerns in mind, the administration made the following guarded recommendation:

The success in some areas and the failure in others leads us to believe that the only way a jurisdiction can determine if a public safety department fits the needs of a community is to implement the system and evaluate the system as it progresses. We would recommend that the Charter Township of Meridian implement the system over a period of years.

The May 19th memorandum, once again, laid out the steps for implementation. This time the Township retrieved the earlier 1977 Township study and updated and revised it. The process

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34 You will have access to the multiple complaints that have been made. Each has been investigated. In addition to complaints, there have been scores of grievances and unfair labor practices, all of which have claimed some kind of improper action. The investigations, often conducted by outside agencies, such as the State Police, mediators, etc., reveal proper conduct and appropriate responses by the department. However, the amount of time taken to answer these false claims takes away from other responsibilities.

35 Id.
for hiring, training and conversion to public safety was recommended to be completed over a four year period rather than the long-term plan that was cited earlier. The recommendation was to cross-train 18 to 24 employees and then evaluate the concept after a two year track record was established.\textsuperscript{36} This recommendation, once again, was not acted upon. Why did the Township continue to recommend public safety yet fail to fully implement it?

Two reports were submitted in 1987, one from the chief of the police department and one from the chief of the fire department. These reports were prepared as part of a five year study. Each study discusses the departments' need for additional staffing.

\textbf{REPORT ON UTILIZATION OF PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS - 1989}

\textit{The Assistant Superintendent Francis "Bud" Brokaw identifies obstacles to the public safety transition.}

On August 31, 1989, Assistant Superintendent Francis Brokaw wrote a memorandum to Superintendent Richard Conti regarding utilization of public safety officers. In his memo he explained that "[t]he concept provides greater efficiency by using the "waiting time" for firefighting activities to accomplish police patrol activities."\textsuperscript{37} He also felt that some of the traditional functions of police and fire services should remain so and explained that fire response equipment should not be used to respond to police calls.\textsuperscript{38} Mr. Brokaw emphasized the following point:

\begin{quote}
In my opinion, PSO’s could be used in Meridian Township as a common manpower pool for the Police Department and the Fire Department when those functions which are purely police and purely fire have been satisfied. In this scenario there would be a police department composed of persons whose only function would be to accomplish police functions. There would also be a fire department composed of those persons who would accomplish the purely fire
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{36}Id.
\textsuperscript{37}See Brokaw’s Memorandum, August 31, 1989, at 1.
\textsuperscript{38}Id.
functions. Augmenting these personnel would be a group of PSO’s who would backup the police or fire department personnel whenever the situation dictated. When there was a fire PSO’s would respond to the fire scene and under the command of the fire department command officer, assist in fighting the fire. When not needed to fight fire the PSO’s would augment the police patrol activity under the command of the police command officer. . . . 39

Brokaw expressed concerns about whether the Township had reached the point “to permit the inception of PSO’s . . . with new hires beginning in 1990.” He recognized that Chief Johnson had “reservations about implementation of the concept” and there were contractual impediments. He pointed out that Chief Amthor had felt that the police department could function if new hires were public safety officers. 40 Mr. Brokaw accurately predicted the “pros and cons” of implementing public safety. However, most of his concerns, or “cons” as he referred to them, were problems of implementation. As you read, you will see how all of his concerns have now been addressed. This is true for all of the public safety studies. During the last three years the obstacles to public safety, as discussed in the earlier reports, were all resolved. Specifically, Mr. Brokaw identified the collective bargaining agreement as an obstacle to consolidation. This particular problem was dealt with in 1996. The collective bargaining agreement signed in 1996 negotiated increased pay and benefits for firefighters, in return for which the firefighters committed to “facilitate . . . the implementation of the public safety department.” Likewise, Mr. Brokaw correctly identified the high cost of transition.

The Township has invested over one million dollars in the transition to public safety. Mr. Brokaw had presumed that all transitional cost would have to be borne in addition to the continuing operational costs of each department. Fortunately, the transition costs have never exceeded the funds that were authorized in each years’ operating budget. The overtime savings and other efficiencies of public safety provided all of the funding for the transition.

You will also note, in the attached report from Deputy Director Johnson, that the concerns he

39 Id.
40 Id at 1 and 2.
expressed to Mr. Brokaw in 1989 have now also been addressed, or are being addressed, under the current operational scheme of public safety in Meridian Township.\footnote{See Memorandum from Deputy Director Phillip Johnson, November 22, 1996.}

Mr. Brokaw did not envision public safety in Meridian Township as a totally integrated department. He saw a benefit to complementing police and fire services with the utilization of a contingent of public safety officers. The current configuration of the public safety department represents the kind of department Mr. Brokaw would have found to be of greatest value. As you continue your study, you will discover how the barriers that were highlighted by Mr. Brokaw were resolved in 1995 and 1996.\footnote{It appears that the longer the Township studied public safety the more obstacles to implementation they discovered. However, you will observe that the entire list of concerns have been resolved during the last three years.}

\textbf{TOWNSHIP STUDY OF COMPARABLE POLICE AND FIRE DEPARTMENTS IN MICHIGAN - 1990}

\emph{Among comparable townships and cities in Michigan, Meridian Township has the lowest ratio of police to population.}

On February 14, 1990, a memorandum from Chief Amthor to Superintendent Richard Conti documents a list of public safety departments that Chief Amthor had identified in Michigan at that time. He separated these departments into two groups: those that remained "hard-core" police and fire departments and those that had cross-trained public safety officers.\footnote{See Public Safety Departments in Michigan.} A "hard-core" firefighter or police officer was described as someone who performed traditional police duties or fire duties only. Chief Amthor explained that some departments, while they call themselves public safety, only merge the administrative aspects of the separate police and fire departments. This would include such areas as records, budgeting and administration.
On February 15, 1990, Chief Phil Johnson and Chief John Amthor wrote letters to all the public safety directors in Michigan and asked that a survey be completed.\textsuperscript{44} This information was to be used as part of the continuing public safety study. During May of 1990, there was more staff communication with the Public Safety Committee on the status of the study.\textsuperscript{45} The information that was presented simply discussed prior reports, joint ventures and another list of "pros and cons" again summarized by Mr. Brokaw.

On May 2, 1990, the Towne Courier ran a story on public safety and the retirement of Chief Amthor. This article discussed the Township's process of looking at the public safety concept and debate over whether to replace Chief Amthor with a police chief or a public safety director. The Courier article stated:

Brokaw reported that the committee will recommend that the township board proceed with hiring a police chief, but leave open the option to look into the concept of a public safety department in the future... (emphasis added)\textsuperscript{46}

Once again the whole basic concept of public safety and the many options available under different plans were discussed in this extensive article. The Courier asked the Fire Chief to explain the committee's process:

Fire Chief Phil Johnson explained that the committee looked at a wide range of concepts from simply appointing a head of public safety to coordinating the two departments to a full integration of the departments and a number of options within. The options in between would generally require the appointment of one head administrator, and could then lead to the combination of other areas within the department, such as administration, fire investigation and building inspections, community relations and education, or paramedics.\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{44}See Survey Letter.
\textsuperscript{45}See Letter to Township Board - May 1990.
\textsuperscript{46}See Towne Courier Article - May 2, 1990.
\textsuperscript{47}Id.
The *Courier* article also discussed staffing each fire station, under public safety, with one or two firefighters and suggested that a fire station could be closed. An "E-unit" type of vehicle was described and discussed but it was not actually referred to as an E-unit. The concept of using paramedics to patrol, rather than just being station-bound, was discussed more than six years ago. However, the cost involved in cross-training and properly outfitting the members was again cited as an obstacle. As noted, public safety has overcome all of those obstacles.

On May 8, 1990, the Township Board met at a regularly scheduled meeting. At this meeting, the Board decided to hire a police chief and not a public safety director. The minutes of that meeting reflect continuing interest in the concept of public safety even though there was a decision not to hire a public safety director at that time.\(^{48}\) Consider the following:

Supervisor Thomas in trying to come to closure on this motion stated that at least for some time in the future Meridian Township will not be moving into a public safety concept organizational scheme. Clerk White, reporting on the Public Safety Committee's recommendation, said that this was not necessarily the case. The Public Safety Committee was encouraging more consolidation, and she reported that one member of the Public Safety Committee (Trustee Kelley) wanted the Board to visualize the public safety combination by 25 years from now.\(^{49}\)

In the report to the Township Board that was referred to in the Board minutes of May 8, 1990, Clerk White summarized the following points that were relevant to the future of public safety consolidation:

\[
\text{\ldots}
\]

6. In the meantime, the administration and Public Safety Committee were directed to come back to the Board with its recommendation regarding the Public Safety concept for Meridian Township at the present time.

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\(^{48}\)See Township Board Meeting Minutes - May 8, 1990.

\(^{49}\)Id at 5. Even at the present rate of attrition, a total consolidation would not be complete in 25 years.
7. Since we did not have a meeting on May 1, the administration is making a presentation on the public safety concept tonight, May 8. The Public Safety Committee is presenting a recommendation of the following motion that says: "________________ MOVE that the hiring process of the police chief be started without any prejudice to the ultimate decision of the public safety concept decision of the Township Board’s." (emphasis added)

... .

11. Tonight the Board could give direction to the Buildings Committee. I would recommend that it direct the Buildings Committee to pretend that we will not have full-fledged public safety program at the present time. (emphasis added)

12. That we would celebrate all of the consolidation that we already have in public safety, such as, dispatch, goodwill between departments, etc.

13. That one arm of our government develop a plan for the shelf that we might sometime implement regarding the public safety concept.

14. That the Township continue to consolidate as much as possible, such as administration, records, exercise facilities, etc. (emphasis added)  

50

It appears that the Public Safety Committee of 1990 wanted the Township to continue to work toward more areas of consolidation.

50 See Clerk White’s Memorandum to Township Board - May 8, 1990. It is also interesting to note that the new building was purposefully named the “Public Safety Building.”
PART TWO:

MERIDIAN’S FIRE AND POLICE NEEDS GROW
PART TWO: MERIDIAN'S FIRE AND POLICE NEEDS GROW

FIRE – FIVE YEAR PLAN - 1987

Chief Johnson warns that the use of employees to staff stations to a pre-determined level was consuming funds intended for equipment purchases and for firefighter training programs.

In Fire Chief Johnson’s July 15, 1987 Two Year and Five Year Objectives Report (hereinafter referred to as “Objectives Report”) he advises that under the National Fire Protection Association (“NFPA”) standard, Meridian Township, in 1987, would have required a staff of 63 full-time firefighters. However, Chief Johnson indicated that under the two station configuration of 1987, adequate services could be provided with 48 full-time firefighters. He felt that 48 firefighters “would put us in acceptable shape until at least 1992.”

Regarding the 48 fire personnel that were needed for the two stations, Chief Johnson stated:

Clearly, this approach which calls for 15 fewer people than the N.F.P.A. 1.875 per thousand population standard is much more realistic. It does however hinge on other considerations such as a very active fire prevention activity, strong code enforcement and an enhanced training program which will impact on performance on the fire scene, i.e., meeting the strategy objectives with fewer firefighters and firefighters’ safety. To meet these support objectives, I would recommend the immediate promotion of a Deputy Chief (Training/Safety Officer) and the creation of a Fire Inspector classification within the fire department.

Fire Chief Johnson focused on the value that prevention, training and inspections had on firefighting and recognized that improvements in these areas would allow the “fire objectives” to be met with fewer firefighters. However, in your study of this matter, you will observe that until 1993, simply staffing stations with employees (some of whom did not meet the

51 See Fire Chief Johnson Report - July 15, 1987. Chief Johnson did not say how many firefighters would be needed when the third station opened.

recommended training standard) took priority over prevention, training and code enforcement. Operating costs were being directed towards paying for personnel to be in the stations. According to Chief Johnson, as a result of this practice, no funding remained to make capital purchases or to train firefighters. There were also no funds remaining to perform the tasks necessary to stay in compliance with basic fire standards and State and Federal law. This was a direct contradiction of what Chief Johnson had recognized as a more efficient way of meeting fire strategy objectives through training, prevention and inspection. Certainly, when basic training was not being conducted, advanced and specialized training was out of the question.

This debate over the importance of staffing and training continues today. The traditional firefighters continue to demonstrate a strong desire to return to the practices of prioritizing the staffing of stations over training and prevention, and they certainly would oppose Chief Johnson’s plan of “meeting strategy objectives with fewer firefighters.” However, the “real world cost” of simply maintaining an arbitrary number of firefighters in any and all stations at all times became extremely expensive. When some of the personnel costs were brought under control in 1994, capital purchases became possible. The ambulance and other equipment, as well as training costs were all paid for out of funds previously used to keep an arbitrary number of people in fire stations.

Ultimately, these “prior staffing practices” and the conditions that resulted from them, led to complaints that were made by the firefighters themselves. They complained internally to the Township Superintendent, and externally to government regulatory agencies about situations at fire scenes that allegedly endangered their lives. As a result of the findings of those investigations, the Township was severely criticized and fined for its failure to train in mandatory areas and to follow other statutory requirements. It is important to recognize that in 1987, Chief Johnson had foreseen these problems. He had already described the Township’s need to meet “challenges by providing our Township with a properly staffed, well-
trained fire prevention oriented department." Notice that he did not state the importance of having a well-staffed fire suppression oriented department. Once again, he looked to prevention and training as priorities. Chief Johnson has consistently written and discussed the importance of prevention and other progressive fire programs and has become a recognized authority on the subject. However, he struggled with both the traditional nature of the fire industry in the mid-Michigan area and, in particular, Meridian Township Fire Department's "hard-core" stance. Chief Johnson knew of the firefighters rejection of prior progressive programs and clearly understood how difficult it would be to even attempt to implement the most minor changes. Therefore, Chief Johnson administered the department in a very traditional way, avoiding controversy while he continued to struggle with his professional desire to implement progressive operational practices.

POLICE - FIVE YEAR PLAN

Chief John Amthor warns that inadequate police staffing levels have resulted in poor traffic enforcement, inadequate crime investigations, and an excessive response time to police calls.

In July of 1987, Police Chief John C. Amthor also submitted an extensive five year plan for the police department operations entitled A Review of the Meridian Charter Township Police Department and Allied Problems Five Year Plan, (hereinafter referred to as "Five Year Plan.") In his plan, Chief Amthor summarizes the prior studies conducted by the township and explains the current departmental strength. He discusses the impact of growth and the increase

53 Id at 11.
54 In Meridian Township the firefighters had previously fought against the use of firefighters to perform emergency medical services. That battle was fought early in 1980. What was the firefighter's complaint? The firefighters said that "a man can only do one job." The Township administration and Township Board at this time struggled to get the paramedic program implemented. To date, "hard-core" firefighters have complained about helping paramedics. In Meridian Township, firefighters have told paramedics not to call for additional help "unless the patient was on fire." The implication was that they were firefighters, and only firefighters. Comments like these came from fire supervisors.
55 Deputy Director Phillip Johnson also has a police background. As you will see in his resume, the concept of public safety, and the ability to be cross-trained is not foreign to him. When he was a deputy sheriff he also acted in that community as a firefighter.
in demands for police service that had, at that time, resulted in degradation of response times to police calls.\textsuperscript{56} He points out that response times declined from less than four minutes to an average of more than nine minutes. The Chief then attempts to explain why he felt that responses to any call should be prompt.

A citizen may call for assistance once in a lifetime. The immediate problem may not be a police problem, or it may be one of low priority in our opinion; but to the citizen the problem at hand is important, and they expect us to respond immediately. The problem may also be of a life threatening or assaultive nature.\textsuperscript{57}

Response times to 911 calls were not the only problems identified by Chief Amthor. He explained what impact inadequate staffing of police had on the entire police mission. He discussed the problems associated with not properly investigating serious crimes and explained the impact that the lack of "follow up" had on minor crimes. He also advised that there was little or no traffic enforcement and that such conditions result in higher speeds and more accidents. The fact that officers work alone and are often many miles from any back-up help is always dangerous. Finally, he stated that the use of patrol as a crime prevention measure was absent. Unfortunately, many of these problems continue today due to a lack of staffing resources. Public safety has just started to address these problems.

Chief Amthor was the spokesperson for the police department -- the only spokesperson. This distinction is important. In Meridian Township, as in many communities, police operations reflect the military or paramilitary structure that closely follows a chain of command. In the police operation, police issues and concerns were always addressed administratively and police employees recognized that their organizational role was to be silent. They were not to "go public" or "get political" in Township matters. This was true, right or wrong, even for issues

\textsuperscript{56}See Police Chief Amthor Report - July 1987 at 2.

\textsuperscript{57}Id at 3. Today, even with an increase of public safety/police response vehicles available because of the public safety improvements, police runs continue to be "stacked." More than 75 times a month calls for police service are made when no police units are available. Contrast this with the few times a year that calls for fire services are made when there is no unit available. In the latter cases, it is usually for an ambulance, and all three of Meridian Township's are busy.
of officer safety. It is important to understand this point because it has consequences. If the police are silent, and the "squeaky wheel" theory is true, the distribution of limited resources between police and fire could become even more disproportionate to the actual need. Another consequence of some groups benefitting from political involvement would be that more employees from all departments would feel compelled to become politically involved just to protect their interests, but is this in the Township's best interest?

A detailed analysis of the increase in police activity between 1972 and 1986 was presented in Chief Amthor's report. While the population increased by 39%, the calls for police service had increased by 182%. Increased criminal activity mirrored this increase in calls for service. Chief Amthor concludes that this "[i]ncrease in activity is caused both by population growth and the number of people visiting the Township because of the increase in business, shopping malls, restaurants, bars and offices." 58 This trend has continued. Since 1986 the population has increased by another 21% and calls for service by 102%. 59

Finally, a comparison of Meridian Township and the City of East Lansing and Michigan State University was provided in Chief Amthor's report. This comparison is again replicated later in this report. Chief Amthor explains how the challenges for Meridian Township, from a policing perspective, were actually greater than those of East Lansing and Michigan State University, however, Meridian Township was required to address those challenges with less than 1/3 of the officers that were assigned to those jurisdictions. 60 In Chief Amthor's report, he states that, based on the specific type of community Meridian Township is, 54 officers would be needed to properly address policing needs. He recommends a method of hiring 24 additional police officers by January 1, 1992, and concludes by saying, "[w]e may also consider training these new officers as public safety officers to give us the maximum output.

