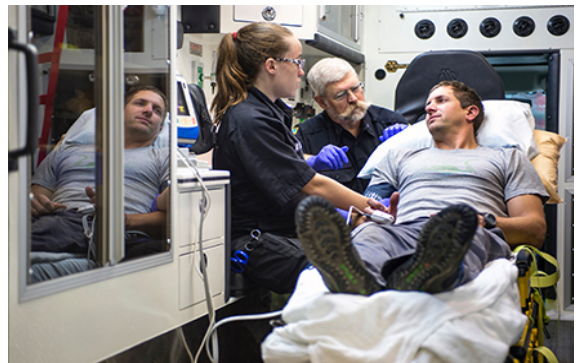


A REVIEW OF THE VILLAGE FIRE/EMS RFP PROCESS AND STRATEGIES FOR MOVING FORWARD

Village of Indiantown

*Final Report, September
2020*



CPSM[®]

CENTER FOR PUBLIC SAFETY MANAGEMENT, LLC
475 K STREET NW, STE 702 • WASHINGTON, DC 20001
WWW.CPSM.US • 716-969-1360

ICMA

Exclusive Provider of Public Safety Technical Services for
International City/County Management Association

THE ASSOCIATION & THE COMPANY

The International City/County Management Association is a 103-year-old, nonprofit professional association of local government administrators and managers, with approximately 13,000 members located in 32 countries.

Since its inception in 1914, ICMA has been dedicated to assisting local governments and their managers in providing services to its citizens in an efficient and effective manner. ICMA advances the knowledge of local government best practices with its website (www.icma.org), publications, research, professional development, and membership. The ICMA Center for Public Safety Management (ICMA/CPSM) was launched by ICMA to provide support to local governments in the areas of police, fire, and emergency medical services.

ICMA also represents local governments at the federal level and has been involved in numerous projects with the Department of Justice and the Department of Homeland Security.

In 2014, as part of a restructuring at ICMA, the Center for Public Safety Management (CPSM) was spun out as a separate company. It is now the exclusive provider of public safety technical assistance for ICMA. CPSM provides training and research for the Association's members and represents ICMA in its dealings with the federal government and other public safety professional associations such as CALEA, PERF, IACP, IFCA, IPMA-HR, DOJ, BJA, COPS, NFPA, and others.

The Center for Public Safety Management, LLC, maintains the same team of individuals performing the same level of service as when it was a component of ICMA. CPSM's local government technical assistance experience includes workload and deployment analysis using our unique methodology and subject matter experts to examine department organizational structure and culture, identify workload and staffing needs, and align department operations with industry best practices. We have conducted more 315 such studies in 42 states and provinces and 224 communities ranging in population from 8,000 (Boone, Iowa) to 800,000 (Indianapolis, Ind.).

Thomas Wieczorek is the Director of the Center for Public Safety Management. Leonard Matarese serves as the Director of Research & Program Development. Dr. Dov Chelst is the Director of Quantitative Analysis.

CENTER FOR PUBLIC SAFETY MANAGEMENT PROJECT CONTRIBUTORS

Thomas J. Wieczorek, Director

Leonard A. Matarese, Director, Research & Project Development

Dov Chelst, Ph.D. Director of Quantitative Analysis

Michael Iacona, Senior Manager Fire and EMS

Xianfeng Li, Data Analyst

Dennis Kouba, Senior Editor

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



In 2019 the Center for Public Safety Management, LLC (CPSM) was retained by the Village of Indiantown (Village) to evaluate its Fire and EMS workloads and to assist in developing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for these services. Indiantown is a recently incorporated municipality in the State of Florida (2017), located in the Southwest portion of Martin County. The Village is a rural community of 9 square miles with a population of 6,800 residents. Prior to incorporation the Village received its Fire and EMS services from Martin County Fire Rescue. As an independent governing body, the Village wanted to evaluate its options for contracting this service from another provider and possibly consider the establishment of an in-house Fire and EMS Department. On March 2, 2020 the Village issued **RFP 2020-004**, which specified the terms and requirements for an outside provider to deliver these services. The bids were closed on April 2, 2020; however, no bids were received. CPSM conducted an **after-action review** of the bid process in an attempt to determine the reasons that no bids were submitted. There were a number of comments obtained from prospective vendors, who were familiar with the RFP requirements, and this feedback was provided to the Village.

