

PIONEER VALLEY REGIONAL FIRE SERVICES FEASIBILITY STUDY



June 23, 2021

Chesterfield – Cummington – Goshen
Plainfield – Worthington



MRI OVERVIEW & LOGISTICS

- MRI is a New Hampshire based – New England focused Corporation that specializes in public safety. Over more than 20 years we have completed more than 175 similar projects.
- **Presenter:**
 - David Houghton, Project Manager
- Questions will be answered using the chat feature. Eric Weiss will monitor chat . Questions will be answered at the end of the presentation.



OUR GOAL



To create a report that becomes a useful guide and a resource that shapes a vision for the success of the study communities Fire and EMS services as these organizations approach the challenges and transitions of the future.

OVERVIEW OF THE CONSORTIUM

- Developed based on pressure to maintain the expected level of fire services.

	Total Area	Land	Water	Pop. Density
Chesterfield	31.2	30.8	0.4	38.6
Cummington	23.1	22.9	0.1	42.4
Goshen	17.7	17.4	0.4	53
Plainfield	21.3	21.1	0.2	28
Worthington	32.1	31.9	0.2	36

	Median Age	2000 to 2010
Chesterfield	54	1.70%
Cummington	38	-10.8%
Goshen	41	14.40%
Plainfield	42	10%
Worthington	42	-9.00%

	2018	2019	2020
Chesterfield	118	114	103
		-3%	-10%
Cummington	101	131	81
		30%	-62%
Goshen	92	102	105
		11%	3%
Plainfield	147	109	88
		-35%	-24%
Worthington	109	127	143
		17%	13%
Year Totals	567	583	520
Difference		3%	-12%

LEVEL OF SERVICE

Totals and Average over three years (2018-2020)

		Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Avg call per month
Chesterfield	Total	29.0	30.0	14.0	28.0	23.0	20.0	37.0	47.0	24.0	24.0	25.0	34.0	
	Avg	9.7	10.0	4.7	9.3	7.7	6.7	12.3	15.7	8.0	8.0	8.3	11.3	17.0
Cummington	Total	51.0	64.0	29.0	44.0	45.0	49.0	61.0	86.0	43.0	52.0	56.0	68.0	
	Avg	17.0	21.3	9.7	14.7	15.0	16.3	20.3	28.7	14.3	17.3	18.7	22.7	27.2
Goshen	Total	29.0	21.0	25.0	15.0	32.0	24.0	27.0	31.0	36.0	26.0	18.0	15.0	
	Avg	9.7	7.0	8.3	5.0	10.7	8.0	9.0	10.3	12.0	8.7	6.0	5.0	5.7
Plainfield	Total	27.0	28.0	23.0	28.0	18.0	27.0	26.0	30.0	18.0	55.0	27.0	37.0	
	Avg	9.0	9.3	7.7	9.3	6.0	9.0	8.7	10.0	6.0	18.3	9.0	12.3	9.6
Worthington	Total	32.0	35.0	32.0	27.0	28.0	30.0	34.0	42.0	32.0	36.0	20.0	31.0	
	Avg	10.7	11.7	10.7	9.0	9.3	10.0	11.3	14.0	10.7	12.0	6.7	10.3	11.9

	2018		2019		2020		Average	
Medical Emergencies	373	(66%)	342	(59%)	326	(63%)	347	(62.6%)
Fire Incidents	41	(7%)	39	(7%)	38	(7%)	39	(7%)
Motor Vehicle Accidents	35	(6%)	32	(5%)	30	(6%)	32	(5.6%)
Fire alarm & Co Alarms	57	(10%)	64	(11%)	48	(9%)	56	(10%)
Assists (service calls)	16	(3%)	22	(4%)	08	(2%)	15	(3%)
Not Classified	15	(3%)	20	(3%)	30	(6%)	22	(20%)
Hazardous Conditions	30	(5%)	64	(11%)	40	(7%)	44	(44.6%)



