Report and Recommendations of the

Chesterfield Township

Emergency Services Needs Analysis Subcommittee

Overview

In 2013 the Chesterfield Township Committee appointed a group of representatives to evaluate the current status of each of the emergency services within the township. This evaluation was to include a general assessment of the facilities, personnel, funding and an overall assessment of whether or not the specific mission of each service was being met. Recommendations on whether or not improvements could be made were also to be a part of the assessment.

The following emergency services were to be assessed:

- Police
- Office of Emergency Management
- Ambulance
- Union Fire Company of Crosswicks (District 1)
- Chesterfield Hose Fire Company (District 2)
- District 1 Board of Fire Commissioners
- District 2 Board of Fire Commissioners

It is important to note that the Township Committee recognizes that it has no official oversight in regards to each fire company which is each an independent non- profit organization. Nor does the Township Committee have any oversight regarding each Board of Fire Commissioners as they are separately elected public boards, much like a local school board. However, the interconnected nature of all of these services required a joint assessment. Each agency above selected a representative to participate in this assessment.

The subcommittee members are as follows:

- Chief Kyle Wilson – Chief of Police and Emergency Management Coordinator
- Lynn Mathews – Ambulance Squad Chief
- Fred Freda – Deputy Chief, Union Fire Company
- Joe Dubell – District 1 Board of Fire Commissioners
- Brian Wilson – Asst. Chief, Chesterfield Hose Company
- Ray Hlubik – District 2 Board of Fire Commissioners
- Aaron Arnell – Public member at large (resident of District 2)
- John Fryc – Public Member at large (resident of District 1)

The following consists of findings and observations for each emergency service followed by recommendations in **bold.**

1. **Emergency Management:** Kyle Wilson is the Emergency Management Coordinator. Kyle Asbrand is the Deputy Emergency Management Coordinator.
   - This branch of emergency services is typically mobilized for extended duration and multijurisdictional events.
   - Fortunately, we have few of these types of events.
   - All branches of the emergency services have worked cooperatively over the years so that in support of the Management System under unified command.
   - There are no immediate needs for additional personnel / facilities / funding.

   RECOMMENDATIONS:
   - **Increased multijurisdictional training could be coordinated through Emergency Management**
   - **No changes to budget / personnel / funding needed**

2. **Police:** Chief Kyle Wilson
   - Staff – 1 chief / 2 Sergeants / 6 patrolman / 2 part-time patrolman / 3 crossing guards / 1 secretary
   - Approximately 3,000 calls / year
   - Facilities are too small to accommodate required confidential interview rooms / temporarily detained persons / the required "Domestic Violence response Team" room / as well as the needed space for normal operations
   - All police offers are required to be EMT certified
   - Police cars currently replaced at a rate of 1 / year
   - No immediate plans to increase the size / role of the police department. There may be a future need for Investigator / Detective

   RECOMMENDATIONS:
   - **Increase the facility space if / when a new municipal complex is obtained**

3. **Ambulance Squad / Service:** Chief Lynn Mathews

- ***All agreed that police & ambulance service are the two most vital emergency services***
- Volunteerism steadily decreasing over time. Currently, 6 active volunteers all EMT certified
- 2 Ambulance rigs currently in service. 1 will need to be replaced / overhauled in the near future
- Facility is more than adequate
- Calls per year 350
- Average call duration 1 ½ hours
- Each call requires 2 qualified EMTs.
- EMT training consists of 175+ hours in initial training ($1,200) and an additional 15+ hours of Continuing Education Units per year (48 CEUs over a 5 year period).
- Current service provided by:

  6 am – 6 pm / 7 days week - Mansfield Township Ambulance Corps (MTAC)- career (paid) staff

  Balance handled by volunteer duty crews, though MTAC, from its Mansfield Township location, is often simultaneously dispatched during these volunteer hours

- Funding:
  - Twp provides approximately $80,000 / year for the MTAC ambulance service
  - MTAC also bills patient's insurance companies for all calls (even volunteer hours) @ approximately $45,000 / yr
- MTAC service has been exceptional
- Various attempts at membership drives over the years have proven to be temporarily effective at best. The squad has often times accepted new members and sent those members through the extensive training, only to see those members move on to career positions within the EMS service in other locations.
- The ambulance squad also offers the Length of Service Award Program (LOSAP) in accordance with state law. LOSAP places funds in a long term investment for the particular volunteer. Once the volunteer becomes vested in the LOSAP program (10 years of qualifying service) they are then eligible to receive those funds after a certain age, much like a retirement account. Both fire districts offer LOSAP as well. Though well intentioned, LOSAP does not seem to have increased volunteerism in any of the three agencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **The Township Committee should seek to award a new contract (current contract with MTAC expires in early 2014) for ambulance service, with coverage times much like the existing contract**
- **Unless trends in volunteerism changes the following contract may require 24 / 7 coverage**

4. **Union Fire Company (Crosswicks):** Dep. Chief Fred Freda:
   - The volunteer fire company provides the volunteer manpower to the District Board of Fire Commissioners.
   - The fire apparatus is owned by the Fire District, not the Fire Company. This is the same for both Fire Companies.
   - 15-20 Active members
   - To become a certified volunteer fire fighter, each member is required to participate in 120+ hours of training through the Burlington County Fire Academy
   - Membership has been relatively steady over last few years
   - Facility in relatively good shape (new roof / new heater / new windows)
   - School Board still owns building (99 year lease?)
   - Relatively few calls have been missed by volunteer staff