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58 Id at 5 and 6.
59 Computerization has allowed for a better accountability of each activity an officer performs and this may have had some impact on this most recent increase.
60 Id at 10.
for the dollars spent.\textsuperscript{61} (emphasis added). It is clear that Amthor felt he would be able to utilize multi-trained employees and, as a manager, could see a bottom line benefit to such a concept. Chief Amthor never hesitated to point out the Township’s need for more police officers. However, he addressed all of his concerns administratively through memorandum and would not allow the police officers to sensationalize the policing needs.

\textbf{SERVICE LEVELS REPORT - FEBRUARY 18, 1992}

\textit{Police and fire administrators have consistently, for more than 20 years, pointed out the need for more police and fire personnel. Twenty years ago the departments were understaffed. They continue to be so today. Demands for public safety services has grown five times faster than the Township’s population.}

On December 10, 1990, the Township Board hired the new police chief. During the first year, this chief studied the challenges of policing Meridian Township. Following that, another report, much like the earlier reports of Chiefs Amthor and Johnson, was submitted to the Township Superintendent pursuant to a request from him. The purpose of the report was to give an overview of “the Meridian Township Police Department’s current status in relation to other comparable community departments.”\textsuperscript{62} In this report, like the ones that preceded it, East Lansing was compared to Meridian Township.

It is important to note that East Lansing and Michigan State University were combined [for purposes of comparison]. With a combined population of 50,000,\textsuperscript{63} they have 108 police officers that patrol a combined area of 16.5 miles. East Lansing also has a full service fire department and emergency medical service that provide services for all of East Lansing including Michigan State University. There are 50 firefighters employed by East Lansing. As you know, East Lansing is an older city with the associated risk of older dwellings and multi-family and high rise structures. Since East Lansing is one of the few

\textsuperscript{61}Id at 12.


\textsuperscript{63}East Lansing and Michigan State University actually have a seasonally adjusted population of 44,000. This makes them very close to the Township’s current population of 40,000.
communities that hire full-time fire personnel, it is important to note that the ratio of police to fire exceeds 2 to 1.\textsuperscript{64}

At the time, there were 34 police officers and 40 firefighters in Meridian Township. The ratio of police to firefighters was .89 police officer per 1 firefighter, in contrast to the above cited ratio of 2 police officers to every firefighter. Currently there are 112 police officers and 52 firefighters in the East Lansing/Michigan State University jurisdiction, a total of 164 public safety employees. In Meridian Township, there are currently a total of 77 public safety employees, including five vacant positions. Forty-four full-time employees are now police-trained and 60 full-time employees are now fire trained demonstrating increased strength in both police and fire services. However, the ratio of police-trained to fire-trained now rests at .75 to 1 which would indicate that thus far, the fire service has been the primary benefactor of the public safety implementation.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{1992-Police-and-Fire-Staffing.png}
\caption{1992 Police and Fire Staffing
\medskip
Meridian Township - East Lansing/MSU}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{64}Id at 2.
MORE STUDIES - 1992

In 1992, more studies were conducted which confirmed that the Township needed more police and fire employees. In one of the reports, many other communities were compared to the Township. In 1992, only one township in the group of comparable cities and townships, had a ratio of police officers to population that was less than Meridian Township’s. That community, West Bloomfield Township, passed a millage for 35 additional police officers later that year. Meridian Township then became the community with the lowest ratio of police to community population. Also, Meridian Township was the only community that spent less on police services than on fire services.

This 1992 report also attempted to describe the services that were not being delivered to our community as a result of staffing deficiencies. This time, the analysis revealed that, in 1992, 48 officers were needed to perform the policing duties. This was six fewer officers than what Chief Amthor requested in 1987 but 14 more than were employed at the time. That report, like Chief Amthor’s, detailed the continuing traffic and accident problems and the need to prevent accidents and crimes rather than just responding to them and taking reports. The report cited that the need for crime prevention was supported by a concurrent "special report" in the Lansing State Journal.

Programs that attack crime proactively like crime prevention make a great deal of difference in the way that people feel about their community. A 1990 survey by the Lansing State Journal found that people in Okemos and Haslett gave the lowest ranking possible in a “Overall Peace of Mind” category. This unscientific survey which was conducted by the newspaper rated both the “serious crime rate” and the “minor crime rate” as “well above average.”

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65 Id at Chart 2.
66 Id at Charts 3 - 5.
67 Id. See Services Not Provided Section.
Certainly the central theme is a fear of crime which contributes directly to the way residents feel about the quality of life in our community.\textsuperscript{69}

Inadequate response times and the "stacking" of police runs were also discussed in the 1992 report. The same problems that concerned Chief Amthor five years earlier continued in 1992 and are still present today. Prior Boards were confidentially informed of the increased risk police personnel were subjected to when forced to respond as single person units to incidents often requiring back up support. In reality, this is a common occurrence in Meridian Township and something prior Boards have struggled to address. It also points out one of the most difficult tasks of managing public safety resources; the utilization of limited resources in a way that will result in a well-balanced public safety delivery system.

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    xticklabels={1972,1986,1995},
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\addplot coordinates{(1972,0) (1986,50) (1995,100)};
\legend{Percent Population Growth, Demand for Police Services}
\end{axis}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

In November of 1992, following the election of the past Township Board, a package of information was provided by the Township's Superintendent to the new Board members much like the package that was provided for the new Board in 1996. Each Department provided an informational message.

\textsuperscript{69}Id.
REPORTS OF EARLIER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDITIONAL POLICE, FIRE, AND PUBLIC SAFETY STAFFING

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Report</th>
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<th>Public Safety</th>
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<td>Analysis by Steve Schultz</td>
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<td>43</td>
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*Includes vacancies and inspector positions

"The Township cannot be all things to all people all the time."

- Township Treasurer Thomas Minter

Chief Johnson advised the new Board of 1992 that the Fire Department was facing "challenges in several critical areas including staffing (overtime has significantly exceeded budgeted amounts in recent years) now that we are operating a third station and a third advanced life support ambulance." At that time, there were 40 full-time members in the Fire Department. Earlier department requests had suggested that nine additional personnel would be needed to properly staff all three fire stations and reduce the overtime problem.

Likewise, the police department message focused on the need for more personnel and cited the statistics. The package pointed out that the Meridian Township Police Department had significantly fewer resources than other departments and also pointed out the disparity in the Township's funding of public safety services.

70 See Introductory Packet - Fire Department.
A higher priority has been placed on calls to respond to fire related problems than on the need to respond to police emergencies . . . This comparison is not a criticism of the level of fire services now received in the Township, it is only intended to illustrate the different service levels offered by both departments and how they compare with national and state trends.\(^{71}\)

The final portion of the 1992 staffing report laid out the cost to fund an additional 16 police officers to provide the following:

In 1992, the Meridian Township Police Department can take the first step toward becoming a modern and progressive police department. Once we have established a good foundation, we can begin to develop a department that will effectively and efficiently address calls for service, conduct thorough investigations, properly maintain records, prevent crime, and increase safety. The proposed increase in personnel would provide for a more responsive patrol force, mandatory follow up investigation, maintenance of statistical information, community policing, and a traffic enforcement unit.\(^{72}\)

Copies of the Special 1992 publication of the Meridian Monitor are included with the Reference Book. The following charts from the Monitor demonstrated the low operational cost of the Meridian Township Police Department when compared locally and nationally. They established that Meridian paid 50% less for police protection than East Lansing homeowners and 30% less than the national average while Meridian police provided more community services and more services in concert with the local schools.\(^{73}\)

\(^{71}\)See Introductory Packet - Police Department.


\(^{73}\)See Meridian Monitor, Special 1992 Edition.
The administrative struggle is to simply do the best that can be done with the precious resources that are allocated to provide services. Public safety utilizes those resources better than traditional police and fire services. As the previous Township Treasurer, Tom Minter, consistently said, "[t]he Township cannot be all things to all people all the time." This is the reality the Public Safety Department faces when attempting to meet demands that exceed resources.
Basic economic and business concepts must be called upon to best manage the resources that are available. Consider other businesses that also must meet demands with less than optimum resources at all times. What do they do? For example, how does a hospital emergency room staff for daily patients? Do they have enough doctors to handle every emergency that is brought to the hospital, or do emergencies get triaged in order of their medical priority? Does Hudson’s Department Store hire full-time employees to insure they can always service the kind of volume they have during the week before Christmas, or do they hire part-time employees during that time and occasionally have customers stand in line for longer periods than desired? Does Michigan State University employ enough public safety officers to handle all the special events and sporting activities on campus, or do they rely on outside assistance as needed?

These are all decisions that have to be made by other entities that also provide services. These service organizations make their best effort to maximize precious resources and maintain staff levels adequate to cover the day-to-day levels of service normally required. Like Meridian Township, they must also develop contingency plans, such as mutual aid and employee recall, to be implemented when unforeseen or extraordinary circumstances arise.

Public safety, according to previous studies, and the Township’s experience to date, is a means of providing as much as 35% more services through the utilization of cross-trained personnel for approximately the same costs as the traditional services. Are there some trade-offs for this improvement? The answer is yes. The difficulty of change and administrative complexity is a high price to pay. However, the earlier studies included with this report have consistently predicted more efficient utilization of personnel with public safety.\(^\text{74}\) Meridian’s experience with public safety has been very good and the results have exceeded the predicted results.

Ultimately, public safety simply becomes a business decision that a government entity may consider. Meridian Township has been considering it for over 25 years.

\(^{74}\text{See Cost Comparisons Chart.}\)
PART THREE:
ONGOING PROBLEMS REACH CRISIS LEVEL
PART THREE: ONGOING PROBLEMS REACH CRISIS LEVEL

Excessive overtime costs caused by conventional station-bound staffing, sick leave abuse and MIOSHA fines for safety violations exhaust public safety funds.

Following the decision to hire the police chief in 1990, and not a director of public safety, thoughts of the public safety concept appeared to have been "shelved." However, the demands for services continued to rise. Also, the fire department faced the fiscal challenge of attempting to staff three stations with the same personnel that formerly staffed two, and the Township reserve fund balance reached what the Township Superintendent and Township Board considered to be a dangerous point. The General Fund balance at the end of 1993 was $260,000. In 1993, there were also allegations about the fire department's response to a fire at 5100 Marsh Road. State investigations were initiated by Township firefighters as a consequence of that fire. It was then that the public safety concept was once again pulled from the "shelf."

During 1993, problems that had to be immediately addressed included sick leave abuse, overtime staffing, training deficiencies, inadequate inspections, and the paramedic step-down practice.

Overtime trends, as earlier projected by Chief Johnson, indicated that overtime costs would continue to rise and that there would not be sufficient funding in the budget to cover overtime expenses. There were several causes of the sharp increase in overtime costs. Those causes included calling in off-duty personnel to stations when the on-duty personnel responded to calls; maintaining an arbitrary pre-set level of staffing; calling in off-duty paramedics to replace those who had "stepped down." It was also determined that there was a direct correlation between sick leave usage and overtime costs. Training deficiencies had been

75 This is one of the terms used by Clerk White in her memorandum to the Board.
76 See MIOSHA Inspection Reports.
identified by Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Act ("MIOSHA") Inspectors and the Township’s potential liability continued to rise. At the same time, the Township was interested in negotiating the firefighters collective bargaining agreement. The contract was expiring on December 31, 1993, and the Township had not been able to reach an agreement with the firefighters.

In June of 1994, approximately eight months after the appointment of the public safety director, he wrote a memorandum to Township Supervisor Jeff Minor and attempted to describe the conditions in the Fire Department.

In retrospect, the scope of the total public safety management challenge was not realized when the administrative responsibility of the Fire Department was transferred to the Public Safety Director. Originally, excessive overtime and abuse of sick leave was assumed to be the major problem. Unfortunately, these were only the most obvious problems. The analogy, "the tip of the iceberg," seems the most appropriate way to describe what were the obvious problems. The hidden problems, like the iceberg, contained the greatest challenge. Major problems that were not so apparent include: the Fire Departments' inability to safely provide basic fire suppression services; their inability to conduct competent investigations; some members' lack of basic training; the membership's poor physical and mental readiness; a general lack of dedication and desire; ancient contractual obstructions; a total void of any progressive programs, such as prevention and pre-incident inspections; the repeated failures of the department to comply with State statutes; the lack of a mandatory incident command system; unaddressed hazardous materials concerns; and, an absence of responsibility, accountability and control. All of these challenges, and certainly there will be others, must be addressed. 77

Much has been learned since that memorandum was written. Identifying problems was much easier than solving them. During the last three years, there have been many changes, but many of the problems that existed then still remain.

77 See Review of Public Safety Activities at 4.
OVERTIME

In 1993, overtime costs were exhausting the fire department's budget.

There are several different kinds of overtime that are referred to in the documents and material presented to you. The following sidebar defines the different kinds of overtime and will serve as a guide to the different overtime expense line items.

OVERTIME DEFINITIONS

Tone-outs are alert tones sent out to the pagers of all off-duty firefighters notifying them that there is a situation occurring in which the incident commander is requesting more assistance. In short, the incident has risen beyond the capabilities of the on-duty personnel.

Recall is a category of firefighter overtime that occurs when staffing is below a certain level for the day. This does not occur because of an emergency situation. This level has always been an arbitrary number that has gone from a low of 5 to a high of 9 over the past ten years.

Call-back is a third category of firefighter overtime and it is associated with calling back off-duty firefighters on overtime when an emergency run is occurring. It is not an all-call request as with a tone-out, but usually an individual telephone request for a firefighter or two. The firefighter on call-back overtime is rarely involved with the actual emergency that necessitated the overtime. Most call-back time is spent in the stand-by mode at a station.

In 1993, the existing staffing guideline that required an arbitrary and a set number of personnel at a station had resulted in tremendous overtime costs.\textsuperscript{78} $76,550 was spent on overtime to

\textsuperscript{78} Arbitrary is used for the following reason. In 1990, before the South Fire Station opened, the minimum staffing was set at six people. At that time, six firefighters made the initial response to fires. When the new station opened it was automatically presumed that it would then take nine people to respond to fires. It was explained that three members were required to respond "in a fire truck." In theory, two responders from the North Fire Station, two from the South Fire Station and two from the Central Fire Station would not have been equivalent to the six that had responded from the two fire stations the day before the South Fire Station was opened. This same logic is applied today. That is, you should only count the firefighters coming from the stations and you should not consider other firefighters who do not (continued...)
staff stations to a level of nine. This overtime is referred to as "recall overtime." Also in 1993, $103,875 was paid in overtime to call members back to cover stations when on-duty members went out on runs. This overtime is referred to as "call back overtime."

On August 25, 1993, Township Superintendent Jeff Minor advised Chief Johnson that he must cut $100,000 out of fire department overtime costs. With only 40 full-time budgeted positions and a mandated staffing level of nine in the stations, Chief Johnson reported to the Township Board that the only means available to meet the Superintendent’s direction to reduce overtime costs by $100,000, required the closing of a fire station or taking an ambulance out of service.

While overtime costs were the focus of the discussion before the Township Board at that moment, Chief Johnson took the opportunity to go on to describe other problems that the mandated staffing level caused. Staffing fire stations to a predetermined and arbitrary number not only exhausted budgeted funds and left the department without money for training or equipment purchases, it also resulted in fire personnel being unavailable for other important tasks such as training, inspections, and fire prevention procedures. Chief Johnson criticized this form of staffing as being "reactive" rather than "proactive" and explained that the "re prioritizing" of funds that were previously used for staffing of stations was the only prudent option and the only alternative option to closing a fire station or taking an ambulance out of service.

76 (...continued)
respond from stations. Therefore, Deputy Director Phillip Johnson and the five fire patrolling/mobile inspectors with combined experience of over 100 years would not count as firefighters at the scene because they were not in the truck that drove to the fire. Also, patrolling public safety officers/firefighters that arrived before the fire apparatus and are waiting to make a fire attack should also not be included for the same reason. Firefighters argue that, for staffing purposes, only station bound firefighters that drive to the scenes in fire equipment can be counted. If public safety inspectors and public safety officers arrive two to three minutes before the station bound firefighters and perform a rescue and totally extinguish a fire, they still do not count. Station-bound firefighters also do not consider part-paid firefighters who respond to help from their near-by homes as equals on the fire scene.
A team of Meridian firefighters develop new staffing guidelines.

Prior to initiating any changes in staffing guidelines, a detailed analysis of utilization of employees for overtime was performed. That analysis revealed that in over 95% of the cases, employees on overtime did not respond to any runs. In those instances where employees on overtime were used (less than 5%) other station bound firefighters could have responded to the calls. It was concluded that there was no existing need to continue to staff in this manner.

New staffing guidelines, developed by a team of Meridian firefighters, were put into effect on January 13, 1994. The new staffing guidelines allowed line commanders to exercise their own judgement based upon their training and experience to determine when and if overtime was needed. One year later, a comparison was made between the first 12 days of 1994 and 1995.\(^7^9\) That comparison showed that the run activity was much higher in 1995 (96 runs compared to 74 in 1994), but the overtime costs had been reduced by 96%. These savings continued throughout 1994 and 1995. Overtime costs did rise in 1996 but this was due to vacancies.

Spending almost a quarter of a million dollars each year to maintain a nine-man station-bound staff could not be justified. Because of the savings that resulted from the new staffing guidelines, we were able to purchase a much needed ambulance and other equipment.

