Carlos Area Fire Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) Meeting Minutes

Date: Monday, October 26th, 2026
Start Time: 6:30 PM
Location: Carlos Event Center

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1. Call to Order

- Roll Call / Members Present
    - Ronna Berghoff, City of Carlos
    - Jon Trenne, City of Carlos
    - Bill Krivanek, Carlos Township
    - Andy Miller, Belle River Township
    - Dwayne Waldorf, Carlos Township
    - Colton Steidl, Carlos Fire Dept Chief
    - Joe Cecko, Cecko Construction
    - Dustin Tomoson, Ringdahl Architects
    - Attendance list
- Introduction of Board and those in attendance.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes

- Review and approval of minutes from Oct 12th, 2026
    - Motion to approve minutes: **Trenne, seconded Krivanek – Passed**

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3. Reports

a. Treasurer's Report

- No Treasurers report

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4. Old Business

a. Project Discussion

- Joe Cecko –
    - Gave history of the project, bids went out to local contractors in July-Aug.
    - 5 alternates were offered but none were accepted by the group. As we wanted to keep the base project cost as minimal as possible.
    - Total project with hard costs, softs costs and contingency: 2.66 million

- Ballot question will state up to 2.8 million to accommodate interest rate for the bonds.
- Bids went out in August. Twenty bid packages listed, and all local contractors were awarded bids. These bids are secured through the month of Nov. \
- Question from the audience: If this passes this election period, do you intend to start this fall yet?: Yes, we are set to start if we get a yes vote.
- Question from the audience: If they are local contractors who won the bids?:
  - Bid selection was reviewed with those in attendance.
- Question from the audience: What were the alternates that were not selected:
  - Alternate 1: Generator – back of generator – all utilities to set up for future
  - Alternate 2: Asphalt parking lot – base bid has gravel
  - Alternate 3: Recycled bituminous parking lot– base bid has gravel
  - Alternate 4: Minisplit for admin offices – base bid does not have this
  - Alternate 5: Spring 2027 start date vs. Fall 2026
- Question from the audience: Are the first responders also included and housed in the same firehall?: Yes this building will house both fire and first responders.
- Question of the audience: What is the Earthwork and Utilities costs/bids? – $187,000

- Dustin Tomoson – Ringdahl Architects
  - Describe details about the current design and type of construction.
  - Post frame vs. conventionally framed building – due to the amount of doors, the conventionally framed building was more highly recommended and cost would be about the same.
  - Question from the audience: how many trucks does this hold?: 11 trucks
  - Question from the audience: Once 20 years have passed what is the plan of the building, who will own it?: The JPA has not talked to an attorney about changing the JPA agreement, at this time, so it does state it will be a City of Carlos asset, but the JPA board is all in agreement to make it a joint ownership once the bond passes. This was requested by a Carlos Township resident.
  - Question from Audience: What is the breakdown of the fires?: Colten talked about getting this person the exact figures, but it really can be a mixed bag of fires. They specifically asked for a guess about grass fires, Colton reported minimal this year, but last year there were 3 on one day.
  - Question from the audience: What kind of trucks do you have? Colton talked about the specifics of each truck and their designated purpose.
  - Question from the audience: How much have we spent so far?: Ringdahl architect $136,000 for current design fee, $197,000 to Bolton and Menk.
  - Question from the audience: What will the ballot say?: It will request funding op to 2.8 million, even though cost is 2.66 million, we won't know until early November for interest rates. We will only bond for what we need.

- Question from the audience: Do people know that Carlos Township people, even if in Alex Fire Jurisdiction, are going to be paying? Yes, this was noted in the newsletter.
- Comment from the Audience: Discussion about response times and coverage between those in the audience.
- Question from the audience: Is the new building design sufficient for the fire department? – Colton responded that yes this does meet the needs
- Question from the audience: Is there a hose tower? – this was explored but is not in the budget therefore it was taken out of the project.
- Question from the audience: Is the City of Carlos paying cash up front? – The City of Carlos hasn't fully decided yet, but there is encouragement to bond for the project vs. paying cash as it can be hard for City's to recoup that cash, or can use it for other projects that may be harder to bond for.
- Question from the audience: How many overhead fill stations? – There will be 2 overhead fill stations.
- Clarification about the election - It will be on general election ballot. A "Yes" vote will be a yes, "no" vote will be a no, a "blank" vote will count as a no. The ballot question will read to bond up to 2.8 million.
- Question from the audience: Interest rate anticipation? – we don't have specifics, but we are ranging from 4-4.5% of an interest rate for the bond.
- Question from the audience: What is the city's plan for the current fire hall building if this project goes through? - As a city of Carlos we have not entertained this idea, we are waiting for the vote to go through before exploring options.
- Comment from the audience: Many of these small towns have fire departments, and the landscape and everything is very different than 50 years ago (roads, peoples occupations and ability of fire trucks), things need to be updated. Merge into one fire department, and creating a fire district. "You are going to spend 3 million dollars…for what…?"
- Question from the audience: What happens if this is no vote?: It doesn't change the need of a new building. Joe added that this is the lowest bids he has seen in a long time, they are very competitive and we will never be able to build this building any cheaper. If there is a no vote, contracts likely will look different come March 2027, and it likely will cost the townships more money in the future.
- Question from the audience: Have you thought about possible expansion and is this new building set up to be added on?: Yes, we have thought about this and the south end is set up for this.
- Question from the audience: What is the tax impact?: Carlos township for a 150,000 home = 22.71, Belle River Township for same sized home = 28.31 per year for 20 year term.
- Question from the audience: Are all properties taxed at the same rate?: As a board, we are not certain but we believe it goes off of total valuation on your tax statement.

    - Question from the audience: How did you come up with the cost sharing formula?: We looked at the fire jurisdiction coverage area and tax capacity of each entity.
    - Question from the audience: Why isn't each entity paying the same?: It was discussed the cost sharing formula was created to take some of the burden off Carlos Township.
    - Question from the audience: How are new trucks paid for?: City owns and operates the fire department and trucks, there are some ear marked for a truck fund but its minimal, grants, DNR, and Carlos Lions.
- JPA board expressed, "We have messed up a lot in this project and we understand we have lost your trust in the process. We feel we have done a fair job of working to earn that trust back. We went from a building that was intended for longevity with a high price tag, to a financially responsible building and decreasing the bottom line from 5 million to 2.6 million. At many of our meetings you expressed the need to fire Bolton and Menk as the people didn't trust them, as a board we did that. You wanted more transparency and we are working on providing that through newsletters, open meetings, and now these informational meetings. If we, as a board, were to do this again, we would certainly do it differently. We are listening and we did make changes that were asked of us. We are human, and we messed up, none of us have built a firehall before, and we truly are doing the best we can."

5. New Business

a. Building Committee

- Committee Members:
    - Mike Swendsrud – Not Present
    - Lawerence Keenan – Not Present
    - Fire Department Members
        - 2-3 Fireman

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6. Miscellaneous

a. None.

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7. Next Meeting Date and Time

- Confirm: ***Nov 9th, 2026*** – *6:30 PM at* ***Carlos City Hall***
- Preliminary Agenda Items:
    - Review of Election results

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8. Adjournment

- Motion to adjourn: **Waldorf, second Miller – passed.**
- Adjournment time recorded: 7:19 pm
- Notes completed by: Ronna Berghoff, Carlos Area Fire JPA, Secretary; City of Carlos, Mayor

JPA BOARD CONTACT INFORMATION:

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