# City of Hallowell, Maine

## Hallowell Fire Department

## Development of Options Relative to the Delivery of Fire Protection Services

*Draft*

**Neil D. Courtney**

**December 2011**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS


| | Page |
|---|---|
| Overview | 3 |
| Scope of Project | 3 |
| City of Hallowell—Profile | 3 |
| Public Safety Services | 4 |
| Fire Department | 4 |
| Fire Station | 6 |
| FIRE SERVICE DELIVERY OPTIONS | 8 |
| 1.0 INTER-LOCAL GOVERNMENT/JOINT SERVICE AGREEMENTS | |
| 1.1 Functional Consolidation | 8 |
| 1.2 Full Merger – Inter-local Government Agreement/Fire District | 12 |
| 2.0 LOCAL SERVICE DELIVERY | |
| 2.1 Retain Hallowell Fire Department | 17 |
| 2.2 Create a Public Safety Department | 18 |
| 3.0 CONTRACT SERVICE | 19 |
| Appendix A | 22 |

## Overview

The City of Hallowell is at a crossroads with regard to the condition and functionality of its fire station. Hallowell needs to undertake a project that provides the fire department with up-to-date, modern facilities from which to operate. The city may need to develop a capital improvement project to meet that goal. However, before attempting such a project, the city's administration determined that all fire service delivery options should first be considered. If alternative solutions were to be discovered, then the city may choose a different course of action.

As stated in "Hallowell's Comprehensive Plan, 2010 Update" the city should pursue opportunities to collaborate with other agencies when such occasions arise. If feasible, it may behoove the city to enter into joint service agreements that could produce efficiencies beyond entrenched methodologies.

## Scope of Project

The purpose of the study is to analyze the current service where efficiencies, modernization, streamlining, coalition, and other nationally recommended fire service practices might lead to more effective service. The fundamental tenet of this study is to develop a strategic plan for City Council endorsement that would provide an optimum level of fire protection services in a cost-effective manner.

Before writing the strategic plan, the project manager will prepare a draft report that identifies several options for fire service delivery systems, ranking those options in terms of efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and practicality. After the City Council has agreed upon one of the options, or perhaps a modification of an option, the project manager will proceed to develop and write the strategic plan based on the approach selected.

## City of Hallowell—Profile

Located in Kennebec County, Maine, bordered by the city of Augusta and the towns of Manchester and Farmingdale, and across the Kennebec River from Chelsea, Hallowell is considered the smallest city in the state. With a population just under 2,500 residents within its 5.8 square miles, this city is comprised of a compact, built-up downtown; a commercial business zone; scattered minor subdivisions; and rural areas that include several preserved natural areas. The city has a deep sense of pride and values its commitment to historic preservation.

The city's fiscal 2011 assessed valuation is $224,285,700 and the personal property valuation accounts for another $7,343,260. The current mill rate is $15.30. The city does not have a capital improvement (CIP) program.

## PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICES

The city has a full-time police department that consists of a chief and four career and nine reserve officers. The department is housed within the lower level of City Hall. The police chief is a dual-role employee who is also the city's Emergency Management Agency (EMA) director. The animal control officer is also under the authority of the police chief. The police chief is appointed by the city manager.

Hallowell contracts with the City of Augusta for emergency dispatch services. Augusta handles all 911 emergency telephone calls and radio traffic for Hallowell's police and fire services. The current contract is for $40,477. The Augusta Fire Department, which is a career fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) department, provides contractual ambulance service to the Paramedic level for $26,473. It is understood that this service contract also provides Hallowell with "technical rescue services," typically auto extrication, at motor vehicle accidents. The Hallowell Fire Department does not provide EMS, but will assist the ambulance upon request. Both the city of Gardiner and Augusta have watercraft that can be requested for incidents on the Kennebec River, because Hallowell does not have a boat.

## FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Hallowell Fire Department is an on-call department currently consisting of 13 fire fighters who are compensated for their time spent responding to incidents and attending certain training programs. The fire chief receives an annual stipend for managing the department. The fire chief, assistants, and members of the fire department are appointed by the mayor. Fire fighters can live outside the city, but must be within eight driving miles of the Hallowell fire station. The fire department responded to 87 calls for service in fiscal 2011 and 74 calls in both 2009 and 2010.

The fiscal 2012 operating budget for the fire department is $42,750. Additional funding of $9,425 is allocated for utilities (water, sewer, electricity, and heat). Insurances for the entire city are bundled and not broken out per department. The city pays the water district $100,196 for 75 pressurized public fire hydrants, a fixed cost. Current debt service for the fire department is for a pumper that was delivered in 2003. The final payment of $13,750 due January 2012 will retire the bond.

