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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report documents the findings and recommendations for the Town of Chilhowie Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Study. The information contained is not to be construed as legal advice or as binding recommendations. This report is intended to provide guidance for the Town of Chilhowie and its fire and rescue stakeholders an opportunity to build on what is working well, while observing opportunities for improvement. Strategic focus in these areas will enhance the overall quality and coordination of fire-rescue service delivery to residents of the Town of Chilhowie and surrounding areas of Smyth County.

The study was requested by the Town Council in order to analyze several areas of responsibility within the Town's Fire and Rescue Services. The Study Committee was comprised of representatives from the Virginia Fire Services Board, the Virginia Department of Fire Programs, and the Virginia Office of Emergency Medical Services.

The findings and recommendations are organized into five working themes to include:

- Organizational Development
- Communication
- Training
- Budget and Administration
- Delivery of Services

These working themes provide a central focus for prioritizing the study's recommendations. They serve as a guide for the Study Committee to identify and evaluate measures that ultimately will improve the quality and coordination of Fire and EMS Services within the Town of Chilhowie and surrounding areas of Smyth County.

Below is a high-level summary of the findings and recommendations, which will be discussed further in the report.

Theme 1: Organizational Development (Page 10)

- ***Strategic Plan & Unified Vision:*** The Town of Chilhowie government should adopt and implement a strategic plan for its Fire and EMS Services, so it is able to improve performance levels and achieve lower cost of service delivery.
- ***Accountability Practices:*** The Town of Chilhowie should continue enhancing the Town's Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the Fire & EMS Department.

Theme 2: Communications (Page 13)

- ***Levels of Interdepartmental Communication:*** The Town of Chilhowie Government should consider hosting a strategic communication session with a professional mediator to resolve existing challenges and barriers amongst the other two towns,

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Marion and Saltville, and Smyth County along with adjacent localities such as Washington County.

- Dispatch System: The Town of Chilhowie must pursue efforts to work with relevant parties in upgrading the 911 Communications Center to include Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) services.

Theme 3: Training (Page 15)

- Coordinated Training Program: The Town of Chilhowie should pursue a comprehensive training program and assess it annually.

Theme 4: Budget and Administration (Page 16)

- Capital Improvements: The Town of Chilhowie should complete an annual needs assessment for the delivery of Fire and EMS Services in an effort to improve the capital improvement process.
- Standardization and Central Purchasing: The Town Administration should develop and implement a centralized purchasing option to leverage purchasing power and reduce operational expenses.

Theme 5: Delivery of Services (Page 18)

- Recruitment and Retention: The Town Administration should identify the needs for additional career and volunteer fire and rescue personnel to meet the service demands and citizen expectations. Local government must take a proactive role in accomplishing the task.

METHODOLOGY

For each task of the work plan, the Study Committee identified objectives, performed specific activities, and delivered project products. The following is an overview of the study process:

PHASE I: INITIATE PROJECT

Objectives: Initiation of Study

To initiate the study, the Study Committee began by gaining a comprehensive understanding of the project's background, goals, and expectations. This was carried out by identifying in detail the specific objectives for the review, and assessing how well the work plan would accomplish the objectives. In addition, the Study Committee set out to establish a mutually agreed project work plan, timeline, deliverables, and monitoring procedures that would support the accomplishment of all project objectives. The final study initiation step consisted of collecting and reviewing existing operational data and information on agreements along with relevant policies and procedures. Many of these review materials are included in the appendix of this study.

As part of Phase I, the Study Committee met with leadership from the Town of Chilhowie to establish working relationships, make logistical arrangements, and determine communication lines. During these meetings, the Study Committee discussed the objectives of the project and identified policy issues and concerns central to the study.

The meetings also allowed the Study Committee to obtain pertinent reports and background materials relevant to the review, such as current and historical staffing data, as well as a description of the current service delivery system and organization.

Based on this course of action, the Study Committee concluded this section of the study with a revised project work plan/timeline deliverable.

PHASE II: OBTAIN STAKEHOLDER INPUT

Objectives: Conduct Leadership Interviews & Capture Input from the Departments

The second phase of the study consisted of leadership interviews and department evaluations. The expectations were as follows:

- Identify expected service levels;
- Identify opinions of department officials concerning the operations and performance of the department;
- Identify issues and concerns of officials regarding fire and rescue services;
- Identify perceived gaps in existing service levels and new priorities in mission; and,
- Identify strengths and weaknesses as perceived by departmental personnel.