INCIDENT DISTRIBUTION

Incidents by the Day of the Week 2018 - 2020

		Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Total	Avg
Chesterfield	2020	17	11	14	13	15	16	17	103	15
Chesterfield	2019	14	16	19	11	17	21	16	114	16
Chesterfield	2018	17	16	14	18	20	10	23	118	17
Cummington	2020	18	13	3	8	16	14	9	81	12
Cummington	2019	17	19	15	18	17	19	26	131	19
Cummington	2018	10	11	18	12	14	20	16	101	14
Goshen	2020	18	11	16	17	14	17	12	105	15
Goshen	2019	15	17	11	18	10	16	15	102	15
Goshen	2018	17	14	10	18	6	13	14	92	13
Plainfield	2020	6	12	15	8	18	11	18	88	13
Plainfield	2019	10	18	12	12	18	21	18	109	16
Plainfield	2018	28	21	23	24	14	14	23	147	21
Worthington	2020	15	19	36	23	15	14	21	143	20
Worthington	2019	16	20	21	14	16	21	19	127	18
Worthington	2018	18	14	13	17	16	15	16	109	16

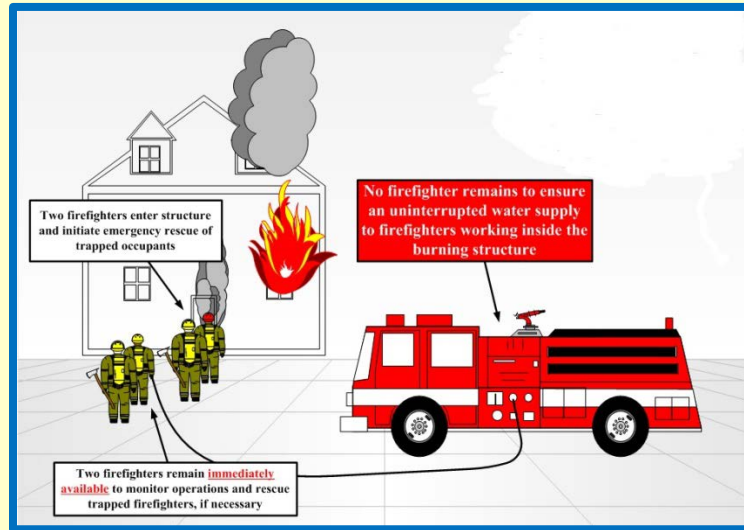
Response Times & Staffing

	2020	2019	2018
Chesterfield	11.65	12.44	12.05
Cummington	9.11	9.04	11.45
Goshen	7.41	8.06	8.11
Plainfield	9.2	9.31	11.0
Worthington	14.34	13.39	12.05
Average	10.34	10.44	10.93
Prior year decrease	.10	.49	-

Community	Total	Active	Chief	C2	Captain	Lt	FF	Explorer	Support	Other	
Chesterfield	21	16	1	1	2	2	14	1	0	0	
Cummington	18	13	1	3	0	1	11	0	1	1	Jr FF
Goshen	24	24	1	1	2	3	12	5	0	0	
Plainfield	20	20	1	1	2	2	14	2	1	0	
Worthington	15	8	1	1	2	2	9	5	1	0	
	98	81	5	7	8	10	60	13	3	1	



OPERATIONAL SAFETY



CRITICAL TASK	NEEDED PERSONNEL
Incident Command	1
Continuous Water Supply/Pump Operator	1
Fire Attack via Two Handlines	4
Hydrant Hook-Up, Forcible Entry, Utilities	2
Primary Search and Rescue	2
Ground Ladders and Ventilation	2
Aerial Operator (if Aerial is Used)	1
Establishment of an IRIT (Initial Rapid Intervention Team)	2
Effective Response Force	14/15

SEVEN MOST CRITICAL CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

- **Rapidly diminishing volunteer pool for fire operations, part of a nationwide trend. The cost associated with addressing this issue will be the biggest challenge ahead for all the stakeholders, both internal and external.**
- **Emerging generational differences that often produce a lack of understanding on both sides**

SEVEN MOST CRITICAL CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

- The time commitment required for certifications and continued training
- Tapping into the high school aged students and the ability to market the fire service.



SEVEN MOST CRITICAL CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

- What level of fire and EMS service will providers need to maintain in the future.
- Elongated response times based on lack of available staff
- The need to train in the new work force prior to the active members aging out.



OVERVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ *The report contains 39 recommendations, in the following slides we will highlight ten of those recommendations.*
- ▶ *Please refer to the consolidated listing of recommendations contained in the report and published as a separate document for a listing of all recommendations.*

TEN MOST IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ *Each department should conduct a thorough Community Risk Assessment and use the assessment as a tool to move the department into the future. Over the next year, plan should be developed to utilizes strengths to pursue opportunities and address weaknesses while mitigating threats. This should be an ongoing process that has member involvement and is moved forward by the officer core.*



TEN MOST IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Each community within the Consortium should be asked to identify an appropriate service level/Standard of Cover and if service gaps exist these gaps should be quantified and addressed through a collaborative effort by the Consortium.*
- *Every effort should be made to preserve the primary responder role of on-call personnel and expand membership within each individual Fire Department.*



TEN MOST IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- A manual of standard operational procedures or guidelines (SOPs/SOGs) to consistently guide fire and EMS operations throughout the area should be developed and implemented.



TEN MOST IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Towns either individually or jointly should apply for a federal SAFER grant for on-call recruitment and retention. This grant should be utilized to develop a comprehensive marketing program to attract new members, and provide incentives for the retention of those personnel, such as tuition reimbursement, health care benefits, tax abatements, etc. This competitive grant requires a lot of time and dedication to write and to be successful to obtain.*



TEN MOST IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- *The Fire Chief within each community should develop a social media presence and involve other members of the department in this endeavor. The use of social media like Facebook and Twitter are what the younger generation use and a very active social media account can reach out to this group of people for hiring.*



TEN MOST IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Each department should identify and prioritize its most critical equipment, training and/or operational needs, and apply annually to the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program. This should include making applications for apparatus capital replacement projects that will otherwise be funded through the town's capital budget and at town meeting.*



TEN MOST IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Creation of a quick reaction response team*
 - *Day time hours*
 - *Two people to immediately respond to calls*
 - *To be augmented by Call staff (NOT to replace call staff)*
- *Cost factors and logistical decisions will need to be planned out*
- *Part of the phased in approach (part of the report)*

TEN MOST IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- *In consultation and cooperation with its neighboring departments, all Fire Departments should enter into formal automatic aid agreements that specifies the number and types of resources that should be dispatched immediately to various types of reported emergencies, such as structure fires. These recommendations should be based upon a community-wide risk management process and/or pre-fire/incident plan.*



TEN MOST IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Fire Departments in the Consortium should set a realistic goal of recruiting at least 6 to 8 new members over the next three years, and simultaneously set a goal of increasing the overall force by a minimum of 10%. These personnel should be required to be properly trained and certified to the Firefighter I/II level, and preferably to the minimum of EMR level.*

TEN MOST IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- *The Consortium fire departments should ensure that all department members are trained certified to the minimal NIMS level required for their duties/responsibilities and ranks. In addition to the basic I-100/I-700 training mandated; it is MRI's recommendation that all officers should be trained to the ICS-300 level. All chief level officers should be trained to the ICS-400 level..*

IMPLICATIONS OF NOT TAKING ACTION

“Fire and EMS are in a crisis – right now. Simply put, the number of volunteer firefighters has fallen dramatically over the decades.”

- There is a crisis that is slowly building and has been for a considerable period.
- The reason that many stakeholders; municipal leaders, and the general public; do not see “evidence” is the long tradition in both the fire and EMS services of “getting the job done”.



CREATING AN ECONOMY OF SCALE

Working collaboratively Communities should explore the feasibility of standardizing many of the tools and equipment utilized by the Consortium fire and EMS providers to allow for cost savings generated through group purchasing arrangements.



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

- The fire and EMS service organizations are, for the most part, well-equipped, well-managed, and appear to be well-trained. When they arrive on the scene of an emergency, their personnel perform their duties very well and can be counted upon to complete assignments given to them.
- Most fire companies have a dedicated core group of members who are trying to make their organization one that provides dependable, high quality, emergency services to the municipalities that it serves.

They should be commended for their efforts and given the support they need to continue to be successful.



