

REPORT FROM

THE NORTH HAVEN

FIRE & MEDICAL SERVICES WORKSHOP GROUP

11/14/18

To the North Haven Fire Commission:

On April 17, 2018, the Board of Finance commissioned a review of North Haven's fire and medical services. A workshop group was formed to conduct the review assignment. Based on that review, this report represents the opinions of the BOF members who participated in the workshop.

Participants in the review process:

Richard Monico – Board of Finance Chairman

Michael Hallahan – Board of Finance member

Paul Januszewski – North Haven Fire Chief

Scott Martus – North Haven Deputy Fire Chief of Operations

Edward Swinkowski – North Haven Director of Finance

Purpose of the workshop group:

To gather information, evaluate procedures & policies, and develop recommendations, concerning resource allocation and other issues affecting the Town of North Haven's fire and medical services.

Listing of workshop study topics:

6/27/18

- 2017-18 response data for NoHFD
- Recent response data for AMR
- Evaluation/triage process and response options
- 911 non-emergency response options
- AMR resource analysis
- Basic Life Support Public Service Area Responder (PSAR) holder for North Haven – NoHFD intention to acquire from American Medical Response (AMR)
- Fire/medical simultaneous event situations and frequency
- Mutual aid

8/14/18

- First Responder designation holder -- statutory stipulations
- AMR performance concerns
- Medical mutual aid
- Fire service data & incident categorization
- Personnel and apparatus pairing relationships
- Shift scheduling
- Second paramedic enablement

8/28/18

- Typical fire/medical response resource requirements
- Volunteer response dependability & consistency
- Mutual aid data
- Simultaneous incident response resource allocations
- Time of day /Day of week statistical variations

9/11/18

- Review of dispatch tasks & responsibilities
- Activation time requirements
- Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) call evaluation (triage) process
- AMR handling of EMD and contingency planning for substitute coverage
- Requirements for NoH Dispatch takeover of EMD

10/2/18

- Review of volunteer firefighter resources
- Volunteer management, morale, training, involvement
- Discussion of 2014 UNH study of NoHFD
- Reliability and sustainability of volunteers long term
- Second paramedic feasibility

10/16/18

- Review of fire apparatus
- Equipment requirements
- Replacement cost scheduling of vehicles
- Review of submitted 5 year EMS plan
- BLS PSAR takeover time/expense/probability
- AMR as a possible BLS subcontractor
- EMD in-house cost and dispatch capabilities

11/7/18

- Review of commissioned purpose and fire/medical problem areas
- Solution options and costs
- Discussion of proposed recommendations
- Timetable of implementation and affordability
- Usage of set-aside \$140k allocation within 2018-19 budget
- Conclusion consensus & areas of disagreement
- Report format, intended audience, time estimate for completion

Workshop group recommendations:

From workshop participants Richard Monico and Michael Hallahan, the following recommendations represent financially feasible changes or additions to the North Haven Fire Department's human/physical/logistical resources, intended to improve the department's ability to fulfill their fire and medical emergency service responsibilities (with estimated costs):

- 1. Basic Life Support (BLS) Public Service Area Responder (PSAR) – Modifications to Specifications of BLS PSAR Holder or Subcontractor-Vendor**
 - a. Currently, the BLS PSAR is held by American Medical Response. The North Haven Fire Department is in the process of appealing the state Office of Emergency Management (OEM) to acquire this designation.
 - b. If acquisition is approved by OEM, subcontract the BLS PSAR function to an accredited ambulance service, with specifications listed below.
 - c. Whether or not the acquisition is approved, contractually require the BLS PSAR holder (or subcontractor), to perform with the following additional requirements:
 - i. 24/7 positioning of vehicles at certain location(s) within North Haven boundaries.
 - ii. 100% paramedic response requirement for ALS-rated service calls, backfilling for continuous new-call compliance (\$300,000 paramedic assurance supplemental surcharge estimate, if AMR retains BLS PSAR).
 - iii. Mandatory return to North Haven of NoHFD paramedics after hospital ride-ins.
 - iv. Require all vehicles to be equipped with an opioid antagonist.
 - v. Regular reporting of response data and other associated performance metrics.
 - vi. Other stipulations as may be deemed necessary.