In 2003, the fire department was awarded a Homeland Security grant of $12,600 through the "Assistance to Fire Fighters Grant" program. These funds were used to upgrade the department's self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA). Additional grants allowed for a two-way radio upgrade project, and the replacement of personal protection equipment (PPE)—turnout gear and a truck-mounted breathing air refill station known as a cascade system.

The department operates two Class "A" pumpers, a tanker, and a utility truck. (Note: The fire department is contemplating decommissioning the tanker (see below).

| |
|---|
| Engine #1 – 1987 Ford Chassis 1,250 gpm pumper with 750-gallon water tank |
| Engine #2 – 2003 International Chassis 1,000 gpm pumper with 500-gallon water tank |
| Utility – 1996 Ford Chassis utility truck (purchased used) |
| Tanker – 1974 Chevy Chassis with approximately 1,200 gallons of water (Note: this vehicle was originally a city service ladder truck. The fire department removed the assemblage of ground ladders and installed a water tank, converting it to a tanker) |

The Insurance Services Office (ISO) Public Protection Classification (PPC) for Hallowell was last conducted in 2002, and the town was rated at 6/9. This rating schedule provides a tool for the insurance industry to measure quantitatively the three major elements of a community's fire suppression system, of which the fire department is one. The other two elements are the receiving and handling of alarms, and the public water supply. Measurements of these elements result in a Public Protection Classification (PPC) number on a relative scale from 1 to 10, with 1 representing the best possible fire suppression system and 10 representing less than minimum recognized protection. This rating schedule is used to assign fire insurance premiums on many properties within communities throughout the United States. The rating of "6" is given to those areas of Hallowell serviced by fire hydrants, while those beyond are rated "9."

The communities in and around Hallowell assist one another in suppressing fires and other related emergencies through a mutual-aid compact. There is an "Automatic Aid" agreement (See Appendix A, page 23 for definition) between Farmingdale and Hallowell, but there is no such agreement between Manchester and Hallowell. As of November 1, 2011, an enhanced agreement between Hallowell and Augusta now has Augusta sending its 105' aerial ladder to Hallowell upon the receipt of an alarm indicating there is a potential or an actual building fire in the city. This agreement addresses a critical need in Hallowell, because the tallest portable ground ladder carried on Hallowell's apparatus is 24 feet in length. Considering the array of buildings in Hallowell—their construction features, proximity, occupancy, geography, and life hazard—the need for immediate aerial ladder service response is essential in order to rescue people trapped on upper floors, or to prevent a fire from spreading from one building to another by directly applying water from an elevated stream known as a ladder pipe.

Reciprocally, the city of Hallowell will now respond to similar incidents in Augusta with one engine, a utility truck, and manpower. (Note: Each of Hallowell's pumpers can only seat two firefighters. The utility truck can carry two additional personnel to an incident, allowing for a crew of fire fighters to function in what is considered a full engine company assignment.)

The Hallowell Fire Department has a small roster of fire fighters. Currently, five members reside within the city and the other fire fighters reside and work outside of Hallowell. Some live in Augusta, a city that relies solely on full-time, career personnel. To Hallowell's benefit, that means that Augusta residents who would like to be on-call fire fighters cannot join their hometown department, but do have that opportunity in Hallowell.

## FIRE STATION

The City of Hallowell Fire Department operates from a single, three-story brick and wood frame building in the heart of downtown. The two-bay station is approximately 183 years old. This building was not originally designed to be a fire station, but was converted to one around 1898. At some later date, a wood frame addition and hose tower were added to the rear of the building, apparently to address the space needs of the fire department. The building has a full cellar; a second floor that is divided into two separate areas—a meeting hall for the fire department, and an unoccupied apartment; and a third-floor attic space. Previously, the apartment was rented out and at one point the current fire chief and his family resided there for a number of years.

The building has not been upgraded to current standards and lacks many of the features found in 21st-century fire stations. The rear section of the building was damaged by fire decades ago. A number of years ago, the apparatus floor was reinforced with support columns in the basement and poured-in-place concrete added to the wood floor system. The weight of modern motorized fire apparatus made these improvements necessary. The city commissioned an engineering study of the building with a full report of those findings issued in 2009.

The fire station has two overhead bay doors measuring 9" wide and 8' 10" tall that allow for the apparatus access and egress from the station. These doors are smaller than the standard 12' to 14' tall and 10' to 14' wide doors found in most fire stations. This limitation impacts the design characteristics of the department's fleet.