\(^7^9\)See Memorandum - January 13, 1995.
Other overtime problems were also brought under control. A memorandum entitled Tone-outs best explains how and why some of the overtime practices were changed:

In the past, fire policies have required the toning out of initial calls without any verification of the need. An excellent example is the Ingham County Extended Care Facility on Dobie Road. Whenever an alarm is pulled there, regardless if by accident or by carelessness, the off-duty firefighters were toned out. During the first two months of 1993, the fire alarm went off eleven times, all false alarms due to mechanical malfunctioning. Each time the alarm was toned-out for off-duty personnel to respond, even though the officer knew the alarm was false and no additional personnel were needed. A revised tone-out policy came into effect in 1994. It stated that there would no longer be "automatic" tone-outs. The decision to tone-out would now be made by the officer in charge after considering the variables involved, such as dispatch information, observations made by the first arriving units, etc. This policy revision never stopped the practice of toning-out. This revision now gave the discretion to the officer in charge to make that decision with the guideline that life-safety is always the most important variable.⁸⁰ (emphasis added).

Line commanders now determine what the staffing levels should be. They are the professionals that are most qualified to do so.

**TRAINING**

*In 1993 as a result of incidents at the fire scene at 5100 Marsh Road, MIOSHA fined the Township for safety violations and failing to have an incident command system.*

The inadequate training of Meridian Township’s firefighters was a concern expressed many times by Chief Johnson.⁸¹ The reactive posturing and traditional thinking of the fire services, and the influence of rank and file members to maintain status quo, had resulted in a system that had prioritized staffing over training with the end result that funds were unavailable for

⁸⁰See Tone-Outs.
⁸¹See Reflections of MIOSHA.
training. As a consequence, only 18 of the 40 firefighters had received the minimum state recommended training of Firefighter I and II, and most members did not have the mandatory incident command training. Operational procedures on incident command for the protection of firefighters and other persons at the fire scene, as mandated by MIOSHA, were not in place. Other procedures and policies on hazardous materials and medical training also took a lower priority to staffing stations, and prevention through inspections was almost entirely ignored. Funds were simply not available.

At the first administrative public safety meeting with the fire commanders, a fire lieutenant made a candid remark about the fire department reasoning at a fire scene, for staffing to nine firefighters. He claimed that if nine firefighters from Meridian Township arrived, five of them might actually know what to do. Although many laughed, everyone knew that the situation was not funny. Lack of competence in the department was of great concern. Inadequate training is probably the most serious deficiency that can exist. Notification of these conditions, imposes a legal duty to act. Failing to act or being "deliberately indifferent" to these training deficiencies could subject the Township to serious tort liability,\textsuperscript{82} because it is entirely foreseeable that an untrained firefighter has a higher probability of being hurt, or being responsible for the injury of another firefighter or innocent citizens.

Staffing is not as important as training. This issue is central to this entire discussion. Training allows members to recognize those situations that are manageable from those that are not. Training is key to effective and efficient use of the personnel assigned. Training allows members to distinguish the more dangerous tasks from the routine tasks and respond accordingly. To have people responding to fires who are not adequately trained to help fight that fire is useless. It is also very dangerous and unfair to the competent firefighters.

The fire union contended "if it ain’t broke don’t fix it." But the fire department was broke and in need of repair. The goal of instituting changes was not to place blame for the poor

\textsuperscript{82}See Harris v. City of Canton.
condition of the department, but rather to move forward to correct the problems. Both the chief and the firefighters were complaining about conditions. Public safety provided a mechanism for improvement. After the change to public safety when everyone was trained to an adequate level, demands were made on employees to do the job they were hired to do; people were removed from jobs they were not doing properly; funds were available for better capital equipment, and the number of people available to assist firefighters in emergency situations was almost doubled.

In March of 1995, Meridian’s firefighters all completed the Firefighter II academy. Some firefighters who remained in the department through the training, retired prior to the state exam.

**SICK LEAVE**

*In 1994, sick time was reduced by 65%.*

In 1993, there was 7280 hours of sick time used by firefighters. This sick time was one of the major contributing factors that resulted in nearly $180,000 in staffing and call-back overtime expenses. In 1994, sick time was reduced by 65% after a new policy was implemented. No firefighter was disciplined for past abuse of sick leave but documentation of abuse was shared with them and a warning was issued. No disciplinary action was taken because the goal of the Department was to simply fix the problems and move forward. However, the abuse was so extreme, that as a precaution this matter was discussed with the prosecutor’s office before taking any administrative action.

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83 See Relationship on Overtime.
84 See Attendance Policy and Response to Grievance #94-0004.
85 It may have been argued that some of the patterns of sick time abuse rose to the level of fraudulent activity. This was discussed with the prosecutor’s office before taking unilateral action of disregarding the possible criminal culpability.
Included for your review in the appendix are sick leave comparisons between 1993 and 1994\textsuperscript{86}, a four year comparison\textsuperscript{87} of sick leave hours, and calendars documenting 169 days of sick time taken in 1993 compared to only 19 taken in 1994 after implementation of a strict sick leave policy. It is important to note that the Attendance Policy was changed by collective bargaining agreement language earlier in 1996 and, the usage of sick time is again rising to the levels of 1993.\textsuperscript{88} Although this recurrence is unfortunate, it has not had the same monetary impact due to the flexibility of available public safety resources.

**PARAMEDIC STEP DOWN**

*Although 20 firefighter/paramedics were being paid as paramedics, only 16 of those firefighter/paramedics were properly certified and allowed to perform as a paramedic in Ingham County.*

One of the first public safety issues to be addressed was the "stepping down" of paramedics. It was discovered that some firefighter/paramedics were using a "loophole" in their collective bargaining agreement to "step down" from their paramedic duties. Stepping down is a term used by firefighters that means paramedics would no longer obtain the necessary certification that allowed them to work as licensed paramedics in the county. By stepping down an employee would also most likely respond to less runs.

This particular action allowed the firefighters to receive their bonus pay for being "state certified" but not perform paramedic services through the mechanism of not re-certifying their county certification. Because, in 1993, 20\% of the paramedics had unilaterally "stepped down," the Township was forced to pay other paramedics, at overtime rates, to staff these positions.

\textsuperscript{86}See Sick Leave Usage Comparison 1993 vs. 1994.

\textsuperscript{87}See Sick Leave Hours.

\textsuperscript{88}See Calendars.
There was language in the firefighters collective bargaining agreement that said "[a]ll personnel holding the classification of paramedic shall be paid an annual bonus of $500 per year." The firefighters had claimed they only needed to be state certified to receive the annual paramedic bonus of $500. However, in order to provide paramedic services in Ingham County, paramedics must also be certified in Advanced Cardiac Life Support ("ACLS"). Four paramedics unilaterally decided not to renew their ACLS certification.

For years the fire union had attempted to negotiate the "benefit" of stepping down. As discussed earlier, to step down means to drop your paramedic license and become an emergency medical technician. These paramedics believed that they had discovered a "loophole" that would allow them not only to "step down" but, they thought they could step down and still receive the annual paramedic bonus.

This issue is important for several reasons. In 1992 and 1993, the number of tri-county certified paramedics in Meridian Township was at the lowest level ever. Only 16 paramedics (of the 20 firefighter/paramedics on staff) could legally perform the services of a paramedic. The paramedics argued that their collective bargaining agreement only required them to be state certified to receive the $500 bonus, and that there was no requirement to get the Tri-County ACLS certification. The Township asserted that the firefighter/paramedics were hired to perform paramedic services and the intent of the contract was to give them an increase in pay for these extra services.

When ordered by Chief Johnson to take the necessary training to perform their paramedic duties, the firefighter/paramedics responded by filing a charge of an unfair labor practice. This matter was then tied up in litigation for the next year. When the Township prevailed in the action, the firefighters appealed. The Township won again. The administrative law judge and appellate panel held, "[t]he firefighters have but one choice, do their job or find another

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89 See 1993 Firefighters Association of Michigan Collective Bargaining Agreement Section VI, Subsection 6.3.
90 See Paramedic Licensing Memorandum.
line of work. "91 These same firefighters recently expressed concern for the quality of Meridian Township's paramedic services because one firefighter resigned and the number of paramedics went from 20 to 19. Why was it acceptable to unilaterally reduce their own numbers by 20% in 1993 and yet so "dangerous" to be temporarily reduced by 5% in 1996? Were these paramedics truly concerned for the safety of the citizens of Meridian when they accepted the bonus pay for being a paramedic but would not do the paramedic work until the Township forced them to do so?

This same matter also resulted in the suspension of the fire union president who had attempted to interfere in the certifying of the paramedics who were ordered to attend training. Arbitrator Peter Jason found that the Township's actions were proper in that suspension. He said that the most convincing evidence came from testimony that the union president had admitted at the local union meeting that he had stalled the ACLS training. According to Arbitrator Jason:

Grievant did not deny making the statement but claimed that it was a joke. I did not believe this explanation. I also believe grievant tried to cover up. The witnesses all testified that at the investigatory meeting grievant was asked point blank by his supervisors why he didn't place these firefighters in the October class at LCC and he responded that the class was full. Not only was this class not full, there were many other classes available, particularly one designed especially for paramedics available through the Lansing Fire Department. The only reasonable explanation is that grievant deliberately stalled because he wanted the Chief's order overturned before these firefighters were trained.92

91 See Administrative Law Judge ruling.
92 See Arbitration Decision - Disciplinary Suspension.
FIREFIGHTERS ANNOUNCE THAT THEY MAY NOT RETURN TO FIRES

In 1995 a decision is made to cross-train the public safety personnel to ensure that there will be enough trained firefighters at every fire scene.

With or without public safety, our community needs to be assured that there will be a sufficient response to critical events. The firefighters, through their union representatives, announced to the administration and to Trustee Heidi Grether, that they should no longer be relied upon to return to fire emergencies if they were not going to be recalled for station staffing. Ironically, this stance, more than anything else, forced the acceleration of the plan to cross-train public safety officers and hire more part-paid firefighters who could then be relied on to fight large fires.93 When Meridian Township changed the overtime and staffing practices, many firefighters stopped answering their pagers when called to return to duty at fire scenes. Although the Township does not have many large fires, it is necessary that there are adequate personnel to respond to whatever fires do occur. The Township needed to do something and there were not many options. The number of off-duty full-time firefighters responding to calls for help demonstrates that firefighters followed through on their threats. In 1996, there were 27 “tone-outs.” Ten of the current 22 firefighters never returned and four members returned only once. No full-time firefighters returned more than six times.94

When the Township representatives were told by the firefighters that they would not be returning to calls for help, the firefighters were literally putting a gun to the Township’s head. The Township was forced to act to ensure sufficient firefighting personnel at fire scenes. A decision was made that the Township should not be totally reliant on a single group of employees with the capacity to withhold such critical services.

93 See Discussion with Fire Union and Trustee Grether. Many firefighters had become accustomed to being paid more than $10,000 per year in overtime. Some were making more than $20,000. It was clear that they wanted to return to practices that paid them overtime to be at fire stations not just at fire scenes.

94 There were two occasions when a tone-out was sounded at the change of shift. Since many members were already at the station (but not officially on-duty), they were paid for responding to those runs. These two runs were not included.
One of the motivating factors behind the decision to begin cross-training in 1995 was that, in addition to recognizing the need to protect citizens and property, the administration was concerned about the firefighters’ own safety. The firefighters who were on duty, at the time of an event, could no longer depend on their fellow firefighters to come to their aid. The Township’s public safety administration faced a difficult and dangerous situation.

The consequence of the firefighter’s actions resulted in accelerating the need for the fire training of as many employees as possible. It was the police personnel and part-paid firefighters who demonstrated a willingness to be trained. These newly trained firefighters have responded while off-duty, to calls for back-up personnel at fires. The refusal of firefighters to return from off-duty to fight fires raised serious questions about their claims of loyalty and dedication. Those questions are what forced management to seek alternative resources in the form of cross-training and the utilization of part-time firefighters.

Even before cross-training was in place, a firefighter training program had been instituted to bring existing firefighters up to minimum standards. But attempts to train members of the fire department and establish standards of professionalism, including an environment of courtesy and respect, were met by resistance from a small but vocal group of firefighters.

**POLICE CALLS WAIT FOR POLICE TO BECOME AVAILABLE**

*Inadequate police staffing results in poor traffic enforcement, inadequate criminal investigation, and excessive response times to police calls.*

Superintendent Conti and prior Boards struggled to find a solution to the police staffing problems. They recognized that increased demands were being put on police services. It was these concerns that initiated the initial studies of public safety. For over 20 years, the Township continued to try to find ways to address the problems that study after study confirmed. More police were needed. During those years, consultants, committees and
Township administrators recommended hiring more police. Even when public safety was recommended as an option, more officers were needed.

The Township’s earlier cited studies and reports demonstrate that attempts to improve response times to calls for police services have always been a challenge to the Township. Chief Amthor consistently warned the Township administration and Boards that inadequate police staffing resulted in poor traffic enforcement, inadequate criminal investigations, and excessive response times to police calls. He also talked about the negative impact poor responses had on the reputation of the department. He knew that the poor response times would most likely increase as demands for police services grew. He did not hesitate to inform elected officials of the consequences of failing to improve conditions. As Chief Amthor predicted, the problems did get worse.

When the new police chief was appointed in 1990, he also attempted to communicate the dangers associated with too few police and of delayed response times. Again, the Township administrators and elected officials recognized a need to do something. A millage to hire 14 officers was authorized and attempted by the Board. For various reasons, the voters rejected the millage.

The need for more police continues to grow. During the 1990s, there have been more calls for police services and constant requests for traffic enforcement. Effective traffic enforcement has been proven to reduce accidents and injuries.

More time is now being devoted to the investigation and closure of criminal cases. This has placed even greater demands on police services. Additionally, calls for service are at an all time high.

The implementation of public safety now provides more police-trained members to respond to calls, address traffic matters and investigate criminal activity. However, even now, with more
officers responding to calls, many of our citizens that call for the police are still forced to wait until a police unit becomes available. This is very concerning and is something that should not be ignored in your total evaluation of public safety needs. Last month alone (December 1996), over 75 calls were “stacked.”

With a low number of officers assigned to each shift, there is a higher probability that officers will face increased risks because fewer officers are available to provide back-up in dangerous situations. Too often, officers put themselves into jeopardy by handling activities by themselves that usually call for back-up support.

The summary of 1995\textsuperscript{96} police activities and the last semi-monthly report\textsuperscript{97} have been included in the Reference Book for your perusal.

Increased police presence in our community and aggressive investigation and successful prosecution of crimes is a key ingredient of crime prevention. Criminals will tend to avoid communities where police are highly visible and there is a greater risk of apprehension and prosecution.

A comparison of the following charts reveals the current increase in the number of patrol personnel per shift due to the implementation of public safety.

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\textsuperscript{95}See Police Calls for Services Held Memorandum. “Stacked” is a term used by police and dispatchers that informs supervisors that calls are waiting. “You have six calls stacked” means six calls for service are waiting.

\textsuperscript{96}1995 Annual Report - Police Division.

\textsuperscript{97}Semi-monthly report - December 30, 1996.
AVAILABLE PATROL PERSONNEL

1993

1997
PART FOUR:

THE TRANSITION TO PUBLIC SAFETY
PART FOUR: THE TRANSITION TO PUBLIC SAFETY

CROSS-TRAINING

*Off-duty firefighters could no longer be relied on to return to emergencies.*

When Meridian Township changed the overtime and staffing practices so that overtime was not used for staffing stations, firefighters stopped coming back to fires. With or without public safety, Meridian Township needs to be assured there will be a sufficient response to critical events. The past president of the firefighter’s union informed the public safety administration and Trustee Heidi Grether that off-duty firefighters could no longer be relied on to return to emergencies. A review of off-duty responses since the president’s warning reveals that most firefighters were not responding to calls for help. Although the Township does not have many large fires, it is absolutely necessary to insure that adequate personnel are available to properly extinguish them. The firefighters threat was very concerning. The Township needed to do something and there were not many options. Certainly the Township could not allow the firefighters to dictate staffing and overtime policies by withholding their services. The Township needed to act.

The public safety department accelerated the hiring of additional part-paid firefighters and training of public safety officers. This was fortunate because only a few full-time firefighters have an acceptable record of responding to emergencies when they are off-duty.

In the past, there were many “tone outs.” Remember, a tone out is a call to off-duty firefighters for help. Back then, because of the practice of "automatically" toning out and calling back firefighters, the firefighters that were called back were rarely used on emergency runs. However, back then, many off-duty firefighters responded to those requests. Today,
because of the changed practices, it is more likely that firefighters will be needed when calls for help are sounded. Unfortunately, few full-time off-duty firefighters now return.

In 1996, with the utilization of only a limited number of public safety officers and part-paid firefighters, the response to fires dramatically increased. Since many full-time firefighters were not returning to help, these employees were critically needed. As you study the fires in 1996, observe how many firefighters are now available to help.

A review of the more serious fires and other concerns that were raised by opponents of public safety about day-to-day operations in 1996 has resulted in the development of a record number of reports for you to analyze.

**TRAINING GOALS SET**

From October, 1993 through December, 1994, the fire operations were reorganized. The goal of training the fire department to minimally acceptable standards was accomplished within the confines of the existing fire department budget through greater efficiencies and the elimination of unnecessary overtime. No additional funding was needed to meet this goal. During 1995, all police personnel were trained as medical first responders and training of police and supervisory officers in the fire academy had begun. In 1996, cross-training of police and fire employees continued, and 27 private sector employees at the Meridian Mall, Meijers and the Michigan Athletic Club were also trained as medical first responders. These new civilian partners became a part of a more comprehensive public safety team and are ready to respond at no cost to the Township.

During the first phase of reorganization, all efforts were focused on training fire department personnel. Chief Johnson issued a *Training Schedule Memorandum* noting members of the shift in priorities:

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98 See Training Schedule Memorandum.
Each member of the Department must accept their responsibility to be professionally trained and competent. The Department recognizes the importance of training and the positive relationship that exists between training and the reduction in foreseeable safety risks. The safety of individual members, fellow firefighters, and our citizens depend on our ability to do our assigned duties in a way that does not compromise “life-safety.” Therefore, the Department has identified training as its highest priority and has committed both financial and personnel resources to the accomplishment of this task. All members will be given assistance in reaching an acceptable level of training. Likewise, the Department will do whatever is reasonable to properly train its employees. However, the safety of another person will not be compromised by the incompetence of any member. Accordingly, all personnel are encouraged to train to a level of professional competence.