Each goal was realized with the support of the Town of Chilhowie's study project manager and Fire Chief, Dave Haynes. Chief Haynes assisted in finalizing the interview list and

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establishing a schedule that was reasonable, but more importantly convenient for the interviewees. All interviews were conducted during an allotted timeframe and a considerable amount of information was collected. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with majority of the Town of Chilhowie's Fire & EMS organizations as well as Town leadership including Town Manager, John E. B. Clark, Jr.

The Study Committee received descriptions of staffing and deployment responses in meeting service demands at targeted service levels. The discussions also provided a snapshot of personnel management contentions as well as concerns regarding service delivery. It is also important to note that the Study Committee visited the fire and rescue station that was staffed in an effort to support their research of the organizational functioning.

The deliverable for this section of the study work plan consisted of a thorough evaluation of the site visit data and the development of working themes to capture the team's assessment.

PHASE III: PREPARE ANALYSES AND DEVELOP CORE STRATEGIES

Objectives: Evaluate Current Trends and Prepare a Report

The third phase of the study work plan involved further investigation and understanding of the organizational structures, operations, limitations, achievements, and opportunities for improvement within the career and volunteer system. The activities that supported this process consisted of additional requests for information not already obtained in Phase I and II of the work plan. Data requests, made in this phase of the study, attempt to address any issues that emerged from the interviews, and further evaluate implications of the operational issues cited. Data obtained during the study process also assists the Study Committee in identifying issues influencing the current levels of service.

After receiving and critically evaluating information from the interviews and all supporting materials, the Study Committee began identifying the necessary critical action steps to achieve exceptional organizational functioning and uniform service levels throughout the Town of Chilhowie.

Each action step was selected to identify the changes in policies, facilities, apparatus and equipment to ensure that the Town would be capable of providing fire, EMS and rescue services at the desired level going forward.

The deliverables achieved in Phase III involved drafting a report that evaluated current trends in the services, recommended action steps for improvement, and the assignment of responsibility.

PHASE IV: PREPARE FINAL REPORT

Objectives: Prepare and Present Final Report

The final phase of the study involved documenting the results of all previous tasks into a written report with critical components, such as an executive summary, methodology, background, and findings and recommendations. Once completed, a draft report was shared with the designated locality project manager, Chief Dave Haynes to ensure the technical content is accurate. Upon receiving corrections, the Study Committee revised the draft report, as needed, to assist in the preparation and issuance of the final report.

The deliverables for the final phase of the work plan consisted of 1) a draft report, and 2) the final report.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

The Town of Chilhowie is a town in Smyth County, Virginia. The 2010 census population was 1,781, with an estimated 2017 of 1,729.¹ Smyth County is located in the lower portion of the Great Valley of Western Virginia. Interstate 81 runs through the county's central valley, and intersects with Interstate 77 approximately 25 miles northeast of the Town of Marion. Chilhowie is one of the three towns that are located in Smyth County; others include Marion (the county seat) and Saltville.² During the 2010 census, there were over 60% owner-occupied housing units.³ Moreover, the median household income as of 2017 was \$41,389 with over 25% of the population working within educational services, health care and social assistance. The remaining population is divided among construction, manufacturing, retail trade, and transportation.

The area is a prime Southwest Virginia location offering strategic market and distribution advantages, a strong manufacturing base, sufficient education, and recreation opportunities.⁴ Smyth County and its towns have been home to many growing and successful manufacturing operations. Presently, major employment is delivered by General Dynamics, Utility Trailer, Royal Mouldings, TRW, United Salt, Scholle Corporation, American Wood Fibers, Innovative Millworks Technologies, and Blue Ridge Knives; and many home-grown small businesses.⁵

The Town Council consists of six members elected to four-year terms and Mayor elected for a two-year term.⁶ Elections are held every two years with three alternating council positions and the Mayor running each time. The Mayor is the President of the Town Council, and is only allowed to vote to break a tie. The Town Council is responsible for assigning duties to the Mayor. Lastly, the Council appoints a Town Manager who serves as the chief administrative officer of the Town.⁷

¹ U.S. Census

² Virginia Economic Development Partnership – Smyth County

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Town Code

⁷ Ibid

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Theme 1: Organizational Development (Page 10)

- *Strategic Plan & Unified Vision:* The Town of Chilhowie government should adopt and implement a strategic plan for its fire and EMS services, so it is able to improve performance levels and achieve lower cost of service delivery.
- *Accountability Practices:* The Town of Chilhowie should continue enhancing the Town's Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the Fire & EMS Department.