2. Emergency Dispatch (\$400,000)

- a. Hire four additional dispatchers to increase staffing of the fire/medical/police emergency call center.
- b. Assume the function of EMD evaluation for all medical service calls (currently handled by AMR).
- c. Direct all routine transport calls, originating from clinics, medical and healthcare facilities, etc., to the non-911 phone line of the Basic Life Support (BLS) PSAR holder [or BLS subcontractor].
- d. As part of the initial EMD process, screen 911 calls to identify non-emergency queries not requiring ALS resources and assign exclusively to the BLS responder.
- e. Instruct town hall switchboard operators to directly connect police non-emergency calls to their appropriate extensions, by providing switchboard with a chart of assigned police extension numbers.
- f. Purchase and/or develop a centralized after-hours phone answering system that will direct municipal calls to specific town extensions, utilizing voice mail capabilities.

3. Create second 24/7 Paramedic Unit (\$60,000)

- a. Purchase and locate paramedic gear on Engine #1, establishing a second paramedic unit.
- b. When possible, transfer paramedic responsibilities to ambulance paramedic to maintain preferred Engine #1 personnel requirements.
- c. Should FD paramedic accompany a patient to the hospital, summon an overtime replacement to backfill the position, restoring the preferred personnel requirements of Engine #1.

4. Additional Fire/Medical Career Personnel (\$240,000)

- a. Hire two firefighter/paramedics for a Monday-Friday daytime-only shift. This recommendation is contingent on the creation of a new "Day Shift Firefighter/Paramedic" position, with acceptance from the FF labor union.
- b. Utilize Rescue #2 as a third daytime paramedic response vehicle, with possible positioning at Montowese.

5. Volunteer Firefighters (\$30,000)

- a. Integrate training and other experiences between career and volunteer firefighters.
- b. Enhance the volunteer experience, address grievances, encourage mutual respect, monitor morale, etc.
- c. Complete development of Northeast training facility (additional cost unknown).
- d. Estimation: Volunteer staff numbers will not greatly increase/decrease over time.
- e. Increase tax deferral benefit for each volunteer from \$1,000 to \$1,750, with step increments based on years of service.
- f. Post permanent road signage at each volunteer house with a recruiting message.

6. Vehicles and Equipment

- a. Purchase/acquire grant for personal protective equipment (\$60,000).
- b. Create operating line item for PPE gear continuous replenishment (\$10,000).
- c. Replace Engine #1. Reassign existing Engine #1 to replace an older vehicle (\$750,000).
- d. Repair or replace Ladder Truck #2 (\$150,000).
- e. After the 2020-21 budget year, consider the need to replace a pumper or specialty apparatus every 3 years, in addition to timely replacement of rescue vehicles and ladder trucks.

7. Mutual Aid

- a. Maintain mutual fire aid agreements with area departments. Utilize with discretion.
- b. Maintain mutual medical aid agreements with ambulance providers to supplement paramedic service during peak demand.

Summary of findings:

North Haven fire officials are currently advocating for significant increases to the manpower of the department, with an eventual goal for an additional 8 [or more] professionals, to boost the regular staffing on each shift from 8 to 10 [or 12, if 16 more individuals are hired]. The cost of this expansion would be approximately \$1 million per year (for 8 new recruits), plus the cost of protective equipment and another fire apparatus (\$775,000). In the opinion of the Board of Finance participants of this workshop group, proper medical/fire response, for most common situations, can affordably be maintained, for the next 3+ years, via enactment of the reasonable changes/recommendations listed in this report.

After additional dispatch staffing, EMD training, and other improvements to dispatch operations, along with enhanced availability of paramedics (internally and externally), North Haven medical personnel should consistently meet, or exceed, expectations for emergency response time and level of service.

To reiterate, by addressing our equipment needs and peak-hour personnel demands, career firefighters will possess the resources to adequately respond to a typical simultaneous fire incident and medical call. Multiple overlapping medical calls for service can be accommodated through subcontractor specifications (paramedic response requirement) and mutual aid agreements. Any second concurring fire incident will continue to be answered with volunteer firefighters and mutual aid assistance.

This report is developed to fulfill the designated purpose of the North Haven Fire & Medical Services Workshop Group. We hope that you will find these recommendations helpful in the future planning and budgeting of the town's emergency services.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard Monico / Michael Hallahan