The Fire and EMS RFP was advertised at the on-set of the Covid-19 virus outbreak in South Florida. Prospective vendors indicated that the virus had an adverse impact on their abilities to sufficiently develop their bid proposals and there were significant concerns that the virus could hamper their ability to initiate a new service delivery system during the outbreak. In addition, a number of other concerns were identified regarding the bid requirements that ultimately contributed to their choosing not to submit a bid. The following is a summary of these issues;

- Covid-19 Virus Outbreak
- The 5-month lead time for start-up
- The sufficiency of the Booker Park Fire Station
- The ability to obtain the required EMS Licensing
- The ability to fully amortize capital costs during the term of the contract
- Dispatch Services and Radio Communications Licensing
- EMS Billing requirements
- The availability of definitive Mutual Aid options
- Recruiting, hiring and training the necessary personnel during a pandemic
- Insurance Costs
- The on-going working relationship with Martin County Fire Rescue

In June of 2020 the Village Manager asked its seven-member **Fire and EMS RFP Review Committee** to evaluate the Fire and EMS RFP, along with the CPSM After Action Review, in order to provide feedback to the Mayor and Village Council regarding possible next steps. The RFP Review Committee met on June 30, 2020 (Via ZOOM), to discuss the process. At this meeting

they appointed a Chair and Vice-Chair to lead this process. At subsequent meetings (via ZOOM), after lengthy discussion, and receiving public input, the Review Committee decided to develop a **Review of the Initial Fire and EMS RFP**. In addition, the Review Committee felt that an **Action Plan** was needed to address the lessons learned in the initial RFP process and to identify the next-steps to consider if a subsequent RFP were to be issued. This document is a culmination of this effort and is intended to provide the Village of Indiantown with a road map to assist in guiding its decision-making regarding the delivery of Fire and EMS services.

KEY DECISION POINTS IN SOLICITING AN ALTERNATIVE SERVICE PROVIDER

The objective of RFP-2020-004 was to provide an alternative service provider for both Fire and EMS services that would deliver an equal or improved level of service at a reduced price. It was the Village's belief that the nearly **\$5.9 million annual service contract** being paid to Martin County Fire was excessive and could be reduced if these services were provided by an in-house Village Fire Department or through a competitive bid process allowing an outside vendor to provide these services. The current contractual arrangement with Martin County utilizes an annual renewal process. Subsequently, if the Village chooses to cancel its service contract, it must formally notify the County by May 1st of that year to effectively discontinue service beginning October 1st of that same year. In effect providing a 5-month lead time to institute an alternative delivery system. The Village realized that a 5-month lead time was insufficient for it to establish its own Fire and EMS Department and it believed that an outside vendor could meet this time constraint.

RFP-2020-004 utilized a number of key assumptions that when reviewed through the after-action exercise elevated a number of factors that either constrained outside vendors from bidding or would require additional costs for providing the services as prescribed. It is the belief of the RFP Review Committee, that each of these key decisions should be evaluated and direction be provided that would revise a subsequent bid offering in order to allow greater vendor participation. The following is a description of each of these key decision points and alternative considerations that could improve outcomes.

Fourteen key decision points are listed below. These issues each have a direct effect on the ability of the prospective vendors to meet the requirements specified or will directly impact their costs and the pricing subsequently charged to the Village for these services. In addition to a general description of the issue, alternative considerations are provided that the Committee feels if addressed, could improve a subsequent bid outcome;

1. **Expand the Possible Options of the Structure/Organization of the New Service Delivery System:**

There are several key options in the design of the new service delivery system. The initial RFP specified a combined Fire and EMS structure meaning that all employees were trained and certified to provide both Fire and EMS services. Separating the two-service functions and contracting for each separately may improve the solicitation response.

Recommended Action: The Village Council should provide direction regarding the type of delivery structure that is specified in the RFP. These may include:

- a. An Out-sourced service that utilizes a combined Fire and EMS Structure
- b. Separate Fire and EMS Providers
- c. An In-house Fire Provider (Village Fire Department) and an outsourced EMS Provider (Private Ambulance Company)
- d. An In-House Village Fire Department that provides Fire and EMS services

2. **Fire Station Facility:**

The Booker Park Fire Station is not sufficiently sized and equipped to house and operate a joint Fire and EMS based service delivery system. The truck room area is not large enough for the anticipated number and types of fire engines, ambulances, support vehicles and equipment required. The dormitory and living areas

are insufficient. The location of the Booker Park facility is not centrally located in the Village and response times into the more distant sections of the Village will be extended.