Theme 2: Communications (Page 13)

- *Levels of Interdepartmental Communication:* The Town of Chilhowie Government should consider hosting a strategic communication session with a professional mediator to resolve existing challenges and barriers amongst the other two towns, Marion and Saltville, and Smyth County along with adjacent localities such as Washington County.
- *Dispatch System:* The Town of Chilhowie must pursue efforts to work with relevant parties in establishing Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) within the 911 Communication Center.

Theme 3: Training (Page 15)

- *Coordinated Training Program:* The Town of Chilhowie should pursue a comprehensive training program and assess it annually.

Theme 4: Budget and Administration (Page 16)

- *Capital Improvements:* The Town of Chilhowie should complete an annual needs assessment for the delivery of fire and EMS services in an effort to improve capital improvement processes.
- *Standardization and Central Purchasing:* The Town Administration should develop and implement a centralized purchasing option to leverage purchasing power and reduce operational expenses.

Theme 5: Delivery of Services (Page 18)

- *Recruitment and Retention:* The Town Administration should identify the needs for additional career and volunteer fire and rescue personnel to meet the service demands and citizen expectations. Local government must take a proactive role in accomplishing the task.

THEME 1: ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Town of Chilhowie Fire & EMS Department is an all-hazards department that provides fire suppression, rescue, technical rescue, emergency medical services, hazardous materials response, fire code enforcement, fire investigations and fire prevention activities.⁸ The Department operates as a combination system consisting of full-time, part-time and volunteer members.

According to interviewees, all fire personnel are certified in accordance to NFPA 1001, level 2 standards. EMS personnel are certified as Emergency Medical Technician, Basic, Advanced and Intermediate or Paramedic. As of November 2018, the locality had an ISO Rating of 3.

The Town of Chilhowie has adopted the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Codes - provisions of which control all matters concerning the design, construction, alteration, addition, enlargement, repair, removal, demolition, conversion, use, location, occupancy and maintenance of buildings.⁹ Additionally, the Town has adopted the Statewide Fire Prevention Code which contains regulations that must be complied with for the protection of life property from the hazards of fire and explosion.¹⁰ Such efforts exhibit a high level of consciousness within the evolving nature of the fire services.

Authority of Fire Chief: According to Chapter 26, Article II - Section 26-28 of the Town Code, at a fire scene within the Town of Chilhowie - The Fire Chief shall be the department head. He shall have responsibility and authority for all operations and administration of the department and shall be directly responsible to the Town Manager. The Fire Chief shall have full authority and complete supervisory control of all equipment and personnel in attendance at an emergency incident. In the absence of the Fire Chief, all such authority and control shall be vested with the next-in-rank officer of the department.¹¹ The Town of Chilhowie is within Smyth County – thus acting as one of seven fire departments and four rescue squads. The remaining entities are located in Marion, Atkins, Saltville, Adwolfe, Sugar Grove and Nebo. Although there are several entities listed above, there is no one unit that can act as a Fire and Rescue Association in an effort to provide decision-makers with valuable information relating to fire and EMS. The current 911 Committee is not effective and has no impact or interest within the fire and EMS system and its daily obstacles.

Recommendations:

1. The Locality must explore an opportunity to create an entity such as a Fire and Rescue Association which must serve as a steering committee for the Town Manager and Town Council.

⁸ Town Code Chapter 26 Article II, Section. 26–26. Established, Town of Chilhowie Fire & EMS Department.

⁹ Town Code Chapter 14 - Sec. 14-1. Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code adopted.

