

1 **Selectboard**
2 **Subcommittee on Fire Services**

3 May 15, 2019
4 SPECIAL MEETING

5 *All minutes are draft until approved by the Selectboard; please check future minutes for approval of these*
6 *minutes. Meetings may be videotaped; recordings are held by Green Mountain Access Television. GMATV info:*
7 *PO Box 581, Hyde Park, 05655; info@greenmountainaccess.tv or 802-851-1592*

8 Present: Dave Gagnier, Vice-Chair Hyde Park Selectboard, Roger Audet, Hyde Park Selectboard, Eric
9 Williams, Hyde Park Planning Commission; Hyde Park Emergency Management Coordinator
10 Carol Fano; and Roland Boivin, Hyde Park Selectboard; Hyde Park Town Fire Department Fire
11 Chief Ed Webster; North Hyde Park/Eden Fire Department Fire Chief John Savage; Ricky Morin,
12 Town of Eden Selectboard
13

14 Others Present: Ron Rodjenski, Town Administrator; Alyson Cusson; Randy Burns; Ryan Nolan; Chris
15 Jones; Brent Lanpher; Ethan Griggs; Marvin Whitcomb; GMATV did not videotape this
16 meeting.

17 Dave Gagnier opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

- 18 1. **Welcome** – Dave Gagnier welcomed everyone to the discussion on fire services. Dave stated that the
19 meeting was called to invite the fire chiefs to discuss the future of fire services provided by the Hyde
20 Park Town Fire Department and the North Hyde Park/Eden Fire Department. Dave stated that his goal
21 was to have a positive meeting and determine next steps.
- 22 2. **Fire Services Discussion** – Dave opened the floor to the fire chiefs to discuss current and future needs.
- 23 • Volunteers need to work out of the County reducing the number of daytime responders (Monday
24 through Friday being the most difficult period).
 - 25 • Dual tones started to help address the daytime responder issue.
 - 26 • Local businesses could help by agreeing to release workers for fire response.
 - 27 • The former sawmill operations provided most of the daytime responders in North Hyde Park.
 - 28 • Automatic Aid versus Mutual Aid is needed now.
 - 29 • Mutual Aid with surrounding departments helps spread the cost out without billing, such as the
30 Applecheek fire which was costly, but Hyde Park did not have to reimburse other responding
31 departments.
 - 32 • Wolcott & Elmore are also on Automatic Aid due to reduced staffing and limited equipment.
 - 33 • What can be done to improve efficiency of both fire departments and maintain current fire
34 services?
 - 35 • With Eden funding North Hyde Park/Eden FD at 50%, is Hyde Park getting short end of the
36 stick?
 - 37 • Looking at fire call numbers, the current split on the service areas responded to is close to the
38 cost share being followed now, so each Town is paying their fair share.
 - 39 • The State Department of Public Safety is working on adjusting the training minimums for fire
40 fighters and how training is offered to reduce the burden on volunteers.
 - 41 • The departments must have trained firefighters and the types of calls are substantially different
42 than 40 years ago requiring training on a variety of scenarios.
 - 43 • If untrained firefighters are allowed, then the fire chief is responsible for that decision.
 - 44 • Career firefighters are required to be certified as Firefighter 1, not volunteer firefighters.
45 Firefighter 1 certification requires over 200 hours of training. Finding new firefighters that are
46 able to leave their daytime job and complete training is a national issue.
 - 47 • Could the high school offer a firefighter class to encourage joining local departments?

- 1 • Vermont State Police and Sheriff provide no traffic control at motor vehicle accidents and will
2 call out the local fire department for that task.
- 3 • Calls to false alarms have increased but the Chiefs prefer not to adopt a local ordinance to fine
4 people as has been done in other nearby communities.
- 5 • The departments have good equipment and limited rosters so automatic aid is used.
- 6 • Encouraging new business growth could help build rosters along with public outreach.
- 7 • One central fire station would not work well as response times are increased.
- 8 • The call data for “truck on road” and “truck on scene” are important to the ISO (Insurance Service
9 Office) rating for each department. The ISO rating is one factor in determining fire insurance
10 premiums.
- 11 • 911 dispatch staff turns over frequently and the departments need to regularly provide LCSD
12 with call protocols to help reduce the number of dual tones.
- 13 • Why is Johnson Fire serving their area with two pumpers while Hyde Park & Eden have four
14 pumpers? Hyde Park & Eden ISO ratings are improved with each department having two
15 pumpers.
- 16 • Combining water storage with pumpers or rescue truck with an engine can be looked at but the
17 replacement cost of the combo-truck is significantly higher, so more information is needed.
- 18 • The type of equipment purchased needs to reflect the terrain being served.
- 19 • The Town of Eden is not being looked at to increase its share even though the costs might
20 appear lop-sided; the cost share is close to the average responses to each community.
- 21 • The departments both have a daytime responder issue that the Towns can collectively work on
22 by reaching out to the community to increase interest in volunteering for the department.
- 23 • Increase Daytime Roster & Cost Savings:
 - 24 ○ Reimbursing for training and travel costs could be considered.
 - 25 ○ Merging the departments into one.
 - 26 ○ Reducing some equipment so each department doesn’t bring identical tools to the scene
27 when only one is needed. Can buying a “tanker only” be eliminated in the future?
 - 28 ○ Not making changes to the current fleet, but as replacements come up, both departments
29 could work together on the specs before ordering.
- 30 • Some calls do not need to be dual tone.
- 31 • Both departments annually receive strong voter support for the current level of service and cost.
- 32 • Fire service demands are changing for the volunteers and the Towns are responsible to discuss
33 how those changes bring new options, including how to improve the rosters and what services
34 to provide in the future. It will take time so additional meetings will keep the discussion going.
- 35 • Public safety is why firefighters volunteer to protect life, property and the environment. Becoming
36 as efficient as possible without reducing service levels is the goal.
- 37 • Becoming efficient is the most likely the best option as seeing new industry is not likely. A county
38 service with paid firefighters is a likely long-term outcome if the trend of reducing numbers of
39 daytime volunteers continues, at a much higher cost to the community than volunteers.
- 40 • A plan can be developed to identify how the departments will maintain or improve the current
41 level of service. Currently, the calls continue to increase, and other agencies call the fire
42 department when there is an emergency; lost person, mountain rescues, etc. Some calls for
43 service received today would have been handled by the resident in the past. Rules, insurance
44 and regulations are also driving costs and calls. This includes what departments must report on
45 via paperwork following an incident.

- 1 • Can the Towns ask the State to cleanup accidents on state highways with their own traffic
2 control?
- 3 • The Eden-Hyde Park cost share should only be looked at if there is a reason to believe it is
4 wrong and voters have consistently approved the current cost share. Eden provides additional
5 capital funds to the NHP/Eden FD on top of the annual 50% share of the department's operating
6 budget amount.
- 7 • Another option is to start to bill insurance companies for the fire departments' cost at motor
8 vehicle accidents.
- 9 3. **Next Steps:** A meeting to discuss building rosters is needed. Dave will set a date soon. Dave thanked
10 everyone for attending and participating.
- 11 4. **Adjourn** – Motion by Roger A. to adjourn, seconded by Roland, so voted at 6:45 p.m.