The memorandum included a full page of training goals for 1994. Chief Johnson concluded his report by advising firefighters that “[I]long term goals will focus on more advanced technical and progressive aspects of suppression, prevention, inspection, emergency medical services, and fire management.”

It took more than 12 months to complete the academy training. During that year all full-time firefighters were trained to Firefighter I level, certified in Incident Command, trained to meet hazardous materials requirements, trained in blood borne pathogens as mandated by MIOSHA, and for the first time, all firefighters were SCBA (self-contained breathing apparatus) certified.

Although 1994 ended without a signed collective bargaining agreement, a tremendous amount of training was accomplished and changes were made that resulted in more employees being on duty every working day. This occurred even though attrition had reduced the number of firefighters in the Department. On January 16, 1995, a report on the impact of public safety changes was submitted to the Public Safety Committee. In that report, the “net benefit” of changes, as a result of public safety, was listed at $385,927 for 1994.

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59 Id.
100 See Impact of Changes.
101 Id at 4.
PUBLIC SAFETY MILESTONES
1994

- State authorizes Meridian Township to hold fire academies
- All firefighters certified to Firefighter I level
- Hazardous Material Cost Recovery Ordinance passed
- Implementation of the National Fire Academy’s Incident Command System
- Meridian Mall mock disaster drill tests police/fire/EMS divisions
- Targeted overtime reduced over 90%
- Sick time usage reduced over 70%
- More firefighters on duty daily

1995 was another challenging and rewarding year for the evolving public safety department. Again, staffing practices were brought forward as an issue. When less than nine members were on duty, overtime funds were not used to automatically fill in the vacancies and there were those who expressed concern about that. A memorandum entitled Public Safety Staffing\(^{102}\) explained the importance of allowing line commanders to make staffing decisions. This memorandum discussed the complexity of staffing and stated that:

The Township has knowledgeable and competent commanders in both departments. They are encouraged to make well considered decisions that balance the cost of staffing against the risks that are inherent in a host of varying circumstances that are too extensive to list. Operating in this manner is consistent with theoretical principles of management and supervision that encourage the delegation of authority, where possible, to competent decision makers.\(^{103}\)

The credit for the success of operational changes made in 1994 should be given to fire commanders. "By putting competent line supervisors in key positions, and vesting them with the authority to make staffing decisions, unnecessary overtime and excessive absenteeism were
drastically reduced."\textsuperscript{104} In September of 1994, the position of Training Safety Coordinator was posted by Chief Johnson.\textsuperscript{105} This was an eight hour per day job and would further reduce overtime being paid to trainers that currently remained on 24 hour assignments. The firefighters opposed the action and filed one of the unfair labor practices against the Township. Chief Johnson had requested such a position years earlier, but had been unable to establish it without increasing budgeted personnel.

\begin{table}
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\begin{tabular}{|l|}
\hline
\textbf{PUBLIC SAFETY MILESTONES} \\
\textbf{1995} \\
\hline
\hline
- All firefighters certified to Firefighter II level \\
- Fire Safety House purchased/donated \\
- Enacted the Accident Investigation Team \\
- All police officers crossed trained as Medical First Responders \\
- First police officers cross-trained as firefighters \\
- Appointment of two Deputy Directors and one Assistant Deputy Director \\
- Purchased SMART (Traffic Enforcement Trailer) with East Lansing and Michigan State University \\
- Hired first public safety officer \\
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\end{tabular}
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Amended staffing guidelines were issued in September, 1995, giving the commanders who had become more proficient in their utilization of personnel the ability to make well-reasoned staffing decisions.

By the end of 1996, there were 61 full-time employees trained to be firefighters, 44 full-time employees trained as police officers and 73 employees licensed as emergency medical providers including 19 paramedics.\textsuperscript{106} At the end of 1996 there were four vacant positions. This represents an increase of 53\% more firefighters, 32\% more police officers and 85\% more trained emergency medical employees. Additionally, the number of on-call part-paid firefighters has more than doubled.

\textsuperscript{104} See Phase One of Recommended Plan at 3. This report demonstrates that 33.8 members would be needed to staff fire operations to 9.
\textsuperscript{105} See Job Description for Training Safety Coordinator.
\textsuperscript{106} There will be 63 firefighters by the end of January.
PUBLIC SAFETY MILESTONES
1996

- Entered joint dispatch with East Lansing and Michigan State University
- Placed new ambulance into service
- Placed first E-unit into service
- Hired first public safety officer/paramedic
- First firefighters cross-trained as police officers
- Settled labor agreements with firefighters, police and public safety personnel
- Implemented the CAD (computer) system
- Appointed five mobile inspectors
- Ambulance revenues increased over 250%

PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS RESPOND TO FIRES

The Public Safety Department was responding to major fires with 30 firefighters in a very short period of time.

In 1995, public safety officers trained and certified to Firefighter I and II by the State of Michigan began to respond to fires in Meridian Township. Evaluation of their actions at fires is important. Because Meridian Township does not have many fires that would be described as significant, when there is a large fire it is important to report on it and evaluate the impact that the cross-trained public safety officers had on the extinguishment of the fire. Reports of all significant fires have been prepared and are available for your perusal. They will be included with this report. By the end of 1995, the public safety department was responding to major fires in a very short period of time with as many as 30 fire trained employees. This was before many of the current public safety officers had been trained.\textsuperscript{107} The Department can now establish that the off-duty response to a “tone out”\textsuperscript{108} has been dramatically improved from just one year ago.\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{107} See Activity Report of November 6, 1995.
\textsuperscript{108} Tone out is a term used in fire divisions to bring back all available firefighters to help with the emergency.
\textsuperscript{109} See Responses to Fires Memorandum.
All of the 1997 fire personnel are certified by the State of Michigan. In 1993, many members of the fire department did not have Firefighter I and II certification. The first chart below compares staffing levels of full-time employees who were available for fire suppression between 1993 and 1996. The second chart compares the training level of those employees.
CITY MANAGERS ON CHANGE IN FIRE DEPARTMENTS

City managers from most communities have had to find more efficient ways to provide services. In July of 1995, the Michigan Fire Service News,\textsuperscript{110} published an article entitled "The Fire Service of the Future."\textsuperscript{111} The article consisted of excerpts from a speech given by the city manager of Great Falls, Montana, John W. Lawton, addressing a group of fire officers at the firefighter’s national convention. The Editor of the Michigan Fire Service News summarized the speech as “[a] hard-hitting, for-your-own-good critique of the current mentality among change-resistant fire service personnel . . . and a demanding prescription for survival in the next century.”

The speaker, Mr. Lawton, had extensive experience as a city manager in the administration and oversight of fire departments. In his speech he expresses his perception of the struggle between city managers and the fire industry.

Here's what my experience with fire departments has taught me: If you are not one of them, you are wrong. There exists in the fire service a tradition-bound assumption that if a person has not paid his dues in fire combat, he does not know a damn thing that can be useful to the fire service. I management, you fire service. Never the twain shall meet. Which of us will wind up in Jurassic Park?\textsuperscript{112}

Mr. Lawton claims that firefighters have their own training manual, “the one no one ever sees,” and that he, as a city manager, has to “deal with on a daily basis.”\textsuperscript{113} He refers to their current belief system in the “service” and informs the firefighters that another manual is now being written that “counter-balances” those beliefs.

\textsuperscript{110}See Michigan Fire Service News.
\textsuperscript{111}Id.
\textsuperscript{112}Id.
\textsuperscript{113}Id.
Mr. Lawton does attempt to explain the firefighters point of view. Their "idea here is that if change is resisted, then layoffs will not occur." However, he points out that changes in the past have resulted in a reduction in manpower.

This is also true of almost every other occupation including some that were assumed to be unassailable, like computer industry jobs. Starting with the recession of 1982, every major industry has been impacted by reorganization, reductions in force, and competitors groping for advantages for hostile takeovers. As these same economic forces trickle down to the public sector, all departments and their programs will be required to justify their existence again.\textsuperscript{114}

City Manager Lawton cites articles he has studied from the firefighters' own journals. He reminds them of one article that explained that "[a] 12-year study finds that the United States could cut fire death rate if it follows the lead of other countries and makes fire prevention a higher priority."\textsuperscript{115}

Firefighters are warned by Lawton that even if they keep their jobs "it will be totally different from the one you came in with 20 years ago."\textsuperscript{116}

Lawton challenges the command firefighters to "invent the future" and he shares his vision of the future with them. Many of his visions have already been put into practice in Meridian Township. Consider the following:

* **There will be roving fire officers.** Roving fire inspectors are now the backbone of the Township's public safety plan. In Lawton's vision, these officers would have both police and fire engineering experience. In Meridian Township, roving fire command officers attend daily roll calls with other public safety officers and respond to fire and emergency medical service calls while patrolling. They also serve as "eyes and ears," assisting in crime prevention

\textsuperscript{114} Id.
\textsuperscript{115} Id.
\textsuperscript{116} Id.
efforts. Possibly you’ve seen the red patrolling public safety vehicles of the public safety inspectors.

* **Entering firefighters will have two year degrees.** This is consistent with the requirement to be a public safety officer in Meridian Township.

* **Large departments in cooperation with educational institutions will provide a station as a laboratory.** Lawton suggests that stations be manned by students with experienced trainers in all the above mentioned specialties. Meridian Township now has the ability to do this. The collective bargaining agreement between the Township and firefighters allows for an internship program. This was inserted into the latest agreement and the public safety administration is working with educators at Lansing Community College and the Michigan Fire Marshal’s office to develop such a program.

* **Manpower pools made available to handle extensive demands.** In Meridian Township, there are now almost twice as many state certified firefighters than there were just three years ago and almost double the number of employees have been licensed to respond to medical emergencies, while 25% more employees are police trained. Lawton suggests:

  > Police, life safety, pre-hospital care providers, and public works personnel will be cross-trained to handle disasters, crisis, multiple or simultaneous incidents, or high incident time periods.\(^{117}\)

Meridian Township has not only cross-trained employees but has more than doubled the number of part-paid firefighters. We have reached out into the community to train Mall Security, Meijers Security, and soon, school personnel as medical first responders to assist those in need in the first crucial minutes of a medical emergency before the paramedics arrive.

\(^{117}\)Id at 15.
* Insurance companies will stop grading fire departments. Lawton suggests that cost for
insurance should be based on objective risks and explains how prevention efforts should result
in a decrease in the fee. Although East Lansing cited a decreased ISO rating as a selling point
for lower insurance rates during the annexation initiative. A later report in the State News
revealed that the decrease in East Lansing’s ISO rating did not result in a reduction in their
rates.\(^{118}\)

* Department of the future. Lawton labels the firefighters and other emergency responders
of the future as “life safety employees” employed in a “life safety department.” This broad
department heading with multiple responsibilities is a paradigm shift that many businesses are
making to be more competitive or survive in their environments.

The life safety departments of the future will be energetic, exuberant interacters
with their communities. Needs assessments will be on-going. Programs will be
evolving out of programs as service personnel continually monitor what the
public wants. This will be in contrast to the almost anachronistic effort of
trying to convince the public it needs you. Life safety and fire protection
education will be an integral part of formal education.\(^ {119}\)

Meridian Township has been discussing the “life safety officer” concept for 25 years and has
incorporated many of these ideas into the job description of a Meridian Township Public
Safety Officer.

Lawton also explains how he sees life safety officers being used:

Finally, the distinctions between law enforcement and fire protection will blur.
The need for law enforcement services is ever-increasing, while the need for
traditional fire protection services is ever-decreasing. The area of overlap
between law enforcement and fire protection is in life safety.\(^ {120}\)

\(^{118}\)See State News Article - November 26, 1996.
\(^{119}\)Michigan Fire Service News.
\(^{120}\)Id.
In conclusion Lawton tells the fire commanders that they should embrace change:

The future for the fire service will be bright if change is embraced. If it is not, the fire service will slowly decline through traditional budget cutting approaches over the next ten years. Who knows where it will end?\textsuperscript{121}

These comments were echoed in \textit{Time} magazine, December 9, 1996. An article in the business section discussed how firefighters from around the country were competing to do more, for example, ambulance services. According to \textit{Time}, "[t]he folks who man the hoses need other work; the number of fires across the nation has plummeted 40\% since 1977."\textsuperscript{122}

\textsuperscript{121}Id.

\textsuperscript{122}\textit{Time} article, December 9, 1996, at 58.
PART FIVE:

RESISTANCE TO CHANGE
PART FIVE: RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

Resistance is a very reliable barometer to measure the impact of change. But it is not a good gauge of how appropriate the change really is. You can’t say change is bad medicine just because some people don’t like the taste of it.\(^{123}\)

In analyzing Meridian Township’s difficult administrative struggle to implement public safety changes, it is important to find something that can put that struggle into perspective. Looking at how other communities have also had to withstand difficult challenges to changes in their fire departments is a good place to start. A comparison between Meridian Township and other communities who have implemented projects that are now deemed to be “great successes,” will help evaluate how much of the reaction to Meridian Township’s changes was predictable and consistent with similar struggles across the country, and will offer some insight into the future of public safety efforts. It can then be determined whether resistance in Meridian Township was unique.

Certainly resistance to change does not present a good person/bad person issue. Resisting change is a very human reaction, especially among those who benefit from the status quo. Every organization that wishes to move ahead must overcome resistance.

The motivation for resistance can run the gamut from a genuine concern about the impact of proposed changes all the way to fear of change. Many people resist change simply because the status quo represents something they are familiar with. They know exactly what their duties are, and they know they can discharge those duties. Changes present new training demands and new duties, which some of the resistors fear because he or she feels apprehensive about their own ability to meet these new demands and duties successfully.

As individuals, the majority of Meridian firefighters are good community-oriented people with families, who are simply expressing their concern about the impact of public safety changes on

\(^{123}\) See Resistance at 1.
their futures. We have attempted to address their concerns through bargaining concessions and contract inducements. For example, in an effort to allay the fears about cross-training, the final contract made cross-training an option which the existing firefighters and police officers may or may not elect. Also, to allay fears that their positions might become redundant, their labor contracts contain a “no lay-off” provision.

However, training that relates to safety, rescue, emergency medical services, crime and fire prevention techniques cannot be made optional. An issue such as training relates less to job description and more to the protection of the community and the protection of employees themselves when they are at scenes of critical incidents. With regard to these issues there is no room to compromise. Management not only has a right to prioritize these areas, they have a duty to do so.

The resistance to change demonstrated by Meridian Township firefighters is not unique. In fact, there is a great deal of literature dealing with the strong resistance to change in many organizations. In particular, studies of other fire departments reveal tremendous consistency in the methods used by resisters, regardless of the issue. The resistance to progressive change is well documented throughout the country in other industries, and in particular in the fire industry. A large section of this report will be spent discussing some of these publications because they help to put into perspective the turmoil that has been experienced in Meridian Township.

ATTACKING THE CHANGE AGENTS

Progressive changes in the fire industry are difficult to make, as documented in Fire Chiefs Under Attack, a publication provided by the International Association of Fire Chiefs ("IAFC"). The IAFC represents fire chiefs and strives to improve professionalism in the firefighting industry. The publication was designed to document the unique challenges faced

\[\text{\footnotesize\textsuperscript{124}}\text{See Fire Chiefs Under Attack, 1993.}\]
by "progressive" fire administrators, referred to as "change agents." Anyone that has followed the public safety conflict will be astounded to find the same situations described throughout this IAFC publication. The strategy used during the last three years, and that continues to be used today by Meridian Township firefighters, is consistent with that used by other fire organizations and unions fighting to maintain the status quo. To understand the effectiveness of the fire union's strategy is to begin to understand Chief Johnson's reluctance to implement changes in the past.

In retrospect, one might argue that Chief Johnson was wise to delay change until the problems in the fire department reached a crisis level. He knew he could expect such bitter and extremely personal attacks that it might be pointless to make changes before the problems had reached a crisis level, because, until then, there would simply not be enough demonstratable evidence to refute those attacks.

The International Association of Fire Chiefs published their booklet to inform city managers and elected officials of tactics that fire unions have used to undermine change agents in fire services and attack their personal and professional credibility within the political process. Top fire administrators and other change agents are being fired for attempting to institute professional and efficient practices in their fire departments. The fire chiefs' association warns of the "national involvement" of fire unions "attacking individual chiefs across the country." The booklet refers to specific actions of firefighters and their supporters. If you have been following the events in Meridian Township, you will recognize that many of the incidents described in their book mirror the circumstances that Meridian Township Public Safety administrators have been faced with during the last few years. Consider the following quotes:

... it appears that the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) and its member locals have been using the conflict itself as a means of promoting labor interests by usurping the power of the fire chief.125

125 Id at 9.
The attacks are made on chiefs who are disliked by the union leadership for some particular reason and are used simply as part of an increasingly hostile anti-management strategy.\textsuperscript{126}

Often this tactic is used to resist the chief's efforts to implement changes in the department.\textsuperscript{127}

The basic approach is to discredit, defame, demoralize and isolate the fire chief, making management more difficult and casting doubt on the chief’s credibility. The direct target audience is the elected political body or the city/county manager. The public at large is a secondary audience to which the union will present itself as the only organization truly concerned with public safety. (emphasis added)\textsuperscript{128}

It is important to note that in most cases, chiefs who observe the status quo almost never come into conflict, while the chief who tries to change the system for the better is attacked viciously and repeatedly. These attacks can be particularly destructive since the progressive chief is likely to be highly dedicated to the mission and makes a strong personal commitment to solving problems and improving conditions.\textsuperscript{129}

Issues are contrived or severely misrepresented, attacking the fire chief simply to obstruct his ability to manage the fire department.\textsuperscript{130}

However, in the present reality there are few limits on the behavior of an employee organization or its leadership. Conversely, as a public official, the fire chief is always subject to close scrutiny and must exercise caution in imposing disciplinary actions.\textsuperscript{131}

As described above, the Meridian firefighters have used the public safety conflict as a means of promoting their own labor interest. They have found the national firefighters' union road map to fighting change and have followed it. Only after they feel their tactics are working are they willing to "return to the bargaining table."