¹⁰ Fire Prevention Adoption

¹¹ Town Code Chapter 26, Article II, Section 26-28. Powers and Duties of the Fire Chief

- a. **Membership:** Membership should consist of all Smyth County fire and rescue departments, if feasible; therefore, it should include but not be limited to a minimum of one representative from Chilhowie, Marion, Atkins, Saltville, Adwolfe, Sugar Grove and Nebo.
 - a. **Role:** The entity would provide valuable contribution on decision-making efforts relating to emergency services operational and administrative procedures Countywide. Furthermore, it must function as a voice for all fire and EMS providers. It is therefore incumbent on all Town Administrations within Smyth County to encourage its service providers to pursue the effort.
 - b. **Codification of Association:** This Association should be codified through a local ordinance outlining specific responsibilities and expectations to improve the organizational cohesiveness and efficiency.
 - c. An organizational chart should be generated and distributed to all affected parties.

Strategic Plan and Unified Vision

There should be a long-term plan for the provision of fire and EMS services. The long-term plan must be able to address growth in service demands, and how the system will work to limit service interruptions and collaboratively work with its mutual aid providers. The Town of Chilhowie must consider revising and updating its current mission statement. See below for the current version;

“The members of the Town of Chilhowie Fire & EMS Department are dedicated to those who visit, live or work in the Town of Chilhowie and surrounding areas. Through our proactive service delivery, we strive to:

- Enhance the quality of life through prevention, education, and community involvement;
- Deliver responsive and caring emergency services;
- Mitigate emergencies and disasters;
- Prevent the loss of life and property.”

Moreover, the locality must pursue to establish a strategic plan that represents the collective efforts of the Town of Chilhowie’s leadership and nearby service providers, so it is able to identify the critical challenges it faces with clearly defined performance goals. Such evaluation will allow the locality to identify specific initiatives they must undertake so it is capable of delivering quality service to their citizens. Strategic planning must become institutionalized as an integral part of fire and rescue department and community resource

allocations.¹² The Town should explore hiring a professional facilitator with strategic planning experience to guide them through this process. The benefits of such pursuit have a great deal of impact across various realms including improving customer services for the constituents.

Recommendations:

1. The Town of Chilhowie government should adopt and implement a strategic plan for its fire and EMS services so it is able to improve performance levels and achieve lower cost of service delivery.
 - a. Stakeholders must each play an integral part in the development of this strategic plan in order to meet expectations and foster commitment.
 - b. Parties involved in the strategic planning process should analyze the gap between where the Town is and where it wants to be in the future and identify strategies to close this gap.
 - c. It is suggested that a neutral party facilitate this process.
2. Collaboratively, service providers and the Town's Administration must establish a system of measurable performance goals and objectives. These measures will serve as the basis for the strategic plan.
 - a. Strategic plans should identify immediate, intermediate and long-term goals with reasonable target deadlines.
 - b. The Town Council should routinely review the achievement of these performance measurements and alleviate any barriers to their completion.
3. In developing its strategic plan, the Town of Chilhowie should continue their commitment to using incident analysis and reporting, to include the Virginia Fire Incident Reporting System (VFIRS).
 - a. The Town of Chilhowie's commitment to reporting will ensure that they have reliable data to appropriately assess performance and develop a plan to address operational and capital funding needs, or equipment, apparatus and facility needs.
 - b. By analyzing fire and rescue incident data and potential community hazards, a plan can be developed to improve deployment of resources, placement of sub stations, and the number of personnel needed for response and prevention efforts.
 - c. Access to the data collected should be provided to the rescue squad and fire department so they are able to get a comprehensive understanding of their performance.

¹² Preserving and Improving the Future of the Volunteer Fire Service, March 2004

- d. The use of data such as VFIRS can be contributing factors to performance measurement and can further enable stakeholders to assess the effectiveness of the strategic plan.

Performance measurements will enable the Town Council an ability to evaluate the performance of its service providers tasked with accomplishing the goals and objectives of the strategic plan. The performance measurement will exhibit clear association between performing, planning, spending and results. The Town of Chilhowie will have the opportunity to evaluate its mission, vision and performance objectives through three perspectives: financial accountability, constituent priorities and internal processes.

Accountability Practices

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), a standard operating procedure is “an organizational directive that establishes a standard course of action.”¹³ Standard operating procedures (SOPs) are written guidelines that explain what is expected and required of fire service personnel in performing their jobs.¹⁴

The Town of Chilhowie Fire & EMS Department is applauded for their efforts to create and utilize a set of comprehensive Standard Operating Guidelines. Based on the study team’s observation, the guidelines are consistent with the intent of NFPA 1561: Standard on Fire Department Incident Management Systems. Future efforts to enhance would be beneficial and has the potential to further improve service delivery and operational safety.