   RECOMMENDATIONS:
   - **No immediate changes are needed to address membership or the service provided**
   - **Though membership is currently strong, uncertainty lies in the nation-wide trend of decreasing volunteerism. There is no known "winning formula" to be implemented that will increase volunteerism, though efforts to that end should be continued**

5. **Chesterfield Hose Co. (Chesterfield):** Asst. Chief Brian Wilson
   - The volunteer fire company provides the volunteer manpower to the District Board of Fire Commissioners.
   - The fire apparatus is owned by the Fire District, not the Fire Company. This is the same for both Fire Companies.
   - 20 +/- active members
   - Membership has been steady over recent years
   - To become a certified volunteer fire fighter, each member is required to participate in 120+ hours of training through the Burlington County Fire Academy
   - Facilities in excellent condition (except the need for new paving of the parking lot)
   - Many calls missed in recent years – vast majority of the missed calls are due to the perception of "false alarms"

   RECOMMENDATIONS:
   - **No immediate changes are needed to address membership or the service provided**
   - **Though membership is currently strong, uncertainty lies in the nation-wide trend of decreasing volunteerism. There is no known "winning formula" to be implemented that will increase volunteerism, though efforts to that end should be continued**

6. **Fire District 1 (Crosswicks)**: Commissioner Joe Dubell
   - Comprised of 5 elected Commissioners
   - Consists of the geographic area generally north of Old York and Margerum Roads
   - Contains the majority of homes in the Twp (1,200 +/-)
   - 4 full time career staff M-F 7 am – 5 pm
   - Per diem staff fills in on vacations / call outs etc
   - Fire Tax rate is .100 / $1,000 assessed value
   - Approximate $430,000 annual budget
   - $80,000 / yr. of the budget goes to hydrant rental @ NJ American Water Company ($692 / hydrant)
   - Current debt obligations on truck 2615 to be paid off in 2019
   - Engine / Pumper 2612 to be replaced next (3-4 years)
   - No plans to change career staffing levels

   RECOMMENDATIONS:
   - **See Fire District 2 below**

7. **Fire District 2 (Chesterfield):** Commissioner Ray Hlubik
   - Comprised of 5 elected Commissioners
   - Consists of the geographic area generally south of Old York and Margerum Roads
   - Contains approximately 577 +/- homes
   - No career staff
   - Fire Tax Rate is .079 / $1,000 assessed value
   - $200,000 / yr. budget
   - Low water bill (Only Old York Road hydrants in District)
   - Facilities are rented from the fire company
   - Current debt obligations on truck 2621, to be paid off in 2015
   - Tanker 2627 to be sold this year
   - No immediate need for career staff – rely heavily on volunteers, District 1 career staff and Twp employees during daytime calls
   - Will need to replace rescue truck in next 2-3 years

RECOMMEDATIONS for both Fire Districts:

- Currently both Fire Districts are providing more than adequate fire protection to the Township

- While the fire service is relatively strong it was agreed that a proactive approach to maintaining this level should be pursued as opposed to a reactive approach if membership were to suddenly decrease

- The subcommittee found that there may be benefits to the residents of the township with a fire district consolidation for the following reasons:
    - Address an apparent inequality in which career fire fighters in District 1 are providing fire service to District 2 at no cost to the District 2 taxpayers. The career staff of District 1 responds to all calls within Districts 1 & 2 while they are on duty.
    - Reduce some duplication of services currently used by each fire district including legal fees, insurance costs, financial consultant
    - Possibly reduce long term equipment costs including fire apparatus. For example each fire district has contemplated the need to have a primary and secondary fire pumper. This could result in 4 pumpers within Chesterfield Township at costs that exceed $400,000 each. It is possible that 1 Board of Commissioners could find that only 3 pumpers are needed township wide. This same principle could apply to a whole host of equipment needs

- Subcommittee review recommendations in the November 2007 report entitled "Summary Report Prepared for the Township of Chesterfield regarding Fire District Shared Services and / or Possible Consolidation." This report was prepared by the consulting firm, Jersey Professional Management
    - It was determined that many of the recommendations within that report have been successfully implemented over the last few years
    - The report also included a recommendation to consolidate Fire Districts while still maintaining the two fire companies at their current locations

- Much of the success in the shared services currently occurring between the Fire Companies and Fire Districts is based on a positive relationship between the leadership and membership of each organization. It is thought that these positive relations would help to facilitate a consolidation of the Districts.

- On September 18, 2013 the subcommittee met with Nancy Malool, Director of Shared services with the NJ State Dept of Community Affairs. Nancy is able to provide assistance and guidance if the two fire districts were to agree to consolidate. Nancy is willing to meet with representatives from each to provide further details on the process. She did feel that the two fire districts are currently in an advantageous position to make this consolidation possible.

- **The subcommittee also recommends that if the Districts were to consider consolidation, a financial analysis including the potential impacts to taxpayers in both districts should be prepared in advance.**

In conclusion, the subcommittee finds that the level of emergency service provided within the Township has been exemplary over the years. Much of this exemplary service has been the result of countless hours of self-sacrificing volunteer service. However, for unknown reasons, each volunteer organization faces a current (or near future) lack of volunteers to continue this service. The subcommittee recommends that the Township Committee and the Commissioners from each Fire District establish a proactive approach to ensure that this exemplary service continues.

Respectfully Submitted,

Emergency Services Needs Analysis Subcommittee