\textsuperscript{126} Id.
\textsuperscript{127} Id.
\textsuperscript{128} Id.
\textsuperscript{129} Id.
\textsuperscript{130} Id at 13.
\textsuperscript{131} Id.
In Meridian Township, as warned of in the IAFC manual, personal attacks have continued and there has been a severe misrepresentation of the facts. Attacks have been made against the public safety staff and anyone that has embraced public safety changes. Many administrative employees have been represented as demons. Firefighters have used their positions of trust to influence senior citizens and others to turn against even non-administrative police employees. When some firefighters were appointed to command positions, and other firefighters requested to cross-train, the fire union made it clear that they did not want any further relationship with any of these firefighters. Continuous false claims and allegations of inappropriate behavior, labeled "standard tactics" by the IAFC, have constantly fueled the union's "anti-management strategy." Conflict in Meridian Township seems to be no different than conflict in other changing fire departments.

As the IAFC points out, the target audience is usually the elected political body. Like other resistant fire unions, the Meridian Township fire union has "presented itself (to the elected political body and constituents) as the only organization truly concerned with public safety." Yet, many of their actions, such as failing to return to fires and relinquishing their paramedic certifications, have actually jeopardized the public's safety.

"The basic approach to discredit, defame, demoralize and isolate" the change agents has made management of the entire public safety organization more difficult in Meridian Township. It appears that the union's expression of a lack of confidence in management has "cast doubt" on the administrative staff's credibility. The public safety organization is now being forced to "fly speck" itself as it is "micro-managed" because of the doubt that has been cast upon it. The change agents themselves have now become subject to very close scrutiny. Like other communities, unfortunately, the attacks have become "vicious and repeated" and the agents of change have become the targets of personal attacks. Chief Johnson, while he was not satisfied with the status quo, recognized the political realities and low probability of surviving any attempt to make changes in the past. Now he has become a target of the attackers simply because he has not joined in the attack.
USING THE GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE TO RESIST CHANGE

Another approach used by the union has been to overload the system with grievances. Again Meridian Township appears to be no different than other jurisdictions that have attempted change.

During the last three years, over 40 grievances and 7 unfair labor practices have been filed. None of the grievances were resolved in the union’s favor.132 There has also been a steady stream of internal complaints and requests filed under the Freedom of Information law.

While a grievance procedure is intended to resolve issues, it is easy to abuse the system by filing numerous official grievances over trivial issues and refusing to settle on any of them. In some cases, as many as one hundred grievances have been filed at one time. This tactic is intended to make the fire chief appear as an unreasonable person incapable of functioning in a normal labor-management process. It is also intended to take up so much of management’s time that progress is stopped and frustration is instilled.133

USING THE POLITICAL PROCESS TO RESIST CHANGE

According to the IAFC booklet, it is also common for fire unions to attempt to frighten the community about its safety and warn of reductions in public protection that will result from new policies.134 According to the booklet, the most irresponsible act of personalizing an issue has been to accuse an administrator of personal responsibility for a death or injury. During the past three years, there have been two deaths caused by fire in Meridian Township. In each

132 Only one unfair labor practice was answered in favor of the union. In that instance the Township attempted to test the competence of firefighters to perform basic firefighting tasks. This test was used in other communities and is a model. The administrative law judge ruled that the test could be given but had to be negotiated with the union. On the same day the Township won another unfair labor practice that was filed by the union. All grievances have been won by the Township, dropped after a certain step, or dropped by the union as part of the settlement agreement reached in contract negotiations. The Township also agreed not to pursue pending disciplinary actions against firefighters.

133 Id at 17.

134 Id.
case, the person had died before the fire alarm was even sounded. Yet, in each instance, the resistors claimed that public safety or the new staffing practices were responsible.

An entire chapter in the IAFC booklet is entitled, The Primary Audience: Appointed and Elected Officials. The process that unions attempt to use to maintain status quo or to get the changes they want through the political process are simple. By-pass managers/administrators (the change agents) and deal directly with elected officials. Once the unions have side stepped the administrators they can use community support as leverage against elected officials.

The firefighter’s union has consistently attempted to circumvent the public safety director and Chief Johnson and take matters directly to the Township Manager and elected officials. These are methods of attempting to usurp power that closely resemble actions of other unions resisting changes. This process is explained in the IAFC text this way:

In many cases the fire chief’s access to elected officials is very limited, particularly under a city management system - whereas the union has free access and numerous ways to become involved in directly supporting or opposing candidates. The union representatives can make false accusations to destroy the chief’s credibility or promise to support a candidate in return for a vote against the fire chief. One of the union’s goals in attacking the chief is to by-pass the administrative system of the fire department and deal directly with the local government and elected officials. Once the union can deal directly with the government, it can effectively lobby for implementation of labor interests, using popular public support as leverage against the elected official. The question is, how far will the politicians allow themselves to be manipulated and where will their perceptions of the issues lead? It is difficult to accept that an elected official may be more attracted to the votes and support that the union may promise to deliver than to the plans and policies of a conscientious fire chief who is interested in improving efficiency.  

An evaluation of the resistance to public safety changes in Meridian Township appears to be no different than the resistance of firefighters throughout the United States to other progressive changes. This does not make the current resistance any less challenging, it just puts it into a

\[135\] Id at 19.
perspective that is easier to understand. In Meridian Township, Monty Nye, president of the firefighter's union, criticized Trustee Heidi Grether in the Towne Courier immediately after the last agreement between the Township and firefighters was signed. Trustee Grether explained her role in the negotiations and reminded Monty Nye that she never promised the firefighters to support status quo.

Perhaps Mr. Nye and other need to be reminded of why the firefighters offered to endorse me in the last election. I publicly stated my belief that with limited taxing authority the Township's number one obligation is to protect its citizens through the provision of police, fire and paramedic services; and that the previous Board should not have sought a special millage for police and fire while paying for the Township's administrative building expansion with general fund dollars. I never committed that the system in place at that time was the only system I could support, nor did I commit to not looking at other options to provide those services.\textsuperscript{136}

An understanding of the rationale behind the resistance helps to explain why so much effort is exerted by the firefighters to resist change.

The immediate cause of most conflicts is change. The resistance of the fire service to change is legendary; there have been few, if any cases where a fire chief has been attacked for leaving things alone. Any attempt to introduce change, particularly in a department that has operated with an established power structure, is a ripe opportunity for conflict.\textsuperscript{137}

There is also a list of common tactics used by fire unions toward new administrators. One of the greatest challenges faced by any new administrator is to come in as an outsider. The outside person is commonly referred to as the "foreign chief." The most difficult problem, from a fire union perspective, is the appointment of an outsider.

Most direct actions against fire chiefs are initiated within the first two years after the appointment. Those who have been recruited from outside the

\textsuperscript{136}See Trustee Grether Letter to Towne Courier.
\textsuperscript{137}See Fire Chiefs Under Attack at 20.
department are much more likely to be attacked than those who are promoted from within. New chiefs are often selected as change agents; to modernize, reform, inspire or gain control of organizations that are not meeting the expectations of the appointing authority.\textsuperscript{138}

The IAFC text attempts to warn the new administrator/change agent about "the ability of one extremely dedicated union leader to make life miserable."\textsuperscript{139} The chief's booklet also has pages of text and letters from other "change agents" who were fired for simply attempting to bring about more efficiencies to fire services. A thorough review of this publication will provide you with much more insight into the strategy of fire unions. It summarizes many unique administrative challenges to managing fire departments and helps to explain logically some of the labor events that have been experienced in Meridian Township.

**BUSINESS CONSULTANTS ON CHANGE**

*Strong resistance is also encountered in the private sector.*

*Resistance, Moving Beyond the Barriers to Change* (hereinafter referred to as "Resistance") is a handbook written for businesses attempting to implement change. Price Pritchett, the author and publisher, tells business leaders that "[e]mployee resistance is the biggest barrier to change. . . and the very quickest way for organizations to pick up speed is for the resisters to take their foot off the brakes."\textsuperscript{140}

In the introduction, business leaders are advised:

> Precious resources are being squandered on organizational civil wars. People are fighting change instead of pushing it forward. They’re pulling in different directions rather than aligning with the change efforts. These are *insiders*.

\textsuperscript{138} Id at 21.
\textsuperscript{139} Id at 22.
\textsuperscript{140} See *Resistance* at 2.
You’re paying full dollar for these people. Yet they represent one of the major threats to your organization’s future.\textsuperscript{141}

The theme of \textit{Resistance} is that change is necessary and resistance is inevitable and most of the time unavoidable. “If you don’t encounter it [resistance] you have to wonder if you’ve really changed things much.”\textsuperscript{142}

The \textit{Resistance} handbook describes what kind of resistance to expect any time any organization makes major changes. According to this handbook, most organizations will generally find that 20\% of the workers are “change friendly”; 50\% will “sit on the fence”; and, the remaining 30\% are the resisters.\textsuperscript{143} These percentages are representative of the initial attitudes of the Township’s public safety employees about the change. However, during the past three years, those numbers have changed dramatically. It is now estimated that 60\% of the employees support the change; 20\% of the employees are “sitting on the fence”; and 20\% are resisters. \textit{Resistance} recommends ignoring the resisters:

\begin{quote}
\textit{You must be willing to let squeaky wheels squeak. Save your grease for the quieter wheels that are actually carrying the load.}\textsuperscript{144}
\end{quote}

There is, however, a difference in reaction to changes in a business and the reactions to changes made in fire departments. A change in a fire department’s method of operating will most likely get more attention than a change in the production schedule at the local plant. When a change is presented as a threat to a community’s safety, the obstacles to change become greater than that of just the resisting employees. Frightened community members also become resistors and have much more influence and leeway than employees in resisting changes.

\textsuperscript{141} Id.
\textsuperscript{142} Id at 1.
\textsuperscript{143} Id at 3.
\textsuperscript{144} Id at 4.
When businesses are inefficient, they usually go out of business. When government services operate inefficiently, they are forced to raise taxes or provide fewer services.

No real change is accomplished without some resistance. Meridian Township knew that the change to public safety would be no different. Fortunately, to date, while there have been internal problems because of the transition, there has been no decline in the quality and level of police, fire and emergency medical services provided to the community. In fact, services have been enhanced.

There were problems in the past, and in all likelihood, there will be some problems in the future. Problems in the past were often buried by employees. But, there are less operational problems now and changes have been made to identify and prevent problems with public safety services before they occur. Administrative resolution of problems is preferred. However, in the current environment, resisters are eager to broadcast and sensationalize even the slightest hint of a problem through every available medium, including direct communication to elected officials. Our local resisters have even manufactured problems where subsequent investigations have revealed no problem. Several times the administration has been accused of abusing police powers. Investigations conducted by outside agencies revealed no evidence of any inappropriate action by administrators. There are many other examples of resisters misrepresenting events and fabricating problems. This "modus operandi" continues today.

Public relations have been a challenge to the public safety staff. No one seemed to want to hear the good news about public safety. Apparently, this is not unusual:

Most major change initiatives run into public relations problems rather quickly. People see and hear things that disturb them. They're disappointed by all the problems... that always seem to arrive well ahead of the successes. As usual, bad news drives good news away, so people disregard much of that which actually represents progress.\textsuperscript{145}

\textsuperscript{145}Id at 17.
Bureaucracy is referred to as the "enemy of change."\(^{146}\)

The bureaucrats rely heavily on covert tactics. Passive resistance is their forte. For example, riding the fence rather than taking a clear position. Dragging their feet. Rationalizing the need to "go slow and avoid mistakes." Waging their own private turf battles by means of red tape and standard operating procedures. Circulating behind the scenes to spread doubt and sabotage the game plan for change... Bureaucrats can be well intentioned in their efforts to "protect" the organization against itself. But even if you give them the benefit of the doubt as to their motivation, you must dismiss their rhetoric. And you must override their argument for preserving the status quo. In "defending" the organization, they're protecting what "used to be" instead of what "needs to be."\(^{147}\)

Critics of the move to public safety said that it "was done too quickly" and that "more study was needed" even though there has been 25 years of discussion and study. The Township is now studying public safety once again. There is a lesson in Resistance that says that criticism has a tendency to die out "once people come to the conclusion that change is a done deal."\(^{148}\)

The Township has never quite reached that point. A majority of the public safety employees now support the change because of the results they have seen. However, resisters are "relentlessly searching for any shred of evidence to help them believe that change efforts might be aborted."\(^{149}\) The resisters in the fire division have boasted to other public safety employees that the recent "freeze" in public safety activities is evidence that public safety has been aborted. Resisters were telling other firefighters and public safety officers that staffing changes were going to be made even before the Township Manager and Director of Public Safety were given a directive to prepare alternative staffing options. Resisters claim that this is proof of their "political clout" and that public safety is doomed.

\(^{146}\)Id at 19.
\(^{147}\)Id at 19 and 20.
\(^{148}\)Id at 16.
\(^{149}\)Id at 21.
The private sector also struggles with implementing change quickly. "Resisters rely on the strategy of delay. Naturally, speed is the adversary they fear the most. They hate "fast.""

Actually, the resisters don’t really even want “slow”... they want “not at all.” “Slow” is just the argument they use to get there. Their behavior is carefully calculated to make the change process stall. Resisters wag their heads and warn about the risks of rapid change. They condemn speed as reckless, shaming those who are in favor of quick execution. They want to sit down... talk things over... weigh the risks again... consider other options... ruminate over what might possibly go wrong. You'll hear them emphasize the value of deliberation. They lobby hard for not making mistakes. They can present a powerful case—appealing to “reason,” and doing a guilt trip on you with their holier-than-thou attitude. Be careful, or the resisters will con you into making the most fundamental mistake of all: Letting them choose the pace of change. Agreeing to go slow gives them home field advantage. Or even worse, it’s like letting the opponent call all your plays. Is this a game you can win?

There have been positive side effects of resistance. As difficult as the resistance has been for administrators it has served as an excellent diagnostic tool. The department has been forced to closely monitor and report on all operations. Resisters began their own monitoring of public safety officers. They would follow, question and video tape public safety officers responding to calls in an attempt to catch them making mistakes, embarrass them, and prove that the system could not work. Dedicated, hard-working public safety officers were basically being harassed. Since it was obvious what the resisters interest was, there were detailed investigations and analysis of almost every major public safety event during the past year to determine if the system was working. These reports are now available for you to evaluate. These are important to consider when reviewing the results of the changes. It is ironic that the best evidence of the public safety successes are now available because of the resistance to public safety.

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150 Id. at 31.
151 Id.
Change is very difficult. That does not mean that it is not possible, it only requires the added component of properly communicating with people, like yourselves, that have agreed to study this complex matter. The better you understand the entire issue, the more likely it is that our 40,000 neighbors will receive the best services possible from our public safety resources.
PART SIX:

THE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING PROCESS
PART SIX: THE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING PROCESS

LEGAL ISSUES

The Township preferred to "purchase" an agreement from the firefighters rather than exercise their legal right to reorganize without the firefighters consent.

In October of 1993, the collective bargaining agreement between the firefighters union and the Township was near expiration. Earlier negotiating had not resulted in any issues being agreed to. It was important, from the Township's perspective, to expedite the negotiation of a new agreement. As with all Township bargaining units, the Township advised the firefighter's union of the areas in the contract they desired to change and the union did likewise. In regards to public safety, there was ancient language in the collective bargaining agreement that discussed the consolidation or merger of the police and fire departments. At best, this language was ambiguous. From the Township's viewpoint this language was no longer relevant. The Township and Union verbally exchanged their interpretations of the language. The interpretations were quite different. The Township advised the union of their interest in reorganizing and of their desire to have clear and unambiguous language in the agreement.

There was no dispute over the fact that the Township had the right to totally reorganize to public safety without the authorization of the firefighters. This had also been pointed out in the earlier public safety studies. Both parties recognized that that right was outside of the control of the collective bargaining agreement. The Township has the legal right to reorganize. Under the concept of "reorganization," the Township could: 1) legally reorganize to public safety; 2) eliminate all traditional police and fire positions; 3) create a new classification of public safety officer; and 4) require all public safety officers, as a condition of

152 See 1993 Firefighters Association of Michigan Collective Bargaining Agreement, Article XXVII. "Effective 1/1/80, this section shall allow incremental implementation without parity, after discussion and mutual agreement with the Union.

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continued employment, to be trained and function as police officers, firefighters, and emergency medical providers.

If the unions were to challenge the Township’s right to reorganize, for the Township to prevail in any challenge of its right to reorganize, it must be able to prove that there was an actual reorganization of the public safety services. The more extreme the change, the less likely it would be that the change could be successfully challenged. The more moderate the change in operations the more likely a challenge to it by the union would be successful. If the Township attempted to reorganize in a way that would reduce the impact of the reorganization on the affected employees, the Township would be vulnerable to a claim that the Township’s actions were not an actual reorganization but a “sham” or “pretext” to unilaterally rewrite the collective bargaining agreement. The Township again found itself in the classic “catch 22” position. If the Township demonstrated good will and sensitivity to the concerns expressed by employees, the Township would become vulnerable to a legal challenge to its absolute legal right to reorganize to public safety from those same employees.

In light of the above dilemma, the Township’s choice of changing from traditional police and fire services to a public safety department could have only been accomplished in one of two ways. The Township could either “purchase” an agreement to change to public safety from union members through negotiations, or it could exercise its legal right to reorganize by simply eliminating the police and fire departments. The Township preferred the less adversarial, yet more costly, alternative of purchasing an agreement from employees by making concessions and offering benefits to them. The Township decided to negotiate a plan that was acceptable to the fire union and give them some additional benefit or pay in exchange for their agreement to cooperate with the change to public safety.

The parties eventually made a deal wherein the union agreed that the Township would reorganize, in exchange for concessions. But the firefighters later changed their mind and repudiated the signed tentative agreement they had negotiated with the Township. At this
point the Township then considered its other options and decided to exercise its legal right to reorganize into a public safety department without a fire department. This action is what ultimately brought the parties back to the bargaining table where the firefighters again agreed to another negotiated deal. In the second agreement the Township was very explicit in what it wanted in exchange for the benefits and the no-lay off guarantee the firefighters were to receive.

