

FIFTEEN ROPE FERRY ROAD
WATERFORD, CT 06385-2886



PHONE: 860-442-0553
www.waterfordct.org

**FIRE SERVICES REVIEW SPECIAL COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA**

THURSDAY, MAY 1, 2025 6:00 P.M. WPD TRAINING RM (41 AVERY LANE)

RECEIVED FOR RECORD
WATERFORD, CT
2025 APR 29 1 P 2: 05

1. Establishment of quorum; call to order; introduce new Advisory member
2. Public Comment
3. Approval of minutes for March 27, 2025, meeting.
4. Consideration and possible action on the RTM's charge to the committee (RTC 6/7/21):
Review issues including performance, policies, and staffing and present their findings/recommendations on any changes needed to enhance public safety, creating a steering document and strategic plan.
 - a. Continue discussion on Draft 1 of first half of report
 - b. Initial feedback on Draft 1 of second half of the report
 - c. Continue discussion on identifying/retaining outside expertise to assist in finalizing report findings and recommendations.
5. Determine remaining meeting schedule to provide adequate review time, incorporate existing comments, and address gaps.
6. Adjournment

encl: Replacement notice
FSRSC Minutes March 27, 2025
Second Half Report-Draft 1



Waterford Professional Firefighters Association

Local 4629

P.O. Box 278, Waterford, CT 06385



Sue Driscoll,

Following the recent resignation of Tom Martin from the Public Safety Ad Hoc Committee, the members of the Waterford Professional Firefighters Association Local 4629 met and voted on a replacement for Tom Martin. Our new representative on the committee will be Ronnie Williams, and his contact information is as follows:

Cell phone: 860-867-6454

Email: ronnierocs@yahoo.com

Sincerely,

Erik Pawlak

President – Waterford Professional Firefighters Local 4629

FIFTEEN ROPE FERRY ROAD
WATERFORD, CT 06385-2816



PHONE: 860-442-0553
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Fire Services Review Special Committee

Minutes—Special Meeting March 27, 2025

Members Present: Robert Tuneski (BoF); Susan Driscoll (RTM); Richard Muckle (BoS); Matthew Keatley (RTM); Tim Condon (Public Protection & Safety Comm.); Mike Howley (Interim Director, Fire Services); Tom Martin (Captain, WFD)

Members Absent: Steven Sinagra (Director, Emergency Management); Todd Patton (Chief, Goshen Fire Co.); Mark Greczkowski (WAS Director of Operations)

Also Present: Town Attorney Nick Kepple

1. Call to order: Chair Tuneski called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

2. Public comment: Erik Pawlak (Captain, WFD) noted that he began his service as a teen-age volunteer firefighter before the WFD was combined in 2011 and offered to discuss the change in relations between career and volunteer firefighters at a future meeting. He pointed out several factual errors in the draft report that had been sent the night before. (*attached*)

3. Previous Minutes: Motion by Keatley, second by Condon, to approve the June 25, 2024, minutes as presented.

Voice Vote: Yes-4 No-0 Abstain-1 (Condon).

Motion by Keatley, second by Condon, to approve the March 6, 2025, minutes as presented. Voice vote: Unanimous.

4. Consideration of FSRSC's charge from the RTM (6/7/21):

a. Review of provided information: None provided. Howley expects to finalize and submit for next meeting.

b. Initial feedback on first draft of report: Chair noted that this is first rough draft (*attached*) and was looking for comments on content and quantity of information. Condon and Driscoll confirmed Pawlak's error citations and provided corrections. Tuneski said he would contact former members of the defunct Board of Fire Commissioners for info on when the Board was established and when the Town started financing fire house capital projects. Condon offered his perspective as one of the co-creators of the FSRSC and its written charge. The effort was triggered by a fatal fire across the street from Jordan fire station, and citizens were demanding an accurate review of policy and performance. The report was envisioned, he said, as a "community lift" with representatives from all fire and rescue first responders who and would provide data, insights, concerns, and work together to propose strategies.

He noted that the Town established a combined department back in 2011, but implementing the change has long been delayed and the town has failed to follow through in various ways, including years of neglecting repairs to all the fire houses. He added that no one is proclaiming an end to the volunteer system, but that we need to recognize and react to the reality of a system that is foundering nationwide. Noting that previous reviews and reports were done decades ago, when the situation was very different and the volunteer system was robust, Condon urged the committee to create a fully-documented report explaining where we were, where we are, and what we need to do...and provide accurate costs for each option and explanations of why we made our final recommendations, whatever they are. He added that if the

FSRSC intends to continue its initial support of maintaining 5 stations, they should be aware that once the shovel goes into the ground at Oswegatchie, that signals a new age of town-owned firehouses and the potential end of the five-station option.

Tuneski said we need to put everything in its proper context, from where we were to where we are today and then where we should go. He added that we need high integrity and accuracy in what we ultimately present.

Atty Kepple told the committee that while he appreciated the effort put in so far, there was no need to struggle with a lengthy report and they could simply move on with a recommendation and disband. Condon and Driscoll disagreed, pointing out that the FSRSC's written charge from the RTM was to provide a thorough review and present a report that contained recommendations for action. Kepple noted that the people voted and we've had a combined department for nearly 15 years, and questioned the authority or the role of the FSRSC in charting the town's future when there will be an administration or a director who has their own plan. Condon pointed out that the problems we face now are the result of the town never following through on the initial plans and ordinances to implement necessary policies and procedures. While times and players may change, a detailed, documented, and well-publicized report would be a reference for future officials who, if they proposed a change in strategy, could be asked to explain what triggered the need or what new issue needed resolution.

Muckle stated that the science of firefighting has become much more efficient over the years, so we should not need as many responders as in the early days. Condon and Driscoll pointed out that changes in training, volume of incidents, hazardous materials, electric vehicles and greatly reduced flashover times demanded a suitable number of on-duty staff at a minimum.

c. *Consideration of independent report reviewer:* Chair asked for updates on members' efforts to locate potential outside reviewers. Condon reported that Mystic Chief Clarkin and Old Mystic Chief Ken Richards and Assistant Chief Keith Richards are willing to review the report. He noted that their tenure in combination departments would be an asset and that while they are close enough to be considered regional colleagues, they are not so close that their input would be influenced by regular working or personal relationships. Chair asked Howley if he had reached out to colleagues in the CT Fire Chiefs Association; Howley predicted that they would probably defer, since the group tends to stay out of individual town issues.

Martin requested, and was given, the opportunity to make a statement before the meeting adjourned. Remarks included suggestion that IAFC's Blue Ribbon and Red Ribbon reports on combination fire departments would be good resources for the committee, reflections on his 3-year tenure on FSRSC, and announcement of his resignation. (*attached*)

Motion by Muckle, second by Keatley, to include Martin's statement in the minutes. Voice vote: Unanimous.

5. **Next meeting:** Consensus to schedule next meeting for Thursday, May 1, at 6:00 p.m. Location tbd.

6. **Adjournment:** Motion by Keatley; second by Muckle to adjourn at 7:20 p.m. Voice vote: Unanimous.

Submitted by
Susan Driscoll, FSRSC Secretary

encl: Pawlak public comment
Report (first half) Draft 1
Martin resignation

Fire Services Special Review Committee meeting 3-27-25

First half report talking points

-The fire commission was not formed in 2010. This needs to be corrected for the report

-The report is stating that the town will justify a volunteer as active as long as they respond to just one incident annually. In 2024 the WFD responded to 3100 incidents. If a Little League coach only showed up to one game we would not consider him an active coach and remove him from his position for neglecting his role, yet we are trying to justify a single response as acceptable in emergency services?

-I feel the term for our department should be changed from hybrid to combination. It is a more widely accepted and understood term in the industry regarding a department that is made up of paid and volunteer staff alike.

-Claiming that the standards for paid and volunteer staff are the "exact same" is blatantly false. There are no pre requisites to become a volunteer fire officer. They just have to be elected to the position by their peers. Some chiefs have 0 state certified fire officer training and some have not even possessed their EMT certification. There are pre requisites to be hired as a firefighter and even more so to become an acting captain and even more requirements to be a captain. Also, the physical requirements are not the same. Paid staff are required a full physical by Pequot health including blood work, spirometry, and chest x-rays. Volunteers generally go to their primary care and after the primary care write on a routine physical that they can be firefighters. The union has lobbied against this practice for years but it continues today.

-In the report it states the Waterford Fire Engine Co#1 (Jordan) was founded in 1923 but it was in fact founded in 1920.

1.0 Executive Summary /BLUF

TBD pending completion of entire report.

2. Introduction

2.1 At the June 7, 2021 meeting, under new business initiated by Representative Tim Condon (Chair of the Public Protection and Safety Standing Committee), the RTM voted to create a special committee, "Fire Services Review Special Committee". The charter of the new committee was "to review issues including performance, policies, and staffing, and present their findings / recommendations of any changes needed to enhance public safety, creating a steering document and strategic plan". Per the approved motion, the committee shall consist of five full voting members as follows:

2 RTM Members (appointed by the RTM)

1 Public Protection and Safety Committee Member (appointed by the Public Protection and Safety Committee)

1 Board of Finance Member (appointed by the Board of Finance)

1 Board of Selectmen Member (appointed by the Board of Selectmen)

And five advisory non/ voting members as follows:

Fire Services Director

Emergency Services Director

Waterford Ambulance Manager

One Volunteer Fire Chief (appointed by consensus of the 5 Waterford Fire Companies or the 5 chiefs)

One Full Time Career Fire Fighter (appointed by the consensus of the Waterford Full-time Firefighters)

The original full voting members included the following:

Richard Muckle, RTM Member (R)

Greg Attanasio, RTM Member (D)

Susan Driscoll, Public Protection and Safety Committee (D)

Robert Tuneski, Board of Finance (R)

Rob Brule, Board of Selectman (R)

The non-voting / advisory members included the following:

Michael Howley, Director of Fire Services

Steve Sinagra, Director of Emergency Management

Mark Greczkowski, Manager of Waterford Ambulance

Donald Chapman, Volunteer Fire Chief

Tom Martin, Full-time Waterford Career Firefighter

The Committee was sometimes referred to as the Ad Hoc Fire Services Committee.

The Committee held its kick-off and swearing-in meeting on XYZ. At that meeting Robert Tuneski was elected Chairman and Susan Driscoll was elected Secretary. At this meeting Director of Fire Services Howley presented each voting member with a loose-leaf binder with the following sections populated with information:

Agendas / Minutes

Charter / Ordinance – Fire Services

Waterford District Maps

Waterford Organizational Chart

Contracts / Agreements

General Information

This binder served as the basis of information provided by Director Howley, and periodically he provided additional information for the committee to review, mostly technical publications that were directly relevant to firefighting in Waterford. Other information addressed the difficulties of attracting and keeping volunteer firefighters, the issues of hybrid and fire services, and demographic comparisons to other similarly sized / populated towns. A few different revisions of Staffing Plans were provided, as was a Volunteer Recruitment Plan. Additionally various metrics measuring the level of membership and activity of the volunteer firefighters in Town firefighting service were offered.

