FINAL REPORT

AD-HOC EMERGENCY FIRE AND MEDICAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
OF THE JO DAVIESS COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

A REPORT ADDRESSING RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION ISSUES IN
PUBLIC SAFETY AGENCIES IN JO DAVIESS COUNTY, ILLINOIS

AUGUST 2017
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Opening Summary

One of the keys to long-term success within any organization is the ability to plan and implement a sustainable recruitment, retention, and succession management program. The results of topic research and nationwide articles and surveys make it patently clear that public safety agencies, and specifically volunteer fire and emergency medical service (EMS) agencies throughout the United States are finding it difficult to maintain adequate membership levels. Many agencies lack the necessary internal programs for recruitment initiatives and for sustainable programs designed to retain members.

This Ad-hoc sub-committee, a temporary branch of the Law and Courts Committee, was established at the request of the Jo Daviess County Board of Supervisors to address this issue. Representation includes EMS and Fire agency directors, EMS and Fire members, community representatives, and local elected officials. This determined group goal was to review the reasons why recruitment and retention issues occur, the challenges and barriers that we face in addressing these issues and the impact to both the agencies and the public when these issues occur. In addition, we are tasked to create a document to support all agencies, irrespective of their size or type, in their pursuit of reasonable and manageable recruitment and retention programs. By conveying information specific to planning and implementing various initiatives, the committee's intent is to enable any agency to undertake recruitment and retention issues with more confidence and success.

Because recruitment, retention and succession management encompasses multiple components, each affected agency will be unique in what is included in its specific agency's program. Effective recruitment and retention is a journey, not a destination or a one-time plan. In addition, although recruitment and retention issues has been the focus of much research, the committee's literature review fails to find a single document that disclosed all the possible components that should be considered when addressing a recruitment and/or retention program. As with all programs dealing with human resources, the successful development and implementation of a recruitment and retention program is reliant on the buy-in of both internal and external stakeholders, including all ranks and levels within the agency, municipal leaders, and community members.

A continued lack of an effective, sustainable recruitment and retention program in individual agencies may have a negative impact on the future of the respective service as well as on the people they serve. Therefore, it is imperative that agency leaders take decisive action to address existing deficiencies. There are no internal or external barriers to recruitment and retention management that cannot be overcome or at least mitigated. The Ad-Hoc Emergency Fire and Medical Services Committee of the Jo Daviess County Board of Supervisors wish all area agencies much success as they move forward and address recruitment and retention issues.
Legal Disclaimer

The Ad-Hoc Emergency Fire and Medical Services Committee of the Jo Daviess County Board of Supervisors recognize that many laws and regulations at the local, state, and federal levels relate to employment and other human resource initiatives. This document cannot account for every law or regulation in place within a given law enforcement, fire or emergency medical service agency. It is advised that any organization effort to endorse a recruitment, retention, or succession initiative seek review from qualified legal counsel to ensure compliance with all laws and regulations. Some useful websites to guide agencies considering modifying existing human resource policy include:

United States Department of Labor: https://www.dol.gov
National Labor Relations Board: https://www.nlrb.gov
State of Illinois Employment Relations Board: https://www.illinois.gov.ilrb
Panel Members and Contributors

This committee is represented by EMS providers, Fire Service providers, Citizens, and Elected Officials at both the Municipality and County Government levels.

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Responsibility and Purpose

Being part of a public safety service is a proud and important task. Public safety organizations are not businesses or social clubs. They are vital organizations wound within the fabric of all communities. Citizens support them and hope to never use them. Public expectation assumes that those in charge of these organizations are good leaders that project a positive, professional and ethical image, make good personnel and finance decisions, and are interested in public outreach and the support of the community. These elements positively impact the support and trust of the community and have a positive impact on recruitment, retention and succession initiatives.

Fundamental human resource responsibilities in any organization include: Recruiting and hiring qualified applicants and providing them with necessary training and fundamental objectives and goals; Retention of desirable members by encouraging and challenging them to be successful, trusted and model members within the organizational framework; and Succession for promotion opportunities that allow members to seek his/her highest goals as a trusted ranking member of the organization.

This ad hoc Emergency Fire and Medical Services committee is responsible for listening to the impacted public safety services to better understand their issues and challenges relating to staff recruitment and retention; to identify challenges and barriers to recruiting and retention; to establish options on how to address these challenges; to report committee findings to the County Board; and to make recommendations on improving and sustaining staff for Jo Daviess County volunteer public safety agencies. When Noah built the ark, it had not yet started to rain. The best time to think about initiating a recruitment, retention or succession plan is when things are running smoothly and there is no urgency, as opposed to when the situation is dire and members are being adversely impacted.

All public safety agencies have a responsibility to be forthright and completely honest with the communities they serve about the many challenges they face. Discussing the impact of longer response times, lack of necessary responders, and the impact this has on meeting the core mission of the organization is vital. This discussion may come as a shock to constituents that believe that qualified responders will be arriving quickly to effectively deal with his/her problem. First responders understand that the day a person dials 911 is likely the worst day of their life. There are trends that have been developing for many years that challenge the concept of voluntarism. The take away from this is not that we are going away, but that first responders as well as those they serve deserve to know the level of response capability available.

