

Progress Report

Submitted by

Harpswell Fire and Rescue Planning Committee

To

Harpswell Board of Selectmen

October 13, 2016

## I. BACKGROUND

Over the past several years concern has been growing that the three existing volunteer fire departments (Harpowell Neck, Orrs & Bailey Island, and Cundy's Harbor) will not be able to respond to emergency calls in an acceptable period of time. The problem has become particularly acute for Harpswell Neck, which informed the Town that it will have difficulty providing sufficient fire services during daylight hours within three years.

The causes of the problem are complex and long term, and include, among other things:

- Harpswell's aging population;
- A lack of affordable housing in the town for young families;
- An increase in people commuting long distances to locations outside of the town to work;
- A lack of time in young families' lives with two working parents to volunteer for fire and rescue services;
- The growth in mandatory training requirements for volunteer firefighters.

Taken together, these factors have worked to reduce the effectiveness of recruitment and retention efforts by the volunteer departments and, ultimately, the number of volunteers who can consistently respond to emergencies. The problem is not unique to Harpswell; it is one faced by many other communities in Maine and across the nation.

To address these concerns, the Town formed a "Fire and Rescue Planning Committee" to develop a strategic plan that would ensure the delivery of fire and rescue services for all residents (Attachment 1). Comprised of seven people, the committee included representatives from all three volunteer fire departments and the board of selectmen (Attachment 2), with staff assistance provided by the Town Administrator and Town Treasurer. Since forming in April 2016, the committee has met 14 times in open session. Members of the public and responders from the volunteer departments have been in attendance at many of the meetings and were given an expanded opportunity to comment on the committee's work at a special session held on September 12 at the Harpswell Town Office. The committee also met with the Fire Chief from Topsham to gain greater insight into the challenges associated with running a municipal fire department, requested and received a presentation on volunteer recruitment from Mr. Phil Taylor, a responder from OBIFD, met with the Town Engineer to review potential sites for a central fire station on Mountain Road, and leveraged the results and insights of three significant studies on emergency services in Harpswell completed since 2008 (the Harpswell Fire and Rescue Services Study dated February 2008, a Strategic Plan for Emergency Medical Services in Harpswell dated October 4, 2011 and a Report by the Emergency Medical Services Group dated June 30, 2014).

## II. PROGRESS TO DATE

As a result of the activities noted above, the committee can report progress in the following areas:

- Development and agreement on a three-part plan to augment the current volunteer system which can be phased in gradually and adjusted or stopped at any point going forward (Attachment 3).
- Development of a Draft Fire Department Ordinance for the Town, which is a necessary first step in the establishment of a municipal fire department (Attachment 4).
- Development of a Draft Job Description for a Town Fire and Rescue Chief (Attachment 5).
- Development of a proposed vehicle plan that could reduce future expenditures and partially offset the cost of a municipal department, including construction of a central fire station should the town choose to do so (Attachment 6).
- Development of a Draft Budget input to implement Phase 1 of the plan which will be submitted to the Town Budget Advisory Committee (Attachment 7).

In the course of moving forward in the above areas, the committee believes that progress has been made in one other important area. Meaningful dialogue with and among the three volunteer departments has increased and has worked to enhance a spirit of cooperation across the town's fire and rescue entities. Evidence of this can be found in a recent agreement among the departments to hire an outside consultant to specifically explore ways to improve volunteer recruitment and retention, which is a core challenge in maintaining a viable volunteer system. Highlighting fire and rescue challenges in the Town has also prompted OBI to accelerate plans to build residential spaces in its fire station, which could be used to house paid municipal firefighters on an interim basis at some point in the future.