The committee functioned by meeting and discussing topics of interest to the Fire Services. Initially some of the key topics included the status of the Oswegatchie Fire Station, communications (radio and pager), the relationship between the volunteers and

the paid firefighters, volunteer recruitment, and general staffing of Fire Services. Initially, the status of the Oswegatchie Fire Station was viewed as the highest priority as it was considered in risk of collapse in need of urgent action. Each topic was discussed over one or more meetings. Director Howley continued to provide relevant information regarding each discussion topic. This information added to that currently in the binder.

Over time and at the request of an RTM member at on of their meetings, the committee was asked to also addressed fire apparatus fleet management and general infrastructure. And policies were discussed sporadically over the tenure of the committee.

Others, including the Emergency Services Director provided relevant information on communications. Most information from the balance of the advisory members was verbal through the meetings.

There was also a fair amount of public discussion, primarily on the status and condition of the Oswegatchie Fire Station.

New information brought to the committee including public comment was captured in detailed meeting minutes. The meeting minutes were also good sources of relevant information.

It is noteworthy to highlight that there was a recent compilation of fire services studies entitled "Fire Service Study, 2018" which is a collection of Fire Services related information dating back to 1995 including *Task Force 95 Study*, and *Fire Service Study, 2001*. This compendium is a very valuable and relevant reference, and covering Waterford's Fire Services history.

The process then, that the committee followed in generating this report and the findings / recommendations herein was one of deliberate discussion and debate on the topics of interest, and solicitation and capture of both quantitative and qualitative information as primarily provided by the Director of Fire Services, other advisory members, and the public as captured in meeting minutes. All information used by this committee (including various revisions based upon year / time) and used in this report has been originally presented to the committee. No independent research by members of the committee has been used.

In January of 2023, an Interim Report was prepared, and approved in a 3-0-1 vote and delivered to the RTM.

The report recommended that the Oswegatchie Fire Station, described as being in "extensively deteriorated condition", be demolished and that a new Fire Station be built to replace it. The findings of the report were presented at the February 3rd, 2023 RTM Meeting by the chairman, at which time, as a result of the findings, the RTM unanimously voted to create the Oswegatchie Fire Station Building Committee.

Following the issue of the interim report, the Committee experienced a brief hiatus, as focus of some of the members shifted to other important Town responsibilities, including the newly established Oswegatchie Building Committee. After the hiatus, the meeting resumed with a change in membership:

Rich Muckle changed from an RTM representative to Board of Selectman representative

Greg Anastasio departed and became Selectman

Susan Driscoll changed from Public Protection and Safety Committee representative to RTM representative

Matt Keatley was appointed as the RTM representative replacing Richard Muckle

And the Public Protection and Safety Committee representative was left unfilled until August 14, 2024, when the Public Protection and Public Safety Standing Committee filled it with Tim Condon, Chairman of the Public Protection and Safety Committee.

In the summer of 2024, Director Howley retired from his position. Around the time of his retirement the committee had received 99% of the information it had requested, and was in position to begin data analysis and report development. A brief second hiatus was taken pending the hiring of a new Director of Fire Services, who it was thought could then provide the remaining bit of information requested and providing a final update to yearly collected information. The hiatus lasted several months and resumed March 6th, 2025. That meeting began the crafting of the final report, as well as updating previously provided information. coincided with and was partially responsible for the second hiatus of the committee.

3.0 Fire Services History

Fire services pre-date the incorporation of the local fire departments, which occurred in the 1920-1940'. Prior to having fire stations from which services were deployed, the Town.... Need more input here

In 2010, the Board of Fire Commissioners was formed, in accordance with a Town charter revision. It was created via the Code of Ordinances (Chapter 2.36) and charged the RTM with appointing one person from each fire district to serve on a board of five commissioners. The commission had the authority to elect officers, establish rules of procedure, set meeting frequency; and possessed authority as vested by State Statute.

The board oversaw the funding of fire services. It worked with each fire station in determining equipment and operation needs, although it did not have direct control over the day to day operation of the individual fire districts. The board set policies for fire and rescue services, and coordinated the provision of those throughout the Town.

The board had oversight of the over the Fire Marshalls office and the Town Communications Center.

The Town is divided into 5 fire districts, each with its own fire department and fire station. Each fire department is incorporated as a non-profit corporation under the General Statutes of the State of Connecticut. Each fire department has an individual signed legal agreement with the Town stipulating that they will provide fire services in exchange of an annual funding appropriation from the Town. Each fire department was required to prepare and submit a budget to the Board of Fire Commissioners, who then would tabulate it with inputs from the other fire departments, the Fire Marshalls Office, and the Emergency Communications Center, and submit this to the Board of Finance for review. Each fire department is independently managed and operated, in accordance with bylaws established by each, and has its own hierarchy of officers. Each department provided volunteer fire-fighting activities to the Town, and there were provisions made to provide mutual aid among companies.

Fire Services Costs over the Past 20 years

In essence, with funding provided by the Town, the Board of Fire Commissioners managed Fire Services for Waterford. The organizational was largely very distributed with multiple levels of volunteer oversight, few if any checks and balances, and no direct Town accountability. But it was a step towards a more centralized organization to better address Waterford needs.

The Board of Fire Commissioners was replaced by a flatter, more centralized management structure, featuring a Director of Fire Services. This position eliminated the second tier of management over the private fire departments, instead creating a direct line of reporting and accountability from the individual fire departments to a Town paid official. This change in organization placed accountability back to the Director and ultimately the First Selectman of the Town. It also centralized the budget creation and

allocation process. The current Director of Fire Services position is responsible for all things fire service-related including:

- Policy development and management
- Equipment procurement and maintenance
- Hiring of paid firefighters
- Training of personnel and maintenance of standards
- Maintenance of the firefighting infrastructure
- Staffing
- Volunteer recruitment and retention
- Emergency Communications
- Fire Marshalls Office
- Budget development and long-range planning

In addition to creating a leaner more accountable fire services organization, it also consolidated data collection and management. It formalized and centralized record retention. This information including examples like response type and frequency, volunteer participation, training, expenditures, fleet maintenance, capital planning, equipment inventories, etc. were collected and tabulated for management review and use, as opposed to being mined periodically from the sourced department or the Commission. The formal collection and tracking of these streams of data contributed to a greater ability to evaluate current fire services performance and forecast future needs. This step in fire services management structure was the single most impactful step taken by the Town in recent history regarding Fire Services. It was essential in unifying policy and practice. This change also invited the use of data-driven decisions, supplanting previous decision making that depended on Board consensus for recommendations. Arguably, depending upon the distillation from 5 members on the Board could have been more subjective.

Along with this change came vertical organization and consistency in policies and practices.

Fire services today is more organized and in a better position to deliver services to the Waterford taxpayer.

Figure ____ compares the organizational structure of the previous and current fire services management structures.

TBD

Figure ____ Organization Charts, Board of Fire Commissioners compared to Director of Fire Services

Fire protection in the Town of Waterford was originally provided by volunteers, working out of the five stations. At one time there were xx hundred registered volunteers. The town was flush with people looking to give back and to fulfill public service. The stations thrived based upon local fund raising, and were in essence self-supporting.

Volunteers were the backbone of Fire Services until xyz, when the first part time firefighter was hired by the Town of Waterford. Over time and for a variety of reasons, the ranks of volunteers have shrunk. The reasons are mainly economic, with fewer people able to take time off from work to provide service. The drop in volunteers has resulted in the need to hire paid fire fighters as replacements to provide acceptable levels of fire service to the Town. Currently there is an active list of xx volunteers, with each responding to at least one incident. Some fire departments have a more robust level of volunteer support while others are nearly closed due to their absence.

But in general, the volunteer fire fighting corp of the past is facing extinction and the future is pointing to the need for more paid firefighters.

The Town of Waterford now has a "hybrid" fire service composed of both paid and volunteer firefighters. Due to similar economic issues nationally, this is becoming the normal situation for many municipal fire services. What cannot be achieved historically with volunteers is being augmented by paid fire fighters.

Hybrid fire services have consequences, some good and some not so good. Among the upside consequence is that coverage of certain parts of Town can be provided part or full time by paid fire fighters. They can also be deployed to various stations as need dictates. They are independent of fire station. Among the downsides is that the additional coverage comes with increases in operational costs, and unfortunately has resulted in visible contempt between the paid and unpaid ranks, despite all firefighters

being trained to the exact same standards. The failure to get along is a potential distraction and detriment to fire services.

At the other end of the fire services spectrum, there are some towns, for example New London, which have fire services composed entirely of paid fire fighters. Moving to an all paid firefighter service will come with a large cost that will only grow with time, based upon annual increases in salary, benefits, and retirement costs.

The Town has benefited enormously from depending on an all-volunteer service for a number of years. The only financial burden previously born by the Town was associated with training, materials and equipment, and maintenance (vehicles and buildings); Salaries, and the associated benefits, were not part of the equation.

A significant takeaway from the change in complexion of fire services is the highlighted focus on performance and cost. The use of data, emergency response type, time, frequency and from which part of town, now become important in assessing risk to the Town. Are there adequate responders to address the risks? Does the Town have adequate funding to provide adequate staffing of fire services?

Not having unlimited volunteers leads to chief executive decision making based upon best available information.

Where possible, it is in the best interest of the Town to recruit and maintain a corp of volunteer firefighters to not only maintain the rich history of the town, but more importantly help manage growth in fire services costs.

The town is broken into five Fire Services Districts, as shown in Figure _____, supported by 5 fire companies:

Fire Company	Fire Company Name	Street Address	Date of Incorporation
1	Waterford Fire Engine Company	89 Rope Ferry Road	1923
2	Quaker Hill Fire Department	17 Old Colchester Road	1927
3	Goshen Fire Department	63 Goshen Road	1928
4	Oswegatchie Fire Company	441 Boston Post Road	1930
5	Cohanzie Fire Company	53 Dayton Road	1942

TBD

Figure ____ Map of the Town of Waterford Depicting Locations of Fire Stations and Fire Districts

Figure ____ Cohanzie Fire Station

PICTURE

PICTURE

Figure ____ Quaker Hill Fire Station

PICTURE

Figure ____ Oswegatchie Fire Station

PICTURE

Figure ____ Jordan Fire Station

PICTURE

Figure ____ Goshen Fire Station

PICTURE

4.0 Demographic Data

The Town of Waterford was incorporated on October 8, 1801. It is a rural town 36.7 sq. miles in size, with 23 miles of coastline and a population of 19,554 +/- and is part of New London County. Waterford has grown at a steady rate since the 1970's, although State projections completed in 2016 expect Waterford's population to decline through 2040.

