

Village of Thurston
Council Meeting Minutes
October 15, 2019

Meeting called to order at 6:00 pm by Mayor Mary Boring. Walnut Township Trustees were present for a joint meeting. The Chiefs of both Thurston-Walnut Twp and Millersport Fire Departments were also present, as well as some members of both departments. Evan Martin and his parents were also present. Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Roll call: Robert Ortman – present JoAnn Hite – present Jimmy Barber JR - present
 Scott Whited – present Lowell Hite – present Heather Baker - present
 Mary Boring, Mayor – present Aaron Reedy, Fiscal Officer – present

Mary said this special meeting was called to discuss Fire Department business, specifically in regards to possible disciplinary actions towards a fire department officer. Mary asked if the group wanted to enter into executive session or not. All involved, including Evan Martin, were okay with leaving this an open meeting, and didn't see the need to go into executive session. Mary explained that the format of the meeting would be to allow the chiefs of the Thurston-Walnut Twp Fire Department to make their statements, and then allow Evan Martin to respond and/or make his statements. Then there would question/answer period after that. Everyone agreed.

Chief Hite asked Asst. Chief Jamie Carroll to read the list of issues against Lt. Evan Martin.

Chief Carroll said that it seemed to start around February 11, 2019 during a fire run to Buckeye Lake. On the way, the engine was involved in an accident. Evan was on the scene, got upset about some issues and things seemed to snowball.

- 1) Evan is the assigned training officer, and the training he's scheduled has not been done.
- 2) Evan is in charge of the testing of new hires. Two men were to be tested, but never were. He set up times for testing, but never showed.
- 3) Some of the people on the department feel like he's not around enough.
- 4) Personnel files came up missing from FD computer. 5 of the files ended up on a laptop which was taken out of the firehouse. These files had personal identifiable information (PII) on them.

Evan then spoke, reading a statement about all the positive things he's done on the department. He discussed several issues that existed within the Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG's). He is accusing the chiefs of not following their own SOG's. Evan also pointed out several discrepancies/mistakes in the SOG's. The comment was made that the new SOG's and Rules & Regulations should correct the issues. Trustee Leith said it's taken a few years to get the latest version of the Rules & Regs from the Chief for approval. Trustees said they passed it tentatively awaiting Council's approval. Mary said Council is still reading through them. Jimmy Barber said he's found several issues with the new Rules & Regulations and he's not done reading them all yet.

Evan discussed the details of the February 11th incident, and read an e-mail he had sent regarding the situation. There were some false information given as to who was driving at the time. Also, even though statements were taken, no drug/alcohol tests were given at the time.

Evan discussed the situation with the new hires. He said he never had their information, and couldn't gain access to the information. He discussed the lack of training, despite the schedule he had set up. No one was made to come to any of the trainings and he felt there was a lack of discipline in regards to making any one

attend the scheduled training. In regards to the files that ended up on someone's laptop, Evan said he had no knowledge of that situation.

Evan said he had tried to gain access to the firehouse after a March 13th argument with Chief Carroll, but found that his door code did not work, and could not get in. Later he found that the filing cabinet that he used to keep testing/new hire information in had been moved out of the chief's office and into the officer's room. All the files were missing from it. Both Chief Carroll and Hite said they never changed his door access, and Chief Carroll even tried Evan's code and it worked. Evan said Lt. Schmidt was present and witnessed his door code not working. Mary asked Evan that if he never received disciplinary action of any kind, how did he know this was going on. He said he reads the minutes of the council meetings and saw he was being accused of different things.

Township Trustees and Council began asking questions of Evan and the Chiefs. Evan said he never received notification of any disciplinary actions. The group discussed the moving of the filing cabinet out of the chief's office. Neither Chief Hite or Carroll knew who moved the filing cabinet. Trustee Yates said he was very disappointed that no drug/alcohol test was done following the February 11th accident with the engine. That protects the firefighters involved. He feels there was too much activity trying to "shut him out" rather than taking appropriate disciplinary actions. No one is even sure if there are files actually missing out of the filing cabinet. Mary said someone at the department should have known and saw who moved the filing cabinet.