The sustainability of an organization is an evolving process. It is likely that some initiatives taken today will not be useful in 3-5 years. All recommendations from all public safety members should be considered as an advancement opportunity.

It is the consensus of this committee that we strive to develop a long-term process that ensures long term stability and sustainability in addressing important recruitment and retention issues. Realizing that, at some point this committee will be deactivated, we feel it critical to bring forth a strong
recommendation that the process of retention and recruitment issues within the Jo Daviess County public safety environment continue in a suitable and productive way by an oversight group. We realize that, over time, more comprehensive, more challenging, and certainly more costly measures will be needed. Now is the time to begin this conversation on this future reality. Those selected to this task will have the opportunity to meet with public safety agencies collectively to identify areas of improvement in accordance with established data indicators, as well as to discuss any other related areas of concern. The responsibility will fall on the affected agencies to determine their respective challenges and corrections. This oversight group will simply monitor progress levels, as a resource for recruitment and retentions issues, recommend additional changes, and serve as a conduit to the County Board.

It was suggested that we use this opportunity to begin informing our communities of the reality of issues addressing recruitment and retention. If our citizens do not understand these issues now, they will be forced to understand them when no one shows up for their respective emergency. We have a responsibility to be proactive and to share these concerns in a timely manner which is a more effective approach than waiting until any negative consequences of potential deficiencies begin to take a toll on the welfare of our citizens.

This report was developed as the result of a collaborative effort. Committee sub groups were tasked with projects reflecting individual members’ interests and experiences in many of the predetermined sections. After all sections were completed by the committee members, this document was developed, shared, refined, and organized as necessary for the final draft. A document review then provided a full perspective and content review, which was converted into this final report.

This project was an opportunity to work with representatives of Jo Daviess County’s police, fire and emergency medical services. We are extremely blessed to have good, caring people throughout Jo Daviess county that are willing to make exceptional sacrifice on a 24/7/365 basis to ensure that all remain safe. We create a sense of security for our constituents with the knowledge that trained professionals will be there to assist them in times of need and to deal with their emergency. Whether law enforcement, fire, or EMS related, an event sometimes representing the very worst day of a person’s life, will be handled with empathy and professionalism.

Attempting to be thorough and accurate, this committee focused not on what we do and what we have, but concentrates on what the future holds as significant changes in age demographics, organizational and governmental mandates, training requirements, and the simple fact that volunteerism is not as prevalent as in the past. To this end, our major area of concentration was on the volunteer services, with the understanding that the paid law enforcement agencies are critical component of the emergency services triad and have challenges similar to volunteers in terms of recruitment, retention, and succession initiatives. Much of the information presented in this report can apply to multiple agencies regardless of paid, volunteer, funding or function.

The result of this document is to provide an ongoing resource for all emergency public safety agencies that aspire to ensure that those in their respective community feel safe and that trained and capable individuals will respond to their emergency needs.
Committee Goals

The primary Human Resource responsibilities in any business or organization includes attracting qualified applicants, retaining desirable members, succession development, motivating members, effective training programs, and promoting members.

Means by which conclusions are drawn center on the ability of public safety personnel to ask some challenging questions. This challenge, if not done consistently, lends to the attitude that ‘it’s as good as its going to get’.

Twelve of the ‘ARE WE SATISFIED?’ questions we asked, shared, and discussed include:

- Are we pleased with our ability to meet today’s and tomorrow’s challenges?
- Is our existing organizational structure compatible with our aspirations?
- Do those we serve have a clear understanding of what we do, how we do it and the obstacles we face?
- What do we have to offer as we attempt to recruit and retain new members?
- Do we have the right team in place to go where we need to go?
- What can this committee offer providers regarding best practices for recruitment success?
- What can this committee offer providers regarding best practices for retention success?
- What can this committee offer providers regarding succession development success?
- What can this committee offer those we serve to better understand our role and to eliminate unnecessary responses?
- What can we offer in terms of best practice and information sharing with our cohorts so that this becomes an important collective challenge in which we can all contribute and participate?
- How can we structure a plan that determines our best opportunity, responsibilities, and process for developing both a Plan A and Plan B as part of a phased process to ensure long term sustainability of the efforts with this initiative?
- How would our members respond if asked the above 11 questions?

The goals of an effective recruitment and retention program are to ensure a high degree of professional service to a community and to increase the organization’s public status, level of professionalism, communication, and a sense of belonging and pride in the agency. This can be done by ensuring that all employees are engaged in the recruitment and retention process and therefore fully prepared to perform their current duties.