Despite these projections, the population continues to grow, and recent growth announcements from local businesses (for example Electric Boat) suggest that local populations including Waterford could increase. The Town's Director of Planning and Zoning notes that the population actually appears to be increasing slightly. Figures ____ demonstrates the census trend, Table ____ depicts current development underway as

of March 2025. Additional commercial growth is likely with the revitalization of the Crystal Mall and the potential for the development of a data center on the Dominion property.

FIGURE

Figure ____ Population Change by Decade

TABLE

Table ____ Summary of Current Residential Building Units

The population density is 435 residents per square mile, less than state average of 648 residents per square mile, but more than New London County, 348 residents per square mile.

More resident workers commute out of Town for employment than the number of employees who travel to Waterford for work.

The number of workers commuting into Town and share of residents working in Town has decreased since 2010.

Waterford is nestled between Montville to the North, East Lyme to the west, and New London to the east. The former two are like Waterford demographically, while New London is a large (by relative standards) city.

Town of Waterford

Fire Services Review Committee

Attn: Susan Driscoll, Recording Secretary

3/27/2025

April of this year will be three years that I can say I have had the privilege and honor to have been appointed to the Fire Service Review Committee. It has been my pleasure to work alongside those whom I have, during this tenure.

That said, with this letter, it is my intent to resign from the position.

Please allow me to address my thoughts and concerns to you, as well as factors that have been a concern of mine that have led me to my decision.

It is in my opinion that Mr. Tuneski, has done an injustice to the Fire Services Review Committee. This committee was established in June of 2021 by the Representative Town Meeting (RTM). The first meeting did not happen until April 2022, which is almost a year later, and then there was another gap from July 2024 until March of this year. The first order of business from Mr. Tuneski was to determine whether the town of Waterford needed to continue to maintain a five fire station model. Once the recommendation was made to continue to utilize 5 fire stations moving forward the next order of business was the committee needed to recommend replacing the current Oswegatchie Fire Station with a new town-owned building.

It is my opinion, as Captain of the Waterford Fire Department, with over 30 years of experience in the field of firefighting, that this was a frivolous move. It was done without necessary data and documentation to support the five station model, including a response data analysis regarding the five station model. Now that we have several stations with 24/7 personnel, it is pertinent to have this researched so effective and appropriate considerations are implemented for the safety of our town.

Of note, I personally have requested to meet with Mr. Tuneski on numerous occasions in past years, which never came to fruition; however, it is a known fact that he had allocated time to meet with five fire chiefs in town, outside of the committee, but never once has met with the career firefighters to have a similar discussion.

In addition, a discussion among the committee members at one of the meetings, of which I was not present, about Waterford having a decline in volunteer firefighters, Chief Todd Patton blatantly blamed the career firefighters in the department as to be the reason for the lack of retaining volunteer firefighters. Had I been able to attend this meeting, I would have been able to speak to this matter and bring attention to what I believe the problem is. With Chief Patton's

remarks and accusations against the “career firefighters,” I have very good reason to believe he is being influenced.

Again, my opinion.

Another issue that has brought me to my decision to resign is the current lack of leadership for the fire service in Waterford. Chief Howley resigned his position in June of 2024 and to date we still have not found a replacement for his position. The first selectman, Rob Brule, appointed Fire Marshal Steve Dubicki, in the interim. Unfortunately, Mr. Dubicki could not keep up with the demands of both positions he held; Fire Marshall **and** Director of Fire Services.

Consequently, Chief Howley was asked to come back on a part time basis, and while he retained this part time position, this is only a temporary “fix.” This “temporary fix” does not work; the department needs a full time Director of Fire Services that can manage and function at a high capacity given the town of Waterford’s fire department, and the public service needs. An example of why this is important to the department, is quarterly town-wide fire officer meetings. Because of the void in the position needed as Director, we have not had a meeting since June 2024, which is a major component to interagency communications and operations to protect the town.

Finally, an issue that has been known for years and has been brought forward by the union numerous times... There are different standards held within career, part-time, and volunteer employees. And some of these variations and standards are a direct violation of state and federal laws. Osha approved medical screenings for **all** staff that wear respirators, age requirements, and meeting OSHA requirements should be mandatory for all employees / volunteers for the safety of not only the staff, but for the safety of the town as well

I encourage this committee to read a report written by the International Fire Chiefs Association titled “A Call For Action The Blue Ribbon Report Preserving and Improving the Future of the Volunteer Fire Service.”

On page 16 of the report it states “A combination system will not work when it is based on prejudice or when either group of firefighters, volunteer or career functions in a minority role and is perceived subservient to the other.”

With the above highlighted issues mentioned, the possibility of having this report being controlled by persons outside of the committee, and the liability of having my name attached to the final report from which someone may get hurt, I have decided to hereby resign effective March 28, 2025 from the Fire Service Review Committee.

Respectfully Submitted,

Thomas M. Martin
Captain, Waterford Fire Department

Report Part 2

FINDINGS

Response Types and Frequencies

Data on types and frequencies of responses as well as response times was provided by the Department of Fire Services to the Fire Services Ad Hoc Committee and was distilled into graphs to better display pertinent information.