**NEGOTIATIONS PRECEDING THE FINAL AGREEMENT**

*Against the advice of their union, the firefighters repudiated the agreement they had proposed and by doing so, left the Township with few options.*

At the end of 1995, it looked as though the public safety conflict had been resolved. The firefighters had agreed to a tentative agreement and it appeared as though the public safety conflict was over. To understand why it was not requires some discussion of the negotiations that took place.

Remember, those early negotiations were prior to the appointment of the public safety director. Following the director's appointment, dialog was established with the prior union president. The union was advised that there was no specific public safety plan and that initial efforts of the Department would be focused on training and the reduction of unnecessary overtime expenses. The union president was advised that there was not an interest in reducing the funds provided to public safety, but instead, to use those funds more efficiently. He expressed his desire to be involved in this reorganization and advised the director of some capital items he felt were immediately needed in the paramedic services. He also expressed a desire to have exercise equipment put into the individual fire stations. The union president made it clear that the fire union was not opposed to public safety but wanted to make sure that firefighters had equal opportunities to cross train and be a part of the public safety
organization. You will note as you review the historic sections of this report, that the fire
union has consistently claimed that they were not opposed to public safety.

After meeting with union’s president, the exercise equipment and emergency medical services
supplies that he had requested were purchased. He was also advised that more capital
equipment, supplies and training would be forthcoming as savings in overtime were reinvested
back into the organization.\footnote{See Public Safety Investments since 1993. During the last three years, over one million dollars has been
invested into capital goods, training and supplies. Contributions to the financing of the North Fire Station are not
included. This is important because there is an interest in purchasing more capital goods for the fire operations.
Ambulances and fire engines are always mentioned. Continued efficiencies in operations provide the greatest opportunity
to provide these items within the authorized budgets.}

The Township was not able to reach an agreement with the firefighter’s union and the steps to
proceed to Act 312 arbitration had all been completed before the first agreement was
reached.\footnote{There were many meetings, many canceled meetings and several meetings with mediators assigned to assist
the parties. After two years, the parties had not agreed on the issues that were central to the agreement. The details of
those meetings are not discussed but are available for review and discussion.} Professor Daniel Kruger of Michigan State University was selected as the
arbitrator. The parties met once with him immediately after he was appointed. He
encouraged the Township and the Firefighters Association of Michigan (“FAOM”) to meet and
attempt to work out details of the collective bargaining agreement. The parties met but no
agreement was reached. Prior to setting an arbitration date, Professor Kruger once again
ordered the parties to meet and “strongly encouraged” them to come to an agreement. The
parties met on October 4, 1995. The specific details of that meeting and the events that
followed are important because the Township’s later decision to eliminate the fire department
was a direct result of the events surrounding that meeting.

A complete package of letters and documents summarizing the negotiations is provided with
this report. You may wish to refer to them as you read through the sequence of events. The
first exhibit is the proposed contract settlement offer that was presented by the Township to
both the police and fire unions on October 4, 1995.\textsuperscript{155} The proposal affords the opportunity to cross-train to both police officers and firefighters. The Township believed that the firefighters still wanted to cross-train because they had continued to express interest in it. A no-lay off clause was also offered at this time. The firefighter's union claimed that they did not like the initial proposal because police officers were given the first opportunity to cross-train. They argued that they wanted to be cross-trained first. Township representatives caucused and agreed to cross-train the firefighters first. Another offer was written.\textsuperscript{156}

Later in the negotiations that day, the firefighters acknowledged that they did not really want to cross-train at all. They said they had simply changed their mind.\textsuperscript{157} In frustration, the Township asked the union's bargaining agent, Gerald Radovic, what it would take to reach an agreement. Mr. Radovic laid out the demands of the firefighters in a hand-written note.\textsuperscript{158} The Township agreed to each and every term requested by Mr. Radovic on behalf of the firefighters.\textsuperscript{159}

At the same time, the Township had also reached a similar agreement with the Police Officer's Association of Michigan ("POAM") representative, Jim DeVries. Both unions agreed to the terms and were to discuss them with the bargaining unit members. Ironically, the firefighters ratified their part of the tentative agreement but the police officers did not. The Township's attorney, Mr. John McGlinchey, was advised to discuss this matter with the firefighters' agent and determine what impact this would have on the firefighter's agreement. Mr. McGlinchey

\textsuperscript{155}See Contract Negotiations Summary, Exhibit 1.
\textsuperscript{156}Id, Exhibit 2 at 2.
\textsuperscript{157}The firefighters have consistently said they are not opposed to public safety and want to be cross-trained themselves. However, when all of their demands were met, they rejected public safety and the opportunity to cross-train. The firefighters later acknowledged that they never wanted their members to cross-train and the subsequent treatment of their own members that did volunteer to cross-train demonstrates their distaste for cross-training.
\textsuperscript{158}A copy of the note is included for your review.
\textsuperscript{159}Id at Exhibit 3. This document is the most interesting. Mr. Radovic makes an offer. The most highly priced ticket item is the pension benefit increase. His offer includes the words "accept public safety." Later in discussions, the present local president, Monty Nye, claimed that the bargaining agent misspelled the word "except." Nye attempts to convince a cable television audience that the firefighters were willing to accept all the wages and fringe benefits but never intended to accept public safety.
called Mr. Radovic on October 25, 1995, and they agreed that a tentative agreement could be signed between the firefighters and the Township. The original tentative agreement\textsuperscript{160} was to be re-written to exclude the POAM.

Following the telephone conversation with Mr. Radovic, Mr. McGlinchey sent another tentative agreement to Mr. Radovic that included some additional agreed upon language to clarify some of the firefighter’s concerns.\textsuperscript{161} These additional changes were initiated by Mr. McGlinchey. Mr. McGlinchey also sent Mr. Radovic a letter confirming the telephone call and the agreed method of handling the changes.\textsuperscript{162} The agreement was signed by Mr. Radovic on November 8th and returned to Mr. McGlinchey on November 9th with the following note:

\begin{quote}
Please find enclosed a signed tentative agreement that was ratified by the Meridian Firefighters. Please return a fully signed copy to me and I will prepare a draft of the new collective bargaining agreement between the Township of Meridian and the Firefighters Association of Michigan. (emphasis added)\textsuperscript{163}
\end{quote}

Mr. Radovic had also initialed the changes that had been made. The Township was very excited that an agreement had been reached. The offer was very expensive but the Township was confident that public safety would provide greater efficiencies and justify the investment. The Township would agree, by signing the agreement, to pay for the right to implement public safety. The Township Board voted to ratify the agreement and signed it.\textsuperscript{164} On November 17, 1995, Township Manager Gerald Richards returned the “fully executed copy” of the tentative agreement to Mr. McGlinchey.\textsuperscript{165}

\textsuperscript{160}Id at Exhibit 4.
\textsuperscript{161}Id at Exhibit 5.
\textsuperscript{162}Id at Exhibit 5.
\textsuperscript{163}Id at 6.
\textsuperscript{164}Id, Exhibit 7.
\textsuperscript{165}Id.
On November 21, 1995, Mr. McGlinchey wrote Mr. Radovic advising him that the tentative agreement was ratified.\textsuperscript{166} On November 22, 1996, Mr. McGlinchey sent the original settlement agreement to Mr. Radovic.\textsuperscript{167} On November 27, 1995, Marvin Dudzinski, an employee of FAOM, wrote a letter to Arbitrator Kruger advising him that a tentative agreement between the Township and FAOM was reached.\textsuperscript{168} This letter advised Mr. Kruger that he could cancel the meeting that had been set for the Act 312 Arbitration. The Township and the Public Safety Department now assumed that the conflict was over.

However, on December 7, 1995, Mr. Radovic sent Mr. McGlinchey another letter stating that it may be necessary to return to the bargaining table.\textsuperscript{169} On January 8, 1996, Mr. McGlinchey again wrote to Mr. Radovic and summarized an earlier telephone conversation of that day in which Mr. McGlinchey had been advised that the firefighters no longer wanted to accept the agreement.\textsuperscript{170} Mr. McGlinchey asked Mr. Radovic to confirm these facts to him in writing. Mr. Radovic did not do so.

On January 14, 1996, Mr. Radovic and Mr. McGlinchey had another telephone conversation. At that time, Mr. Radovic informed Mr. McGlinchey that the firefighters were in fact rejecting their own offer. Mr. Radovic asked Mr. McGlinchey not to do anything “rash.” He advised Mr. McGlinchey that the attorney for the FAOM, Mr. Guido, and he were going to Meridian Township to “give the facts of life to the firefighters.” At this point, the union representative was telling the Township representative that he felt the firefighters would honor the agreement.

There was a union meeting held with Mr. Radovic and Mr. Guido, the FAOM attorney. The Township found out, by way of rumor, that the firefighters had rejected the deal they

\textsuperscript{166} Id, Exhibit 8.
\textsuperscript{167} Id, Exhibit 9.
\textsuperscript{168} Id at Exhibit 10.
\textsuperscript{169} Id at Exhibit 11.
\textsuperscript{170} Id at Exhibit 13.
themselves had proposed to the Township over four months earlier. On February 5, 1996, Mr. McGlinchey wrote to Mr. Radovic asking him to confirm by February 8, 1996, if the firefighters were going to refuse to execute the tentative agreement.\(^{171}\) Again, the Township never heard from Mr. Radovic or the union. The Township was faced with a situation where the union, against the advice of their own union legal staff, had failed to accept the agreement that they themselves had proposed.

The FAOM is the lawful, certified, exclusive bargaining agent for the firefighters in Meridian Township. The Township can not negotiate with employees, or their local association, it must deal directly with the FAOM. The FAOM representative had stopped communicating with the Township’s representative. Because the local association and the local president are not the legal representative of the employees, the union has warned the Township not to deal directly with the local. Therefore, the Township was bound, by law, to deal with the FAOM and only the FAOM. That is the way the collective bargaining process works. As much as the Township wanted to communicate with the affected employees, it was not allowed to do so. However, there are always members of the local association present during negotiations and it is clear that they knew what was going on. It is their responsibility to communicate with their own members. Members of the Township’s administrative staff were concerned by the actions of the firefighters and apparent lack of information, but were legally precluded from advising them of the jeopardy they were placing themselves in. The Township’s administrative staff was later informed that the union’s bargaining agent and their top attorney had also tried to communicate these facts to the members.

Following the notice of the union’s repudiation, the public safety director wrote the Township Board a confidential memorandum.\(^{172}\) This memorandum requested that the Township Board make a decision on how to proceed with the public safety plan. It explained:

\(^{171}\) Id at Exhibit 14.
\(^{172}\) See Public Safety Choices - February 5, 1996.
It is now apparent that the firefighters are attempting to renege on their agreement. It appears that the firefighters now want what is more important to them than any economic package or any no-layoff clause the Township can offer. The firefighters desperately want to return to “the way it was;” they want status quo. This is an option you may also want to consider.\textsuperscript{173}

In the negotiated plan that had been repudiated, new employees would be hired as public safety officers. Current employees who requested to be trained as public safety officers would be allowed to do so. \textit{No current member would be required to cross-train.} Only those current members who wished to cross-train would do so. The negotiated agreement that the union rejected would have prevented a legal challenge to the gradual reorganization from the union, had it not been rejected. The Township had attempted to “buy,” from the firefighters, a public safety reorganization plan that would have had no detrimental impact on the firefighters so that the Township could avoid a more radical and immediate reorganization that would have most certainly hurt many or all of the firefighters.

It is important to remember that the firefighters had been advised \textit{by their own union} to accept the Township’s generous offer to them. It was also clear that the firefighters knew that the Township could reorganize to public safety but it appears that they did not believe that the Township would do so without their consent.

The Township also could have compelled the firefighters to take their deal by taking them to court or by filing an unfair labor practice. This option was rejected. The Township did not feel it should have to force the firefighters to take their own deal. Why should the Township be forced into lengthy litigation of the issue and then have the firefighters claim that the modified form of public safety was forced upon them?

The Township would have been happy to proceed with arbitration, but, remember, the union had canceled the arbitration hearings and it would take several months to be rescheduled. In the meantime, the Township could not utilize public safety officers that had already been trained to

\textsuperscript{173}\textit{Id at 3.}
respond to fires, even though firefighters had stopped returning to fires. This situation put Township residents in a dangerous position in the event of a large fire. It was regretful that the Township and the firefighters found themselves in this position. However, if the Township was forced to reorganize, it had an obligation to do so in a way that would survive the challenges of the firefighters and result in better services to our community. Clearly, the firefighters knew, or should have known, the consequences of their actions. In retrospect, it is now clear that all of the information was not being conveyed to rank and file members. However, the union and the firefighter's representatives were made aware of the ramifications of their repudiation of their own offer and agreement and of the possibility that the Township could choose to assert its legal right to reorganize without their consent. Against the advice of their union, the firefighters repudiated and by doing so, challenged the Township to make the next move.

On February 15, 1996, the Township Board made the decision to reorganize to public safety. There was considerable discussion by the Township Board of the proposed reorganization plan. This plan detailed how emergency services would be delivered and introduced the “E-unit” concept. The Board voted 6 to 1 in favor of reorganizing. The dissenting vote expressed concerns about the impact of the reorganization on the affected employees but recognized the value of the recommended plan. She stated that she really liked “those mobile units and I think we will be covered a lot better and a lot faster.”

THE FINAL AGREEMENT

On March 8, 1996, the Township Board’s Personnel Committee received a memorandum from the director of public safety entitled, Proposed Last Chance Offer. It informed the Committee that an option to the reorganization of the fire department, as adopted by the Board on February 15, 1996, may be possible. By March 8, 1996, it was clear that the firefighters had reconsidered their position and had lobbied for an opportunity to negotiate an alternative plan. Such a plan was developed and presented to the Personnel Committee.

174 Cable TV tape of February 15, 1996, Township Board meeting is available for your review.
This modified plan was different from the offer that was rejected by the firefighters. It gave firefighters all economic benefits earlier bargained but accelerated the transition of public safety. The Township felt that the benefits of the new plan “greatly outweighed any of the liabilities.”\textsuperscript{175} The memorandum explained how the alternative plan was developed:

1. The Township was forced to reorganize public safety services after the firefighters repudiation of their agreement.
2. The Township developed a public safety plan that delivered dramatically improved public safety services.
3. The Personnel Committee emphasized that a modified public safety plan would have to at least deliver comparable services.
4. This proposed plan recognizes the value of preserving long term employees in their position while delivering most of what could have been delivered in the Township’s reorganization plan.
5. This option is a compromise position.

The parties were back at the bargaining table. The Township again agreed to give the firefighters all the economic benefits that were authorized in the original offer. However, the Township insisted upon an acceleration of the public safety plan, creation of the inspector position and a commitment from the firefighters to “facilitate and cooperate in the implementation of the public safety department.” On March 15, 1996, the Township Manager and Director of Public Safety informed the Board that a tentative agreement was reached. This memorandum also advised the Board that:

In addition to the contract language, there will be accompanying letters of understanding which serve to clear up all outstanding issues between the Township and the Firefighter Union. It was the union’s desire to “wipe the slate clean” and that is what the tentative agreement was able to accomplish.

A summary of the agreement was detailed in a news release on March 26, 1996.\textsuperscript{176} The parties both signed and ratified this new agreement. The union voted 27 to 3 in favor of the new agreement and the Board voted unanimously to support it. The firefighters agreed and have

\textsuperscript{175}See Proposed Last Chance Offer.
\textsuperscript{176}See News Release - March 26, 1996.
received all of the authorized benefits from the Township, but have they in return “facilitated and cooperated in the implementation of public safety?”

The firefighters negotiated increased pay and benefits in return for the Township’s right to convert to public safety. The firefighters profited by the Township’s purchase of the right to go to public safety. If the Township does return to traditional police and fire services, will the firefighters be willing to give back the pay and pension improvements that were obtained as part of the public safety bargain? Should the Township protect its investment in public safety or reverse the public safety changes?
PART SEVEN:
PUBLIC SAFETY AT WORK IN 1996
PART SEVEN: PUBLIC SAFETY AT WORK IN 1996

In the first full year of the public safety program, fire losses in Meridian Township dropped dramatically and response times to medical emergencies were significantly improved.

OVERTIME COSTS HAVE BEEN REDUCED

Overtime cost for staffing stations was reduced by 96%.

Prior to initiating a change in staffing guidelines, a detailed analysis of utilization of employees for overtime was performed. It revealed that in over 95% of the cases, employees on overtime assignments did not respond to any runs. In those instances where overtime members were utilized, (less than 5% of the time) other station bound firefighters would have also been able to respond to the calls. It was concluded that there was no justifiable reason to continue to staff in this manner. New staffing guidelines, developed by a team of Meridian Township firefighters, went into effect January 13, 1994. In January of 1995, a comparison was made between the first 12 days of 1994 and 1995. The comparison showed that the run activity was much higher in 1995 (96 runs compared to 74) but the overtime costs were reduced by 96%. Operation under the new staffing guidelines during the last three years has reinforced the earlier hypothesis that there was no need to always maintain a predetermined staffing level.

FUNDS BECOME AVAILABLE FOR TRAINING, SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT

Overtime savings were invested in public safety improvements.

Spending close to a quarter of a million dollars each year to staff facilities to an arbitrary level, with no money left for training and prevention activities, could no longer be justified. Funding previously spent on overtime was instead invested in training and equipment. In
1996, we were able to purchase a much needed ambulance, the E-unit and other equipment with funds that were saved from reduced overtime and salaries. More capital purchases are possible if personnel costs remain controlled.

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<th>PUBLIC SAFETY INVESTMENTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fire Training Costs - Personnel$^1$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fire Training Costs - Equipment$^2$</td>
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<td>EMS Training Costs - Personnel$^3$</td>
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<td>EMS Training Costs - Equipment$^4$</td>
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<td>Police Training Costs - Equipment$^6$</td>
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<td>Other Costs$^7$</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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$^1$Salary and overtime expense  
$^2$Firefighters gear, books, tuition, outside instructors and training equipment  
$^3$Salary and overtime for EMS training  
$^4$New ambulance, E-Unit and equipment for them and the equipment for the Medical First Responder vehicles  
$^5$Personnel costs to cross train firefighters  
$^6$Police academy costs, additional police gear and vehicles  
$^7$Contractual incentives and payments, public safety information, and costs associated with integrating computer system

The delivery of services in Meridian Township was not compromised by any of the changes that were made. As stated earlier, they have been improved.