Specific Recruitment and Retention Ad hoc Subcommittee goals are to:

- Represent all public safety agencies, and specifically volunteer Fire and EMS agencies in Jo Daviess County.
- Determine and capture the reason why members join and why they leave an organization.
• Lend support in terms of ideas, resources, past practices, and potential changes to recruitment efforts – What have departments done? What have departments not done? What has worked? What has not worked?
• Showcase initiatives that are working and improve on those that are not working, with the understanding that there is likely 'no one size fits all' solution.
• Offer marketing and recruitment standards that can be shared throughout Jo Daviess County.
• Offer a county-wide model for organizational communication specifically addressing the issues of recruitment, retention, and succession planning.
• Develop a process to share this information among providers on a regular basis.
• Develop opportunities that connect with, and educate, the citizens we serve on all that we do, why we do it, and how we do it.
• Provide education to citizens regarding home and health safety initiatives that may have the positive impact of fewer emergency calls.
• Incorporate a focus on succession planning as an integral part of the overall recruitment and retention process.
• Develop a final report in phases that address observable current issues as well as comprehensive long-term issues and challenges.
• Provide a mechanism that continues this emphasis after the completion of the final report and the termination of this committee to ensure that a sustained level of oversight is available to assist with the necessary changes as they become available in the future.

Recruitment, retention, and succession are a challenging and sizable task. Good leadership, professional image, high morale, community support and recognition of services are important to the process and to the member(s) being recruited. We need leaders that people need, not leaders that people want. To be effective, there are significant internal and external challenges and barriers that must be identified, challenged, and overcome.
Internal Recruitment Barriers and Challenges

Family responsibilities
Increased financial needs – (two salaries are needed)
Work responsibilities
Generational differences
Holidays / Time away from family
Weather extremes
Increased call volume
Calls during specific times of the day / days of the week
Time consuming responses (rural response zones, large coverage areas, hospital location for EMS)
Time commitment regarding meetings, drills, and running calls
The concept of volunteerism is not as prevalent today as in the past
Many people have no idea of the types of emergency services offered
This is a commitment that cannot be scheduled, or a schedule that you can rely upon
Significant training is required for both fire and EMS, some requiring a physical ability test and medical clearance
Increased training demands
Increase in an aging population (See article below)

On July 26, 2017, the Dubuque Telegraph Herald had a frontpage article entitled: Our aging population: Range of local industries prepping for increasing numbers of older citizens, written by Jeff Montgomery. The subtitle stated that ‘the percentage climbs even higher in jo Daviess County, Ill.’ This article compared Jo Daviess County with data from Clayton, Delaware, Dubuque, Jackson, Jones and Crawford Counties in Iowa, as well as Iowa, Grant, and Lafayette Counties in Wisconsin. Jo Daviess County topped all counties represented in terms of percentage of county population age 65 and older in 2016. Jo Daviess County, at 26% (compared with 17% in 2010) bested all the counties identified in this survey in terms of our aging population, a significant future impact on emergency services, particularly emergency medical services.

There is no reasonable expectation that these issues are going to go away.

For the reasons mentioned above, and certainly not a complete list, these are volunteer services that many people may simply choose to not want to participate. This can be due to the inconsistent schedule, the emergency nature of the job, or simply the type of activity involved in the public safety professions. Public Safety is a noble calling, but is not for everyone.
External Recruitment Barriers and Challenges

No active recruitment strategy
No knowledge of the importance of staffing issues or of an active recruitment process
Low morale (or perception)
Poor leadership (or perception)
Improper management (or perception)
Lack of orientation, mentoring, and training
Lack of effective communication
Lack of respect for organizational diversity
Lack of consideration of generational differences
Lack of transparency
Lack of communicating the ‘why’
Lack of funding for training and education
Lack of follow-up
Lack of respect and camaraderie
Lack of guiding rules and policy
Lack of progressive discipline and reasonable consequences
Lack of a strategic plan
No real personal commitment or sense of belonging

“Many members have been driven out by problems with their chief or officer’s management style. As a result of this and other changes in workplace management philosophies, there has been a striking move in volunteer fire departments across the nation toward participatory management. Of serving volunteers, 58% are between the age of 30 and 49 and another 18% are older. These people are no longer “kids,” and many are managers in their own right. They have a lot to offer and must be used effectively, or they will be lost. Volunteers do not want to work for a chief who is viewed as an inflexible dictator. Volunteers want to be proud of their organization and comfortable with it. They do not want a lot of grief while serving. The leadership skill of the chief is the most important factor in recruitment and retention. The chief’s personality and competence in communications, personnel relations, and human resource management are vital. The chief is therefore critical to successful recruitment and retention.”

(National Volunteer Fire Council)
Sustainability

Most volunteer fire and EMS organizations are aware of the challenges to sustainability. Rural communities particularly are seeing an aging population with fewer younger people stepping up to volunteer. Across the country departments are losing volunteers to the out-of-area career services as members seek job opportunities. While this pattern is not prevalent in Jo Daviess County, our member numbers are constantly in flux for many other reasons. People generally have less time available to volunteer now than in decades past. In some communities, there is less financial support to their local public safety organizations, creating a strain when it comes to training and equipping members.