Response types and frequencies are depicted in Figures

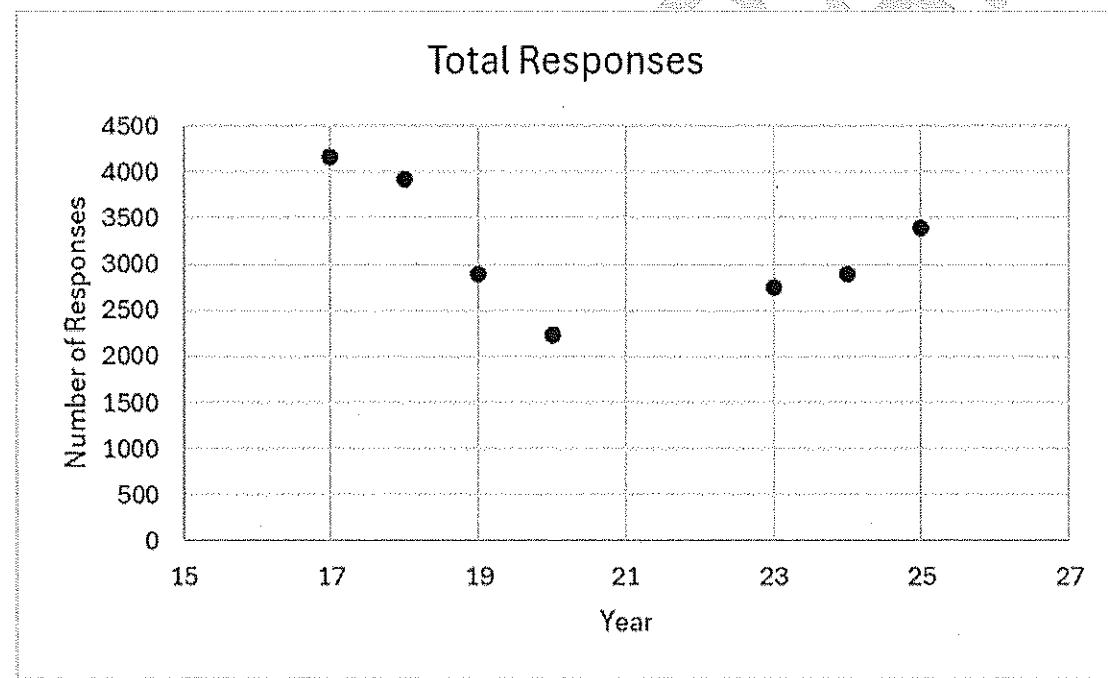


Figure ____ - Eight Year Trend of Responses

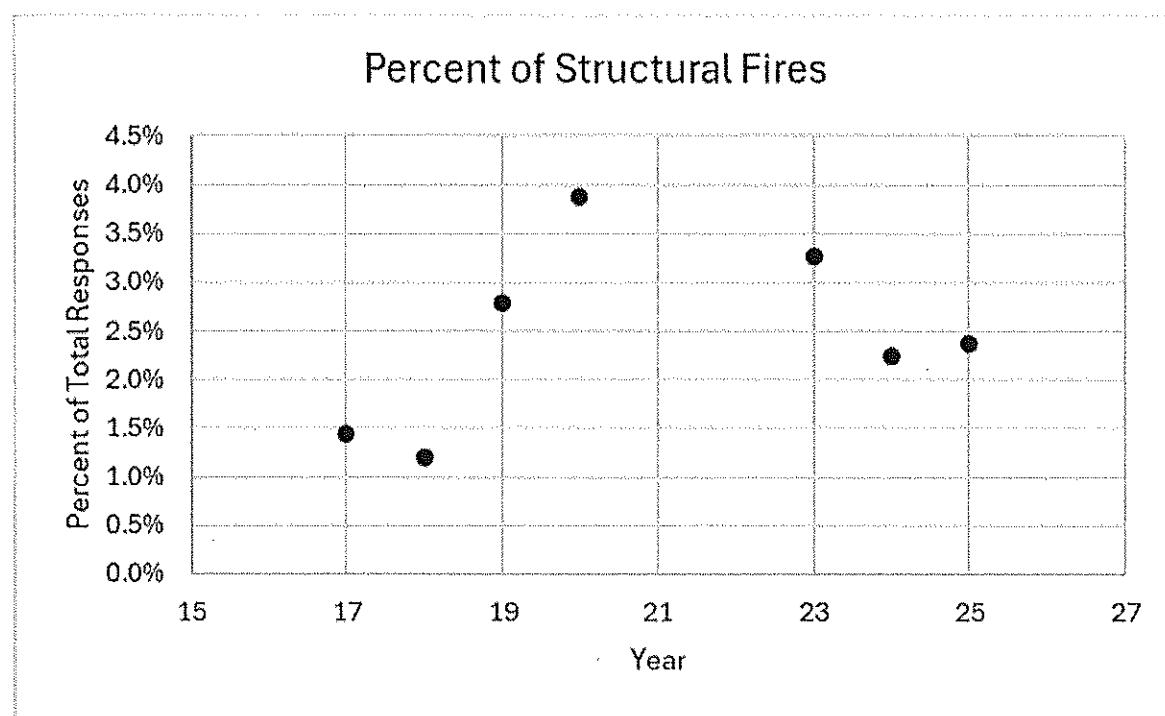


Figure ____ - Percent of Total Responses That Are Structural Fires

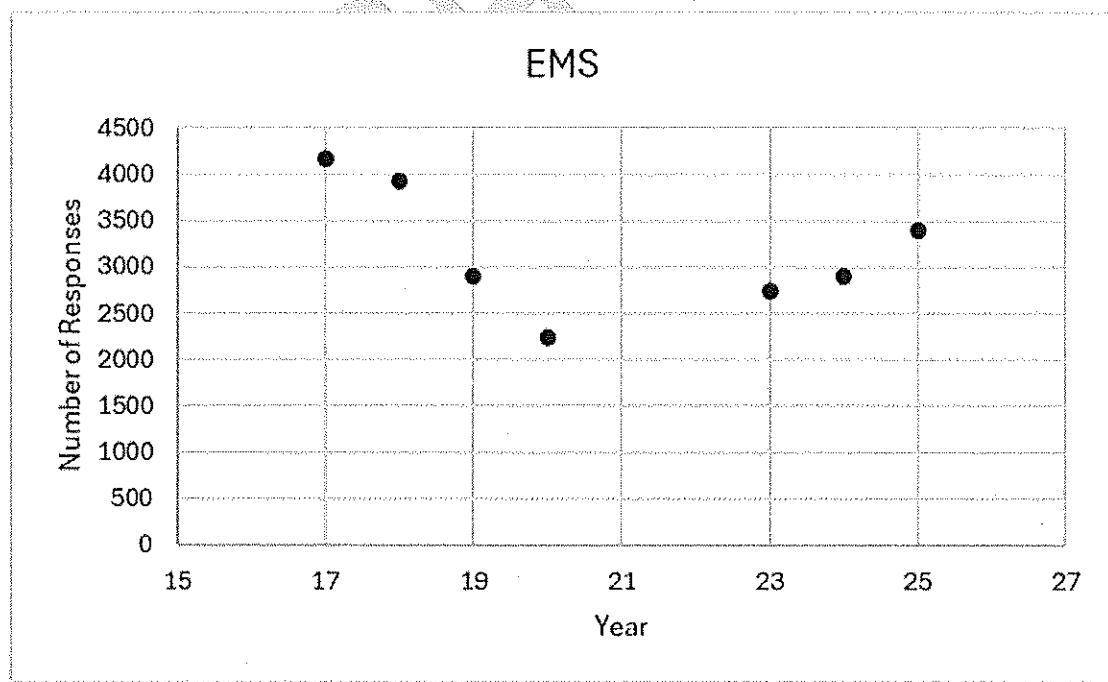


Figure ____ - Eight Year Trend of EMS Responses

EMERGENCY RESPONSE TYPES EIGHT YEAR AVERAGE

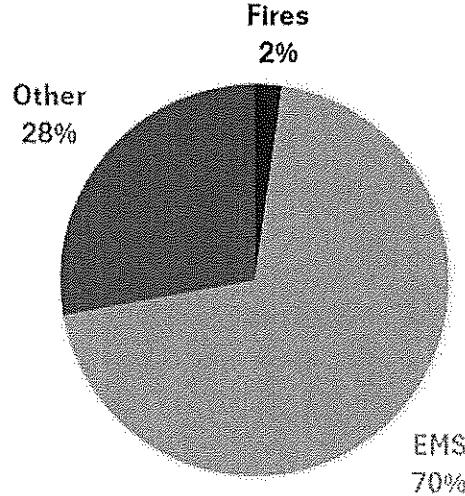


Figure ____ - Summary Percentage of Structural Fires, EMS, and Other Incident Types

Average Response Times, 2022, By Company

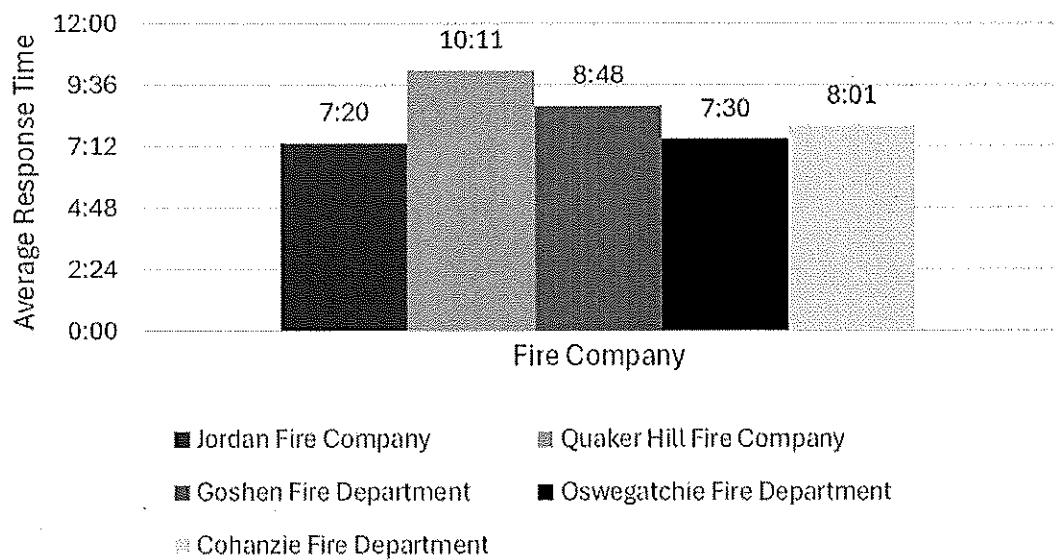


Figure ____ - Average Response Times by Company

As seen from the data, most responses are responses to EMS calls throughout town as well as motor vehicle accidents with and without injuries, structural fires hazardous conditions, service calls, good intent calls, false alarms, severe weather incidents,

Capital Plan

An abbreviated capital / facilities plan was provided by the Director of Fire Services. A copy is attached as Appendix _____, and is distilled here in Figure _____

STATION	YEAR				Totals	COMMENTS
	24	25	26	27		
Jordan	\$ 100,000.00			\$ 65,000.00	\$ 55,000.00	\$ 220,000.00 Kitchen in 2027
Quaker Hill		\$ 150,000.00			\$ 150,000.00	Bunk Room Renovations, Bathroom Renovations
Goshen		\$ 150,000.00			\$ 150,000.00	Includes items pushed out from 2023 and 2025, Roof replacement 2030
Oswegatchie	\$ 80,000.00				\$ 80,000.00	On hold pending new building
Cohanzie		\$ 30,000.00			\$ 30,000.00	Bunk room, bathroom, day room renovations, new windows and doors
						\$ 630,000.00

Figure _____ - Outyear Maintenance Planning of Existing Stations

Staffing Findings

Establishing staffing levels of fire stations can be a challenging task. There are no definitive legal requirements, whether federal or state that dictate the specific number of firefighters each town or station must have. There are two primary organizations whose standards influence fire departments throughout the state and nation. These are:

OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration)- a federal agency under the U. S. Department of Labor responsible for setting and ensuring safe and healthy working conditions for employees, through the issuance of enforced standards.

NFPA (National Fire Protection Association- a global not-for-profit organization that develops and publishes over 300 standards and codes that target the elimination of economic loss, injury, and death due to fire, electrical or related hazards. Their standards are widely recognized and commonly adopted but not mandated.

Fire Service Staffing Standards: OSHA and NFPA Guidance

Two primary organizations, OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) and NFPA (National Fire Protection Association), publish many standards that significantly influence fire department operations and fire service deployment. Among these are several overarching standards that impact fire department staffing, either directly or indirectly. The most referenced include:

- OSHA 29 CFR 1910.156 – Fire Brigade Standard

This standard establishes requirements for fire brigades, including organizational

structure, training and education, personnel requirements, and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE). It specifically applies to fire brigades performing interior structural firefighting.

- OSHA 29 CFR 1910.156 Revision – Emergency Response Standard
A proposed revision of the Fire Brigade Standard, this updated Emergency Response Standard—once approved—will impose a significant number of new requirements. These will largely focus on expanded training, qualifications, and safety procedures for fire stations. The revision has completed its public comment period and is pending final issuance. However, the official effective date remains uncertain as of the publication of this report.
- OSHA 29 CFR 1910.134 – Respiratory Protection Standard
This standard addresses requirements for respiratory protection in hazardous environments. Critically, it establishes the “Two-in / Two-out Rule,” which mandates that two personnel must remain outside a hazardous environment to monitor and assist two personnel operating inside an IDLH (Immediately Dangerous to Life or Health) environment.
- NFPA 1710 – Standard for Career Fire Departments
NFPA 1710 sets standards for the organization and deployment of fire suppression operations, emergency medical operations, and special operations provided by career fire departments.
- NFPA 1720 – Standard for Volunteer Fire Departments
NFPA 1720 outlines similar standards tailored for volunteer fire departments, focusing on deployment expectations based on community demographics.

Staffing Influence of OSHA and NFPA Standards

Neither OSHA nor NFPA directly prescribes exact staffing levels for fire departments. However:

- OSHA influences staffing indirectly by establishing mandatory safety standards, including equipment, working conditions, and training requirements.
- NFPA affects staffing through its emphasis on response times and the minimum number of personnel required based on population density.

For example, NFPA 1720 sets the following staffing guidelines:

- Rural areas (population density of 500 or fewer people per square mile): A minimum of six personnel should respond within 14 minutes or less for 80% of incidents.

- Suburban areas (population density between 500 and 1,000 people per square mile): A minimum of 10 personnel should respond within 10 minutes or less for 80% of incidents.

The Town of Waterford contains both Rural and Suburban areas, meaning it must plan accordingly to meet both standards.

Staffing Considerations for Waterford's Combination Fire Department

Overview

In addition to the regulatory standards and guidelines outlined above, fire department staffing is determined by a combination of critical factors:

- Community Needs: Including call volume, types of emergencies encountered, and population density.
- Budgetary Constraints: Municipal governments operate within limited financial resources, primarily based on tax revenues.
- Risk Assessment: Considering the hazardous nature of buildings, presence of industrial facilities, building sizes, and related factors.
- Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ): The individual, office, or organization empowered to make and enforce regulations affecting fire services (e.g., fire marshal, building official, or other regulatory authority).

In the Town of Waterford, the Authority Having Jurisdiction is the Waterford Fire Department.