The overhead doors are manually operated. When apparatus responds out to emergency incidents, the doors are usually left open because the only way to close them is for the driver to stop the apparatus, get out, and manually close them. Because the timely response to an emergency is imperative, the doors are often left open, leaving the fire station building subject to vandalism, liability concerns, and potential freezing during the winter.

Engine #2 cannot leave its top-mounted deck gun permanently in place, because it would stand too high above the contour of the apparatus and would strike the building when under way. This impediment is due to the fire station's low ceiling height and associated low level of the overhead door.

The deck gun is a critical feature for quickly delivering a large volume of water to a heavy fire condition quickly. This tactic is especially critical during the first moments of a fire attack, when only a few fire fighters have arrived. The time and effort it takes to set this gun up may impede fire suppression functions and associated rescue efforts. Furthermore, having to store the gun in the apparatus cabinet takes up space that could otherwise be used to store additional equipment. Because Hallowell has to design smaller fire trucks to fit into the fire station, the storage capacity for the apparatus is limited. As the department's inventory of equipment increased, the need arose to stow it on a vehicle, requiring the acquisition of a utility truck in fiscal 2005.

The low ceiling height presents another challenge when reloading fire hose. Although fire fighters usually are able to repack hose at a fire scene, there are times when it is impossible or imprudent to do so. Having to climb atop the pumpers to repack hose in inclement weather may be prohibited for safety reasons. The hose also needs to be cleaned or decontaminated in a proper, indoor environment.

When mutual-aid fire companies are called to provide "station coverage" at Hallowell's fire station, their vehicles may be too large to fit through the overhead doors and be parked in the fire station.

The "apron" in the front of the apparatus bays is not deep enough to allow fire trucks to be parked outside the fire station for routine maintenance, training, cleaning, and other functions. The apparatus must be moved onto the street and parked along the roadside in order to perform these tasks. Fire fighters are at risk of potential vehicle strikes as they are standing in the road.

Fire fighters must go to the fire station to board apparatus and respond out to incidents. The present location of the fire station does not have on-site parking exclusively designated for firefighters, whether they are coming to the station for emergencies or ancillary duties. Fire fighters must jockey to park their personal vehicles along city streets, wherever possible.

The building does not have an automatic smoke and fire alarm system, nor is it protected by an automatic fire sprinkler system. Should a fire occur in the uninhabited building, it would probably go unnoticed until visible from the outside. Furthermore, the building lacks an alarm system that indicates "no heat." Should the boiler fail to operate, the situation could go undetected for a period of time. The building and apparatus could freeze, rendering the apparatus inoperable and perhaps damaged, and the building could incur damage from broken water pipes.

The purpose of a vehicle exhaust extraction system is to remove harmful emissions from the interior of the building so that personnel are not exposed to atmospheric contamination when a vehicle's engine is started. Although the fire station is equipped with a through-the-floor vehicle exhaust extraction system, its effectiveness is questionable. The system must be actuated manually by throwing an electric switch before the apparatus is started. This procedure can easily be forgotten during an emergency response. Most of today's fire stations have been outfitted with a "source-capture system." This type of system has a flexible hose attached to the tailpipe of each apparatus. When the vehicle's engine is started, a sensor turns on the exhaust system and sends the exhaust directly from the tailpipe to the exterior of the building.

The fire station is not equipped with an automatic-start emergency standby generator. The station does not have Internet service, nor is there computer access. There is a lack of quality office space, lounge area, showers, and restrooms. It appears that the station does not meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

# FIRE SERVICE DELIVERY OPTIONS

## 1. INTER-LOCAL GOVERNMENT/JOINT SERVICE AGREEMENTS

### 1.1 FUNCTIONAL CONSOLIDATION

*Functional consolidation between two or more jurisdictions can take many forms, ranging from very simple agreements for sharing single resources, to complex agreements for combining the entire operations of two or more fire departments. No matter how a cooperative agreement is legally or financially addressed, it can be considered a functional consolidation if all parties are empowered to act fully and completely for whichever jurisdiction is affected by a given incident or situation. But even while cooperating functionally, the participants retain their legal and political identities. (Excerpt from the ICMA's "Managing Fire & Rescue Services)*

Perhaps the most identifiable model of "Functional Consolidation or Joint Services Agreement," can be found within the American fire service. The archetype known as Mutual Aid allows for reciprocal, cross-border responses between prescribed fire departments, in order to provide additional resources during moderate to large-scale emergency incidents. These resources are deployed on an "as needed" basis under mutual aid compacts.