Sustainability is critical for any organization, including volunteer public safety department. When an organization is not able to retain an adequate number of experienced and qualified personnel, it has the obvious impact of negatively affecting the individuals and the important services offered to the community. A constant revolving door of losing members can have a significant impact on both the financial and human resource aspect of an organization. These include the desire of members to give 100%; the development of cliques that undermine and divide organizational initiatives; lack of sense of duty; and low member morale.

Succession planning is a vital human resource tool that can assist in the process of sustainability by developing a planned structure that maintains consistency, professionalism, and morale.
Succession Planning

“Plans don’t accomplish work. Goal charts on the wall don’t accomplish work...its people who get things done.” General Colin Powell

Succession planning is a systematic, sustainable process of identifying and developing internal candidates to replace key employees throughout an organization in a timely manner as vacancies arise. The successful development and implementation of a succession planning program is contingent upon the “buy-in” from all levels of the organization.

Because succession planning encompasses various components, every agency will be unique in what is included in its succession management program. Succession management is a process, not a one-time event or plan. Although succession planning has been the focus of much public safety related conversation, it is difficult to find research that discloses all viable components that should be factored into the process when promoting a succession management program. An effective program creates a structured, systematic process for meeting current and future needs for a well-prepared workforce capable of keeping its community and its members safe. It enables the agency to develop a pool of prepared individuals who are able and willing to fill those vacancies when needed, without costly and demoralizing delays.

A continued lack of an effective, sustainable succession planning program in individual agencies will have a negative impact on the future of the agency and certainly on the communities they serve. While there are significant challenges to this process, there are no challenges to succession management that cannot be overcome or mitigated. Only those programs not implemented are guaranteed to fail.

Benefits of succession planning include increasing productivity, enhancing the quality of the work environment, gaining a competitive advantage, assuring workforce flexibility and adaptability, and creating a ‘destination’ organization.

Some reasons why succession planning is important include retirement, a mobile workforce, skills that may not match organization needs, a loss of institutional knowledge, talent pool replacement, crisis management avoidance, and the ability of an agency to serve as an internal HR source.

Pitfalls include a lack of organizational commitment, problems caused by lots of planning and little execution, a general lack of defined goals and objectives, and a failure to sustain initial momentum.

Succession planning benefits include a planning process for future needs, avoidance of crisis management, the gradual and purposeful building of a talent pool, and the ability to identify in advance where and when a vacancy may occur. Succession planning and the need for each agency to have such a plan may avoid embarrassment and chaos.
Best Practice

During this five-month process, committee members identified many best practices that organizations may consider as they work to meet their sustainability needs. These are listed below. These initiatives create a sense of pride, honor and professionalism.

The Foundation

- Develop a Mission, Vision, and Value statement. Share it, own it, and live by it
- Develop guiding documents that address rules, guidelines and procedures
- Develop an internal communication system to ensure transparency and eliminates confusion - Transparency breeds trust
- Don’t encourage diversity, promote diversity. Be an inclusive organization and do not discriminate due to age, sex, race, religion or ethnicity. An organizations workforce should be reflective of those who live in our community
- Develop a hiring process that is legal and reflective of the organization and how it works
- Develop an orientation program to ensure quality training during the probationary period. This eliminates expectations and nervousness
- Develop a mentorship program in synchronization with the probationary period to ensure objective education and training
- Develop a Classification Specification (job description) that clearly and objectively addresses the specific role and function of each member within his/her respective role
- Develop a Recognition Program as an objective means of giving credit to members who go ‘above and beyond’ throughout the year
- Transformational leadership is critical in all areas of recruitment, retention and succession, and particularly in making the organization a place people want to belong
- Develop an aggressive but practical training program that is diverse and challenging
- Create an organizational culture of empowerment and confidence
- Provide an agency uniform for members for operational work as well as for special and administrative events
- Create an environment based on respect and empathy

A Changing Environment

- Be willing to support and promote change
- Develop a comprehensive proactive recruitment program that best serves your community and your organization
- Create a brochure highlighting your organization that can be shared throughout your respective community and communicated in your social media efforts
- Create an organizational website to be used both internally and externally
- Develop innovative informational social media opportunities
- Share an article of interest or news regarding your agency in the local paper once per month
- If current recruitment, retention, and succession methods are not working, change them
- Always consider how the organization may survive the next decade and put a plan in place before it is needed
- Life today seems to move faster than ever – keep up with it. If you are standing still you are moving backwards
- Mental health issues may be a barrier to retention. Provide support and resources to assist members who are struggling with behavioral health issues
Generational Considerations