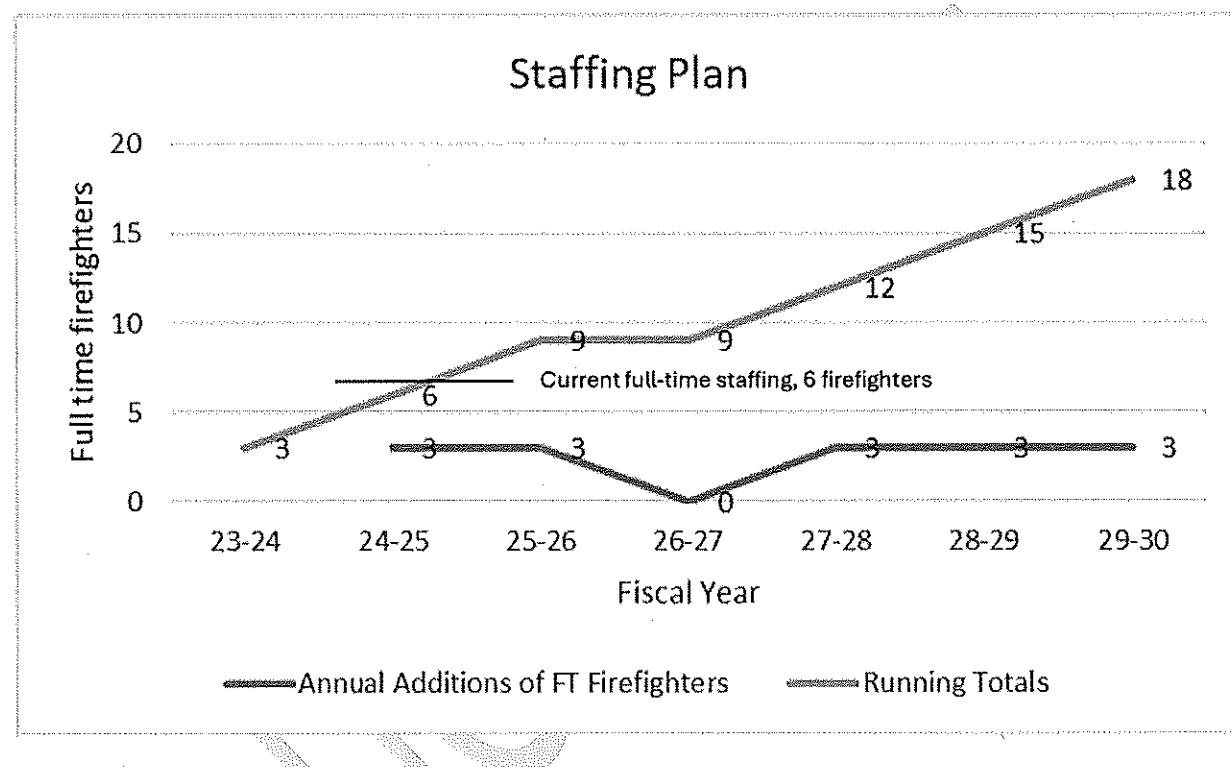
Staffing Determination Process

The exact determination of appropriate staffing levels is a multi-faceted exercise. It requires balancing objective data, expert judgment, and available financial resources.

- Objective Data:
The importance of data collection, trending, and reporting—as depicted in Figures _____—cannot be overstated. This data serves as a key indicator of departmental performance and represents the only consistently quantifiable, objective factor available for staffing evaluation.
- Subject Matter Expertise:
Local fire service experts, notably the Director of Fire Services and his team of experienced professionals, play a vital role in assessing staffing needs based on operational demands and evolving community risks.

- Municipal Leadership and Financial Oversight:
The Town's Chief Executive (First Selectman), along with the Board of Selectmen (BOS), Board of Finance (BOF), and Representative Town Meeting (RTM), are responsible for reviewing staffing recommendations, balancing financial realities, and ensuring that fire service funding decisions align with the broader interests of Waterford residents.

The Town of Waterford Fire Services are currently staffed full-time as shown in Figure ____.



This is an increase in the previous numbers of firefighters from the previous year. Appendix xyz outlines the Director of Fire Services' recommendation for staffing the fire stations in Waterford over the next 5 years. Figure ____ also graphically depicts the proposed increase.

Staffing Developments and Projections for Waterford Fire Services

Overview

It is important to underscore that staffing levels for the Waterford Fire Department have increased since the inception of the Ad Hoc Fire Services Committee.

The Director of Fire Services has expressed a strong belief that staffing should continue to grow to meet both current and future demands facing the community. Increased construction,

population growth, and rising call volumes will require additional response capabilities to maintain Waterford's public safety standards.

Key Takeaways from the Director's January 2025 Staffing Report

- **Full-Time Staffing of Three Fire Stations**

The Director recommends that three fire stations should be staffed full-time with career (paid) firefighters:

- Company 1 (Jordan)
- Company 4 (Oswegatchie)
- Company 5 (Cohanzie)

Although specific justifications are not explicitly listed, it is presumed that these companies were selected because they have:

- The largest call volumes
- Strategic geographic distribution: one station near each east and west end of Town and one centrally located station providing rapid access across Waterford.

- **Part-Time Staffing of Two Fire Stations**

Two stations should be staffed with part-time paid firefighters to ensure broad coverage while managing costs.

- **Importance of Maintaining Adequate Staffing**

Maintaining sufficient staffing is critical to:

- Protecting personal safety and property.
- Maintaining a high Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating, which directly affects residents' insurance premiums.

- **Review of Staffing Growth Every Three Years**

Staffing levels and the pace of growth should be formally revisited on a three-year cycle to adapt to changing community needs.

- **Competitive Salaries**

Until 2024, Waterford's starting firefighter salaries were below the state average.

However, the most recent labor contract addressed this disparity, helping facilitate the hiring of 3 new firefighter(s).

- Pursuit of SAFER Grants

The Director recommends aggressively applying for SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response) grants to offset hiring and personnel costs.

- Projected Staffing Model for FY 2030–2031

The Director's plan envisions:

- 10 career firefighters on duty at all times (requiring 30 career firefighters total)
- A 24/48 schedule (24 hours on, 48 hours off)
- A blend of part-time staffing seven days per week
- Full operations from all five fire stations
- Deployment of a variety of apparatus tailored to incident needs.

- Standards of Response Coverage (SOC) Analysis

The Department should consider conducting a Standards of Response Coverage (SOC) analysis to formally evaluate operational efficiency and identify opportunities for improvement.

Historical Context and Justification for Staffing Expansion

In presenting his Staffing Plan, the Director also provides a brief history of the Waterford Fire Department's staffing evolution. The trend reflects a slow but steady migration toward paid firefighters, driven by challenges in retaining and recruiting sufficient volunteer personnel.

The Director identifies four critical factors justifying continued expansion of paid staffing:

1. Nationwide Decline in Volunteer Firefighters

Recruitment and retention challenges mirror a broader national trend.

2. Increased Calls for Service

Higher call volumes place additional strain on the fire response system.

3. Commercial and Residential Development

Development in Waterford is progressing at a pace that threatens to outstrip current service capabilities.

4. Service Response Times and Their Impact

Variations in response times can have serious consequences for life safety, property protection, and insurance costs.

Fleet Management

Waterford's Fire Services maintains a substantial fleet of emergency vehicles—currently 26 in total—primarily designed to support fire suppression operations. This fleet includes:

- Fire engines
- Ladder trucks
- Specialized apparatus
- Support vehicles

A detailed inventory and status assessment of the fleet is provided in Figure _____ and the Appendix _____.

Fleet Asset ID	Town Asset ID	Model Year	YEAR				Mileage	Hours	S-Yr Total Repair Cost	Years of Service	Refurbishment Points	Replacement/
			2025	2026	2027	2028						
W-51	101405	2016				\$ 31,500.00	30,539	2461	\$ 37,551.00	9	15	
W-53	100515	2009					10,449	1419	\$ 2,943.00	16	16	
W-55	100079	2004		\$ 2,200,000.00			41812	4816	\$ 132,074.00	21	28	
W-56	101012	2011		\$ 73,000.00			5424		\$ 4,925.00	14	18	
W-57	101011	2010						2512	\$ 40,743.00	15	18	
W-16	101615	2018					22833	1180	\$ -	7	6	
Car 115	101354	2013					35500		\$ 1,250.00	7	13	
Car 58	101203	2013	\$ 564,000.00				117000		\$ 2,489.00	12	24	
Car 85	101409	2016		\$ 64,000.00			118000		\$ 3,001.00	9	20	
New				\$ 65,000.00			0					
W-31	101225	2014					16659	1539	\$ 25,046.00	11	13	
W-32	100203	1998					39230	4295	\$ 49,062.00	27	32	
W-34	101127	2012					9183	701	\$ 2,778.00	13	14	
W-36	100310	2007		\$ 74,000.00			53206	2355	\$ 28,519.00	18	25	
W-93	100376	2007					1139	1028	\$ 25,601.00	18	21	
W-94							218	20				
W-11	101321	2014					38156	3287	\$ 50,574.00	11	18	
W-15	101536	2016					32844	2866	\$ 66,338.00	9	16	
W-41	1011829	2018					9105	822	\$ 11,902.00	7	8	
W-42	300433	2007					43720	4831	\$ 61,882.00	18	25	
W-43	100256	2006		\$ 226,206.00			12834	1294	\$ 13,930.00	19	20	
W-46		2020					15127	566	\$ 840.00	5	5	
W-21	100311	2006			\$ 925,000.00		35488	3503	\$ 59,405.00	19	26	
W-23	100297	2006					8274	4329	\$ 15,545.00	19	20	
W-25	101432	2018					7808	3075	\$ 24,663.00	7	11	
A19	100216	2006			\$ 72,000.00		54800	3373	\$ 6,232.00	19		
W-26		2021					2150				2	
			\$ 564,000.00	\$ 2,563,206.00	\$ 111,000.00	\$ 955,500.00	\$ 5					
\$ 27,823.54 Average 5-Yr Repair Cost per Vehicle \$ 667,765.00 Total 5-Yr Cost \$ 133,593.00 Average Cost per Year												

Figure _____ - Summary of Fleet Maintenance and Capital Acquisition Costs

As fire suppression now represents only a small percentage of emergency call responses, Waterford's current fleet, geared heavily toward traditional firefighting, may warrant strategic realignment over time to better match the evolving mission of an Emergency Services or First Responder organization.

Regardless of future adjustments, effective fleet management today remains essential to ensure the reliability, safety, and fiscal responsibility of this critical public asset.

Using *Fleetio* Software: A Modernized Approach to Fleet Management

To optimize fleet performance, Waterford utilizes *Fleetio*, a modern fleet management software platform designed specifically to:

- Track vehicle condition and maintenance
- Monitor vehicle utilization
- Manage repair records and costs
- Improve budgeting and forecasting accuracy

- Support asset replacement planning

Fleetio provides real-time, centralized data that allows the Fire Services leadership, Town executive staff, and financial officials to make data-driven decisions about asset maintenance, replacement, and allocation.

This technology represents a significant advantage for Waterford, enabling the Town to extend the useful life of its vehicles, improve operational efficiency, and strengthen long-term financial planning.

Existing Town Resources: Building a Collaborative Maintenance Model

In addition to *Fleetio*, Waterford has internal resources that can be leveraged for fleet management efficiency:

- Department of Public Works: Potential to expand the use of Public Works mechanics and facilities for standard maintenance tasks, achieving economies of scale.
- Shared Procurement: By coordinating purchases of routine parts, supplies, and service contracts across departments, the Town can further control costs.
- Cross-Departmental Asset Review: Collaboration between Fire Services, Public Works, and the Finance Department can ensure objective evaluations of fleet needs, promoting smarter capital investments.

A central component of this effort is the use of a maintenance score, a tool designed to evaluate the operational integrity of each vehicle. This scoring system assists in proactively planning for maintenance needs, scheduling repairs, and determining appropriate timelines for vehicle replacement.

Communications-TBD

Waterford Ambulance-TBD

Conclusion

Waterford's Fire Services have a proud history and a strong operational foundation. By implementing the above recommendations—centered on vision, data, adaptability, and

strategic investment—the Town can ensure that its emergency response capabilities not only meet today's needs but are positioned for long-term excellence.

The future of Waterford Fire Services is not just about preserving tradition—it's about smartly adapting and leading into the next generation of public safety.