This premise of sharing resources can be realized through other collaborative efforts as cities and towns seek to achieve the best value in public safety expenditures. Case in point is the fixed-facility needs for the Hallowell Fire Department. The decision will have to be made whether the city should renovate the current station or construct a new one, if Hallowell continues to operate its own fire department. At the same time, the Town of Farmingdale is in the process of locating and designing a new replacement fire station. There is an opportunity for the two communities to embark upon a joint project, where one strategically located fire station could address the needs of both communities. Hallowell and Farmingdale have had discussions regarding the sharing of one fire station in the past, but apparently this concept was not fully embraced at that time.

The Hallowell Fire Department and the Farmingdale Fire Department could stay autonomous, yet operate from a single facility. A well-designed fire station that delineates between the two could be constructed somewhere in either community near the shared border. One initial hurdle in pursuing a successful joint-venture construction project would be the location of the proposed facility. The fire station can only be in one community, which in and of itself may break the deal. There may be resistance to relocating a fire station at a distance from the current location(s). For Farmingdale, this proposal could move the department about two miles from its present location, and for Hallowell, a decentralized, jointly shared station could be about one mile from the existing building.

If the region's fire departments bolster their automatic-aid, cross-border responses, the opportunity may exist to redistribute fire stations. For example, the Gardiner fire station is approximately 0.5 miles from the border it shares with Farmingdale, and 0.9 miles from Farmingdale's fire station #1. The location of these two stations results in an overlap in coverage. If Gardiner responds automatically into Farmingdale, a new Farmingdale fire station could be relocated further north along the Route 201 corridor. For Hallowell, the closest Augusta fire station is approximately 1.8 miles from downtown. Fire apparatus from Augusta's manned fire stations could respond immediately into Hallowell (Note: The Augusta central fire station is where the primary ambulance is housed that responds to Hallowell's EMS calls).

Historically, sharing of fire facilities has not been the norm, but the concept is beginning to gain a foothold in emergency service delivery. For example, a keenly watched project between two Massachusetts cities (Revere and Malden) allowed for the construction of a single fire station that houses two separate career fire department engine companies. Although this station is located in Revere, it provides better response to areas of Malden that had previously been underserved. This unique undertaking was reportedly the first of its kind in the state.

Photo: The Overlook Ridge Drive fire station located in Revere, Massachusetts, a facility shared between Malden and Revere fire departments.

The sharing of fire stations (and personnel) by two or more communities overall is somewhat unusual. However, an exemplary model of just such a system in Maine is in the Cumberland County towns of Scarborough, Gorham, Windham, and Standish. Many of the fire stations in these communities house not just their own apparatus but those of a neighboring town as well. For example, the North Gorham fire station houses a pumper from Standish and a Gorham pumper/tanker. This Gorham station is located close to an outlying area of Standish near Saint Joseph's College that until 22 years ago was about eight miles from the nearest Standish fire station—a distance considered "unprotected" in terms of ISO criteria. Through an inter-local government agreement between the two towns, Standish improved the fire protection service to that area by placing one of its pumpers in the North Gorham fire station. Gorham did not have to buy a similar piece of apparatus, so instead bought a piece of apparatus that carries 4,000 gallons of water, a crucial need in a burgeoning area that is not serviced by the municipal water supply system.

Qualified fire fighters serving any one fire department of this four-community alliance are considered co-employees and may perform as such within one of the multi-jurisdictional stations (functional consolidation). If they respond to an incident in Standish, they are considered Standish employees, and if they respond to calls for service in Gorham, they are considered Gorham employees.

This program of sharing has negated the need to build additional satellite fire stations, minimized the need to increase the number of apparatus per department, and effectively and efficiently utilized the ranks of personnel in this fundamentally on-call system to respond to emergencies across the borders of each of the four involved communities.

To further this concept, the Town of Sebago, Maine is in the design phase of building a new fire station. The proposed 10,000-square-foot building will cause two obsolete stations to be decommissioned. When the new station becomes operational, the neighboring Town of Standish will relocate one of its pumpers to the Sebago fire station. This inter-local government agreement will have fire apparatus respond automatically from Sebago into areas of Standish that are beyond a five-mile response distance from any of Standish's fire stations. This new program would have Sebago fire fighters operating a Standish fire truck respond into Standish. This approach will reduce travel distances; response times; and in all likelihood insurance premiums in that "new response district" of Standish, even though the fire station is actually located in Sebago. The two towns have already agreed upon an equitable long-term cost-sharing formula.

Another tangible example of sharing resources is the cooperative agreement between Windham and Gorham, Maine. To further their established collaboration, an expensive piece of fire apparatus was purchased jointly with funding provided by both towns. In Windham, not only does the Lower Falls fire station house equipment from Gorham in addition to its own, but these two towns have jointly acquired an apparatus called a "quint" (combination aerial ladder and pumper)—costing nearly $700,000—which is kept in that shared Windham fire station. As you can see in the photograph (page 11), the names of both towns are emblazoned on the front doors of the fire truck.