- Create opportunities for potential members to volunteer with the understanding that you are aware that he/she may have less free time to offer
- Explore all options and recruit from all disciplines and all job fields
- Create opportunities to get families involved on a regular basis
- Recognize that members of newer generations may be individuals that cannot comprehend a ‘one-size fits all’ solution to problems – Make time to get to know them
- Make sure members can maintain a good work-life balance
- Job satisfaction is critical in terms of a member’s dedication, drive, and organizational promotion
- Those in charge need to look forward to the next generation of leaders in the form of a succession plan
- In a world of instant information respond quickly when a potential recruit expresses an interest in volunteering
- Making rules is not the same as creating solutions

Keep an Open Mind

- Do not disregard members who are looking to move to the career service (They can provide several good years of volunteer service before they move on, and some may even continue to volunteer on the side after getting a paid position, or return later)
- Open recruitment initiatives to neighboring communities
- Establish necessary mutual aid and automatic mutual aid agreements with nearby organizations to help meet call volume needs and adjust as necessary
- Organizations need to change and adjust with the world that surrounds them
Member Incentives

There are multiple opportunities that may be provided by public safety organizations that serve as an enticement for the retention of members. While costs are involved, one needs to look only at the expense of member turnover and the toll that may take on the organization. These include the costs of the recruiting and hiring process, interviews, training, equipment, uniforms, and the list goes on. These potential investments can serve as an instrument to avoid unnecessary costs while fostering longer term employment with an existing trained, capable, and knowledgeable workforce. This is certainly not a complete list and these suggestions are in no particular order.

- Member activities and social and community events and activities
- Member project workgroups
- Flexible hours and shift clusters that best accommodates members
- Learning Partners programs at local and on-line college and universities
- Focused training sessions and make up sessions for those excused from attendance
- College tuition reimbursement
- Holiday bonus incentive
- Encourage both required and not-required training programs and seminars
- Award and reward duty and public performance recognition
- Tax breaks (legislative issue)
- Gym Membership
- Holiday bonus based on activity throughout year
- A professional agency work and dress uniform
- Flexible training schedules and opportunities including make-up sessions
- Dues reduction for community services (gyms, attractions, rental equipment, POA’s etc.)
- ‘Live In’ station accommodations for distant members to take call
Cost Benefit

Taking the time to assess stakeholder, organizational, and individual needs and using the results to develop and implement a sustainable succession management program provides a heightened awareness of critical jobs and functions, identifies their specific goals and objectives, and dramatically increases the likelihood of matching each vacancy with the person most qualified to fill it. Doing anything less – e.g. utilizing a replacement planning approach where positions are filled without regard to an individuals’ qualifications - sets the employees and the agency up for failure.

A succession management program enables the creation of a talent pool specific to the organization’s (and community’s) current and future needs. Combining mentorship, succession and employee development opportunities ensure that such a program can expedite the filling of vacancies with those who not only want the position, but also are prepared to assume its duties and responsibilities.

Remember that recruitment is ongoing. The goal is to get to the point where the focus is on quality candidates rather than the quantity of candidates. Use social media to reach out to and entice the next generation of members. The department can use social media platforms organically to increase interest in volunteering, and can also place inexpensive paid ads to reach potential volunteers. Successful ad campaigns on Facebook can cost just a few dollars a day and can be extremely effective.

All agencies have a fiduciary and practical responsibility to be proficient and forward thinking. Recruiting new members is a very costly endeavor, exacerbated if the organization is not adequately prepared to accept new personnel in a manner that encourages them as opposed to confusing them. Every organization should strive to become a ‘destination’ organization, and not a ‘stepping stone’ organization. Just as your most valuable resource is your human resource, there is nothing costlier in terms of both money and perception, than a constant turnover in personnel. Both money and time have been wasted in these circumstances, not to mention the potentially negative impact that person may have on your organization regarding future recruitment initiatives.

Most importantly, the community and stakeholders reap the benefits of a well-prepared workforce. a successful succession management program will enable the agency to fulfill its mission more effectively and efficiently because it minimizes the likelihood of gaps in critical knowledge and experience.
Initiatives

Collaboration
All public safety agencies are encouraged to network with other organizations, local and outside the area, to see how others deal with issues concerning recruitment, retention, and succession planning. Likewise, reach out to struggling organizations and share with them successful approaches to these issues. Share with each other what is working and what hasn’t worked in your organization. Live, work, learn and share. One of the most critical mistakes an organization can make is to live in a self-made cocoon, avoiding outside agencies, and not interested in new and challenging experiences because it is much easier than making decisions and getting involved. These people shy away from change and continue to live in their dysfunctional world at the expense of those they supposedly lead. The world is simply moving too fast. We encourage change for the betterment of the organization.

The possibility of consolidation and organizations working together or combining is not a threat but a means to a more comprehensive and less isolated first response system that best serves our citizens. If the current system needs and resists change, these services may be forced to change in the future on someone else’s terms. After all, the only guaranteed failure of a recruitment, retention, and succession management program is the one that was never started.