In addition to the intense training program, all fire stations were provided with exercise equipment and all heretofore denied requests for medical supplies and equipment were filled. Once again, savings provided the funds to accomplish this. Many other equipment purchases have also been made. All the gear and supplies necessary for the increased number of trained employees was provided as a result of savings.
Earlier studies accurately predicted the high startup cost for public safety. Those costs have now been paid within the authorized budgetary limits. Staffing practices have been changed and have resulted in more professionals responding to emergencies more quickly.

**MERIDIAN IS NOW A FIRE TRAINING ACADEMY**

The State of Michigan Firefighters Training Council has now recognized Meridian Township as a fire training academy. The Public Safety Department takes great pride in this fact. The academy has been closely scrutinized by the State and has consistently received high marks from State evaluators.\(^{177}\) Other fire departments have also certified their employees in Meridian Township’s fire academy.\(^{178}\) Once the full-time members of the fire department were trained, the trainers’ attention was directed to training public safety officers and newly hired part-paid firefighters.

**TRAINING LEVELS INCREASED**

*The training levels in the Meridian Township Department of Public Safety now meet state and federal safety levels.*

With relatively low budgetary impact, Meridian Township accomplished the completion of thousands of hours of training by training members while they were on duty. Using on-duty time for training must be contrasted with the prior practice that put a priority on staffing stations over all other needs with the result that little training was done and most of that training took place on overtime hours. Training, inspections and maintenance all suffered when the costs of operations were focused on maintaining a predetermined and arbitrary number of people in each station at all times. Now, the Public Safety Department prioritizes

\(^{177}\) See State evaluations of Meridian Fire Academies.

\(^{178}\) Recently a firefighter hired by the Lansing Fire Department attended the Meridian Township Fire Academy.
training, enabling the department to respond to fires and other emergencies with trained members that are competent to handle the assigned task.

In the last three years, there has been no criticism of the incredible amount of training that has taken place. Even those most critical of the public safety concept have acknowledged the need for training and recognized the value of what has been accomplished in this area. Contrast the results of emphasizing better training with the prior practice of simply responding to emergencies with a lot of people. This shift of emphasis has resulted in more members who are better trained and who are available to respond to all emergencies more quickly. It has also provided the decision-making members of the department with the knowledge to recognize what level of emergency can be properly addressed with the resources that they have available to them.

**FIRE - 343 PIPER**

On January 24, 1996, at 9:53 p.m., a fire was reported at 343 Piper Road in Meridian Township. Engine Two, with two firefighters, arrived in four minutes from the North Station. "Upon arrival, Engine Two's crew was met by five public safety officers..." A pole barn containing five vehicles "was totally involved." At the time of this run, two crews of the fire department were busy on another run, investigating smoke in a residence. These crews responded from that location after verifying that there was no hazard. A tone out for all available personnel was sounded and mutual aid was requested for a tanker from Williamston and a medic from East Lansing.

This was a large fire. A total of 31 Meridian Township firefighters responded to the scene to fight it. This was an excellent response. There were 8 on-duty firefighters, 3 off-duty

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179 See Piper Road Fire.
180 Id.
181 See Count of Firefighters at Piper Road.
firefighters, 13 part-paid firefighters, and 7 public safety officers that made up the response team.

OTHER FIRE RESPONSE

On April 9, 1996, the issue of responses to fire alarms was addressed. The memorandum explained that the public safety department was forced, in the past, to explain how a typical public safety department would respond to fires based on public safety theories alone. Since the public safety transition was now 50% complete the department could point to actual experiences and demonstrate how the department had responded. Unfortunately, the more that public safety officers were being utilized, the more they were being criticized by firefighters. It was in response to some of that criticism that a summary of a four day period was prepared. This summary exemplifies some of the daily events and more routine activities that public safety officers are involved in.

1. March 31, 1996

Two runs were dispatched at the same time, an ambulance run and a fire run. Both runs were to the Haslett area. Two public safety officers, trained as medical first responders, went immediately to the medical emergency. They arrived first and assessed the patient prior to the arrival of the ambulance. When the paramedics arrived, they took charge of the patient. Another public safety officer went to the fire alarm. This officer arrived four minutes before the fire unit, performed an assessment and determined that the alarm was false. Had there been an actual fire, this assessment and improved response time would have been critically important.

2. April 1, 1996

A grass fire was reported on Piper Road. Two staff members and two public safety officers responded prior to the arrival of the first fire unit. They assessed the situation, communicated with fire personnel and began extinguishment. A crew of 11 firefighters and public safety officers

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182See Information on Response to Fire Runs.
were able to address the fire without calling back other off-duty firefighters.\textsuperscript{183}

3. April 2, 1996

On this date there was another grass fire, this time on VanAtta Road. A public safety officer arrived first, assessed the circumstances, and advised the responding fire crews that the fire was well off the roadway and that a barn was in close proximity to the fire. With this important information, the officer in charge immediately authorized the recall of off-duty personnel and the fire was extinguished with a crew of 15 firefighters and public safety officers.

4. April 3, 1996

Four fire and emergency medical incidents occurred on this date.

The first instance was an early morning fire alarm at the Ingham County Extended Care Facility. A public safety officer arrived before the fire unit left the station. The public safety officer assessed the situation and advised the dispatcher that the alarm was false.

The second incident was an ambulance run to the Haslett area where a female had uncontrolled bleeding in her leg. A public safety officer, trained in medical first response, arrived and had the bleeding controlled prior to the paramedics response.

The next fire incident was a grass fire on Tihart Road. Two staff members and four public safety officers arrived on the scene of the fire prior to the arrival of the first fire unit. A crew of 10 firefighters and public safety officers handled this fire.

The final incident was dispatched only ten minutes after the prior incident. This fire was in Okemos. Sufficient firefighters were available and able to handle this fire since the earlier fire was being handled by the public safety officers and one fire crew.

Regarding the response to one of the above incidents, a witness, that had obvious concerns about the public safety concept, wrote a letter to the director of public safety.

\textsuperscript{183} Administrative members of the Public Safety Department, minimally trained to the Firefighter II level, respond to fires from the Public Safety Building or while they are working elsewhere in the Township.
The recent public safety controversy has unfortunately overshadowed the fact that we are extremely fortunate to have such a highly trained and professional group of dedicated men and women serving our community.

Last night our family found itself in the midst of a very scary and frightening situation as a fire broke out in the wetlands area located some distance behind our home. Though we were unaware of the fire’s presence, several Public Safety units arrived in front of our house where the officers changed from their role as police officers to fire fighters. The department’s timely response and the officer’s deliberate and professional action helped minimize the damage and prevent the fire from spreading or growing out of control. Though we personally are not yet convinced that the Public Safety officers dual role is in the best interest of the community or the officers, we were nevertheless both impressed and extremely grateful for the manner in which the blaze was fought and contained. The only officer whose name we were able to obtain was that of Officer Anne Stahl, but we would greatly appreciate your conveying to her and to each officer who assisted our deepest and most sincere thanks for their efforts on our behalf and on behalf of our neighbors. We realize that often the work by civil servants is taken for granted, but we wanted you to know that there are many of us who genuinely appreciate the hard work you exert every day in order to preserve the safety and security of Meridian Township. This incident has served to remind us that the recent public safety controversy has unfortunately overshadowed the fact that we are extremely fortunate to have such a highly trained and professional group of dedicated men and women serving our community.¹⁸⁴

On April 19, 1996, at 9:19 p.m., fire division units were dispatched to a grass fire "behind Goff’s on Grand River." A public safety officer arrived first on the scene, advised the fire units that there was a small fire "with the potential of spreading into a bushy area. ..."¹⁸⁵ The public safety officer then extinguished the fire with the equipment in the public safety vehicle.

On May 15, 1996, at 7:24 p.m., a fire alarm was sounded for 1475 Bay Meadows, in Paddock Farms. This was considered a small fire and the fire commander did not call back any off-duty or part-paid personnel since there were sufficient on-duty personnel. A total of 12 trained firefighters and public safety officers were on duty and available to immediately respond.

¹⁸⁴ See Truax Family Letter.
¹⁸⁵ See Grass Fire Memorandum.
On May 16, 1996, at 7:30 a.m., again at 1475 Bay Meadows, another fire alarm was sounded. There was a "rekindle"\textsuperscript{186} of the original fire. This alarm was "toned out" and a total of 20 firefighters fought the fire.

**A BUSY DAY**

*More than 20 hours out of the 24 hour shift was free from any run activity.*

May 24, 1996, was a busy day for the fire division. Those opposed to public safety used this day as an example of poor fire coverage in the Township. In response to their complaints the public safety department did an analysis of activities. It revealed:

This was a busy day for Township firefighters and it is now being used as an example of how the department is ill-equipped to handle multiple incidents. Deputy Director Johnson will explain the sequence of events on May 24 and will factually demonstrate that the opposite is true. However, it is important to note that an average of less than one hour out of six was spent on fire or emergency medical activity during this 24 hour shift. The average time that firefighters spent on runs during their 24 hour shift was 3.52 hours. Remember, this was a "busy day."

May 24, 1996 was also busy for police and public safety officers. During the 16 hour period between 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m., there were 59 police runs. At least five times during this period, police runs were "stacked" until a unit was available. Minor incidents, such as harassing phone calls, were not handled until the next day. By contrast, no fire runs were stacked and a unit was always available to respond to a fire. Likewise, mutual aid was available during this time, but it was not needed.\textsuperscript{187}

Even though this was considered a busy day for fire service requests, more than 20 hours out of the 24 hour shift was free from any run activity. Part of the public safety plan is to

\textsuperscript{186} An investigation of this fire revealed that the first fire was not totally extinguished resulting in the second alarm. This matter is currently being addressed with efforts being made to respond to the renters concerns.

\textsuperscript{187} See Fire Division Activity.
distribute some of this activity more evenly between all employees. Some of that is now happening.

SIMULTANEOUS RUNS

On July 5, 1996, two fire runs were dispatched at the same time. This is an unusual occurrence. On the first run, a grass fire, a public safety officer and Fire Jeep #1 and the Fire Jeep #2 responded. The public safety officer arrived within a few minutes, suited up, and assessed the fire prior to the arrival of the first Jeep. The grass fire was then extinguished by Jeep #1. The other run was to a car fire. Two public safety officers arrived and suited up before the fire truck arrived. The public safety officers attempted to extinguish the fire but were unable to do so. The fire crew then arrived with a two-person crew and the joined four-person crew extinguished the fire.

The above simultaneous runs 1) demonstrated the public safety department’s ability to handle multiple alarms without relying on calling other members back on overtime or being dependent on mutual aid; 2) reinforced the response time capabilities of public safety officers; 3) demonstrated the benefit of communication of early responding public safety officers to fire crews that are enroute; and 4) demonstrated that public safety officers can be ready to join the responding fire apparatus crews upon their arrival.\(^{188}\)

MULTIPLE INCIDENTS

On November 6, 1996, Assistant Deputy Director Schlachter wrote a memorandum detailing how the merged public safety department was able to handle multiple incidents during what he described as “an intense period of EMS, fire and police activity.”\(^{189}\) Activities had taken all three ambulances, staffed with six firefighters, out of the Township conveying patients to the

\(^{188}\) See Public Safety Officer Activity on July 5, 1996.

\(^{189}\) See Public Safety Activities on November 5, 1996.
hospital. While they were out, a fire alarm was sounded, and seven firefighters were available and on the scene within five minutes. During this time of heavy activity the police division was also occupied with an arrest from one run and a hit and run investigation from another.

These kind of personnel resources have never before been available in the Township. Even under the very expensive system of recalling employees back to the stations, there was always a "gap" in the coverage. This gap occurred between the time the stationed employees were dispatched and the recalled employees arrived from home. With only seven firefighters living in the Township, and some of them commuting from long distances, there was a significant period of time when runs and stations were not being "covered." It was not unusual for the crew that was sent out on a run to return to the station before the arrival of firefighters who had been called in. Naturally, overtime was paid to returning firefighters from the time they were called in. When this practice was stopped in 1994, hundreds of thousands of dollars were saved.

E A R L Y  E X T I N G U I S H M E N T

During a three month period, between April 19 and July 23, 1996, public safety officers responded and extinguished six fires prior to the arrival of the first responding fire crew.\textsuperscript{190} It is true that the fires that were extinguished by public safety officers were small. In discussion of the public safety concept presented in the earlier public safety studies, it was stated that 1/3 of all fires are out before arrival of fire units, 1/3 could be extinguished by public safety officers that would arrive before the fire division, and 1/3 would have to be extinguished by the fire division with the assistance of public safety officers and other resources. Meridian Township's limited experience appears to be consistent with these predictions. However, it is important to note that fire spreads and grows very rapidly. According to the second edition of \textit{Firefighting Principles & Practices}, a fire can double in size every 30 seconds. A small fire

\textsuperscript{190} See Fires Extinguished by Public Safety Officers.
can become a large fire in a matter of minutes. Therefore, response time to fires is very important.

Public safety officers can get to fires faster than the fire apparatus. There has been no dispute of this fact. The highest priority of responders to critical events is life-safety. The most important job that any emergency responder has is to save lives. Since police officers are usually the first to arrive at critical incidents or fires, doesn’t it make sense to train them in search, rescue and evacuation? If your house catches on fire, what is the first thing you want responders to do? The usual answer is, save me, save my family. Public safety officers can begin search and rescue efforts before the fire truck arrives. This has now been demonstrated many times in Meridian Township.

LARGE FIRES

The Twyckingham fire of May, 1995 was the most destructive fire in the Township’s history. Police officers on patrol observed the fire and performed the initial evacuation of many residents from the apartment building. These officers had no fire training and their abilities were limited. However, this incident did point out the importance of having some firefighting experience and a thorough knowledge of fire rescue procedures. This would be true for any police department. Why don’t fire departments train police departments to perform this important task?

On August 12, 1996, a little more than one year later, at 10:38 p.m., public safety units were dispatched to Twyckingham Apartments on a fire alarm. While units were enroute they were informed via radio transmission that there was “smoke in the hallways.” Public Safety Inspector Greg Kueppers immediately “toned out” the alarm. You can imagine his “deja vu” experience. Within the first minute, a public safety officer arrived and advised that there was no smoke visible from the exterior. A second public safety officer arrived. Smoke was observed in the building. Evacuation of the building was initiated and when the fire engine
arrived, the two public safety officers entered the building with the fire lieutenant as the fire team leader. Heavy smoke was found near Apartment B-3. The crew entered the apartment and discovered that a sprinkler head in the apartment had extinguished the fire.

The public safety department had responded by putting 26 firefighters on the scene in a very short period of time. There were only six firefighters assigned to station duty on that day but eight on-duty public safety personnel also responded. Additionally, one off-duty firefighter, five off-duty public safety officers, and six part-paid firefighters responded to the tone out. This fire exemplified the benefits of proactive fire prevention combined with a strong reactive force. Since the new building utilized water sprinklers, an effective prevention device, a tragedy was avoided. If that system had failed the response of the public safety department would have been adequate to fight the fire.

On September 24, 1996, at 11:00 p.m., the public safety department responded to 6056 Columbia on a "fully involved house fire." Within minutes, 15 on-duty firefighters were at the scene preparing to make a fire attack. Six of the members were assigned to fire stations, seven members were on-duty public safety officers and two members were on-duty inspectors. Six of the public safety officers and fire inspectors arrived just before the first engine. Upon arrival, and observing the fully engulfed fire, the officer in charge immediately toned-out for more help. More help was needed. One full-time firefighter, six part-paid firefighters and ten off-duty public safety officers responded. There were now 32 firefighters at the scene. The fire was attacked by two crews of public safety officers and extinguished.

The public safety department's report of this major fire, and an evaluation of the public safety department's effectiveness at major fire scenes, is included for your review. The facts of the Columbia fire contradict the criticisms of public safety that have been made during the past three years.

191 See Twyckingham Fire Memorandum.
192 See Columbia Fire Memorandum.
On September 30, 1996, at 11:27 p.m., the public safety department responded to 3056 Rothbury on a reported fire. Seventeen firefighters immediately responded. There were six stationed firefighters, two inspectors, four public safety officers and five public safety officers involved in a training class. A public safety officer arrived within minutes, checked for rescue, reported to other responding units and proceeded to the location of the fire. A ceiling fan was found to be on fire and was extinguished with the hand-held ten-pound extinguisher issued to that employee.\footnote{193} Assistant Deputy Director Schlachter’s report again analyzes the actions of this fire and compares it to a fire earlier in the year.

Earlier this year, a ceiling fan fire in a Paddock Farms apartment did approximately $45,000 in damage. At the time of this incident, there were limited numbers of PSOs in our organization but more importantly, the Inspector position had not yet been established. There were problems with the fire scene command at the Paddock Farms fire that are currently being investigated and addressed. However, as a result of the problems, the fire was not totally extinguished and the department was required to return to the same scene within 8 hours to fight an even larger fire. Comparing these past fire incidents, public safety reorganization demonstrates the remarkable improvement in fire services that have occurred in the Township. Fires are now being handled quicker, with competent commanders and more and better-trained personnel. There is now also less of a reliance on overtime and mutual aid. The results are that fires are being extinguished quicker and fire losses are being drastically reduced because of the mobility of the firefighting force that public safety now offers.\footnote{194}

On October 16, 1996, at 1:30 p.m., there was a report of a fire in the basement of 1696 Grand River. Immediately, 16 firefighters responded. Six were station bound firefighters, three were mobile inspectors, four were public safety officers on patrol and three were public safety officers responding from staff duties at the Public Safety Building. The first two to arrive were the mobile inspectors. The fire attack crew consisted of two inspectors, a public safety officer and a firefighter. The basement was entered and the fire extinguished.