## III. AREAS REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ATTENTION

Despite the substantial progress that has been made, additional attention is required in several areas. First, the committee needs to more fully understand the potential impacts a municipal department with paid firefighters could have on the existing volunteer system. Some have expressed concern that it will discourage volunteerism while others have expressed the opposite. Second, additional discussion is required before finalizing the wording of the draft fire department ordinance and draft job description for a fire chief (Attachments 4 and 5). Additional consultation with the Town Attorney will likely be required to accomplish this. Third, the exact relationship between a Town Fire Chief and the volunteer departments needs greater clarity. What would constitute an effective "chain-of-command" and what would the volunteer stations need to do to facilitate such a relationship? Fourth, while the committee feels comfortable with the initial budget estimate for Phase 1 of the plan (Attachment 7), the long term costs, including the potential construction of a central fire station need to be fleshed out.

This will not be possible unless/until a full architectural estimate for a central station is developed. Finally, while several excellent news articles in local papers have been published addressing fire and rescue challenges in Harpswell, the committee and Town leaders need to take all necessary steps to ensure Harpswell residents fully understand the details of the proposed plan, the rationale behind it and the cost implications if implemented.

## **Attachment 1: Fire and Rescue Planning Committee Mission Statement**

- To develop a strategic plan for the delivery of emergency services (both fire and rescue) in the Town. The Committee is charged with considering, among other factors, the implications, if any, over the next two to three years of: the aging of the Town's population (both year-round and seasonal), the viability of the all-volunteer approach to emergency services, whether some paid staff may be required in the future, how vehicle, facility and other capital investments may change and the implications including cost and budget impacts of all such changes. Possible impacts on the paramedic service and whether there is an anticipated need for any changes or enhancement of that service, require consideration, as does the overall organization of emergency services and the role of the Town in that organization.

## **Attachment 2: Committee Members and Composition**

- Kevin Johnson, Co-Chair, Selectman
- Ben Wallace, Co-Chair, Fire Chief of CH and OBI
- Rick Daniel, Selectman
- Jonathan Burbank, CH Board President
- Gail Hart, HN Rescue Chief
- Allan LeGrow, OBI Board Member
- David Mercier, HN Fire Chief

The Committee shall be composed of seven members including at least one representative of each of the three fire & rescue entities and four other members which may include additional members from the fire & rescue entities as well as members of the Board of Selectmen.

### **Attachment 3: 3-Part Approach**

- Phase 1 (tentative date -- FY 2017)
  - Hire Town Fire Chief (complete scope of duties still to be worked on)
  - Hire 2 FTE's Firefighters to provide 5x12 (5x8?) daytime coverage (type of employment still to be worked, per diem, etc.)
  - House new FTEs initially at OBI (preferred) or HNFDF until new facility can be built (to be negotiated and agreed with Departments)
  - Provide monies for site design, planning and bidding to establish a firm cost to build a central municipal fire station (4 bays, 2 deep, 2 stories, proposed 66' x 76')
  - No change to current Paramedic Service

*Evaluate status of recruitment efforts, success of Phase 1; adapt Phase 2 as needed*

- Phase 2 (tentative date -- FY 2018)
  - Upgrade coverage to 2FTEs 7x24 (still to be worked ... if necessary facility changes, etc. needed to make that possible can be made as requirements dictate)
  - Authorize construction and build new central fire station
  - No change to current Paramedic Service

*Evaluate status of recruitment efforts, success of Phase 2; adapt Phase 3 as needed*

- Phase 3 (tentative date - FY2019)
  - New Central Station online (Mountain Road)
  - Migrate operations to a new 'central' model augmented by existing stations
  - Adjust Vehicle plan to match new requirements (next slide)
  - Consider possible change(s) to Paramedic Service

## **Attachment 4: FIRE DEPARTMENT ORDINANCE OF HARPSWELL, MAINE**

### **Section 1. Title.**

This ordinance shall be known as the Fire Department Ordinance of Harpswell, Maine.

### **Section 2. Purpose.**

The purpose of this ordinance is to establish a Municipal Fire Department, and to define the powers and duties of the chief and members of the Department. An additional purpose of this ordinance is to provide the maximum legal protection available to the Fire Chief and municipal firefighters, and to best protect the health, safety and welfare of the residents of Harpswell, Maine.

