

Fire Department Regionalization Study Committee Final Report

Mission Statement

To examine the prospects of regionalizing the services provided by the Fire Department with a neighboring town. To study the financial considerations of regionalization and the impact on the fire services provided to the town. A goal of the committee is to study and examine whether or not consolidation of the Fire Department can provide a more effective service to the residents of Sanbornton.

The Sanbornton Fire Department Regionalization Study Committee met seventeen times between August 10, 2016 and March 8, 2017. We held joint meetings with the towns of Belmont, New Hampton, Tilton/Northfield Fire District, Meredith, Laconia, Franklin, and Stewart's Ambulance Service.

Committee Final Report Summary

In meetings with Franklin, Tilton/Northfield Fire District, and Belmont fire authorities, it became clear that all were reluctant to enter into any sort of regionalized arrangement with Sanbornton due to inconsistent manpower coverage at Sanbornton. The combination of on call and per diem personnel results in occasional manpower shift shortages.

There is a strong delineation between local fire departments. Some are volunteer rich with a focus on fire fighting only, relying on private service providers for EMS. Others, including Sanbornton, are cross trained and staffed in support of EMS operations. Smaller rural departments, including Sanbornton and New Hampton, have developed strong relationships with larger neighboring departments.

The most likely scenario for the advancement of a regionalized Fire /EMS entity will be due to the growth in cooperative agreements between neighboring towns. At some point in the future a critical mass in local cooperative agreements driven by political institutions such as LRMFA or county government may trigger an inclusive area wide governmental incorporation.

Efforts toward cooperation and mutually beneficial service improvements have been occurring regularly due to the ongoing conversations and incidental contacts between Chief Dexter and other local fire chiefs. The possibility for these conversations to develop into cooperative agreements will be enhanced with increased manpower, either subsidized manpower in other towns or in our own.

The benefits of regionalization will come primarily in major asset cost reductions: rolling stock, fire station and substation placement, and other "group purchase" cooperative agreements. Regionalization will have little effect on total manpower requirements other than at the administrative level.

Meeting summary with Belmont 12/5/17 quoted from their minutes

- Chairman Mooney commented that immediately she sees that Belmont has a full time department that is already very busy and Sanbornton doesn't and she sees the burden falling on Belmont because they are full time. She added that she probably would not be agreeable without Sanbornton having full time help.
- Chairman Mooney noted that with the new chief and the arrangement Belmont currently has and the adjustments that have been made there is no need for a substation and she wouldn't support a substation because Belmont doesn't need it.
- Selectmen Pike suggested that they have one large meeting with all the selectmen from each community when they have finished with the individual communities. Chief Erickson expressed that was a great point because the fire chiefs can't change anything and they really need the political people such as the Selectmen that can make change involved.

Meeting summary with Franklin 12/13/16

- We spent approximately 1.5 hrs. discussing regionalization and shared services. No decisions were made, but it is apparent that Franklin and Sanbornton share many of the same problems with regards to ambulance and fire fighting services.
- Franklin would like to be kept informed of how our efforts are proceeding and suggested that it might be a good idea to have a joint meeting with all interested communities to discuss how our combined needs could be met.
- Chief LaChapelle said Franklin would have to add personnel in order to make some type of regionalization commitment with Sanbornton.

Meeting summary with New Hampton 12/15/16

- Cannot provide additional coverage other than what is already covered with mutual aid and automatic response.

Meeting summary from joint meeting with Tilton/Northfield Fire & EMS Commissioners
12/19/16 quoted from their minutes

- Commissioner Manning commented he is interested in regionalization. He talked about the restructuring that the Fire District just went through. He questioned Tilton-Northfield going into Sanbornton being a benefit to anybody. He believes it would be costly for all. His vision is doing something closer to a county level.
- Dave DeVoy said the challenge is the limited hours per diems can work. The State says they cannot work more than 29 hours per week on average or they are considered a full time firefighter.
- Deputy Robinson commented on Winnisquam Fire Department. He is all for regionalization. Look into it but you may not like the results. Once you regionalize, you have a boss. There's going to be a cost for it. Sometimes you lose control. Somebody is going to making that decision for you and handing you a bill.
- Commissioner Manning is for regionalization to alleviate the equipment redundancy. Then you could move your manpower around so we have qualified people going where they need to go. For us, it will cost the District a little more as we already have a full time fire department. The towns it is going to hurt are towns like Sanbornton where you don't have anything in place. It is going to cost a lot for Sanbornton to regionalize.
- Deputy Robinson commented that if we were to do a portion of Sanbornton we would have to add staff to do that. The staffing level would be a minimum of two people. Our two people costs are more that what you asked for. If this Board agreed to do it, we have to take it to the people.