\footnote{193}{See Rothbury Fire Memorandum - September 30, 1996.}
\footnote{194}{Il at 2.}
On October 18, 1996, at 6:53 a.m., there was a report of fire at the Countryway East Apartments. A public safety officer arrived within one minute and reported seeing visible flames and heavy smoke coming from the building. This public safety officer set up an incident command and began evacuation of the building. Based on this information the fire commander immediately toned out the fire. Once again, help was needed. Within seven minutes of the alarm, there were 15 firefighters at the scene. At 7:10 a.m., 17 minutes after the initial report of fire, there were 32 firefighters from Meridian Township on the fire scene. Seven were station bound firefighters, five were inspectors, four were part-paid firefighters and 16 were public safety officers. With the shift change of firefighters, there were over 40 firefighters available. This was another large fire incident that was effectively handled.\(^{195}\)

In the past, the number of firefighters responding to “toned-out” fires was dangerously low. Now that there has been such an overwhelming response by public safety officers and part-paid firefighters the Township will be able to institute a plan that will control the level of response based on the initial assessment of the fire.

**EMERGENCY MEDICAL RESPONSE**

"If it weren't for them, I wouldn't be here."

- Kirk Spry

Paramedics have consistently informed public safety administrators of the importance of having more help on serious medical calls. In 1995, in response to the paramedics request, the emergency medical response procedures were changed. An engine crew would now respond with the ambulance to medical runs.

This change was protested by firefighters. They claimed the Township was wasting money and that fire stations would be vacated. Public safety administrators emphasized that the

\(^{195}\)Fire Incidents - Week of October 14, 1996.
patient’s interest came first and that responding to emergencies was more important than being available in stations waiting for the next run. If there were firefighters that were not busy on another activity, they were instructed to respond in company with the ambulance and be available to the paramedics if their help was needed. If another emergency or fire happened, the firefighters would already be mobile and their response time would most likely be reduced. When help is needed by a paramedic crew at a medical emergency (approximately 10% of the time) time is critically important.

The public safety department explained that this was a temporary measure and once other trained and licensed responders were mobile, and available to help the ambulance crews, the practice of using the engine would be terminated. The accompanying article on the next page was reported in the Lansing State Journal. It demonstrates why this practice was important. It also explains why the mobile paramedics, mobile emergency medical technicians and mobile medical first responders are such an important enhancement of the ambulance program.
HELP FOR AMBULANCE CREWS

On critical emergency medical calls, more than two medical responders are needed. This is true for only 10% of the calls. The paramedics informed administrators of this fact. As a result of this information, the emergency medical response policies were changed in 1995. When medical responders were available, the fire officer in charge had the authority to send medically trained firefighters to assist the ambulance crew. Officers were encouraged to use station-bound firefighters who were not busy to perform this task. Firefighters protested and claimed that this was a waste of Township resources. Many citizens also questioned the use of an engine crew to assist the ambulance. The accompanying article identifies one person who did not complain. The practice of using the engine as support for the ambulance was discontinued when paramedics, emergency medical technicians and medical first responders became available to help the ambulance crews.

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Take a bow

Man’s public thanks shines spotlight on Meridian rescue crew

OKEMOS — Kirk Spry won $100,000 in the Michigan Lottery back in January 1985; but the luckiest day of his life, he said, was Sept. 13.

That was the day his heart stopped beating.
The lucky part about that, as Spry sees it, is that he lives in Meridian Township.

Spry, who’s 73, wrote me recently to say that for the past four months, he has tried to figure out a way to express his gratitude to the paramedics and firefighters who brought him back from the dead and kept him there.

"If it weren’t for them, I wouldn’t be here," he said.

I came up with a way. But first, Spry’s letter. On the morning of Sept. 13, as he was getting dressed, he started to feel sick.

His condition quickly deteriorated and his wife called 911.

"They were at our house in three minutes. They reacted to the emergency as if I were one of their own. After they worked on me for 1 1/2 hours, I was finally stable enough to go to Sparrow Hospital. They even followed up by coming to see how I was doing a couple of days later. I owe my life to those gentlemen.

"They acted very professionally, but didn’t lose sight of the fact that my wife was there and very upset. Before leaving for the hospital, they took a moment to tell my wife all they had done and what my condition was.

"Because of their quick response and their medical expertise I was here this Christmas to play Santa Claus."

You’ll notice from Spry’s picture that he’s a natural for the part.

He added: "How do you thank someone for such a great gift?"

Of course, Spry thanked the rescue crew in the usual way. He went to the station at Christmas time and did it personally. But the words seemed inadequate.

"Thank you just seemed so small a thing for such an important job," he said.

"So, what about a little public recognition?"

Meridian Township officials agreed to rummage through the computer records for me and find the names of the rescue workers who so impressed Spry.

As it turned out, dispatch sent one ambulance and one engine that morning. Ladies and gentlemen, I give you:

Paramedics: Paul McGarry and Monte Nye.

Firefighters: Lt. Bob Linn and Andy Kromes, David Ward and Jeff Stillman.
MOBILE PARAMEDICS AND OTHER MEDICALLY LICENSED RESPONDERS

"This service gave the patient 3 Paramedics, 1 EMT, and 2 MFR’s on the scene within just a matter of a couple of minutes when seconds can make the difference between life and death."

- Inspector/Paramedic Greg Kueppers

On October 18, 1996, the E-unit was put into service. The E-unit is staffed by a paramedic/public safety officer and supplements the three stationary paramedic ambulances housed in the fire stations. Like the medical first responder, it has been established that a mobile unit can respond faster and initiate treatment before the "station bound" unit arrives. The shift started at 6:00 p.m. and the first call came at 6:55 p.m.. A run was dispatched to Arbor Drive in Okemos, "a possible heart attack." The E-unit arrived four minutes before the paramedic ambulance and had the patient assessed, on oxygen therapy and on a heart monitor/defibrillator when the ambulance arrived. The paramedic ambulance conveyed the patient to Sparrow Hospital and the E-unit returned to patrolling duties.

The above example is only the first of many calls the E-unit has made and will continue to make. Inspector Greg Kueppers shared his thoughts with Assistant Deputy Director Schlachter about another incident that the E-unit was involved in. As a paramedic, he discussed the E-unit's application to the Township emergency medical system.

On this critical run the Echo Unit provided several valuable services that were not available before Public Safety in Meridian Township. First it delivered the type of skilled personnel that was required by the other Paramedic on the scene much faster than if the central ambulance responded. Second this allowed an advance transporting vehicle to remain available centrally located and available. This service gave the patient 3 Paramedics, 1 EMT, and 2 MFR's on the scene within just a matter of a couple of minutes when seconds can make the difference between life and death. This patient had the 3 Paramedics doing advanced skills for her en route to the hospital, while the EMT was driving. This run is truly an example on how the citizens benefit from the addition of the
Echo Unit and the team work exhibited between the ambulance crew and the PSO's that arrived with one goal in common.\textsuperscript{196}

In another emergency medical service situation, that occurred on November 5, 1996, all of the components of the public safety department's medical response system came into play. At 11:15 a.m., at the Meijers store, a construction worker suffered a "crushing head injury" from heavy machinery. The public safety department responded with the paramedic ambulance, the heavy rescue unit, the paramedic/inspector and three public safety officers. On arrival, a medical first responder from Meijers security (one of our new partners) was already providing basic medical care. This person had been trained and licensed by the public safety department several months earlier. The patient was turned over to paramedics and was conveyed to the hospital.\textsuperscript{197} These kind of responses have now been performed many, many times.

\section*{AVAILABLE EMERGENCY MEDICAL PERSONNEL}

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\begin{itemize}
\item $\star$ Stationed Paramedic Unit
\item $\bigstar$ Mobile Paramedic Unit
\item $\bullet$ Mobile MFR/EMT Units
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{196}See Echo Unit Assist - November 11, 1996.
\textsuperscript{197}Id at 2.
There should be no dispute over who is most likely to get to an emergency medical incident first. Mobile responders, in different areas of the Township, will more likely arrive before station bound employees. Police and emergency medical services should not be viewed as competitors but as members of the same team. In a recent supplement to the Firefighter News (January 1997), the utilization and importance of defibrillation equipment was emphasized. The article concludes that “turf disputes” may be a problem where “EMS providers may believe that designated responders are taking away from their job responsibilities by covering their turf.”

This article attempts to point out that “turf war would be purely disgusting,” and emphasizes that the focus should be on the patient and the need to respond quickly.

That is, every system should be set up so that whoever can get to a victim of [ventricular fibrillation] most quickly should be authorized to provide defibrillation; it doesn’t make any difference who that [responder or organization] is. Tulius said there was no competition in Rochester because the city’s police officers are the only emergency responders who can arrive within the first three to four minutes, the critical window of time for effective defibrillation. “In Rochester, we [police officers] are the only ones who are mobile; when we work with the fire department and ambulances, they are coming from static positions at their headquarters,” Tulius said. “This means that their response times can vary depending upon where the emergency is. But with the police having defibrillators, we’re all over the city, so our response times will be within three to four minutes, which is critical. If the fire department and ambulances cannot become more mobile, law enforcement is going to have to continue handling these calls.”

This new generation of defibrillators can be used by our personnel. You may have read about this equipment being carried on commercial airlines to be used in emergencies by airline employees. Public safety personnel, licensed in at least medical first response, would certainly be qualified to use this equipment. Utilization of better equipment can only complement the current emergency medical system. Should this cause a “turf war?” We have already seen so much resistance to programs that benefit patients that it is hard to predict what employees’

199 Id.
reactions may be. We are reminded, once again, that it is the patient’s interests that needs to be put before the employees’.

There are now four paramedic/public safety officers operating the “E-unit” assignment. They have defibrillation equipment and the highest levels of training. They complement the services of the paramedic ambulance crews and are getting to patients faster. More trained employees assisting the paramedics can only improve upon the services they deliver. With the hiring or cross-training of two more paramedic/public safety officers, the Township would be able to ensure 24 hour coverage for the E-unit. Should the “public safety freeze” be removed, and if the Public Safety Department is authorized to do so, these positions would be filled.

**RESPONSE TIME TO MEDICAL EMERGENCIES HAS BEEN DECREASED**

*Response times to emergency medical runs have decreased by over one minute, reducing the response time by more than 20%.*

In Meridian Township, the paramedic ambulance service has been enhanced by the mobile paramedic E-unit, mobile fire commanders trained as paramedics and emergency medical technicians, and patrolling public safety officers and police officers that are all at least minimally trained as medical first responders. No other community in Michigan offers this level of emergency medical care.
Recently, it was reported to the media that response times to medical emergencies increased as a result of public safety changes. This did not make any sense since the ambulances were always staffed and were still being dispatched from the same location they had always been dispatched from. As a result of that claim the public safety department did another comparison. This study revealed that the average response time was reduced from 4 minutes and 54 seconds per call to 3 minutes and 49 seconds per call.\(^{200}\)

The importance of response times to medical emergencies has already been addressed. It is difficult to imagine how more help at medical emergencies can be viewed as negative. However, in Meridian Township we have seen much criticism of efforts to provide more help at medical emergencies.

**AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION’S CHAIN OF SURVIVAL**

Links in Chain:

1. Early access to emergency medical system
2. Early cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)
3. Early defibrillation
4. Early advanced cardiac life support (ACLS)

All links of an emergency medical system must be strong for the patient to have the best chance of survival. Public safety has provided a means of creating more and stronger links. Out of all the links, early defibrillation is the single most important factor in determining survival from cardiac arrest.\(^{201}\) The Public Safety Department has consistently argued that prioritizing faster response to medical emergencies by licensed emergency responders, was supported by the “chain of survival” theory. All of the Township’s public safety employees are licensed, and consequently, the emergency medical system is put into place much sooner than before. Response times have been reduced by more than a minute, resulting in a 20% reduction. Also, there are more paramedic units responding to medical emergencies. For the following reason, the Public Safety Department intends to suggest greater utilization of defibrillation equipment by more mobile responders.

\(^{200}\) See EMS Response Time 1994 v. 1996.

\(^{201}\) *Firehouse Journal*, January 1997 at 15.
The use of defibrillators has traditionally been reserved for ACLS providers such as paramedics. Medical studies have shown that early defibrillation unquestionably saves lives. . . The AHA’s position on early defibrillation is that every emergency vehicle that may respond to a cardiac arrest be equipped with a defibrillator and that all personnel be trained to operate the device.  

The State has indicated that any licensed member of the public safety department can use this equipment upon completion of mandatory training.

AEDs have been in use for about 10 years. Research suggests that one life per year is saved for every defibrillator placed in service and that the cost per year of life saved is $452.  

The Public Safety Department will be exploring greater utilization of these devices.

A paramedic in the E-unit or fire command vehicle, or an emergency medical technician in the command car or public safety vehicle, or a medical first responder in a public safety vehicle or police vehicle was arriving at medical emergencies an average of over one minute prior to the arrival of the ambulance. This had the effect of reducing the response times by more than 20%. This is important because the first arriving unit must assess the situation and begin basic care. This is a critical link in the “chain of survival” that must be initiated before advanced care can begin.

In 1996, there were over 100 more ambulance runs than ever before. More members responded and they did so much faster than in the past. Patients are our primary concern and their care has been improved.

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202 Id at 15 and 26.
203 Tri-County Medical Control Authority “AED” Protocol.
RECENT FIRES

Ingham County Extended Care Facility

There were several fire incidents that once again tested public safety as the year was ending. On December 23, 1996, a fire alarm was sounded at the Ingham County Extended Care Facility on Dobie Road. Moments later it was reported that smoke was visible in the hallway. At the time of this alarm, all three ambulances and six firefighters were busy transporting patients. Immediately, ten on-duty public safety officers responded. The alarm was "toned out." Within minutes, 19 firefighters were at the scene, including 4 off-duty public safety officers and 1 part-paid firefighter. Once again, no off-duty firefighters returned to help.\(^ {205} \)

Shaw Street Fire

On Christmas morning at 5:27 a.m., a fire alarm was sounded to 5870 Shaw Street. This residence was approximately one mile from the North Fire Station. At the time of this fire there were six stationed firefighters on duty, five patrolling public safety officers and one mobile inspector on duty for a total of twelve firefighters available for emergencies. Within the first minute of the alarm, a public safety officer arrived, assessed the situation, communicated to the arriving inspector, and secured the victim of the fire and determined that there were no other occupants to rescue. The mobile inspector arrived within two minutes, established command, re-examined the life priorities and addressed the exposure problem to the south of the house that was on fire. Five public safety officers were on the scene before the first station-bound unit arrived. That engine arrived five minutes after the 911 call.

\(^ {205} \)See Fire and EMS Activity - December 23, 1996.
The exposure problem was addressed first. This was the house next to the fire. It was only eight feet away from the house on fire and was directly exposed to the flames. The residents of this house were evacuated by the public safety units prior to the engine's arrival.

Within seven minutes of the alarm, the fire was being "attacked." At this point the house was "fully engulfed" in flames. The fire was approached from several different positions and simultaneously assaulted. Within nine minutes from the time the 911 alarm was first sounded, and prior to the arrival of the South Station crew, the Incident Commanders, Inspector David Harper, announced that the fire was stopped. Two minutes later the crew of the South Station arrived.

You can view the video tape of this fire. You will observe that this was a large fire that completely "gutted" the residence. The residence directly to the south, while only eight feet away, suffered only minor exterior damage. This fire was not "toned out" because of a problem that was experienced in the dispatch center. However, there were 23 fire personnel that assembled at this fire scene.

How would this fire have been addressed prior to public safety? Each station would have been staffed to three. No one would have arrived for over five minutes and it would have taken much longer for the firefighters to arrive with nine firefighters than what it took public safety to respond with 12 firefighters.

The final fire of 1996 demonstrated how the "concepts" of public safety are effectively put into practice. Please take the time to view this video and listen to the dispatch tapes and review the more detailed reports of activities that are available.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁶ Inspector’s Video Tape on December 25, 1996, is available for your review.
COSTS OF PUBLIC SAFETY

More service can be obtained for same costs.

As stated earlier, the Public Safety Department has applied business concepts to government services. This has kept expenses down and increased the Township’s revenues. Like many businesses, there are always difficult choices to make, either you do the best possible with the available resources or you continue to spend more than what is authorized. In the private sector you do not survive when expenses exceed revenues. Public Safety has attempted to apply business concepts to government services. You may conclude that business concepts should not be applied to public services. You may decide that in theory it sounds good but in practice the two are incompatible. If so, another approach must be adopted, but that approach must consider the limited resources available to provide public safety services.

In response to some of the questions about public safety costs, Township Manager Jerry Richards prepared a memorandum to Supervisor Bruce Little that compared the 1994 police, fire and emergency medical services budgets to the 1997 public safety budget. Mr. Richards’ memorandum reveals that there was an 11% increase over the four year period. Most of this increase was to pay for four additional employees.\textsuperscript{207} The million dollars that was invested in public safety was also paid out of those budgeted funds. Also, between 1993 and 1997 public safety revenues (from traffic enforcement, ambulance fees, etc.) increased from $274,000, to over $565,000.\textsuperscript{208} Consequently, the Township can now deliver more services for the same net cost.

\textsuperscript{207}See Comparison of 1994 v 1997 Public Safety Staffing and Budget Information.
\textsuperscript{208}See 1997 Public Safety Budget Analysis and Revenue Sources.
FIRE LOSS

The total fire loss for 1996 was under $275,000. During the last five years, fire damages, excluding the Twyckingham fire of 1995, were averaging $1,200,000.\textsuperscript{209}

\textsuperscript{209}See Fire Loss - Five Year Period.
CLOSING COMMENTS
CLOSING COMMENTS

The action of expediting the study of this matter by the forming of the Police, Fire and Ambulance Commission recognizes the importance of making a decision and moving forward. Doing so will allow efforts to be focused on improving services. A decision should be made to benefit the residents of Meridian Township and all those that visit, work and shop here. The employees of the Township should be considered and treated fairly, but their interest should not be put before the interest of those we serve.

The public safety decision will be difficult, but for the good of all the services, one must be made. Our ultimate responsibility is to provide the best services we can within our budgetary limits. Hopefully, history will not repeat itself by allowing the public safety debate to continue without decisive action. Twenty-five years is long enough.