### **Section 3. Establishment.**

Pursuant to Art. VIII, pt. 2 § 1 of the Maine Constitution, 30-M.R.S. § 3001 and § 3153 et seq., the municipality of Harpswell, Maine hereby establishes a Municipal Fire Department.

### **Section 4. Definitions.**

**Municipal Fire Department:** The organized firefighting unit established pursuant to this ordinance.

**Municipal Firefighter:** An active member, whether full-time, part-time, or paid on call of the municipal fire department, who aids in the extinguishment of fires or provides rescue services or an individual that receives direct compensation from the municipality for aiding in the extinguishment of fires or for providing rescue services, and is at least 18 years of age.

### **Section 5. Duties.**

The Municipal Fire Department shall prevent and extinguish fires and provide firefighting protection within the municipality of Harpswell, Maine and elsewhere as provided by mutual aid or other contractual agreements approved by the Municipal Officers or municipal legislative body.

The Municipal Fire Department shall also be authorized to provide emergency services by responding to and managing other public safety emergencies, including, but not limited to, medical emergencies, hazardous materials incidents or natural or man-made disasters.

### **Section 6. Fire Chief.**

- A. Appointment. The Fire Chief shall be appointed by the Municipal Officers for a three-year term.
- B. Compensation. The Fire Chief's compensation shall be established by the Municipal Officers.
- C. Powers and duties. The Fire Chief shall have the powers and duties set forth in 30-A M.R.S. § 3153. And shall have the authority to issue rules, regulations, standard operating guidelines (collectively "Operating Documents") necessary to operate the Department consistent with this Ordinance, Maine State Law, and other applicable laws and regulations. The Municipal Officers reserve the right to review and amend such Operating Documents as they deem necessary.



- D. Reports. The Fire Chief shall submit reports, as deemed necessary by the Municipal Officers, on the activities of the Department and shall discharge such other duties as may be required by the Municipal Officers.

**Section 7. Firefighters.**

Municipal firefighters shall have the powers and duties set forth in 30-A M.R.S. § 3151 et seq., subject to any Operating Document as issued by the Fire Chief pursuant to 6(C) above.

**Section 8. Deputy Fire Chief.**

A Deputy Fire Chief may be appointed by the Municipal Officers for a three-year term, to act with full authority in the absence of the Fire Chief, and shall have responsibilities as set forth in Section 6 (C) above.

**Section 9. Severability.**

The invalidity of any portion of this ordinance shall not invalidate any other part thereof.

**Section 10. Effective Date.**

The ordinance shall be effective upon its adoption by the Municipal Legislative Body.

## **Attachment 5: Job Description**

### **Fire/Rescue Chief**

#### **GENERAL PURPOSE**

Performs a variety of technical, administrative, and supervisory work in planning, organizing, directing and implementing fire prevention, suppression and rescue to prevent or minimize the loss of life and property by fire, and other emergency situations as required.

#### **SUPERVISION RECEIVED**

Works under the direction of the Town Administrator.

#### **SUPERVISION EXERCISED**

Supervises department staff and Deputy Fire Chief(s) directly, and other officers or volunteers.

#### **ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Plans, coordinates, supervises and evaluates firefighting activities and rescue activities.

Establishes policies and procedures for Fire/Rescue Department in order to implement directives from the Town Administrator or Board of Selectmen.

Plans and implements Fire/Rescue programs for the Town; reviews Departmental performance and effectiveness; formulates programs or policies to alleviate deficiencies.

Oversees contract for paramedic services.

Administers program for burn permits.

Responsible for emergency management planning.

Supervises and coordinates the preparation and presentation of an annual budget for Fire/Rescue Department; directs the implementation of the Departments' budgets; plans for and reviews specifications for new equipment.

Responds to alarms and may direct activities at the scene of major emergencies, as required.

Supervises the inspection of buildings and other properties for fire hazards and fire prevention.

Directs the operation of training activities.

Controls the expenditure of departmental appropriations.

Handles grievances, maintains Departmental discipline and the conduct and general behavior of assigned personnel.

