

Chippewa Fire District History

History:

The Very Beginning – Chippewa Fire Protection District

Early 1977 – Chippewa County Wisconsin. Town of Wheaton ‘Town Board’ is approached about improving fire protection. Walt Schryver of the Town of Wheaton has knowledge of how the structure of a Fire Protection District would be. Having gleaned this from his father who in Illinois had been deeply involved with fire protection districts (structure set down by state law), as well as being President of Illinois Association of Fire Protection Districts. Knowing that a grouping of municipalities into one fire district worked well elsewhere; including the existing Township Fire Department, Inc. surrounding the City of Eau Claire, Walt went to the Wheaton Town Board with the idea. The Board consisting of Don Hable, Fred Anderson and George Swaboda were definitely receptive to upgrading fire protection for the citizens. Five townships surrounding the Chippewa County seat were providing themselves with fire service by contracting with the City of Chippewa Falls with a response of 3 fire personnel and two fire rigs from the city fire station. The Wheaton board agreed this ‘fire service’ was woefully inadequate and a change was needed. The fire District would ‘spark’ the change.

Don Hable and Walt Schryver approached the Town of Lafayette Chairman Marv Roshell with the District idea; he was much in favor. The Lafayette town board has discussed the inadequacies of their fire service before and knew some kind of change was needed.

Marv Roshell called for an informational meeting of the townships interested. A meeting of Wheaton, Lafayette, Hallie, Tilden, and Eagle Point town board members and other interested citizens at the Lafayette Town Hall listened to Walt Schryver propose revamping the fire service. The five town boards must have felt the District concept had merit as they voted to pursue the concept.

The CFPD started organizing with meetings of town boards and then town meetings in mid 1977, hired a career Chief (Ron Salter) in July of 1977 and started training volunteer firefighters in the fall of 1977, the District was officially organized as a non-stock non-profit government corporation November 30, 1977 and began providing service January 1, 1978. Chief Salter retired in February of 1988 and John Neihart was appointed Chief by the board effective February 15, 1988. In the summer of 1989 the Board of Directors approved the addition Emergency Medical Services and January 1, 1990 the District began providing EMT-Intermediates were Patrick Brick, Tim Walters, and Tony Thornton. Tony Thornton resigned in the fall of 1990. Doug Vogler, an original volunteer member of the District was hired to fill the vacancy and is now retired from District. On November 1, 2002 the District began providing Paramedic ambulance service. The District is one of two services in Chippewa County to provide Paramedic EMS.

The Town of Hallie is one of the original organizing corporate members of the Chippewa Fire Protection District. The Village of Lake Hallie became a member of the Chippewa Fire Protection District when the Village incorporated.. Since the current Town owns part of the District the Village became an owner based on the percent of equalized value of the village. The remaining Town of Hallie remained part of the Fire District based on its remaining equalized value.

A sense of Community

Station one of the CFPD is the Hallie Fire Station, which has 44 volunteer members, of which 9 are original organizing members starting in 1977. Two of the original members have been Deputy Chiefs, 1 is the current Deputy Chief, 2 are Captains, 1 Training officer, and 1 is a career FF/Paramedic (Who went to college at age 48 to become a Paramedic). He is lifelong resident of Hallie and an original volunteer member of the District. Of the 44 members 32 are residents of the Town of Hallie. Since the inception of the Hallie Fire Department there have been 53 Hallie residents who have join the station and have retired, moved, or are deceased.

Station two of the CFPD in the Wheaton Fire Station which has 28 volunteer members, of which 2 are original members.

Recognizing the need to reward or compensate he Firefighters/First Responders the District and Towns appropriated funds to start a retirement system in 1991 far before the State of Wisconsin supported the need in the summer of 2000. The Chippewa Fire Protection District pension plan is 100% funded with over seven hundred fifty thousand dollars in assets and having paid over \$300,000 in retirement benefits.

The Fire District is a cooperative community effort of four towns and a village sharing fire and emergency medical services to keep the cost of government services substantially less then providing those services individually or contracting from another entity. This is one of the primer fire districts in the state. It has been recognized by ISO (Insurance Services Office) as the first fire service organization given a municipal class rating without a water system (1980-81). The standards set by the District have been use across the country to rate fire departments that do not have water systems. Many other Districts in Wisconsin and other states have been started using the concepts of the CFPD. The Chippewa Fire Protection District has 13 adjunct instructors for the Chippewa Valley Technical College. The success of the Chippewa Fire Protection District is due to the dedication of the firefighters and the continuous support of the citizens and elected officials.

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Prepared by Chippewa Fire District