Comparison
A comparison was made that referenced the recent Galena School District school referendum. Specifically, many issues were shared regarding the lack of maintenance and upkeep for our schools that got us into the situation of three referendums, and how surprised many of these taxpayers were to learn what it would take to resolve the issue. With an expensive referendum in mind, and if you compare this to the role that public safety first responders provide, life or death in some cases, one must wonder whether a proactive approach of timely communication, accurate information to the public, and CHANGE does in fact make more practical and economic sense than the ‘kicking the can down the road’ approach.

Awareness
An issue was raised regarding community awareness of the services within respective communities. It was telling that some agencies make little effort to share information that allows public awareness regarding Fire and EMS agencies in terms of hours dedicated by first responders, number of personnel, credentialing hours, required and necessary ongoing training hours, number and types of responses, challenges related to geography, compensation for members, automatic and mutual aid partners, cost of vehicles and equipment, needs not being met, and other statistics. A brief survey included in this report sheds light on this issue.

Another important topic addressed was that we may be doing an excellent job with recruitment but a not-so-good job with retention, alluding to the fact that if we are training someone for a career, ‘why are we not paying them to stay in our organization’. It was noted that one reason that people leave organizations is because they do not feel valued. When someone volunteers, you should acknowledge them in some manner. If you cannot even do that it is your own fault that the member leaves. Some committee members stated that they do not have significant retention issues. Certainly, people leave for many reasons, but several current agencies have several long-
term members. One focus may be to address the issue of retention by addressing the provision of a full time salaried service. While our role is to fill the void between now and then, there can be consideration of salaries for the longer term. These issues are much greater for the EMS side. It was noted fire departments have less problem recruiting and retaining personnel. This may be due to requirements, certifications, and scheduling associated with EMS. While not exclusive, an important distinction is that EMS uses a call schedule 24/7/365. This is necessary due to increased EMS call volume. That is, when you are on call you need to be in the area and you need to respond. In a fire department, with some exceptions, you are 'always on call', but can make the decision to respond or not to respond, at any time, specific to your personal status at the time of the call.

Different Generations
To be successful, you must understand those with whom you work. All agencies should make an effort to understand generational differences with the knowledge that a three or four generation workforce is not unreasonable. While we constantly draw conclusions about those we lead in negative terms, we should spend this time talking to them and finding out what encourages them. It IS NOT that they are ‘lazy malcontents with no respect and no appreciation for the benefit of challenging work that they are generally late for’. To the contrary, you will most likely find a fine person that wants to be effective, successful, and understood. It is simple to talk to new recruits and new members and to determine what encourages the, and how they can become an engaged member. You will also find that the skills they bring to the table are enlightening and beneficial to any organization, and most likely skills that many do not possess. We need to appreciate that ‘we were once them’ and that they are the future of emergency services. This involves a level of understanding and an acknowledgement that the future is bright.

Look Outside the Lines

The committee discussed options for EMS recruitment and it was evident that medical disciplines (CNA, LPN, RN etc.) could play a significant role in filling EMT positions. People in these professions have a desire to serve as a medical provider and generally have a fundamental background in the medical profession regarding anatomy, body system purpose and function, and medical terminology.

It is beneficial to recruit not only emergency response personnel, but personnel from nonemergency disciplines. Emergency services have multiple challenges and opportunities that are always changing. To hire only one skillset effectively eliminates those with other needed skills. There are many factors that need to be considered and it is always to the organizations advantage to have a diversely skilled workforce with several different life experiences to assist with our multifaceted organization.

Due to the dissimilar range of services currently offered, it is unlikely that any specific suggestion will serve to assist all affected agencies. When discussion centered on fire and EMS consolidation, specifically being a collaborative organization instead of two separate entities, it was noted that in municipalities that have Fire and EMS agencies that are separate, fire departments have a mutual aid or automatic aid response system in place to assist EMS and vice versa. In some jurisdictions,
there is no automatic response, but Fire and EMS agencies will respond in specific situations to assist the other as a mutual aid partner.

Committee members addressed the future implementation of hourly wages with some full-time employees as opposed to the existing on-call payment formula in the not-too-distant future. Based on call volume only, emergency medical services may need to be financially supported with actual wages when factoring in the number of responses on an annual basis. This conversation often morphed into the potential for consolidation of some services as a possible practical approach to accommodate a future change of this nature.

**Consider a Different Paradigm**

It is to our advantage to seek out various staffing models and incentive programs. More flexible staffing opportunities can help alleviate one of the main reasons that many people do not become involved in the volunteer emergency services - they cannot commit the time. Incentives do not need to be associated with financial gain. Offering family events and programs can serve as an inducement. Learning-partners with colleges and other educational incentives can inspire members to have a sense of ownership in the organization.

This committee did not recommend ‘all or nothing' proposals or recommendations, and supported the fact that any potential program can be done in stages or on a graduated scale allowing the opportunity to evaluate both program success and program cost. Committee members were reminded that this committee will not be in a position of final decision making. Organizations may need to get away from the mindset that 'the way we are doing things is the only way it can be done'.