6.0 A Strategic Vision

Evolution of Waterford's Fire Services

Like many small towns, Waterford's fire services have evolved over time—shifting from a fully volunteer model to today's combination fire department and moving steadily toward greater professionalization.

In the early 1900s, fire protection was provided by a network of privately owned, independently operated stations. Over time, these private companies were managed collectively by a Board of Fire Commissioners. Today, Waterford benefits from a centralized management model, led by a Director of Fire Services, ensuring professional oversight and strategic coordination.

This transition has been driven by necessity: a combination of the need for greater efficiency, declining volunteer availability, and the increasing complexity of emergency services. Importantly, consolidation of management has improved operational effectiveness without sacrificing public safety.

Cost Evolution and Changing Operational Realities

Historically, the cost of maintaining an all-volunteer fire service was substantially lower than the costs associated with a combination or career fire service. Early expenses, largely captured through Town agreements (Ref: Agreement xxx), were focused on station maintenance, volunteer training, and equipment provision.

However, as the fire service evolved:

- Buildings and equipment aged, requiring greater maintenance investment.
- Volunteer staffing declined significantly, forcing the Town to hire part-time and then full-time firefighters.
- Annual fire service costs have steadily increased (see Figure _____), reflecting both broader operational demands and necessary modernization efforts.

Placeholder for Figure

Today, while many stations remain crucial geographic and operational assets, they are no longer community hubs filled with volunteers during downtime. Instead, they serve primarily as deployment outposts for paid staffing and critical equipment.

Volunteer Decline and Professional Growth

Since the late 1990s, volunteer recruitment and retention have faced major challenges—consistent with national trends. As volunteer numbers declined, Waterford responded proactively by:

- Hiring part-time and full-time firefighters to maintain service levels
- Strategically deploying full-time paid firefighters to Oswegatchie, Jordan, and Cohanzie
- Assigning part-time paid firefighters to Goshen and Quaker Hill

Today:

- Full-time paid staffing covers the Town's busiest districts.
- Part-time staffing supports areas where volunteer activity has declined but where service demands remain critical.

Deployment patterns reflect careful use of demographic, call volume, and risk data (see Figures _____), aligning staffing levels with service needs to ensure efficient and economical operations.

Rethinking Service Models for the Future

Given the challenges associated with sustaining the original volunteer agreements, and with volunteers becoming increasingly scarce, rethinking the model for fire and emergency services in Waterford is both timely and necessary.

Key questions for strategic evaluation include:

- How can existing data be used more proactively to optimize resource deployment?
- Should staffing levels be customized to call volume and risk patterns rather than uniformly distributed?
- Can Waterford maximize the use of all five stations while adapting staffing and equipment strategies?
- How can service delivery evolve to balance cost-effectiveness, public safety, and taxpayer value?

Strategic Considerations for a Future Vision

Any new model must reflect the Town's underlying obligations to its residents and taxpayers, including:

- Uniform and consistent provision of emergency services
- Effective and efficient utilization of equipment, apparatus, and buildings
- Strategic deployment of both volunteer and career personnel
- Responsiveness to current and future risks associated with development and population changes
- Prudent and transparent management of operational costs
- Alignment with a defined and forward-looking vision for public safety

Emergency Services: A Broader Mission

Based on the data provided (Figure _____), Waterford's emergency services landscape has dramatically shifted:

- Emergency medical and other non-fire calls outnumber structural fire responses by a ratio of 35:1.
- Structural fire responses now represent only a small fraction of total incidents.

This important trend suggests that Waterford Fire Services is evolving into a broader Emergency Services or First Responder organization—a change that reflects national best practices.

While the reduction in structural fires is a positive public safety outcome, the Town's new mission must focus on:

- Providing agile, community-wide emergency response capabilities
- Equipping and training personnel for a diverse range of incidents
- Maintaining strategically located stations to optimize response times and service delivery

7.0 Conclusion: A Strategic Path Forward

7.1 General Framework

Waterford's fire services model must evolve in response to changing demographics, emergency trends, and fiscal realities. By building upon the historic five-station framework—and adapting it through data-driven decision making, flexible staffing, and strategic investment—the Town can protect its residents, support its first responders, and deliver outstanding emergency services well into the future.

The future of Waterford Fire Services is rooted in tradition—but shaped by innovation, efficiency, and a bold commitment to public safety.

a. Development of a 5-Year Strategic Plan

In coordination with the Town's executive leadership, Fire Services administration, and other emergency management personnel, the Town should create a comprehensive 5-Year Strategic Plan.

Modeled after Waterford's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), or potentially crafted as a subset of it, the Strategic Plan would address:

- Staffing plans
- Capital improvement programs
- Growth and/or contraction projections
- Facility and resource development plans
- Other essential aspects of Fire Services operations

This effort should be an exercise in critical thinking, strategic forecasting, and self-examination, designed to establish a Townwide vision for Fire Services.

The resulting Plan would serve as a codified framework to guide decision-making, align leadership thinking, and provide visible evidence to taxpayers that the Town is actively planning for both the current and future state of public safety.

b. Periodic Fire Services Review

Waterford should establish a formal periodic review process to ensure continuous evaluation of Fire Services operations and policy.

Options include:

- Creation of a public volunteer oversight board with a clear charter
- Scheduled reactivation of an Ad Hoc Fire Services Review Committee to independently review operations, data, and policy every three to five years

Three prior Fire Services reports (including this one) have built an increasingly detailed and referenceable foundation for future strategic reviews, ensuring that successive evaluations benefit from historical continuity and prior lessons learned.

c. Redefining Fire Services as Emergency Services

The Town should consider redefining Waterford Fire Services to better align with its actual service delivery model.

- Historical Context: When the original stations were built, fire suppression was the primary (and nearly sole) function.
- Current Reality: Over the last seven years, structural fires account for only 2% of calls, while Emergency Medical Services (EMS) account for nearly 70%.

Given this transformation, rebranding Fire Services as Emergency Services or First Responder Services would:

- Require a revised Mission Statement that accurately reflects new operational objectives.
- Realign policies, procedures, equipment, and training priorities around broader emergency response needs.
- Lower the training barrier for volunteers, enabling more participation by focusing on non-fire services for those not seeking full firefighter certifications.
- Stimulate broader community interest and better resource the Town for evolving threats and challenges.
- Allow for a reassessment of apparatus, vehicle mix, and infrastructure needs, potentially reducing dependence on expensive, specialized fire-only equipment.

This rebranding positions Waterford as a forward-thinking leader in modern public safety service delivery.

d. Strengthen Data-Driven Decision Making

Maintaining robust Fire Services data systems is critical to evaluating performance and driving continuous improvement.

Data applications include:

- Optimizing vehicle and equipment placement based on call trends
- Analyzing staffing adequacy and deployment strategies
- Supporting strategic updates to the 5-Year Plan
- Demonstrating service success to the public through objective, believable statistics

Data-driven decision-making also helps validate investment decisions and promotes transparency with taxpayers.

e. Prepare for New OSHA Standards

The pending revision of OSHA CFR 1910.156, retitled Emergency Response Standard, represents a transformational shift in regulatory requirements for fire services.

Key anticipated impacts:

- Dramatic increase in required qualifications and training for career fire departments
- New mandates for:
 - Incident and Exposure Recordkeeping
 - Medical Evaluations
 - Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
- Expanded compliance with 22 NFPA standards, which will now carry regulatory—not just advisory—weight

The new OSHA standard is expected to create:

- Significant new costs for equipment, training, facilities, PPE, and recordkeeping
- Substantial operational complexity for towns like Waterford
- Potential volunteer recruitment challenges, as barriers to entry for service increase

Notably, volunteer-only fire departments will not be subject to these new standards, introducing an important strategic consideration for Waterford's combination department model.

Given the complexity and comprehensiveness of the change, the Town's legal counsel must carefully scrutinize the final rule to:

- Determine specific applicability to Waterford's Fire Services
- Identify operational and financial impacts
- Advise on compliance strategies

Proactive planning now will ensure that Waterford remains compliant while continuing to provide high-quality, efficient emergency services to its residents

What is Mutual Aid?

Mutual aid refers to a formalized agreement between neighboring fire departments and emergency services to assist one another during incidents that exceed the immediate capacity of a single department.

In practical terms, mutual aid means that if Waterford's Fire Services are fully engaged in an incident—or if a particular incident demands specialized resources or additional manpower—neighboring towns such as New London, East Lyme, Montville, or others can be requested to assist. Similarly, Waterford is obligated to respond to aid requests from neighboring communities when called upon.

Mutual aid covers a wide range of situations, including but not limited to:

- Structure fires
- Hazardous material (HAZMAT) incidents
- Major vehicle accidents

- Emergency medical situations
- Natural disasters and severe weather emergencies
- Large-scale public safety events (e.g., mass casualty incidents)

Legal Basis and Responsibilities

Mutual aid arrangements are typically codified in formal agreements or memoranda of understanding (MOUs) between municipalities. These agreements clarify roles, expectations, operational procedures, and financial responsibilities when one jurisdiction assists another.

In the case of Waterford:

- The Town has entered into mutual aid agreements that bind Waterford legally to provide reasonable assistance when requested.
- Assistance must be provided to the extent possible without compromising Waterford's own public safety obligations.
- Waterford retains discretion—typically via the Fire Services Director or Chief Officer on duty—to determine the level of aid that can be safely offered without endangering its own residents.

Key Legal Considerations:

1. Duty to Provide Aid Once Dispatched

Once Waterford dispatches resources under a mutual aid request, there is a legal and operational expectation that those resources will perform professionally and safely under the requesting jurisdiction's incident command structure.

2. Risk to Waterford's Assets

When Town personnel, vehicles, or equipment are sent outside of Waterford's jurisdiction, the Town assumes certain liabilities and risks, including:

- Potential damage to equipment
- Potential injury to personnel
- Potential exposure to legal claims (though many agreements include indemnification clauses)

3. Workers' Compensation and Insurance Coverage

Firefighters, whether paid or volunteer, remain covered under Waterford's workers' compensation insurance while operating under mutual aid, ensuring protection in the event of injury or death while assisting another community.

4. Cost Recovery (Rare but Possible)

Generally, mutual aid is provided without direct financial compensation. However, in certain extraordinary situations (especially extended deployments), Waterford may have the right to seek reimbursement for extraordinary costs under disaster declarations (e.g., FEMA reimbursements after federally declared emergencies).

5. Right of Refusal Based on Capacity

Importantly, mutual aid agreements do not require a town to endanger itself to aid another. If Waterford's available resources are insufficient to safely respond to both local needs and a mutual aid request, the Fire Director (or highest-ranking officer) has the legal and ethical duty to prioritize

What Mutual Aid Is Not

- Mutual aid is not a replacement for adequate staffing and equipping Waterford's own fire and emergency services.
- Mutual aid is not guaranteed: other towns might not be available at critical times, especially during widespread regional emergencies (e.g., hurricanes, major storms).
- Mutual aid does not absolve Waterford of its primary legal responsibility to independently and adequately protect its residents

Strategic Importance for Waterford

Given the Town's legal obligations and operational realities, mutual aid should be understood as:

- A valuable supplemental tool, not a core component of service delivery.
- A safety net for rare, high-demand incidents, not a routine staffing solution.
- An obligation of reciprocity, means that Waterford must be equally prepared to both request and provide aid without compromising its own community's safety.