THEME 2: COMMUNICATIONS

The Town of Chilhowie’s Fire & EMS Department lacks proactive steps to ensure communications to citizens. The Fire Department’s website has relevant information such as call volume among other items; however, it took the study team a significant amount of time to reach chilhowiefire.org – the Town’s website does not provide a clear path to the Fire Department’s website. Improvement of the current level of communication has the potential to create a more cohesive relationship with citizens. An effective communications process will improve the strategic plan and clearly define expectations for the community.

Levels of Interdepartmental Communications

During the site visit, the study committee observed a need for improved communication among the towns and Smyth County Government. Lack of effective personal and professional communications can have the potential to affect the application of fire and rescue activities within the Town of Chilhowie. The burden lies with administrators to resolve any conflicting perception and ensure an open and honest dialogue is established. The Town must identify and resolve the breakdowns in communications and work tirelessly to educate all members.¹⁵

¹³ Developing Effective Standard Operating Procedures for Fire and EMS Departments, December 1999

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Leading the Transition in Volunteer and Combination Fire Departments, November 2005

Recommendations:

1. The Town of Chilhowie Government should consider hosting a strategic communication session with a professional mediator to resolve existing challenges and barriers amongst the other two towns, Marion and Saltville, and Smyth County along with adjacent localities such as Washington County.
 - a. The objective of this work session should be to develop strategies to overcome identified barriers. It should further create and implement an effective communication system involving fire and rescue departments from the three towns and county.
 - b. The Town must develop an efficient and effective communication model to ensure all stakeholders within the public safety community have input into long-term plans and decisions.
 - c. This communication model must ensure reliable documentation related to public safety strategic planning and development. It must be disseminated and received by all public safety stakeholders.
 - d. The communication session should further serve as an opportunity to clarify and establish countywide division of labor.
2. The Town should explore additional ways to communicate with its fire and EMS personnel. Some options include producing an annual report, developing a quarterly newsletter and utilizing social networking avenues.
3. The Town should take advantage of pre-existing fire and life-safety information available through state and federal organizations. Public fire and life-safety education resources are available at the following locations:
 - i. Virginia Department of Fire Programs:
http://vafire.com/fire_safety_education
 - ii. Virginia Fire and Life Safety Coalition: <http://www.vflsc.org>
 - iii. The Home Safety Council: <http://www.homesafetycouncil.org>
 - iv. National Fire Protection Association: <http://www.nfpa.org>
 - v. Virginia Department of Forestry:
<http://www.firePowhatanvirginia.org>
 - vi. Virginia Department of Emergency Management:
<http://www.vaemergency.gov/social-media/alert-localities>

Dispatch System

The Dispatch System is located within Smyth County Sheriff's E-911 Office.¹⁶ The facility is responsible for all incoming emergency and non-emergency communications; moreover, it is staffed 24/7, and is capable of answering calls-for-service from law enforcement, fire and EMS, and animal control – across the County (including towns). The E-911 center is equipped with an automated Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system; a dispatch mapping system, and enhanced wired line 911, which allows Communications Officers to immediately obtain the 911 caller's address.¹⁷

According to interviewees, the dispatch office is applying modern communication, such as recording and mapping technologies, so it is able to assist its public safety entities; however, the dispatchers are not Emergency Medical Dispatch qualified. A comprehensive EMD program reduces liability by providing consistent dispatch instructions, and can further help meet the growing public expectation that when citizens call 911, appropriate medical care will be provided as quickly as possible.¹⁸

Recommendations:

1. The Town of Chilhowie must pursue efforts to work with Smyth County to ensure an Emergency Medical Dispatch system is utilized.

THEME 3: TRAINING

Development of important skills is the basis for safety and improving services received by the citizens. The Town of Chilhowie Fire & EMS Department works hard to ensure the sufficient offerings of mandated and relevant training. The Chilhowie Regional Fire Training Center is used for training exercises and is available as a regional training center. The Department provides life safety programs for its citizens, and further inspects residences, businesses and industries for fire hazards.

Coordinated Training Program

Although the Town appears to be trying its best to utilize the most relevant best practices in delivering training – there is no coordinated training system in place within Smyth County. In essence, there are no opportunities that would enable towns such as Chilhowie an ability to train with relevant entities. The study team was advised that the Town of Chilhowie Fire & EMS Department established a Fire-Rescue Academy on January 12, 2019. This is the first attempt at standardized training in the County.

