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Hamlin, Walker, Morton fire districts may consolidate

1:04 AM, Jan. 16, 2012 | Comments

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Staff writer

Commissioners of the Hamlin, Walker and Morton fire districts will discuss plans to merge during a special meeting on Wednesday.

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The three fire districts — which fund the Hamlin, Walker and Morton fire departments — used a \$34,000 state grant last year to study consolidation.

The Center for Governmental Research presented its findings to the commissioners in December, said Glen Unterborn, chairman of the Walker Fire District board of commissioners.

"The savings estimate is that we would probably save about 5 percent of our spending in a consolidated budget versus three separate budgets," he said. "That equates to about \$55,000 annually."

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What: Joint meeting of the Hamlin, Walker and Morton boards of fire commissioners.

When: 7 p.m. Wednesday

Where: Hamlin Fire Department, 1521 Lake Road.

He said the study showed the districts could merge without sacrificing any fire service. And, Unterborn said, if the three districts merge and join their reserve funds together, a consolidated district would likely be able to buy replacement fire equipment for the next

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He said the state money drove the study.

"We have been talking about this (consolidating) between ourselves for a number of years, and the money was just a kick in the seat of our pants to take a serious look at it and have some facts and figures," he said.

The Hamlin, Morton and Walker fire departments provide service to the 45-square-mile town of Hamlin as well as portions of the towns of Clarkson and

Kendall, Orleans County.

Unterborn said if the commissioners agree on consolidating, they will put together a plan to do so in coming weeks. That proposal would be presented at a public hearing, then finalized with any needed adjustments.

The commissioners would then set a date for the consolidation to happen, and the town boards of Hamlin, Clarkson and Kendall would appoint an interim team of commissioners to oversee the new merged district. Residents would elect new commissioners the following December.

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