Recommended Action: The Village Council should provide direction regarding its Village fire station facility and any associated funding for improvements to this facility including alternative leasing/purchasing options. Possible considerations include:

- a. An expansion of the Booker Park facility to be adequately sized to handle the anticipated operations.
- b. Seek an alternative leased facility or build a new station
- c. Utilize the Booker Park facility in combination with an additional facility (split services)

3. **911-Dispatch Services:** Dispatch Services are currently provided by Martin County. It is unclear that if the Village were to separate from Martin County Fire Rescue, whether Dispatch Services would be continued to be provided by Martin County Fire Rescue. In addition, if these services are to be provided to the Village after separation, will there be a charge for these services. The key to this uncertainty is the funding mechanism for Dispatch services. If these services are funded through the County's General Fund, there is the belief that these services should be continued at no additional charge.

Recommended Action: The Village Attorney should deliver a letter to the Martin County Attorney requesting clarification regarding the 911 Dispatching Services for the Village of Indiantown and whether there would be any charges for these services if the Fire & EMS contract with Martin County were terminated.

4. **EMS Transport Licensing (COPCN):** The licensing for EMS ground ambulances (ALS & BLS) is regulated through the Florida Department of Health, Emergency Medical Services Section. These licensing guidelines require the receipt of a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (COPCN) from the county commission in which the service is operated. The COPCN process in Martin County is administered by its Fire Rescue Department, under the supervision of its Chief of EMS.

Recommended Action: The Village Manager (or his designee) should contact the Martin County Chief of EMS to determine the requirements for the Village or its selected provider to obtain a COPCN and clarify the timeline for obtaining this licensing.

5. **Emergency Radio Frequency Licensing:** Fire and EMS emergency radio communications each are required to operate on designated radio frequencies that are authorized and managed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The assignment and licensing of these frequencies requires that each service agency complete an application process. The Village of Indiantown or its designated service provider(s) will be required to receive both FCC and Florida Department of Health radio communications licensing prior to being authorized to operate these services.

Recommended Action: The Village Manager (or his designee) should determine the requirements and the expected timeline for the Village or its selected provider, to obtain an FCC public safety radio communications license and frequency designation to facilitate its Fire and EMS operations.

6. **Fire Inspection, Plans Review and Code Enforcement:** Fire agencies have the responsibility for fire inspections, new construction plans review and code enforcement

as specified in the Florida Fire Prevention Code. These services are typically carried out by fire prevention personnel under the supervision of the agency's Fire Marshal. The initial RFP specified that these services were to be provided by out-sourced resources. The Village has multiple options in providing these services, however a determination should be made as to how these services will be provided and their anticipated costs.

Recommended Action: The Village Manager (or his designee) should provide direction and the costs associated with providing fire prevention services. This determination should be specified in the RFP. Possible considerations include:

- a. The outsourcing of these services from a private provider on an hourly basis
- b. Include fire prevention services as part of the Fire and EMS RFP process
- c. Combine fire plans review, inspections and permitting under the Village's Community & Economic Development function
- d. Establish a service contract with Martin County Fire Rescue to provide these services

7. **Mutual Aid and Automatic Response Agreements:** Fire and EMS agencies utilize mutual aid and automatic response agreements to supplement their workforce and provide assistance during exceptionally high demand periods or during major events. The State of Florida provides an umbrella agreement through the Florida Division of Emergency Management. It is recommended that the Village become a signatory to the Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement.

Recommended Action: The Village Manager should prepare an agenda item for the Village Council's approval that adopts the Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement and establishes the Village of Indiantown as a signatory to this agreement.

8. **Develop a Village Fire & EMS Capital Funding Plan:** The capital needs associated with the establishment of an alternative Fire and EMS service delivery system will be extensive. These capital needs include; various fire apparatus, ambulances and an assortment of equipment (generators, radios, antennas, stretchers, extrication equipment, ladders, hose, computers and software, and miscellaneous tools equipment). It is anticipated that these items will require a capital expenditure that is in excess of \$3 million. If the construction of a new fire station or an expansion of the Booker Park facility is added to this amount, the combined costs can increase to an estimated 8-10 million dollars. Ultimately these capital expenditures will be required to deliver the necessary services and if these capital items, or a portion of them are provided by the Village, they will ultimately reduce the costs that would be charged if an outside provider was responsible for providing these items.

