

2016 Hallowell Fire Services Committee

DRAFT Minutes: July 5, 2016 5:00 p.m. Hallowell City Hall

Members: Bob Duplessie, Chair; Dawn Gallagher, Dan Davis, Mike Grant, Sophie Gabrion, Sandy Stubbs

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Members Present: Bob Duplessie, Dawn Gallagher, Sophie Gabrion, Sandy Stubbs

Others Present: Nate Rudy

2016 Hallowell Fire Services Committee Mission Statement

To provide input and make recommendations that the City Council and citizens of Hallowell may use to establish municipal policies, including codes and ordinance, to retain and direct municipal personnel and to make public investments in training, equipment and buildings needed to deliver essential fire protection services most cost effectively. Our highest priorities are to prevent fires and other threats to public safety and to safeguard the lives and the public safety of Hallowell citizens and visitors. Toward these goals we will also explore opportunities for contracting with other communities to provide selected fire services to Hallowell or deliver services jointly with Hallowell.

Meeting Minutes:

The Committee approved the minutes of the April 5, 2016 meeting.

Agenda for meeting:

1. Fire Service Calls and Response Time

The committee discussed the average response times for fire service calls. Due to the on-call nature of the HFD and that the fire fighters have full-time jobs, Augusta is the first responder to our calls. The committee talked about but could not find any readily available solution given the cost and resources it would take to make the HFD full-time. In addition, it appears that only one firefighter lives in Hallowell, which naturally results in a longer response time.

2. Update on meeting with Augusta officials

Bob met with Bill Bridgeo, Augusta Fire Chief and Deputy Chief (Mayor Walker was not available for the meeting due to other work commitments). There were very preliminary talks about the options of having Augusta provide primary services. (The Hallowell Fire Dept. would provide back-up.) This could begin in January 2017 (or whenever the parties agreed). The cost would need to be determined and the expectation would be that the EMS remains the same as it is now (Augusta provides).

On a related note, Nate spoke with Bill Bridgeo about partnering with Augusta to provide more fire inspections and fire prevention services. Nate will participate in any future meetings with Augusta for fire services.

Augusta is currently building its new fire station on Leighton Road. If the fire station on Western Avenue is closed the trucks will be relocated to the other stations, one of which appears to meet the 1 ½ mile ISO guidelines.

The committee agreed that further talks with Augusta should happen. Talks should consider a multi-year agreement with the first year being a pilot program with the HFD to ensure that services go smoothly and also to perform a QA function. Also, since Hallowell trucks need replacing in the next several years, talks should include the notion that Hallowell would not need to replace its trucks in the long term.

3. Diminishing roster of fire fighters

Like other Maine communities, Hallowell is seeing a reduced number of people available as on-call fire fighters. We are down to 10-11 and we believe that only one lives in Hallowell. Most of the other communities are partnering with neighboring towns which the committee agreed we should continue to look into. Given the small number of fire fighters, the HFD cannot be expected to provide the increased need for service. We have new homes being built on the west side of 95 in the more rural areas, many of which have fire alarm services. This results in more calls which may not require fire services, but which we must respond to. Despite the best efforts of the HFD, the response times are longer than other fire departments that have a full time force. The committee talked about how to recruit new fire fighters, yet that is getting more difficult given busy lives and competing priorities.

4. Insurance

Nate will follow up with MMA to see how the work on getting an updated insurance policy for the fire station and artifacts is coming.

Next Meeting

Bob will schedule the next meeting for late August. The Agenda will be to continue preliminary discussions on partnering with Augusta and getting an update on the insurance.

Meeting adjourned at 6:10

Action Items for Next Meeting and Responsible Parties:

- Action: Nate will follow up with MMA on the insurance policy
- Action: Bob and Nate will meet with Augusta on next steps