Photo: Aerial Tower #3 was jointly purchased and owned by the towns of Gorham and Windham, Maine, and is housed in a Windham fire station.

**Difficulties/limitations/obstructions to functional consolidation of fire services for Hallowell**

- Disconcerting for members
- Awkward environment – having to two fire departments operate from one station
- Empirical, will not work here
- Tedious management due to an elaborate system

**Potential benefits**

- ✓ No loss of identity; departments involved stay autonomous
- ✓ Pragmatic
- ✓ Cost containment
- ✓ Improved facilities
- ✓ Better coordination

## 1.2 FULL MERGER—INTER-LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGREEMENT/FIRE DISTRICT

The Hallowell Fire Department could amalgamate with another service. Logistically, and for purposes of example only, Hallowell and Farmingdale could combine their hard assets and human capital, creating a single agency. With 13 Hallowell fire fighters and 20 from Farmingdale, the two communities could operate with approximately 33 fire fighters. This concept would take the previous option (Option 1.1) to the next level. Having one centralized fire station would allow the two departments to combine organizationally and functionally into a single, cohesive entity. This combining of forces could streamline the organization and make the best use of limited resources.

The two communities would have to determine the best route by which to merge the two departments, whether through an inter-local government agreement or by creating a fire district. (Note: To date, it appears that there are no true "fire districts" in the state of Maine. There are, however, many inter-local government agreements that qualify as joint-service delivery in the field of emergency services. Fire districts are more prevalent in other parts of the country, with several in the neighboring state of New Hampshire).

As stated in Option 1.1, both communities are considering fire station upgrade or replacement projects, and the opportunity may exist for one new facility that could address those needs collectively. This prospect would have a centralized fire station strategically located in the vicinity of the shared border along Route 201. The outlying Farmingdale fire station located on the Hallowell-Litchfield Road would remain, because it provides reasonable access to the western parts of Farmingdale and as well as Hallowell. Farmingdale's 11.5 square miles and Hallowell's 5.8 square miles comprise a geographical area consisting of 17.3 square miles, an area that could adequately be covered by one main station and one sub-station.

To further support this option, specific automatic-aid response agreements with the city of Augusta, the city of Gardiner, and the towns of Manchester and West Gardiner would provide a better deployment sequence into Farmingdale and Hallowell, advancing efforts to streamline and improve upon the delivery of fire protection services throughout the local area. (Note: Farmingdale has an automatic-aid protocol in place, in which the fire departments from Randolph, Pittston, West Gardiner, and Hallowell respond immediately on reported building fires in that town). The purpose of automatic aid is to have sufficient resources respond to emergency incidents from the onset. Having fire stations located strategically throughout a defined area, along with a predetermined response program that capitalizes on the strengths of a region's assets, allows for coordinated and efficient utilization of those resources in order to successfully mitigate emergency incidents. Achieving specific levels of emergency service deployment can improve a community's Public Protection Classification (PPC), which can have a positive effect on fire insurance premiums.

Additionally, a typical volunteer or on-call fire department in the state of Maine attempting to meet the intent of NFPA 1720: the "Standard for the Organization and

Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments," will likely have to work collaboratively with neighboring fire departments—now more than ever before. This performance standard, although not a mandate, is considered a benchmark for fire departments to follow in the quest to achieve an optimal level of service. This standard is based upon criteria that for Hallowell would cover (at a minimum) fire suppression organization, fire suppression operations, intercommunity organization, and special operations response.

Research for this study showed that a previous attempt to look into the feasibility of constructing one fire station between the two communities did not progress because of concerns about escalated fire insurance premiums. At that time, it was believed that decommissioning two stations and building a new one could adversely affect insurance rates if the new, consolidated fire station were built beyond the current locations in either community. If the two towns consider revisiting this opportunity, the ISO should be contacted directly to lend their technical expertise in determining any potential consequences of any plan to redistribute fire stations.

In Maine, there are several examples of inter-local government agreements, in which two or more communities are served by one fire department. The towns of Mapleton, Castle Hill, and Chapman, in Aroostook County, have been jointly served by its fire department of the same name since 1941. The three towns, which have a population base of about 3,000, actually function as a single entity under a Joint Board, which is made up of a representative from each community. A funding mechanism for the operating budget and CIP for the department is based upon the state's valuation and population per town.