Recommended Action: The Village Manager in conjunction with the Village's Finance Staff, should develop a capital program and the associated funding options that can be considered in funding Fire and EMS operations. There are multiple options that can be considered and it would be premature to develop cost projections on the basis of a yet to be defined delivery system. At this point the Committee recommends that the capital program identify in broad dollar amounts the ability of the Village to off-set these costs and the possible funding mechanism that could be utilized (municipal bonds, lease-purchases, grant options, etc.). These options should include fund availability in the following increments:

- a) \$1 million
- b) \$3 million

- c) \$5 million
- d) \$7 million

- 9. EMS Billing:** It is estimated that the Village of Indiantown generates approximately 700 EMS transports annually to area hospitals. Patients are charged a transport fee for these services along with additional charges depending on the services provided (medications, supplies, mileage, etc.). CPSM estimates that the current transport activity has the potential to generate approximately \$125,000-\$150,000 annually depending on the transport rate that is established, the payer-mix and the method of collections. These revenues can be used by a private provider to off-set their costs and this will affect their charge to the Village. If an in-house Fire and EMS Department were charging for these services, the revenues will be utilized to fund these operations. Subsequently the Village will have the option to determine what charges will be levied for transport services and the method of collections. It is necessary that a policy discussion takes place to determine these charges for EMS transports.

Recommended Action: *The Village Council should provide direction regarding the establishment for EMS transport fees (resident and non-resident rates) and the level of effort in collecting for these services.*

- 10. Insurance Requirements:** There are a series of insurance requirements (auto, property, personal injury, liability, indemnity, etc.) for operating a Fire and EMS delivery system. Many of the insurance requirements are mandated in the COPCN licensing process, however there is some flexibility in establishing the levels of insurance coverage that is carried by an outside provider. In some instances, private companies may be self-insured and setting a specified level for coverage will escalate their costs. In other instances, governmental entities may have tort immunities or limitations on awards that can be made against a jurisdiction and insurance coverages can reflect these limitations. The Committee feels that the Village should work with its insurance provider and determine the levels and types of coverage that should be specified if an outside provider is utilized.

Recommended Action: *The Village Manager should work with the Village's insurance provider to obtain guidance on the types and levels of insurance coverage that should be specified in the Fire and EMS RFP.*

- 11. Hazardous Materials Response:** This type of response requires specialized training and equipment that is utilized in stopping leaks or in the containment of spills of hazardous materials, in an effort to minimize their environmental impacts. Hazardous materials technicians utilize a broad spectrum of meters and gauges to determine the types of materials and the levels of exposure. There are three levels of training for personnel who typically respond to these types of incidents. These include;
- a. Level 1- Operational
 - b. Level 2- Technician
 - c. Level 3- Specialist

The State of Florida requires that all certified firefighters be trained at the operational level (Level-1). This level of training is designed for the initial responder in enabling them to verify that a release or spill has occurred, begin the identification and containment process and minimize the exposure of the product to themselves and the effected populations. Hazardous materials technicians (Level-2), typically operate at a regional level. Martin County Fire Rescue operates a dedicated hazardous materials team at the

technician level. Technicians utilize specialized tools and equipment in the specific identification of the product and have an expanded ability to limit or stop the release and identify the specific levels of exposure. Specialist (Level-3) are utilized in the containment and clean-up of spills and the transport of these material for safe disposal. This level of expertise is usually available through commercial providers or military resources. Any firefighting force assembled in Indiantown should be trained and able to respond at the operational level. In the event that a higher level of expertise is needed (Technician or Specialist) this resource will be obtained through outside resources, activated through the statewide mutual aid program.

Recommended Action: The Village Manager should initiate a correspondence to Martin County Fire Rescue in an effort to determine that if the Village were to sever its service contract with Martin County Fire Rescue, will the County's Hazardous Materials Team continue to respond into Indiantown to provide assistance during a suspected hazardous materials incident.

- 12. Undertake a Comprehensive Public Outreach Effort:** Any effort that proposes a change of a Fire and EMS service provider will be met with concern by residents and local business owners. In addition, there is a likelihood that misinformation regarding service levels will be released that will further elevate these concerns. It is the primary objective of the community leadership to provide frequent, reliable and open communications with the community regarding the process, purpose and intended outcomes of these efforts. There are a host of venues that can be effective in achieving a successful public outreach effort. The combined use of social media, electronic email updates, public forums, a public web-page along with public meetings allowing for question and answer forums (public and electronic), are a few of the notable efforts that should be considered.

Recommended Action: The Village Manager should appoint a Public Outreach Liaison who serves as the Villages Point of Contact for the dissemination of information regarding Fire and EMS services. This individual should develop a comprehensive, multi-media communications outreach effort that provides information to the residents and business community regarding the pursuit of an alternate service provider. This individual should be supported by the Committee and the Village Manager and should be able to draw upon the Mayor, Council Members and other Village officials in providing public information, speaking to social and civic groups, updating the web-page and responding to social media postings.