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

- The continuing trend of declining volunteerism will create simultaneous challenges that will stretch the provision of emergency services in many communities even farther. This will require a serious and objective look at the benefits that can be realized by consolidations or mergers of companies that are struggling into a new, stronger organization.
- Looking ahead, planned growth of the fire and EMS delivery system throughout the area is essential to provide a consistent service level to the diverse communities that make up the Valley, while keeping pace with increased demands for service caused by continued development.



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

- Change in the way fire and EMS services are delivered in the area is inevitable.
- Most of the stakeholders agree that the need for a different model is quickly approaching.
- It is our sincere hope that this report and the accompanying appendices will be used as a road map for improving the delivery of fire and emergency medical services throughout the Pioneer Valley.



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The citizens of the Pioneer Valley should feel confident that the fire and EMS organizations that proudly and faithfully serve the area are professional public safety organizations that are continuing to try their best to provide a high-quality level of service to the community 24/7/365.

We continue to be impressed with the dedication and commitment of the members of the departments.



FEASIBILITY STUDY

- Should be viewed as a roadmap for the future direction of the fire and rescue services over the next decade.
- Includes a SWOT analysis.
- Identifies timelines, critical tasks, and considers potential barriers to implementation.
- Living document that needs to be evaluated in an ongoing manner and updated, as necessary.



ROAD MAP TO THE FUTURE

- The team has developed 7 phases (steps) that should be considered moving forward.
- Each Phase has a timeline that can be adjusted.
- Budgeting was developed using current costs and will need to be adjusted as the program develops.
- Phases begin now and run to July 2026.



ROAD MAP TO THE FUTURE

- Total cost of all phases (using current figures) is \$1,243,663.36
- Each phase has outlined a Community cost based on a hybrid calculation.
- Other methods of calculating community costs sharing have been provided.

ROAD MAP TO THE FUTURE

- The future is what each community decides it is our hope to create an ongoing conversation that leads to service level based action.
- What services do they want to have and at what cost.
- An evaluation will need to be done now and as changes are made a continuous evaluation will need to be conducted to assure the goals are being met.



The Seven Phases

- **Phase 1- Start June 2021** – Use Eric Weiss and the PVPC to review the document and involve the Chiefs and elected officials to decide when and how to proceed.
- **Phase 2 – Start July 2021** - SOP Development, inventory, water supply plan, Enhance Automatic aid, Cooperative purchasing. Enlist a part-time coordinator. Cost = \$11,590.00



The Seven Phases cont..

- **Phase 3 – Start July 2022** Expand Coordinator role, 2 or more departments merge staff as a pilot program. Expand FF 1 training, Conduct joint training, develop props
Cost = \$20,000.00
- **Phase 4 – Start July 2023** Add Regional Rapid Response Force, expand coordinator position.
Cost = \$154,438.80



The Seven Phases cont..

- **Phase 5 – Start July 2024-** *Enter an Intermunicipal Fire Protection Agreement, create an Association, Board of Directors, create by laws, continue with staffing. Cost = \$157,754.40*
- **Phase 6 – Start July 2025-** *Increase Rapid Response Force to 2 FTE, increase part-time staffing, Continue all other programs. Cost = \$314,878.08*



The Seven Phases cont..

- Phase 7 – Start July 2026- Coordinator moves to 40 week, RRF program moves to 24 hour – seven day a week model. Cost = \$453,645.52
- With each phase a thorough evaluation needs to take place on a regular basis. Adjustments will need to be made.

THE CHALLENGE AHEAD

- Making the transition in service delivery from “old” way of doing business to a “new” and improved.
- Transitioning from a volunteer system to a more combination one.
- Integrating the independent entities into a singular, more centric and cohesive organization.
- Steadily increasing requests for service in a rapidly growing community.
- Long term development of the consolidated service delivery system, its officers, firefighters, paramedics and EMTs.



FINAL THOUGHTS

- Each of the 39 recommendations should be given careful consideration.
- View each recommendation as a goal.
- Approach the recommendations strategically & systematically to develop short- and long-term goals.
- Recognize each accomplishment.

QUESTIONS?



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