As Waterford continues to modernize its fire services and evolve toward a combination department structure, mutual aid will remain critical—but it must be managed wisely, with full recognition of its benefits, limitations, and legal responsibilities.

Conclusion

Mutual aid strengthens regional resilience and fosters inter-town collaboration. However, it is not a substitute for a strong, properly staffed, and equipped Fire and Emergency Services Department within Waterford itself. Strategic planning, staffing, and resource deployment must continue to prioritize Waterford's primary duty to its own residents, while maintaining respectful and responsible participation in regional mutual aid agreements.

Waterford's future depends on smart investment in its people, its facilities, and its readiness—because when seconds matter, mutual aid should be a backup plan, not the first line of defense.

7. Five Fire Stations - History and Structure of Waterford's Fire Stations

Waterford has a long-standing tradition of volunteer fire service, dating back to the early 20th century. The Town's five volunteer fire stations emerged as a direct response to growing local needs, with each station strategically located in areas experiencing population development. Notably, all five stations were constructed by volunteers, using funds they independently raised.

To formalize and distribute responsibilities, a series of fire districts were created, providing an organized framework for managing the growing fire services system.

Since 1942, Waterford has maintained five fire stations, all incorporated within a span of 19 years. These five stations remain operational today:

Fire Company	Fire Company Name	Street Address	Date of Incorporation
1	Waterford Fire Engine Company	89 Rope Ferry Road	1923
2	Quaker Hill Fire Department	17 Old Colchester Road	1927
3	Goshen Fire Department	63 Goshen Road	1928
4	Oswegatchie Fire Company	441 Boston Post Road	1930
5	Cohanzie Fire Company	53 Dayton Road	1942

Current and Future Demographic Context

Waterford's population continues to grow steadily, and the current infrastructure of fire stations remains largely supportive of existing development patterns. According to the most recent census, Waterford's population stands at 19,554.

While census projections suggest the population may stabilize or even decline slightly in the future, recent development activity—as illustrated in Figure _____—indicates the potential for continued population growth, which could influence future demand for fire services.

Development	Status	Total Units	Recent Newly Constructed, Approved & Pending Housing							
			Affordable Units	Single Family	Townhome / Duplex	Studio	1 BD	2 BD	3 BD	ES School
Waterford Heights	Approved	284				30	122	100	32	Quaker Hill
Brookside Apartments	Constructed	40	35				16	24		Oswegatchie
Kathryn Court Estates	Constructed	10		10						Oswegatchie
Waterford Woods	Constructed	204					126	78		Great Neck
Ivy Hill Village	Under Construction	40	4	32	8					Great Neck
Waterford Central	Under Construction	216	44				144	72		Great Neck
Clark Lane Community	Under Construction	47	15	47						Great Neck
Roberts Village	Pending	24	8	16	8					Quaker Hill
Total		865	106	105	8	30	403	274	32	

Source: Town of Waterford Planning & Development Department, Sept. 2024

Figure _____ Recent Newly Constructed, Approved and Pending Housing

Waterford Fire Services: Evolving to Meet a New Vision

A Community Built on Service

Waterford's proud tradition of volunteer fire service has evolved over decades to meet the needs of a growing and changing community. Originally founded around local volunteer efforts, the Town's five fire stations—established through a historic agreement (Ref. x)—provided critical coverage and protection. This agreement, whereby volunteers deliver fire protection services in exchange for maintaining stations, equipment, and training, remains foundational today, granting Waterford access to a network of five strategically located stations.

As Waterford grows, the Town has a unique opportunity to honor its rich legacy while thoughtfully planning the next generation of emergency services—services designed not only for today's challenges but for tomorrow's vision.

Changing Demographics and Expanding Needs

While census projections suggest that Waterford's overall population (currently 19,554) may remain stable or decline slightly, other trends paint a more dynamic picture:

- **Growth in the Senior Population:**
An increasing proportion of older residents will drive greater demand for emergency medical services.
- **Recent Development Activity (*Figure _____*):**
Despite broader forecasts, recent residential and commercial building activity suggests a blossoming population.
- **Town Size and Diversity:**
Spanning 37 square miles, Waterford features a mix of rural, suburban, and commercial properties, each requiring thoughtful, responsive fire and emergency service coverage.

Key Factors Driving the Future of Fire Services

Several factors are shaping the evolving mission of Waterford's Fire Services:

- **Significant Commercial Entities:**
 - Dominion Energy's Nuclear Power facility
 - The proposed Data Center
 - The Crystal Mall complex

These assets represent critical infrastructure requiring specialized response capabilities.
- **Changing Building Patterns:**
Newer construction often features:
 - Higher population densities
 - Multi-story structures

- Fire-resistant materials

These improvements enhance safety but also introduce new challenges, such as greater exposure to hazardous synthetic materials in fires.

- **Expanded Scope of Emergency Responses:**

Today, structural fires represent a small fraction of calls. Firefighters are now routinely responding to:

- Hazardous material incidents
- Severe weather events
- Service calls
- Medical emergencies
- False alarms

- **Distribution of Service:**

Analysis of call data indicates that emergency call volume is distributed across the Town, reinforcing the critical value of maintaining all five fire stations.

Why Five Fire Stations Matter

Maintaining a five-station model continues to provide tangible, town-wide benefits:

1. Response Times

The current station locations enable fast, reliable service delivery in alignment with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards.

2. Volunteer Retention

Reducing or closing stations could diminish volunteer participation and necessitate more career staff, increasing costs.

3. Strategic Coverage

Stations are located near high-density neighborhoods and key assets such as the Crystal Mall, Dominion Nuclear Power Station, Interstate 98, Interstate 395, Route 85 and Waterford's schools, Town Hall, Community Center, Beaches, Niantic River, Thames River all spread over 38 square miles.

4. Insurance Rates and ISO Ratings

Maintaining five stations helps preserve Waterford's favorable Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating, protecting residents from higher insurance premiums.

5. Resiliency and Emergency Sheltering

Each station provides a critical location for resident sheltering during townwide emergencies and supports Waterford's integrated Task Force emergency management approach.

6. Infrastructure Readiness

Except for Oswegatchie (which requires replacement), the other stations are maintainable through routine repair.

7. Emergency Operations

As Waterford's Fire Services evolve into a broader Emergency Services Organization, each station will play a key role in housing resources, personnel, and shelter facilities across the community.

8. A Proven, Successful Model

The five-station approach has effectively served Waterford for over 100 years—providing life-saving protection, community reassurance, and continuity.

Looking Forward: Waterford's Vision for Emergency Services

As Waterford embraces the future, its fire services must continue to evolve into a modern Emergency Services and First Responder Organization, ready to address a broader range of public safety needs.

Key elements of this future vision include:

- Investing smartly in facility upgrades, apparatus modernization, and training.
- Expanding partnerships with local and regional agencies.
- Applying for grants (such as SAFER grants) to enhance staffing and resilience.
- Adapting tactics to meet the challenges of changing construction patterns, population shifts, and evolving threats.

By recognizing the value of its current infrastructure and proactively planning for the future, Waterford is charting an exciting and responsible course—one that builds on its proud past while preparing for a bright, resilient future.

The future of Waterford's fire services is not about standing still. It's about growing, adapting, and leading—and the Town is ready.

Investing in Waterford's Future: The Case for a New Oswegatchie Fire Station

Background

In January 2023, the Ad Hoc Fire Services Committee released an interim report recommending the replacement of the Oswegatchie Fire Station due to extensive structural and mechanical deficiencies. At the same time, the Committee strongly reaffirmed the Town's five-station fire service delivery model as the most effective and strategic approach for meeting Waterford's emergency response needs.

In addition to the broader reasons supporting the five-station model, the following specific points highlight why replacing the Oswegatchie Fire Station is critical to Waterford's future:

Why Building a New Oswegatchie Fire Station Matters

1. Strengthens Public Safety

- Ensures continued fire and emergency support for the Oswegatchie Elementary School and surrounding neighborhoods.
- Provides a modern, safe, and secure facility for housing part of the Town's paid firefighter workforce.
- Creates an ideal location for a future command center for Waterford's growing team of career firefighters.

2. Supports the Town's Vision for a Combination Fire Department

- Advances Waterford's transition toward a combination fire services model, blending career firefighters and volunteer support—consistent with national best practices and Waterford's evolving needs.
- Positions the Town for a stronger, more resilient fire service well into the 21st century.

3. Enhances Recruitment and Retention

- A new, state-of-the-art station will boost the recruitment and retention of both career and volunteer firefighters.
- A modern facility focused on firefighter safety, training, and well-being demonstrates the Town's serious commitment to public safety services.

4. Protects Waterford's Long-Term Financial Interests

- Repairing and renovating the existing station is not cost-effective according to the Town's architect and construction project manager.
- Delaying construction would significantly escalate costs—potentially requiring \$15–20 million within 7–10 years for new construction and interim repairs.
- Building the new station now is the fiscally responsible choice for taxpayers.

5. Continues a Century-Long Success Story

- Oswegatchie Fire Company has served Waterford from its current location for over 94 years.
- Maintaining a station at this location honors a proven, historic model that effectively covers all 37 square miles of the Town.
- Every major study and both recent Directors of Fire Services have strongly supported the five-station model for Waterford.

6. Enhances Townwide Emergency Preparedness

- Provides a local shelter for residents during emergencies.
- Maintains a strategic outpost for the staging of apparatus and personnel for rapid, effective responses to any emergency.

7. Aligns with Town Plans and Community Values

- Building a new station at Oswegatchie is consistent with both the existing and proposed draft Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD).
- Reflects the Town's values of community investment, public safety, and smart growth.

8. Reinforces Waterford's Commitment to Public Safety

- Waterford protects a community of 19,554 residents and a \$4.5 billion grand list of residential, commercial, and industrial property.
- A new, centrally located fire station will significantly strengthen life and property protection across the Town.

9. Demonstrates Strong Community Leadership

- In February 2022, the Representative Town Meeting (RTM) took decisive action:
 - Established a Building Committee charged with constructing a new Oswegatchie Fire Station.
 - Committed to maintaining the old station only as necessary until a replacement is built.

Conclusion: A Smart Investment in Waterford's Future

The preservation and modernization of Waterford's five-station fire services model is critical to meeting current and future community needs.

Building a new Oswegatchie Fire Station is more than a construction project—it is a clear investment in:

- Public safety
- Community resilience
- Long-term financial responsibility
- Waterford's future growth and success

Waterford's vision is bold, responsible, and clear: continuing to invest in the systems that protect its people, its property, and its proud tradition of excellence

7.3 Staffing: Strategic Management for Waterford Fire Services

Overview

Staffing is consistently the most expensive element in the provision of fire services for any municipality in Connecticut, including Waterford.