¹⁶ Smyth County Emergency 911

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ APCO Institute's comprehensive Emergency Medical Dispatch Program

Recommendation:

1. The Town of Chilhowie should pursue a comprehensive training program and assess it annually. Such assessment will enable the adoption of warranted changes.
 - a. The Town Council should appropriate all the necessary resources to fulfill the Town’s identified training challenges and fully train existing firefighters and rescue personnel.
 - b. The Town of Chilhowie should continue supporting further development of the Regional Fire Training Center to enhance training opportunities.
2. Joint or collaborative training opportunities must be pursued by the Town of Chilhowie and Smyth County.

THEME 4: BUDGET AND ADMINISTRATION

According to the Town’s budget, the locality has diverse revenue streams derived from ambulance billing income, community donations, Smyth County contribution and EMS Two-For-Life to name a few.¹⁹ The revenues do not include the Town of Chilhowie’s contribution. Some major revenue streams include;

1. Smyth County Board of Supervisors Allocation - \$66,040
2. Ambulance Billing Income - \$320,000
3. Grants - \$2,384
4. Aid-to-Localities (Fire Programs Fund) - \$15,500
5. EMS-Two-For-Life Funds - \$6,100

Per the Budget to Actual content provided by the Clerk’s office, the revenue for the Town of Chilhowie Fire & EMS Department is about \$419,534 (FY18/FY19) and has an expenditure of \$626,858 (FY18/FY19). The balance of funds for the Fire & EMS Department are derived from the General Fund of the Town of Chilhowie. It should be noted that approximately 67% of the operating costs for fire and EMS services are generated by the Department.

The Fire & EMS Department submits a separate revenue budget to the Town Administration each year. It was noted that Fire & EMS Department revenues are shown within a separate section of the Town’s Budget. Based on the study team’s evaluation, it is unlikely that fire and EMS services can operate solely on revenues from billing and outside sources such as Aid-to-Localities or EMS’ Four-For-Life-Funds without general fund monies.

¹⁹ Town Budget – FY19

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Capital Improvement Plan

Interviewees were appreciative of the Town's foresight in establishing a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for the replacement of fire apparatus in 2004. As of 2019, The Town of Chilhowie Fire & EMS Department operates the oldest fleet of apparatus in the history of the Town. As indicated by interviewees, usually, a new engine was purchased every 13-15 years (1940, 1952, 1967, 1980, 1992, and 2004). 2004 was the most recent time that the fleet was upgraded in whole (engine, aerial, tanker). As of 2019, the entire fire apparatus fleet will be 15 years old.

Recommendations:

1. The Town of Chilhowie should complete an annual needs assessment for the delivery of fire and EMS services and ensure it improves the base funding allocation system centered upon the priorities set through the needs assessment and quantitative data.
 - a. Monies should be allocated based on the most critical needs and the highest call volume data.
 - b. It is recommended that the Town continuously evaluate whether it is getting the appropriate return on its investments.
2. The Town of Chilhowie should continue its established practice of planned replacement of fire and EMS apparatus to take advantage of changing technologies and avoid increasing maintenance costs.

Standardization and Central Purchasing

There is no centralized purchasing system for fire and EMS equipment in all of Smyth County, including the Town of Chilhowie. The Town of Chilhowie does use Virginia state contracts for purchasing items such as staff vehicles, tires, etc. The Town has also use tag-on contracts for purchasing fire and EMS apparatus. It is imperative that the Town pursue centralized purchasing.

Standardization and Central Purchasing will not be without difficulty but is necessary for delivering cost-effective and efficient fire and rescue services. Group purchasing is highly recommended. The use of standardization of future equipment and apparatus purchases can potentially have cost-saving.