Every recruit selected is not going to be a good member. This is where leadership prevails. Take immediate necessary progressive action according to your guiding documents when it is necessary. Unruly behavior requires consequences. The need to retain bad members for any reason, including being short-staffed, has a detrimental impact to all other members, discredits those in charge as incompetent, and can negatively impact future recruitment and retention efforts. An organization that is selective in terms of the quality of their members is generally more appealing to future recruits than simply putting a body in a seat’.

**If You Love Someone, Let Them Go**

Suggestions were offered as possible retention forecasting that included finding out why recruits are interested, and to engage them to learn more about what it will take to keep them interested. This topic morphed into a conversation regarding candidates who come on board and then, after two or three years, leave the organization for job as a career firefighter or career paramedic or a career firefighter/paramedic. Losing a reliable and qualified member can be upsetting, but this situation should be looked at in a positive way. While there may be disappointment that you spent considerable time and expense for someone who only stayed a brief period, you should wear this opportunity as a badge of honor with a sense of pride. You had a successful recruit who you molded into a reliable member and who enjoyed the service so much that he/she opted to make this a successful lifelong career. This person will always remember you as a mentor who helped him/her get started. This should serve as a recruitment ‘nugget’ and as a stepping stone to a successful and noble career as a public safety provider and as a very positive accomplishment for the organization.
Committee Maintenance
It has been common across the country for many years, due to multiple reasons, that public safety volunteer agencies have been forced into a combination agency, and then into a paid public safety service to the benefit of the communities served. This is going to continue. This committee recommends that this recruit and retention issue be reviewed on a six-month schedule with the sharing of pertinent information that allows total transparency and truthful and reliable information for those we serve as a means of keeping this discussion alive so we do not move backward and be better prepared to deal with future challenges such as the one presented.

The realization of cost impact of an effort to increase funding to volunteer agencies may be prohibitive. It was noted that a fully paid service is near impossible due to existing revenue sources and other budget considerations. On a different, but related note, future discussion should include consideration of consolidation of fire and EMS agencies, a type of system that is prominent in the United States regardless of geographic area and number of personnel. It was recommended that these considerations be included in ‘Plan B’ by a sanctioned and standing county committee that serves in a long-term oversight capacity. It is likely that as this process continues, the County Board should consider a registered voter survey to explore a tax referendum in the future. Some committee members feel that paid fulltime EMS staffers are needed for the safety and health of our communities now. While that remains to be seen and will be based on the level of examination going forward, we leave this section with the understanding that we cannot maintain the same level of emergency services in Jo Daviess County in the future without change.

One Voice for Various Challenges
While it is accepted that some agencies are doing well and are successful in terms of recruitment, retention, and succession planning, there are other agencies that may need the advantage of assorted options, including some form of a consolidated or county-wide system, to maintain their service in the future. It is imperative that if these options are going to be considered as part of this committee report, the committee needs to serve as one voice and to be very clear on that message so everyone understands both our current concerns as well as our suggestions for future considerations.
Conclusion

Some communities are simply not aware that there are other types of organizational structure and other operational options available. It is important that respective municipalities are aware of the significance and any shortfall in any public safety agency regarding staffing, and specifically, the shortage of staffing and the consequences that may result. We all have a responsibility to share this information with those being served. It is obvious that if we avoid these issues internally or externally, we only have ourselves to blame, and we need to be prepared to deal with the consequences. It was recognized that each agency has a specific way of doing things and no one likes to be told what to do. An emphasis on keeping your citizens informed and engaged is critical to success and future cooperation. It was noted that it is not the purpose of this committee to tell others how to run their organization, but to be totally transparent and accommodating in our process and our findings to allow all agencies the opportunity to be able to recruit, retain, and promote qualified individuals through effective succession planning.

Leadership and implementation of issues addressed by this committee need to continue after this sub-committee is terminated and the final report is filed. Jo Daviess County spends approximately $1.9 million per year supporting fire and EMS agencies, making this an important topic. There is no greater calling than that of public service and it is difficult to put a price on Law Enforcement, Fire Rescue, Emergency Medical Services, County Health, and Emergency Management services. It is important that the work of this committee remain active and functional in some capacity to ensure that this is not a ‘read and shelf’ initiative. What is needed is a continuing and fluid effort to evaluate progress and provide public safety agencies with counsel, guidance and funding as those who follow us continue to aggressively address recruitment and retention issues. This can be initiated by a five-person committee that meet once every six months and structured in a way that produces the best representation of this topic. At the very least, formulating this committee will keep this topic alive and will possibly open the door for changes in emergency service delivery and funding opportunities and distribution.