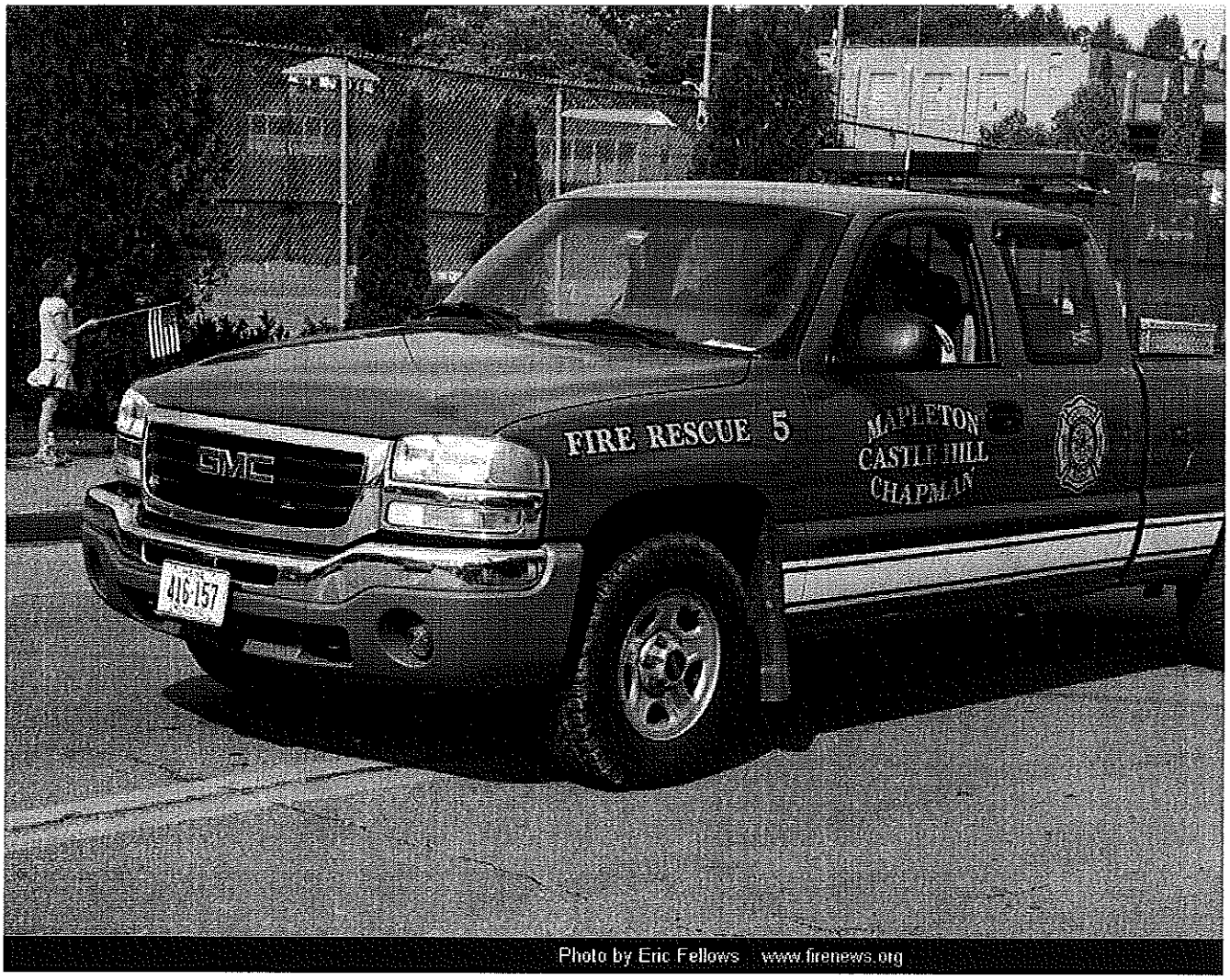


Photo: The Mapleton, Castle Hill, and Chapman, Maine, Fire Department

The York County towns of Lyman and Dayton, Maine, have been served by the Goodwin's Mills Fire Department Inc., a 501(C) (4) non-profit corporation for decades. To a certain degree, these two towns were provided with contract fire service from a private entity. However, the department is transitioning to joint municipal function before the end of 2011. Governance will come from a six-member board of fire commissioners with three members from each town. The cost-sharing formula has each community paying half of the operational and capital expenditures. A no-cost purchase and sale agreement will convey ownership of all assets to the municipalities. The department will operate from a single fire station with a response area comprised of 59 square miles and a residential population base of approximately 5,600.

