

Fire Department Regionalization Study Committee Minutes

Feb 23, 2017 @ 7:04PM

Meeting in Fire Station

Attendees: Chairman Dave DeVoy, Evelyn Auger, Andy Sanborn, Chief Dexter, Steve Ober, Steve Cobb & Roger Grey

Motion to accept Feb 8, 2017 meeting minutes made by Ober, seconded by Sanbornton. Accepted by numinous vote.

Motion to accept Feb 15, 2017 meeting minutes made by Auger, seconded by Sanbornton. Accepted by numinous vote.

Motion to accept Chief Dexter's modified Fire Department Summary Report made by Grey, seconded by Sanbornton. Accepted by numinous vote.

Motion to accept rough draft of Committee's Fire Department Regionalization Study Final Report made by Chief Dexter, seconded by Sanbornton. Accepted by numinous vote.

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 in 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 handling 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 that 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 cost 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 recommendation. 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.

Motion by Ober seconded by Auger to adjourn at 9:15 PM passed unanimously.

Next meeting March 8, 2017 at 7 PM in the Fire Station

Respectfully submitted

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roger J. Grey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Roger Grey
Secretary