Recommendation:

1. The Town Administration should develop and implement a centralized purchasing option to leverage purchasing power and reduce operational expenses.
2. Develop specifications for central purchase activity areas. Below are suggested areas/activities for central purchasing:

- a. Personal Protective Equipment²⁰ and Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus²¹
Ensure all departments are purchasing compatible equipment that meets National Fire Protection Association standards and are reaping the same cost savings.
 - b. Equipment/Apparatus – The Emergency Services Committee should survey each department to determine if equipment commonalities exist. As previously mentioned, common apparatus specifications should be created and contracted, allowing organizations to make customizations without overly altering the specs, and reap the benefits of group purchasing for routine maintenance and replacement of aging fire and EMS apparatus.
3. The Town of Chilhowie should exert efforts in identifying specifications for future apparatus purchases (considering the cost-effectiveness of regional contracts), and replacement using the following national consensus standards:
- a. NFPA 1901 - Standard for Automotive Fire Apparatus ²²
 - b. NFPA 1911 – Standard for Inspection, Maintenance, Testing and Retirement of In-Service Automotive Fire Apparatus ²³

THEME 5: DELIVERY OF SERVICES

The Department’s 20 members consist of two career, nine part-time and nine volunteer members. The staff appears to be self-sufficient in their efforts to provide fire suppression, emergency medical services, prevention, and public fire and life safety education services to its residents. Additionally, Chilhowie’s website provides a Fire Prevention Code document which explicitly cites that the Town of Chilhowie Fire & EMS Department has the responsibility for enforcing the Statewide Fire Prevention Code (SFPC).

Town leadership indicated that the majority of their calls for service are outside the corporate limits of the Town of Chilhowie. Smyth County does provide funding for the Fire & EMS Department (\$66,000.00), while Washington County does not. Based on the Study Team’s observation, the cost of service delivery relative to revenue and/or contribution is unequal.

Equipment: The Town owns; 1 Engine, 1 Tanker, 1 Quint, 1 Brush Truck, 1 Heavy Rescue, 2 Ambulances, 1 Command Vehicle, 1 Fire Marshal Vehicle and 2 Swift Water Rescue Boats.

Recommendation

²⁰ See NFPA 1971 Standard on Protective Ensembles for Structural Fire Fighting and Proximity Fire Fighting

²¹ See NFPA 1981 Standard on Open-Circuit Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) for Emergency Services

²² NFPA 1901, <http://www.nfpa.org/aboutthecodes/AboutTheCodes.asp?DocNum=1901>

²³ NFPA 1911, <http://www.nfpa.org/aboutthecodes/AboutTheCodes.asp?DocNum=1911>

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1. The Town of Chilhowie should pursue efforts to engage Smyth County and Washington County as it relates to delivery of services and funding contribution.
2. The Town of Chilhowie should continue to explore the use of volunteers in support positions such as clerical roles.

Recruitment and Retention

The Town of Chilhowie, similar to other parts of the Commonwealth, requires consistent support from local government to help with recruitment and retention. The Town's Government in collaboration with Smyth County must actively recruit to ensure that an effective successive planning process is present. The Town of Chilhowie Fire & EMS Department's website has a detailed membership application outlining the membership process requirements including a physical agility test. This enables any individual interested in pursuing a career in fire and EMS services within Chilhowie an opportunity to read and review content without endless inquiries. The internet has become a place where locally-oriented individuals share material directly with specific audience groups.²⁴

Recommendations:

1. The Town Administration should identify the needs for additional career and volunteer fire and rescue personnel to meet the service demands and citizen expectations.
 - a. Through improvement of fire and rescue incident data analysis and strategic planning, the Town of Chilhowie should be able to determine fire and rescue personnel needs, equipment needs and deployment.²⁵
2. Hire an official Recruitment and Retention Officer. This individual could be assigned additional responsibilities.
3. Adopt an official recruitment and retention program.
 - a. This recruitment and retention program should take into consideration the needs of current members and identify motivational factors to keep this population engaged and committed to the fire and rescue service.
 - b. The Town should set annual recruitment and retention goals and concentrate its efforts and resources to achieving these benchmarks. The plan should be included in the strategic plan.

²⁴ Part 5: The role of the internet – Pew Research Center – Internet & Technology

²⁵ International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) - "Make Better Decisions: Put Your Data to Work," <http://www.iafc.org/MemberCenter/OnSceneArticle.cfm?ItemNumber=5840>. This article provides an example of how multiple sources of data can be incorporated into fire and rescue department planning.