Prepares and submits reports to the Town Administrator/Board of Selectmen as requested regarding the Departments' activities and prepares a variety of other reports as appropriate including the annual report of activities.

Plans departmental operation with respect to equipment, apparatus, and personnel; supervises the implementation of such plans.

Assigns personnel and equipment to such duties and uses as the service requires; evaluates the need for and recommends the purchase of new equipment and supplies.

Meets with elected or appointed officials, other Fire/Rescue officials, community and business representatives and the public on all aspects of the Departments' activities.

Responsible for coordination with area municipalities and rescue entities as appropriate.

Works with volunteer fire associations on recruitment and retainage efforts.

Ensures that personnel records including training activities for personnel are accurate and current.

Establishes and maintains positive relations with other Town departments and with the Cumberland County Sheriff's Department.

Reviews and comments on public and private development projects relative to public safety issues consistent with relevant standards and codes.

Ensures compliance with all Department of Labor standards.

Shall identify and secure Federal, State, and local grants as applicable.

Performs other work as required.

#### **PERIPHERAL DUTIES**

Attends conferences and meetings to keep abreast of current trends in the field; represents the Town Fire/Rescue Department in a variety of local, county, state meetings—as schedule permits.

Performs the duties of command personnel as needed.

Serves as a member of various employee committees.

Applies for grants for all related purposes.

#### **REQUIRED MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS**

- (A) Five (5) years of experience as a firefighter/EMT, three (3) years of which must have been equivalent to fire lieutenant or higher, and
- (B) Completion of Firefighter I and II and EMT training.

#### **Necessary Knowledge, Skills and Abilities**

- (A) Thorough knowledge of modern fire suppression and prevention, procedures, techniques, and equipment; Thorough knowledge of modern rescue procedures and techniques; Working knowledge of first aid and resuscitation techniques; Considerable knowledge of applicable laws, ordinances, departmental standard operating procedures and regulations;
- (B) Skill in the operation of the listed tools and equipment.
- (C) Demonstrated ability to train and supervise subordinate personnel; Ability to perform work requiring good physical condition; Ability to communicate effectively orally and in writing; Ability to exercise sound judgment in evaluating situations and in making decisions; Ability to effectively give and receive verbal and written instructions; and Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with other employees, supervisors and the public.

#### **DESIRED QUALIFICATION**

Associate's degree in fire science, or a closely related field.

**SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS**

Must possess, or be able to obtain by time of hire, a valid State Driver's License.

**TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT USED**

Fire apparatus, fire pumps, hoses, and other standard firefighting equipment, ladders, first aid equipment, radio, pager, personal computer, phone.

**PHYSICAL DEMANDS**

The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

While performing the duties of this job, the employee is frequently required to sit; talk or hear; stand; walk; use hands to finger, handle, or operate objects, tools, or controls; and reach with hands and arms. The employee is occasionally required to climb or balance; stoop, kneel, crouch, or crawl; and taste or smell.

The employee must frequently lift and/or move up to 10 pounds and occasionally lift and/or move up to 50 pounds. Specific vision abilities required by this job include close vision, distance vision, color vision, peripheral vision, depth perception, and the ability to adjust focus.

**WORK ENVIRONMENT**

The work environment characteristics described here are representative of those an employee encounters while performing the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

Work is performed primarily in office, vehicles, and outdoor settings, in all weather conditions, including temperature extremes, during day and night work. Work is often performed in emergency and stressful situations. Individual is exposed to hazards associated with fighting fires, including smoke, noxious odors, fumes, chemicals, liquid chemicals, solvents and oils.

The employee occasionally works near moving mechanical parts and in high, precarious places and is occasionally exposed to wet and/or humid conditions, fumes or airborne particles, toxic or caustic chemicals, risk of electrical shock, and vibration.

The noise level in the work environment is usually quiet in the office and loud at an emergency scene.

The examples of duties are intended only as illustrations of the various types of work performed. The omission of specific statements of duties does not exclude them from the position if the work is similar, related or a logical assignment to the position.