Photo: The Goodwin's Mills Fire District ladder truck:
Lyman and Dayton, Maine

**Difficulties/limitations/obstructions to creating an inter-local government agreement/fire district for Hallowell**

- Idealistic
- Angst amongst fire fighters with pending change of status quo
- Immediate loss of those fire fighters not willing to participate in the new organization
- Differences in departmental policy and procedures
- Loss of independence and autonomy
- Cultural and/or socioeconomic disparity between communities
- Potential friction between factions
- Funding mechanism
- Differences in local related codes and ordinances, and their application
- Location of the new fire station, in one town or the other
- Creation of another layer of governmental oversight (Board of Commissioners)

**Potential benefits**

- ✓ Highest and best use of limited and diminishing resources
- ✓ Increased efficiency
- ✓ Streamlined agency and organizational uniformity
- ✓ Reduction in the number of facilities
- ✓ Less duplication
- ✓ Potential cost containment in future capital and operating expenses
- ✓ New enthusiasm (eventually) with change in organizational culture and blended assets
- ✓ Enhanced response to emergencies

# 2.0 LOCAL SERVICE DELIVERY

## 2.1 RETAIN THE HALLOWELL FIRE DEPARTMENT

The City of Hallowell could keep its charge of providing city-controlled, municipal fire protection. The city would direct the fire chief to continue managing the department. The city should decide what level of service it requires of the department, and what funding and capital outlay will be required to meet the current and future goals set forth.

From the beginning of this project, it was apparent that the fire department needs a modern facility from which to operate. The city will need to establish a course of action toward that end. However, a determining factor in future expenditures for fire protection is the sustainability of the municipal on-call department. A recruitment and retention program should be launched to boost the roster of fire fighters, not just in Hallowell but entire the region. The Kennebec Valley Council of Governments and/or the Kennebec County Emergency Management Agency could be the lead agencies in that undertaking.

Volunteerism in the American fire service sector is waning. According the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), there are now approximately 800,400 volunteer and on-call fire fighters in the United States, whereas in 2005 there were 807,150 and in 2001 there were 822,850 (Third Needs Assessment of the U.S. Fire Service, NFPA June 2011). These data are disconcerting. With fewer volunteer and on-call fire fighters, some fire departments have had to add some full-time personnel to meet the shortfall, thus becoming combination departments. In some cases, fire departments are closing the door and going out of business. The Byron, Maine, fire department ceased to exist in 2010 after declining membership and myriad other issues forced the inevitable. Ironically, this small department was successful in attaining a Federal Homeland Security Grant to purchase a fire truck in 2004. This truck was transferred to the Mexico, Maine, Fire Department in lieu of fees for contract fire protection for a period of ten years.

**Difficulties/limitations/obstructions to retaining the Hallowell Fire Department**

- Funding for impending CIP for a fire station project and future large-ticket items
- Recruitment and retention of sufficient numbers of fire fighters
- Lack of citizen involvement in the city department
- Continued effort required to meet and maintain mandated safety standards

**Potential benefits**

- ✓ Continuation of tradition
- ✓ Maintains the "esprit de corps" of the Hallowell fire fighters
- ✓ Local control
- ✓ Opportunity for Augusta citizens (and other non-residents) to be members of an on-call fire department

## 2.2 CREATE A PUBLIC SAFETY DEPARTMENT

The city could combine its fire department and police department into a "public safety department." A public safety director would oversee the division of fire services, and the division of police services and Emergency Management. The department could further include code enforcement, which to a degree can be considered a function of public safety.

The public safety director would have direct contact with the city's administration on a daily basis, as this would continue to be a full-time position albeit with additional responsibilities. The director would unify public safety services, ensure mandates are met, develop long-range plans, interact routinely with the city manager and the city council, and maintain liaison with related outside agencies in an effort to stay technically current with ongoing issues regarding public safety. The director would assist the city manager in obtaining available resources for promotion of public safety programs, and would review, interpret, and ensure implementation of public safety laws, regulations, and policies.

The intention of having a public safety director would be to develop a "holistic team management" approach to police and fire services, in order to promote public safety and welfare.

One benefit of having a full-time director overseeing the on-call fire department would be the opportunity to increase the number of members in the department by implementing a recruitment and retention program. Furthermore, police officers could be utilized to augment the number of personnel needed in fire suppression tactics.

The newly created public safety department could operate out of a public safety building. The city would have to locate or construct a facility to house the combined services. Currently, the police department operates from the lower level of city hall and the fire department out of the fire station at 132 Second Street.