‘Times, They Are A-Changin’ (Bob Dylan 1964) and emergency public services are certainly no exception. It has taken many years to get where we are today. For the most part, this was done in a parochial manner to satisfy the needs of individual communities and service areas as public safety systems grew. This approach was noble and in the best interest of those involved in the process. In some cases, we continue with a response structure that originated 100 years ago for fire department and over thirty or forty years ago for EMS while not factoring in changes that have created more emergency responses for a lesser population. These include more traffic generating more accidents, fires that burn faster and with dangerous chemicals that were unheard of in the past, a more elderly population that will live longer than ever before, crimes that are more violent, and rampant chemicals and drugs that are evident in our population and which routinely are on our roads for trafficking and transport. Burying our heads in the sand will do nothing except exacerbate the problem. The key to success is an understanding of all public safety issues within our respective areas and taking a proactive approach to increase recruitment initiatives, developing retention programs, and creating a succession process that maintains quality personnel for all public safety agencies in Jo Daviess County. The intent is clear – the challenge to get it right is up to all of us.
Survey

Enclosed are the results of the community survey conducted at 4 various locations in JDC/July 2017 with 75 participants.

Participating Towns
- Stockton: 16
- Elizabeth: 12
- Galena: 25
- East Dubuque: 22

All participants in the survey were full time residents of JDC
- Males: 36
- Females: 39
- Age/Number: 85-60: 30, 60-40: 24, 40-30: 9, 30-18: 12

Do you have a volunteer EMS service or Full-time paid EMS service?
- Volunteer Department: 57
- Full Time paid department: 18

Do you know how many First Responders/Department members (excluding police) are available in your community?
- 40 members: 12
- 30 members: 7
- 20 > members: 6
- Unknown: 50

Are you aware of the required training hours and continuing education hours EMS personnel need to perform their duties?
- Unknown: 57;
- Many hours but not sure: 18

Should you call 911, how many first responders are available in your community for emergency medical care and transport to a health care facility?
- 1-2 EMS: 8;
- 2-4 EMS: 6;
- More than 4 EMS: 1;
- Unknown: 60

Should your Ambulance service not be available due to another Medical Emergency, do you know who would respond to your emergency?
- Another ambulance from your community: 26
- Ambulance from outside the community: 22
- Unknown: 27
How should communities respond to the decline in volunteer EMS participants?
Have full-time paid staff (24/7): 36
Have full-time day staff with a volunteer evening staff: 32
Continue with volunteers only: 7

Would you vote for a tax referendum in your community for paid full-time EMS?
Yes: 33
No: 10
Maybe: 32

Have you or a family member needed Emergency Medical Care and or transport to a health care facility?
Yes: 21
No: 54
RESPONSE ZONE MAPS AND DATA
FIRE AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

EMS ZONES – JO DAVIESS COUNTY IL

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<td>WARREN</td>
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## Current Jo Daviess County Property Tax Distributions

### Special Service Districts for EMS

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**Total to EMS** $294,205.38

*Stockton EMS is part of the Fire Dept.*

*East Dubuque EMS is part of the Fire Dept.*

### Payments to Fire Departments

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<td>Warren FD</td>
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**Total to Fire Dept.** $1,691,267.8
Fire Department Calls (1980-2013)

Source: National Fire Protection Association (updated 9/2014)
# Jo Daviess County Ambulance Rates as of June 2017

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*Dubuque ALS 850.00 / 950.00 if Dubuque Fire transports*
## Fire Responses 2014-16

### FIRE

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* Indicates Medical & Rescue Calls

### FIRE

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<th>MAR</th>
<th>APR</th>
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* Indicates Medical & Rescue Calls

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* Indicates Medical & Rescue Calls
### EMS Responses 2014-16

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**EMT B** Emergency Medical Technician – Basic Level  
**EMT-I** Emergency Medical technician – Intermediate Level  
**EMT P** Emergency Medical Technician – Paramedic Level  
**PHRN** – Pre-Hospital Registered Nurse
Resources Available

(Most address Fire and EMS issues and opportunities)

NVFC Make Me a Firefighter (Fire and EMS)
www.firerecruiter.com

Illinois Fire Chiefs Association
1. www.illinoisfirechiefs.org

International Association of Fire Chiefs
www.iafc.org

Firefighter FD – Bringing volunteers together
www.volunteerfd.org

National Volunteer Fire Council
www.nvfc.org

Firemen’s Association – State of Pennsylvania
http://pafirefighters.org/recruitment-and-retention/

Illinois Fire Chief’s Association
http://www.illinoisfirechiefs.org/industry-resources/professional-services/volunteer-combination-chief-officer-committee

Fire Corps
http://www.firecorps.org

Volunteer and Combination Officers Section of the International Association of Fire Chiefs.
www.vcos.org

Oregon Volunteer Firefighters Association
http://ovfa.org/?page_id=105

Recruit New York
http://www.recruitny.org

Firemen’s Association of the State of New York
http://www.fasny.com
Reference Sources

How to Successfully Recruit Volunteers, EMS World Magazine

EMS Workforce for the 21st Century, A National Assessment

National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)


National EMS Management Association

National Volunteer Fire Council: Make me a Firefighter Program

Emergency Services Leadership Institute, Florida Fire and Emergency Services Foundation, Leadership and Human Resource Modules

Best Practices in Fire Department Sustainability (April 18, 2017)