

Early History of Public Safety in Center Line

The origins of Center Line's Fire and Police Departments pre-date its founding as a city. It was the desire for more and better services that prompted the citizenry to form the Village of Center Line. Voters approved the Village Charter and elected the first Village officers on November 9, 1925. One of the most pressing needs was fire protection, since there were no organized fire brigades in the area and there were only individual wells and cisterns from which to draw water for dousing a fire. Most fires resulted in the total loss of the structure and often damaged nearby buildings.

At their meeting of December 28, 1925, the newly-elected village officials unanimously approved the purchase of a \$2,500 American LaFrance Type E fire engine, which was only equipped with chemical fire suppression equipment and hoses.

On January 15, 1926 a committee of village officials developed plans for a municipal water system that would provide water to homes and businesses and fire hydrants. Their final report recommended that the village construct a water system consisting of wells that would be drilled near Ten Mile and Wyland, a pumping station, a 90 foot tall water tower, plus water mains and fire hydrants along the existing streets within the village limits.



The village commission not only adopted the committee's recommendations but on March 4, 1926 they also revised the American LaFrance purchase order to instead buy a \$12,500 Type 12, triple combination pumper that would be capable of delivering 750 gallons of water per minute. The Type 12 fire engine included a 40 gallon chemical tank which would be used to fight fires when a supply of water was unavailable.

With plans in place for a new water system and a new fire truck on its way, the village commission could turn its attention to the formation of a fire department. On May 21, 1926, the commission appointed George Theut as Fire Commission at a salary of \$1,800 per year and gave him responsibility for recruiting and training 18 volunteer firemen. Four days later new American LaFrance Type 12 fire engine arrived. The village commission rented Chief Theut's garage on Engleman St. to house it for the sum of \$10 per month until the new Municipal Building at 7550 Ten Mile Road was completed in 1928.