4. Find low-cost methods to enhance public-education efforts such as open houses and creating PSAs.²⁶
 - a. Improve the visibility of the Town of Chilhowie fire and EMS services in the community.
 - b. Continued use of word-of-mouth recruiting is effective. Each member should be encouraged to inform their respective community network about the Town of Chilhowie Fire & EMS Department's training and educational opportunities.
5. In addition, the Town of Chilhowie Fire & EMS Department should take advantage of pre-existing recruitment and retention information. Resources may be downloaded at the following locations:
 - a. Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
 - i. <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/OEMS/Agency/Recruitment/index.htm>
 - ii. http://www.vdh.state.va.us/OEMS/Files_page/Locality_Resources/EMWorkbook_0405.pdf
 - iii. http://www.vdh.state.va.us/OEMS/Files_page/Locality_Resources/EMWorkbook3.pdf
 - b. BecomeEMS.org - <http://www.becomeems.org/>
 - c. Fire/Volunteer (Guide) - <http://www.nvfc.org/resources/rr/retention-recruitment-guide/>
 - d. Fire/Volunteer (Video) - <http://www.nvfc.org/files/documents/Retention-and-Recruitment-Volunteer-Fire-Emergency-Services.wmv>.
 - e. 2004 Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission Report. "Review of EMS in Virginia" Part III of the report; *Recruitment, Retention and Training of EMS Providers* (Page 55) – <http://leg2.state.va.us/dls/h&sdocs.nsf/4d54200d7e28716385256ec1004f3130/87c75ac37063994d85256ec500553c41?OpenDocument>

²⁶ Fire Service Image Task Force Report: Taking Responsibility for a Positive Public Perception 15

The foregoing is a recommendation authorized pursuant to Va. Code 9.1-203.A.4 and is not to be construed as legal advice or as a binding recommendation.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix 1: Town of Chilhowie Letter of Request – June 2018

APPENDIX 1: TOWN OF CHILHOWIE LETTER OF REQUEST



TOWN OF CHILHOWIE

Mayor: Gary L. Heninger
Council: Donna S. Blevins
Billy L. Clear
Alan W. Counts
Charles E. Doane
Emily B. Dungan
F. Brent Foster

325 East Lee Highway
P.O. Box 5012
Chilhowie, Virginia 24319
Phone (276) 646-3232
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www.chilhowie.org

Town Manager: John E. B. Clark, Jr.
Clerk Treasurer: Marlene L. Henderson
Chief of Police: Steve Price
Director - Public Works: James B. Keen
Fire Chief: C. David Haynes

June 18, 2018

Mr. Mohamed G. Abbamin, MPA
Policy Manager
Virginia Department of Fire Programs
1005 Technology Park Drive
Glen Allen, Virginia 23059

Re: Comprehensive Analysis Study of Fire/EMS System Request – Town of Chilhowie

Dear Mr. Abbamin;

This purpose of this letter is to request the Virginia Fire Services Board (VSFB) conduct a review of the fire and EMS system in the Town of Chilhowie.

The study has the support of the Town of Chilhowie Council and was formally approved at the Council's June 14, 2018 meeting.

The requested areas of concentration of this study include:

1. Organization
2. Review of Town Codes relevant to providing fire and EMS services
3. Administration and Budget
4. Training
5. Delivery of Services
6. Apparatus, Facilities and Equipment
7. Town of Chilhowie Fire Marshal's Office
8. Review of Town Codes relevant to enforcing the VSFPC

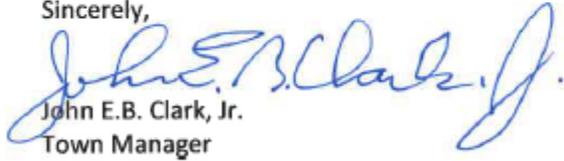
Department of Fire Programs
JUL 09 2018
Administration

It is the Council's intent to have a complete and thorough review of the aforementioned areas of concentration and a comprehensive list of recommendations to enhance the delivery of services to the citizens of the Town of Chilhowie and surrounding areas.

Mohamed G. Abbamin, MPA
Comprehensive Analysis Study of Fire/EMS Services – Town of Chilhowie
June 25, 2018
Page 2 of 2

Your consideration of this request at the next available opportunity would be greatly appreciated. I am available to respond to any questions you may have regarding this request. I can be reached by phone at 276-646-3232 or by e-mail at chilhowie.townmgr@chilhowie.org.

Sincerely,


John E.B. Clark, Jr.
Town Manager