- 13. Directed Outreach to FP&L Officials:** FP&L is a major employer located within the Village of Indiantown and its taxable properties and equipment generate the majority of the tax revenues that funds Village operations. The impacts of a change of the Fire and EMS provider will elevate concern amongst FP&L officials from both an emergency response perspective, along with the code enforcement and construction permitting implications. It is therefore essential that a directed outreach be initiated with FP&L officials to involve them in the developmental stages of this effort and to solicit their input and assistance in guiding the process.

Recommended Action: The Village Manager should establish and facilitate an FP&L Liaison Task Force aimed at involving company officials in the development of an RFP that solicits an alternative Fire and EMS service provider and involves company officials in the design and selection of this provider.

14. Village Council Community Meeting: Public safety is a key function of local government and any determinations that impacts the quality and reliability of these services is a significant undertaking. Any policy decision involving the delivery of essential services must involve and be directed by the elected leadership of a community. Therefore, it is essential that an in-depth orientation process be initiated that provides discussions that can lead to a comprehensive understanding of the topic and the impacts of this decision-making process. A facilitated Village Council Community Meeting, with public participation, is the recommended method to inform and educate elected officials, citizens and business leaders. The objective of this effort is to develop a defined and informed decision-making process that is fully transparent and comprehensive in nature.

Recommended Action: The Village Manager should initiate the effort to hold a Village Council Community Meeting to evaluate and establish a consensus on pursuing an alternative service provider for Fire and EMS services.

ACTION PLAN

DESCRIPTION	ASSIGNMENT	TIMELINE
1. Determine the Structure/Organization of the Village of Indiantown Fire/EMS Delivery System.	Village Council	Village Council Community Mtg. Fall/2020
2. Determine improvements/re-location of Booker Park Fire Station and associated funding allocations.	Village Council	Village Council Community Mtg. Fall/2020
3. Determine the ability to obtain 911 Dispatch Services from Martin County and any associated costs.	Village Attorney	September/2020
4. Define the timeline and methodology to obtain an EMS Transport License (COPCN).	TBD	November/2021
5. Define the timeline and methodology to obtain the required Emergency Radio Frequency Licenses.	TBD	October/2020
6. Determine methodology and cost for providing Fire Inspections & Plans Review/Permitting Services.	TBD	November/2020
7. Develop the Village Council Agenda Item for Indiantown's entry as a signatory into Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement.	Village Manager	September/2020

8. Develop a Fire & EMS Capital Improvement Program and the associated funding options.	Village Manage/Finance	Village Council Community Mtg. Fall/2020
9. Establish an EMS Transport Fee Schedule and Collections Process.	TBD	Village Council Community Mtg. Fall/2020
10. Determine the level of Insurance Coverages and Liability the Village is willing to undertake in delivering Fire & EMS Service.	TBD	October/2020
11. Determine the ability to obtain Hazardous Materials Response (Technician Level) from Martin County via the Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement and any associated costs.	Village Manager/Attorney	September/2020
12. Develop a comprehensive Public Outreach Plan and appoint a Public Outreach Liaison.	Village Manager	Village Council Community Mtg. Fall/2020
13. Establish a directed outreach effort with FP&L Officials to provide advisement and solicit input/participation in developing an alternative Fire & EMS delivery system.	Village Manager & Task Force (TBD)	September/2020
14. Determine the date and agenda for a Village Council Community Meeting in the Fall of 2020.	Village Manage and Committee Chair	September/2020

CONCLUSSION

As a newly established governing body, the Village of Indiantown is responsible for a thorough and on-going evaluation of its effectiveness in delivering services to its residents and business owners. Public safety is key amongst the services provided by local government and subsequently should receive significant scrutiny in determining the effectiveness and efficiencies involved in delivering these key services. The issuance of RFP-2020-004, involving the solicitation for an alternative Fire and EMS service provider was a legitimate and necessary step in this review process. It is clear from the outcome of this solicitation and the absence of any bids, that the timing and structure of this process was flawed and there is a need for an in-depth evaluation of the bid process and a determination as to whether the effort should be renewed.

This study and its associated action plan are intended to initiate this review which will ultimately assist the Indiantown Village Council, its citizenry and business leaders in determining if a subsequent bid offering is warranted. In addition, if the decision is made to move forward in seeking an alternative method in delivering Fire and EMS services, it is necessary that the bid process be restructured and this study provides several key areas of evaluation that can assist in improving this outcome.