The job description does not constitute an employment agreement between the employer and the employee and is subject to change by the employer as the needs of the employer and requirements of the job change.

**Effective Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Attachment 6: Vehicle Plan

•Apparatus Vehicle Description	Current Location	Disposition
•Engine 5 1997 International/Valley Pumper	Cundys Harbor	Remains at Cundy's Harbor Fire Station - Replacement in process
•Engine 1 1991 Ford/Central States Pumper	Bailey Island	Replace, renumber Engine 3 and move to Orr's Island
•Rescue 3 2008 Ford/PL Custom Ambulance	Orr's Island	<b>No replacement at end of service life</b>
•Squad 3 1999 GMC/EVM Heavy Rescue	Orr's Island	<b>Move to Central Fire Station as Squad 1 - Replace when necessary</b>
•Rescue 5 2009 Ford/PL Custom Ambulance	Cundys Harbor	<b>Move to Central Fire Station - Replace when necessary</b>
•Engine 3 2000 GMC/EVM Pumper	Orr's Island	<b>No replacement at end of service life - Renumber and move to BI</b>
•Utility 7 2008 Dodge Pick up w/ skid unit	Harpswell Neck	<b>Move to Central Fire Station as Utility 1 - Replace when necessary</b>
•Brush 3 2008 Ford/CET Brush truck	Bailey Island	<b>No replacement at end of service life</b>
•Squad 5 2003 Ford/E-One Light Rescue	Cundys Harbor	<b>No replacement at end of service life</b>
•Tank 7 2004 International Tanker	Harpswell Neck	<b>No replacement at end of service life</b>
•Rescue 7 2015 Ford/PL Custom Ambulance	Harpswell Neck	<b>Move to Central Fire Station - Replace when necessary</b>
•Engine 7 2006 HME/Ferrara Pumper	Harpswell Neck	Remains at Harpswell Neck Fire Station - Replace when necessary
•Tank 9 2008 International Tanker	Harpswell Neck	Remains at Harpswell Neck Fire Station - Replace when necessary
•Rescue 5 Replacement for 2020 ambulance	Central Station	Remains at Central Fire Station - Replace when necessary
•Engine 9 2010 International/Ferrara Pumper	Harpswell Neck	<b>Move to Central Station as Engine 1 - Replace when necessary</b>
•Tank 3 2012a International/Spartan Tanker	Orr's Island	Remains at Orr's Island Fire Station - Replace when necessary
•Tank 5 2012b Int'l/EV Spartan Tanker/Pumper	Cundys Harbor	Remains at Cundy's Harbor Fire Station - Replace when necessary

Envisions new Central Station on the Mountain Road staffed 24/7: Engine 1, Squad 1, Utility 1, Rescue 5 and Rescue 7.

Engine/Tank 3, 5 and 7 become call companies.

Retire 1 engine, 1 tanker, 1 ambulance, 1 squad, and 1 brush truck at end of life.

Note: Every substation will have an engine and tanker

## **Attachment 7: Draft Budget**

### 2017 Budget Impacts of Municipal Fire Department

Recommend appropriating \$25,000 to \$27,500 to compensate a part-time Fire and Rescue Chief. (This represents a full year's salary which in the first year would not be fully expended).

Recommend appropriating, in the Employee Benefits line item, benefits associated with the Fire Chief position to include payroll taxes, retirement match and health insurance consistent with the Town's personnel policies for a part-time employee. These benefits would approximate \$11,500 on an annual basis.

Recommend appropriating up to \$87,360 for 2 FTE firefighters to cover 12 hours a day, Monday through Friday. The related payroll taxes will be budgeted in the Employee Benefits line items and would approximate \$6,700 on an annual basis.

Recommend appropriating up to \$10,000 for new communications software and miscellaneous costs associated with the Fire Chief position, including, but not limited to mileage reimbursement, uniforms, professional membership dues .

Recommend appropriating \$150,000 for design and planning services related to a new central fire station located near the EMS building on the Mountain Road.