Chief Carroll read FF Joseph Gallo's statement regarding the files being on his laptop. FF Gallo said that the night of March 13th, Lt. Martin asked to borrow one of Gallo's thumb drives. He then brought it back later. A few days later, Gallo needed the drive for school, and copied the files that were on it to his personal laptop. That's when he discovered they were some personnel files. He informed Chief Carroll of it, and they both deleted the files immediately. Evan said he didn't know anything about this situation, and didn't copy files onto any thumb drive.

Heather Baker read from an e-mail from a FF regarding a medic run on March 14th. Both Millersport and Thurston medics were present. The e-mail accused Lt. Martin and others of waiting outside of a house while only a couple of people went into work the patient. He said the reason they didn't go in was because of known bedbugs and roaches in the premises. Chief Price explained the proper procedures that were taken on this run. He state why the officers were standing by outside.

Chief Carroll read from an e-mail dated 4/1/19 where he reached out to Lt. Martin regarding the testing of the two men. Evan responded on 4/2/19 that he would follow up. Lt. Martin was asked why he didn't take action as he said he would in his e-mail. Evan said he's not the one responsible for all aspects of hiring new employees.

Trustee Yates asked Chief Hite to list his officers, and their responsibilities. Chief Hite listed Asst. Chief Carroll and one other. Then had trouble remembering others. Asst. Chief Carroll pulled out the roster for Chief Hite to read from. Trustee Yates interrupted him and said he was disappointed that the Chief couldn't name his own six officers without looking at a roster.

Someone asked who the sender and receiver were for the e-mail regarding the March 14th run. Chief Carroll said it was from FF Joseph Gallo to Chief Carroll. Millersport Chief Price spoke up and said that he has a problem with Gallo and that he's making false allegations about the run. Chief Price was on scene at this particular run, and said that all the guidelines were followed properly. He said Gallo is not educated in how this type of situation works. Gallo's name has also come up before with making accusations against Millersport Fire Dept. Heather read a letter from Mr. Thatcher to Lt. John Layton referring to the run on March 14th. Chief Price said it was not true. He was there.

Evan made a statement. He said his gear had been removed from the firehouse on July 19th. Chief Hite said his gear is at the firehouse, it was never removed.

Evan said the Ohio Revised Code requires vehicle driver training annually. He said he gave the forms to Chief Hite, but it has not been filed with state and he doesn't have copies. Evan also has an issue with not being able to carry his gear with him to use at both departments he volunteers at (Thurston and Millersport) and when he gets a call and goes to the scene directly. Chief Price said he allows Millersport personnel to use their gear anywhere.

Evan also brought up that the crew rosters in two locations at the firehouse had been changed. One of them had Lt. Martin removed completely, the other had him listed as being in charge of volunteers. Neither chiefs knew who changed the rosters. Mary said the chief and assistance chief would be the only ones to change these. No one else would have a reason to do so, and would be disciplined for doing so.

Trustee Horne said he doesn't see any big issues requiring disciplinary action. There are, however, lots of hurt feelings and miscommunications. Jane Baker, Twp Fiscal Officer, said she recently worked in HR at her previous job, and what's going on here sounds a lot like it could be construed as harassment. The Trustees and Council need to be careful about that possible liability.

Trustee Yates wants more information about the e-mails. He made a public records request for copies of all e-mails and documentation regarding this situation. It was suggested that there should be one rep from Council and one rep from the Trustees that look deeper into the issues. Trustees decided on Trustee Yates. Robert made a motion that Jimmy Barber should be Council's rep in this investigation. Scott seconded. Roll call vote: All YEAH with Jimmy and Heather abstaining. Motion passed.

Robert made a motion that all the rosters were to be appropriately updated with Lt. Martin's information, building access should be restored to Lt. Martin, and he be given access to his gear. Jimmy seconded. Roll call vote: All YEAH. Motion passed.

As there was no further business to discuss, JoAnn made a motion to adjourn at 8:31 pm. Jimmy seconded. Roll call vote: all YES. Motion carried.

Respectfully prepared by,

Aaron Reedy