These costs are driven by:

- Salaries for full-time and part-time personnel
- Health insurance, workers' compensation, and related benefits
- Pension obligations (firefighters often retire after relatively short careers compared to other public employees)
- Ongoing training requirements to maintain certifications, safety standards, and operational readiness

Financial Impact of Staffing

Assuming a typical municipal fire service career trajectory:

- Average hiring age: 20–25 years
- Average retirement age: 50–55 years
- Average years of service: 20–25 years

At any given time, the Town could be financially responsible for one current salary and up to two pensions per active firefighter when factoring in past retirees. This underscores the long-

term budgetary impact staffing decisions have and highlights why municipal governments must approach staffing planning with careful strategic consideration.

Challenges in Staffing Decisions

Determining appropriate staffing levels is highly complex, involving a blend of:

- Objective data: such as call volumes, response times, and mutual aid frequency
- Subjective factors: such as organizational culture, volunteer availability, and emerging community risks

Both types of information must be analyzed continuously to adjust staffing models appropriately over time.

Strategic Staffing Recommendations

To meet current and future needs in a cost-effective, resilient manner, the following recommendations are advanced:

a. Data-Driven Staffing Evaluations

- Maintain comprehensive databases tracking:
 - Frequency and type of emergency responses by station and townwide
 - Response times by station
 - Frequency of mutual aid requests provided and received
- Use this information to:
 - Evaluate the operational health of the Fire Services Department
 - Inform adjustments to staffing patterns
 - Ensure equitable mutual aid contributions among neighboring towns
 - Identify opportunities for reallocating personnel or equipment based on actual demand

Data should be systematically reviewed and correlated to staffing levels to support continuous improvement and fiscal responsibility.

b. Renewed Commitment to Volunteerism

Volunteers have been the historic backbone of Waterford Fire Services and remain a potentially critical resource for sustaining cost-effective service delivery.

However, volunteerism has declined due to:

- Increasingly complex and time-intensive training requirements
- Competing family and career obligations

Restoring a strong volunteer corps is imperative both to:

- Strengthen organizational culture and community engagement
- Control long-term operational costs

To achieve this:

i. Expand Volunteer Roles Beyond Firefighting

Recognizing the significant barrier to entry posed by full fire training, Waterford should create and promote alternative volunteer roles that contribute meaningfully to the department's mission, including:

- Public outreach: Educational programs in schools, safety demonstrations, and community engagement activities.
- Administrative support: Assisting with scheduling, data entry, equipment inventory management, and logistics.
- Emergency Support Roles: Establishing a specialized volunteer unit trained for non-fire emergency responses, such as:
 - Traffic control at accident scenes
 - Assistance during severe weather events (tree clearing, welfare checks)
 - Support during shelter activations
 - Basic EMS support under supervision (if legally permitted)

This new corps of Emergency Service Volunteers would not need full firefighter certifications, but would still significantly bolster Town resilience.

ii. Promote On-the-Job Training Opportunities

- Partner with local educational institutions and public programs to offer hands-on fire service internships or ride-along opportunities for young adults.
- Establish a junior volunteer program to expose younger residents (ages 16–18) to emergency services careers.

iii. Rebuild Fire Station Culture

Historically, Waterford's fire stations were community hubs where young people gathered, trained, and socialized.

Reinvigorating this station culture can:

- Promote pride and team identity
- Encourage volunteer recruitment
- Bridge generational gaps between volunteers and paid staff

Ideas include:

- Hosting open houses, family nights, and training events
- Encouraging team-building exercises across stations
- Establishing peer mentoring between career and volunteer members

iv. Integrate Volunteers and Paid Staff into a Unified Team

- Foster a single organizational identity, emphasizing that both volunteers and career firefighters are essential to the Town's success.
- Cross-train volunteers and paid staff together where feasible to ensure operational consistency and mutual respect.

c. Staffing Cost Monitoring

- Annually assess the costs associated with staffing changes, including:
 - Salaries and benefits
 - Training expenditures
 - Recruitment and onboarding costs

- Volunteer incentive program expenses
- Use these cost evaluations as part of a broader fiscal forecast model to guide sustainable growth in staffing aligned with Town revenue projections.

Conclusion

Waterford's future emergency services success depends on maintaining a flexible, responsive, and cost-conscious staffing model.

By embracing data-driven decision-making and restoring a vibrant culture of volunteerism, the Town can deliver outstanding service, manage long-term costs, and build a new generation of civic pride and public safety excellence.

The right people, trained, integrated, and committed, will ensure Waterford's continued success for decades to come.

7.4 Capital Plan

There is an important opportunity to strengthen the planning and management of maintenance for the privately owned fire stations. Specifically, providing more detailed work scopes and more refined cost estimates would significantly enhance the process. Additionally, establishing a more formal, codified procedure for tracking repairs and ongoing maintenance activities is recommended. This would ensure greater consistency and accountability over time.

While the current rough estimates offer a helpful starting point, the Town would greatly benefit from improving the quality and precision of these repair numbers. More accurate estimates would align with the proven practices used successfully by other Town departments, such as Utilities and Public Works, where repair and modification projects are consistently managed on an annual basis.

By adopting these improvements, the Town can ensure that fire station maintenance is planned and executed with the same high standard of care and efficiency seen across its other critical services.

7.5 Infrastructure Management: Respecting All Districts and Building a Strong Future

A Townwide Commitment to Fair Emergency Services

Waterford has long valued the principle that every resident, in every neighborhood, deserves timely, professional, and reliable emergency services.

This commitment is reflected in the Town's historic support for five fire districts, each with its own station, developed by community members working to protect their neighborhoods. Today, as the Town continues its transition to a combination fire service model, it remains critical that respect for all five districts—and the residents they serve—remains at the heart of strategic planning.

The future of Waterford Fire Services must balance operational efficiency with the core value of equitable service across the entire Town.

Strategic Staffing Approach

Recognizing the realities of volunteer availability, call volumes, and community needs, Waterford's staffing model must adapt to optimize service while honoring its five-district tradition.

The strategic approach includes:

1. Full-Time Paid Firefighters at Three Central Stations

- Jordan Fire Station (Company 1)
- Oswegatchie Fire Station (Company 4)
- Cohanzie Fire Station (Company 5)

These three locations serve as primary operational hubs due to their:

- Central or strategic geographic locations
- Higher emergency call volumes
- Rapid access to major corridors and population centers

By staffing these three stations with full-time career firefighters, Waterford ensures a strong, reliable core of professional emergency response throughout the Town.

2. Part-Time Paid Staff, First Responders, and Volunteers at Two Stations

- Goshen Fire Station (Company 3)
- Quaker Hill Fire Station (Company 2)

These stations continue to play a vital role in:

- Maintaining neighborhood-based emergency response
- Serving lower-density areas
- Providing critical backup during larger incidents

By staffing Goshen and Quaker Hill with a blend of part-time firefighters, trained first responders, and community volunteers, the Town can:

- Sustain service coverage without unnecessary costs
- Provide local familiarity and rapid local response
- Preserve the community roots and pride associated with these historic stations

Principles Guiding Staffing and Facility Use

This staffing model is guided by the following principles:

- **Respect for All Neighborhoods:**
No district is abandoned; all five stations remain critical parts of the Town's emergency services network.
- **Equity of Response:**
Residents in every part of Waterford will continue to receive professional emergency services.
- **Efficient Resource Deployment:**
Full-time staff are concentrated where the demand is highest, while part-time and volunteer resources are leveraged effectively where appropriate.
- **Community Connection:**
Volunteer involvement and neighborhood fire stations help maintain civic pride, local engagement, and disaster resilience.
- **Fiscal Responsibility:**
Staffing and operational decisions are made with care for taxpayer resources, balancing quality service with sustainable costs.

Future Considerations

As Waterford continues to evolve:

- Staffing patterns should be reviewed periodically, ensuring alignment with population changes, development patterns, and service demands.
- The Town should continue supporting volunteer recruitment and retention efforts, recognizing that volunteers remain an important part of the Town's public safety model.
- All fire stations should be maintained as critical community assets, providing not only emergency response capability but also shelter, training, outreach, and resiliency functions.

Conclusion

Waterford's approach honors its proud history of neighborhood-based fire protection while modernizing for the realities of today and tomorrow.

Every resident matters. Every neighborhood counts.

By embracing a balanced staffing model—full-time professionals at three central stations, part-time and volunteers at two—Waterford demonstrates its deep commitment to fairness, readiness, and community pride across all five districts.

A strong, unified, and resilient emergency services network will continue to be one of Waterford's greatest strengths.

7.6 Recommended Strategies for Fleet Management and Budgeting

To maximize the benefit of *Fleetio* and Town resources, the following strategic actions are recommended:

- a. Standardize Maintenance Services

- Evaluate the feasibility of using Public Works for routine fire apparatus maintenance where qualified.
- Centralize fleet maintenance standards across Town departments for consistency and cost savings.

b. Fully Implement a Comprehensive Fleet Management Plan

Using *Fleetio*'s capabilities, build a complete operational profile for every vehicle, including:

- Department of Transportation (DOT) condition characterization
- Usage frequency tracking
- Designation of active vs. backup status
- Routine and corrective maintenance records, with actual cost tracking per vehicle per year
- Mileage tracking by usage type (e.g., emergency response, training, routine movement), providing actionable data for future planning

c. Assess Equipment Needs Based on Data

- Use call volume, incident type, and geographic service needs to determine optimal apparatus types.
- Consider transitioning toward smaller, more flexible vehicles if Emergency Services activities continue to dominate responses.

d. Plan for Asset Replacement

- Establish and adhere to an active service life policy of approximately 15–20 years for major apparatus unless chronic maintenance issues suggest otherwise.
- Routinely retire and liquidate outdated or unnecessary vehicles, using sales proceeds to offset new equipment purchases.

e. Buy Standardized Equipment

- Prioritize purchasing "off-the-shelf" apparatus where feasible, avoiding unnecessary customization that adds cost without improving core functionality.

f. Strategically Position Assets

- Match vehicle deployment to population density, risk profile, and response data to optimize readiness (e.g., assigning lighter, quicker vehicles to suburban or low-density areas, retaining heavy apparatus in high-risk commercial zones).

Conclusion: A Vision for Smarter Fleet Management

Waterford's investment in *Fleetio* software and its commitment to strategic asset management positions the Town to:

- Improve emergency response readiness
- Extend the life of critical apparatus
- Make smarter, data-informed budget decisions
- Strengthen overall operational efficiency

As Waterford's Fire Services continues to evolve into a modern Emergency Services operation, fleet management will be a key pillar of success—ensuring that both the community's safety and the taxpayers' investments are protected for the long term.

Waterford's future is not just about owning more vehicles—it's about owning the right vehicles, maintaining them properly, and deploying them smartly.