Meeting summary with Meredith 12/27/16

- It is apparent that Meredith and Sanbornton share many of the same problems with staffing the station during normal duty hours (7am to 5pm).
- Meredith's ambulance service, 24/7, is contracted with Stewart's Ambulance Service at an approximant cost of \$280k per year with a 3-5 year fixed contract. Stewart's keeps at least one ambulance stationed in Meredith. Since Meredith contracts its ambulance service they do not have any EMTs on staff, only firefighters.
- Meredith doesn't see any immediate way they can share services with Sanbornton other than what the two fire departments are already doing thru Mutual Aid.

Meeting summary with Stewart's Ambulance Service 1/10/17

- They breakeven on 911 calls
- They serve Meredith, Center Harbor, Moultonborough, Tuftonboro, Sandwich, and Wolfeboro.
- They would be willing to discuss a 5 year breakeven contract with Sanbornton
- They would be interested only in a 24/7 ambulance agreement
- Stewart's estimated it costs them \$18/hr. for EMT's
- Stewart's suggests our best bet might be to share services with LRG Hospital
- Sanbornton has a very efficient call system for the way we are structured.

Meeting summary with Laconia 1/24/2017

- Chief Erickson estimates it would take 15-20 minutes for EMS to respond to a call for the east (Winnisquam) side of Sanbornton.

Closing Statement

The purpose of this committee was to only gather information and not to enter into any negotiations or to make recommendations. Therefore, the information in this report will be forwarded to the Sanbornton Select Board for their consideration and further study.

This committee is prepared to meet with the Sanbornton Selectmen, at their convenience, to discuss our report in more detail.

Respectfully submitted

David DeVoy
Chairman

The above report was approved unanimously on March 8, 2017 by:
David DeVoy, Chief Paul Dexter, Evelyn Auger, Andrew Sanborn, Steve Ober, Steven Cobb,
and Roger Grey

How the current Sanbornton Fire & Rescue Department Operates Now

How the current Sanbornton Fire & Rescue Department Operates Now

Currently the Sanbornton Fire & Rescue Department operates as a “combination” fire & EMS department which means that it is made up of different types of staffing levels with a Full Time Fire & EMS Chief, Part Time Firefighter/EMTs that cover the station during the day time (8am to 4pm) which is made up of both internal members and outside members to fill the 116 hours of coverage required 7 days a week. The rest of the time the staff responds as needed based on receiving a call for service, 336 hours are covered with these on call members.

The department tracks times with 4 shifts;

Day Shift – 8am to 4pm (8 hours)

Covered with 2 Firefighter/EMT’s at the station.

Evening Shift – 4pm to 7pm (3 hours)

No coverage – dependent on members being available

Night Shift – 7pm to 5am (10 hours)

Covered with a minimum of 2 Fighter/EMT’s from home

Morning Shift – 5am to 8am (3 hours)

No coverage – dependent on members being available

The Chief works Monday thru Friday (8am to 4pm) and also responds to calls all hours of the day and night depending on severity of call and available staff.

Day Shift- (8am – 4pm) Average 50% of all calls

We deal with two issues when it comes to appropriate staffing levels, the first being the Day Shift – due to limited personnel and the limits placed on us by the State of NH regarding how many hours a part time firefighter/EMT can work we have seen an increase in vacant (not filled) shifts. In 2015 we had 136 vacancies of which 26 times there was no one in the station at all, in 2016 we had 160 vacancies of which 20 times there was no one in the station at all.

Evening Shift – (4pm – 7pm) Average 25% of all calls

The problem that arises during this particular time of day is that we do not have the on call members available to respond to emergencies since the majority of members work out of town and are not out of work yet or are dealing with family obligations like kids and school activities, grocery shopping and spending time with a spouse, which leads to the time frame that calls are missed or take longer to respond.

Night Shift – (7pm – 5am) Average 20% of all calls

All members are required to sign up for 4 nights of coverage per month and we do have vacancies on night shifts but members that are not signed up still tend to respond. During this shift we do not have any major issues with member's availability since they tend to be home settled in and available.