Perhaps the most exemplary model of a department of public safety in the state of Maine can be found in the Penobscot County town of Hampden (population 7,257). Hampden has been operating a department of public safety for many years. Three separate agencies, police, fire, and EMS were merged about 17 years ago and placed under the authority of a public safety director. The incumbent director is intrinsically involved in each aspect of the department and is not merely a figurehead, which has made Hampden's operation a success. Although fire fighters do not perform police duties, police officers are trained to operate fire department pumpers and perform other ancillary functions, which frees up fire fighters to carry out other essential fire ground duties. Hampden also provides EMS, and police officers may assist fire fighters in treating patients and driving the ambulance.

**Difficulties/limitations/obstructions to creating a Public Safety Department for Hallowell**

- Usurping the authority of a stand-alone department(s)
- Loss of volunteer fire fighters disenchanted with reorganization
- Sheer resistance to change
- Differences between police services and fire services
- The fact that most public safety directors have law enforcement backgrounds
- A feeling that the fire department has been slighted and betrayed by the community

**Potential benefits**

- ✓ Single-source management and oversight of a blended service agency
- ✓ Potential for multi-role employees
- ✓ Shared facilities
- ✓ Full-time administrative leadership
- ✓ Multi-tasking by full-time police officers
- ✓ Enhanced accountability and interaction between department and the city manager/council

## 3.0 CONTRACT SERVICE

The City of Hallowell could engage the services of another community to provide fire protection. Logistically, and for purposes of example only, Hallowell could approach the City of Augusta with a Request for Proposal (RFP). The RFP would help determine the feasibility of having the Augusta Fire Department undertake fire protection services for Hallowell. To a certain extent, this option could be viewed as an extension of the ambulance service contract with Augusta. It is understood that Hallowell had previously considered contracting for police service with Augusta, but opted to retain its own police department.

The Hallowell fire department has a small roster of fire fighters, and one future concern may be the sustainability of an organization in which so few city residents participate. If not for those non-resident fire fighters, the future of the Hallowell Fire Department would be in question.

The Town of Fairfield, Maine provides fire, first-responder EMS, and EMA services to the town of Benton contractually. Together, the two towns cover nearly 84 square miles (Fairfield 55.0 and Benton 29.0) and have approximately 9,300 residents (Fairfield 6,700 and Benton 2,600). Benton is responsible for 22 percent of the Fairfield Fire Department's operating budget. (Historically, this percentage is correlated to the number of incidents the department responds to in Benton per annum.) Fairfield operates from one station in the downtown area, with a minimum of two full-time personnel on duty. Another unmanned, under-performing station is located on the outskirts of town and according to officials may soon be decommissioned.

Photo: Town of Fairfield, Maine, Fire Department. Fairfield provides contractual fire service to the neighboring town of Benton.

**Difficulties/limitations/obstructions to contract fire service for Hallowell**

- Loss of local control
- Inability to lock in to a long-term, fixed-cost program
- Potential for an unforeseen price spike in future contracts
- Loss of a historical component of the city's fabric with the elimination of the fire department
- Inability to gauge expected performance outputs of the contractor

**Potential benefits**

- ✓ Ease of managing a contract versus operating a department
- ✓ Liquidation of all local fire fighting assets
- ✓ No future capital outlay or infrastructure to maintain

# Appendix A

## AUTOMATIC AID

The region's fire departments are working cooperatively with regard to the deployment of fire suppression resources when an emergency call comes to report a building fire in any of the communities in and around Hallowell. A well-devised plan that meets the intent of the ISO regarding automatic aid should be developed and fully implemented. That process would require a predetermined deployment strategy that would be the responsibility of the dispatch center to follow. The program would take the guesswork out of trying to figure out what resources should be sent to an incident as it unfolds.

One benefit of an automatic aid program may be the avoidance of having to expand a community's fire department. The need for additional fire stations, apparatus, and personnel may be negated if a neighboring town's fire station can serve a proximal area of the community in need. To be considered "protected" by ISO standards, a property must be within five miles of a fire station. A number of Maine communities have areas that are more than five miles from the closest fire station within their community but are closer to a fire station in a neighboring town. Under a bona fide automatic aid program, the ISO will give credit to those areas of town that may be better served by another town's fire department, which can also reduce fire insurance premiums.

### *Definitions*

**Mutual aid:** Outside assistance provided by one community, rendered upon request from another community after a fire has occurred. Mutual aid can impact on the grading evaluations of water supply as defined in the ISO grading schedule.

**Automatic aid:** Outside assistance that responds immediately on the first alarm to building fires beyond a community's boundaries. Two or more departments that participate in an automatic-aid arrangement operate as one fire department for dispatching fire apparatus.

It is understood that automatic and mutual aid response between certain neighboring communities is currently in place. However, the program should be organized to fully comply with ISO standards of practice in order to attain maximum credit. Here again, authenticated programs that qualify the process could result in both cost savings and enhanced service delivery.