Morning Shift – (5am to 8am) Average 5% of all calls

Since the members have to get ready for work, the night shift ends at 5am since an ambulance call has an average turn-around time of 2 ½ hours and if a call is received after 5am the member most likely will be late for work and employers are not as tolerant as they were in the past for employees to miss work. Since this is a small percentage of calls it also is a time when the more serious medical calls are received (cardiac and stroke type calls) these are normally during the last hour of the shift (7am to 8am).

The current staffing is made up of the following;

- Total number of full time members –
 - 1 – Fire Chief
- Total number of on-call full members –
 - 1 – Deputy Chief / Paramedic
 - 1 – Captain / Paramedic
 - 1 – Lieutenant / AEMT
 - 1 – Lieutenant / EMT
 - 3 – Firefighter / AEMT
 - 2 – Firefighter / EMT
 - 2 – Firefighters
 - 1 – Probationary Firefighter
 - 1 – Paramedic
 - 1 – AEMT
 - 3 – EMT's
- Total number outside per-diem –
 - 1 – Firefighter / Paramedic
 - 4 – Firefighter / AEMT

We have a total of 23 personnel including per-diem and "on call" members.

The department runs approximately 450 emergency calls and another 600 non-emergency *service calls* annually, this is accomplished by the use of 2- front line firefighting pumpers, 1 -2000gal tanker, 1 – forestry truck, 1 – utility vehicle, 1 – command car and 1- advanced life support ambulance.

The department participates in fire / EMS prevention activities throughout the year from fire station tours, fire drills at all the schools as well as businesses, fire extinguisher training for the general public and first aid and CPR classes, and a smoke detector program which helps residents with supplying and installing smoke and CO detectors in their homes, this is performed by the day shift staffing.

The day shift staff and the fire chief conduct life safety inspections daily from outside fire permits, life safety inspections, oil and gas furnace and tank inspections.

The following statistics are collected from reports generated from the department’s “FireHouse” reporting software;

| | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|
| Total emergency calls for the last two years: | <u>2015</u> | <u>2016</u> |
| | 391 | 443 |
| Call Categories: | | |
| Fire Related | 46 | 60 |
| Overpressure Rupture, Explosion, no fire | 1 | 1 |
| Rescue & Emergency Medical Services | 212 | 233 |
| Hazardous Condition | 11 | 13 |
| Service Call | 27 | 46 |
| Good intent call | 37 | 36 |
| False Alarm & False Call | 39 | 27 |
| Severe Weather & Natural Disaster | 18 | 27 |

Mutual Aid Responses by the Sanbornton Fire & Rescue out of town:

| | | |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|
| | <u>2015</u> | <u>2016</u> |
| Call Categories: | 53 | 53 |
| Fire Related | | |
| Laconia | 4 | 4 |
| Meredith | 2 | 1 |
| Tilton/Northfield | 4 | 8 |
| Belmont | 0 | 2 |
| Andover | 0 | 1 |
| Campton-Thornton | 1 | 0 |

| (Fire Related Cont.) | <u>2015</u> | <u>2016</u> |
|--|-------------|-------------|
| Bristol | 0 | 1 |
| Franklin | 2 | 4 |
| Gilford | 1 | 1 |
| Gilmanton | 1 | 2 |
| Rescue & Emergency Medical Services | | |
| Meredith | 4 | 0 |
| Tilton/Northfield | 3 | 4 |
| Franklin | 0 | 1 |
| <i>Service Call</i> (cover assignment) | | |
| Meredith | 0 | 1 |
| New Hampton | 1 | 0 |
| Tilton/Northfield | 5 | 7 |
| Belmont | 3 | 0 |
| Bridgewater | 0 | 1 |
| Bristol | 0 | 1 |
| Franklin | 2 | 1 |
| Gilmanton | 0 | 2 |
| <i>Good intent call</i> (cancelled enroute) | | |
| Hill | 1 | 1 |
| Laconia | 0 | 3 |
| Meredith | 4 | 1 |
| Plymouth | 0 | 1 |
| Tilton/Northfield | 2 | 1 |
| Belmont | 1 | 0 |
| Rumney | 1 | 0 |
| Meredith EMS | 2 | 0 |
| Canterbury | 1 | 0 |
| Franklin | 4 | 4 |
| New Hampton | 3 | 0 |
| False Alarm & False Call | | |
| Belmont | 1 | 0 |

Mutual Aid Responses from another town:

| | <u>2015</u> | <u>2016</u> |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| | 21 | 23 |
| Call Categories: | | |
| Fire Related | | |
| Automatic 1 st Alarms | | |
| Towns assisting on scene | | |
| Tilton/Northfield | 2 | 3 |
| Franklin | 1 | 3 |
| Laconia | 1 | 3 |
| New Hampton | 0 | 1 |
| Belmont | 1 | 1 |
| Meredith | 0 | 1 |
| Rescue & Emergency Medical Services | | |
| 19 A-1 Out of Service | | |
| Towns assisting on scene | | |
| Franklin | 2 | 1 |
| Laconia | 1 | 0 |
| Tilton/Northfield | 0 | 1 |
| Only 1 EMT responded | | |
| Towns assisting on scene | | |
| Franklin | 1 | 2 |
| Tilton/Northfield | 0 | 2 |
| New Hampton | 0 | 1 |
| Service Call | | |
| Franklin | 1 | 2 |
| Good Intent | | |
| Tilton/Northfield | 2 | 3 |

Fire & Emergency Medical Service Definitions;

LRMFA – Lakes Region Mutual Fire Aid, this is made up of 35 communities in 5 different counties, the primary responsibility of LRMFA is dispatch services and coordination of mutual aid responses.

MUTUAL AID – This is where another town's resources will be dispatched to another community during a building fire, multi car accidents, mass casualty incidents, multiple incidents or any type of emergency that can overwhelm the resources of a particular community, Mutual Aid is not to be used as the "First Responders" to incidents in another town.

FIRST RESPONDERS – The initial response of personnel and apparatus to an emergency like an ambulance call, trees and wires, motor vehicle accident or car fire. It is the first responders that determine the need for more resources and call for addition resources from our neighbors (mutual aid)

AUTOMATIC AID – This is an agreement with adjoining communities that when a building fire is reported, the dispatch center automatically dispatches mutual aid resources to the scene prior to first responders arriving. This is referred to as an "Automatic First Alarm". In Sanbornton this automatic first alarm will get all of the Sanbornton Resources (two engines, one tanker, one ambulance) and another two engines, two tankers and a cover engine and ambulance to the Sanbornton Station from our neighbors, and if more resources are needed than further alarms can be requested that brings in more resources.

ENGINE – This is a vehicle that carries at a minimum 1000gals of water and all the tools and equipment to function in fire suppression or water supply.

TANKER – This is a vehicle that is designed to carry water (2000gals to 3000gals) from a water supply (lake, pond, river or pressurized hydrant) to the scene of the fire, in some cases a tanker can be used as an engine.

GOOD INTENT CALL – This is defined as a call that the reporting party thought was an emergency and was determined by the first responders to no be an emergency, examples; a slide off into the snow bank on the interstate with no injuries, this tends to occur when another driver drives by the scene and without stopping calls 911 and reports a "car accident" and since there is no good information that 911 receives they start all the resources as if it were a bad accident. Another type incident is when someone drives by a home and sees smoke coming from the backyard and calls 911 to report a building fire and the responding crew arrives to find a permitted outside fire or gas grill putting out the smoke.

SERVICE CALL - This is a type call that does not quite fit into any type category, examples; lockout – where someone locks themselves out of their home where there is a child left in the home, a life assist where an elderly person falls and either their spouse or caregiver is unable to lift them from the floor.

It also covers the 600 +/- life safety inspections including Oil, LP & Natural Gas installations, Generators, Fire Alarm systems.

ON CALL FIREFIGHTER/EMT – This is a member of the fire department that responds to emergency calls 24/7 that has a full time job elsewhere and not necessarily in the fire service; they could be your local contractor, plumber, electrician, insurance agent, neighbor or friend. They receive an hourly wage when they respond to an emergency call or attend training. As an on call member they can choose if they want to pursue Firefighting, EMS or both. Each member is responsible for attending monthly training and 4 nights of shift coverage per month (7pm to 5am).

PER DIEM FIREFIGHTER/EMT – This is an on call member of the fire department that has met all the certifications and qualifications to work the day shifts in the fire station, the qualifications that are required are state certification as a Firefighter I or II, Emergency Medical Technician (Basic, Advanced or Paramedic), Driver/Operator of all apparatus and must complete a 6 shift orientation. The per diem members sign up for day shifts based on their availability.

OUTSIDE PER DIEM FIREFIGHTER/EMT – This is a member that is from another fire department that is not an on call member of the department; they are required to have state certification as Firefighter II, Advanced EMT or Paramedic and Driver/Operator of all apparatus, they sign up for day shifts based on their availability.

Respectfully submitted by;

Paul D. Dexter Jr.

Fire Chief, Emergency Management Director and Forest Fire Warden