

# VIRGINIA FIRE SERVICES BOARD



## A Report of Findings and Recommendations:

### **Greene County Fire & EMS Study**



**August 2020**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

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Greene County Board of Supervisors

Greene County Administrator

Greene County Director of Emergency Services

Stanardsville Volunteer Fire Company

Dyke Volunteer Fire Company

Ruckersville Volunteer Fire Company

Greene County Volunteer Rescue Squad

Greene County Sheriff's Office

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report documents the findings and recommendations for the Greene County 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 Greene County 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 Greene County and the surrounding areas.

The study was requested by the County Administrator in order to analyze several areas of responsibility within the Counties 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 Greene 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 12)***

- ***Centralized Authority for Fire and Rescue:*** Greene County should examine the feasibility of hiring a career Chief/Director of Fire and EMS/Rescue Services as the central position responsible for the coordination and authority for all fire and rescue issues.
- ***Strategic Plan & Unified Vision:*** Greene County government should adopt and implement a strategic plan for its fire and EMS services, so it is able to improve performance levels utilizing measurable data that is collected in collaboration with the emergency 911 dispatch service.
- ***Accountability Practices:*** Greene County should create countywide Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the Fire & EMS Department.

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.

- Emergency Services Board: The County should improve the effectiveness of this board by providing bylaws and structure through the Board of Supervisors.
- Emergency Medical Services: The County should work with the Office of Emergency Medical Services to explore additional options to move forward with a local career Emergency Medical Service by using the funds previously allocated for the UVA contract.

**Theme 2: Communications (Page 17)**

- Levels of Interdepartmental Communication: The Greene County Government should consider hosting a strategic communication session with a mediator to discuss ways to improve communication and continuity for countywide emergency services.
- Dispatch System: Greene County 911 dispatch should submit monthly dispatch statistics to aid the locality in gathering information to help determine needs of departments. While also continuing the dissemination of information to the county staff to increase transparency. Dispatch services should be assessed on a regular basis using standard quantifiable performance measures and emergency call data, to determine further staffing and resourcing needs.

**Theme 3: Training (Page 19)**

- Coordinated Training Program: The County should pursue a comprehensive joint training program between all three volunteer fire companies to ensure proper basic training and assess it annually to ensure that it meets the needs of departments. The County should encourage the three volunteer fire departments to collaborate in local training opportunities.

**Theme 4: Budget and Administration (Page 20)**

- Budgeting: Greene County should implement an annual audit of all fire and EMS providers with line by line budget reports for all allocated county public funds.
- Greene County should complete an annual needs assessment for the delivery of fire and EMS services in an effort to determine proper funding based upon quantitative data and analysis of call data.
- Standardization and Central Purchasing: Greene County Administration should develop and implement a centralized purchasing option to leverage purchasing power and reduce operational expenses to departments

### **Theme 5: Delivery of Services (Page 22)**

- ***Emergency Medical Services:*** The County should work with the Office of Emergency Medical Services to explore additional options to move forward with a local career Emergency Medical Service by using the funds previously allocated for the UVA contract
- ***Recruitment and Retention:*** County 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. While developing new recruitment strategies to increase volunteer workforce.

### **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 Greene County 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 Greene County Emergency Services Director Melissa G. Meador. Mrs. Meador assisted in finalizing the interview list and 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 all County Fire & EMS organizations as well as County leadership including County Administrator, Mark Taylor

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 all three volunteer departments in Greene County to include Stanardsville, Dyke, and Ruckersville Fire Stations to inspect fire apparatus and equipment.

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 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 Greene County.

Each action step was selected to identify the changes in policies, facilities, apparatus and equipment to ensure that the county 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 Emergency Services Director, Melissa G. Meador, 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

Greene County, Virginia is a fast growing gateway between dynamic Northern Virginia and Charlottesville. Greene is a rural county with its main government seated in Stanardsville, other areas include Ruckersville, Quince, St. George, Dyke, and a portion of Barboursville. With a population of roughly 19,819 it has seen some growth in recent years as people move into the County from other areas. Greene County is 157 square miles; the terrain is described as mountainous and hilly. Centered at the crossroads between two major highways, U.S. 29 and U.S. 33, Greene County is only 100 miles southwest of Washington, DC, 20 miles north of downtown Charlottesville and 78 miles northwest of Virginia's capital city, Richmond. Greene County borders five 5 Jurisdictions; Page, Madison, Orange, Albemarle and Rockingham Counties. Communications personnel dispatch among sectors to include Stanardsville, Ruckersville and Dyke.

Greene County is a rising center for commercial and light industrial development. Its central location makes it a convenient tourist hub, providing a relaxing setting, picturesque mountain views, and a temperate climate with welcoming inns, select wineries, and gracious dining.

The Board of Supervisors is the main legislative body for the County of Greene and is comprised of five members elected by voters, one member from each magisterial district and one at-large member. Supervisors are elected for four year terms. At the first meeting of the year, the Board selects a Chairman and Vice Chairman.

The Board of Supervisors has both administrative and legislative responsibilities. The powers and duties of the Board of Supervisors include review and approval of the County budget and appropriation of funds; levying County taxes; adoption of county policies and ordinances; approval and enforcement of zoning and other land use ordinances; and additional responsibilities as set forth by the Greene County Code of Ordinances and the Commonwealth of Virginia State Code.

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### ***Theme 1: Organizational Development (Page 12)***

- *Centralized Authority for Fire and Rescue:* Greene County should examine the feasibility of hiring a career Chief/Director of Fire and EMS/Rescue Services as the central position responsible for the coordination and authority for all fire and rescue issues.
- *Strategic Plan & Unified Vision:* Greene County government should adopt and implement a strategic plan for its fire and EMS services, so it is able to improve performance levels utilizing measurable data that is collected in collaboration with the emergency dispatch service.
- *Accountability Practices:* The County should implement Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the Fire & EMS Department.
- *Emergency Services Board:* The County should improve the effectiveness of this board by providing bylaws through the Board of Supervisors

### ***Theme 2: Communications (Page 17)***

- *Levels of Interdepartmental Communication:* Greene County Government should consider hosting a strategic communication session with a professional mediator to resolve existing challenges and barriers.
- *Dispatch System:* Dispatch services should be assessed on a regular basis using standard quantifiable performance measures and emergency 911 call data, to determine further staffing and resourcing needs. As well as monthly reporting of valid dispatch statistics to determine needs and issues.

### ***Theme 3: Training (Page 19)***

- *Coordinated Training Program:* The County should pursue a comprehensive countywide training program and assess it annually. The County should encourage the cooperation of the three local fire companies to share in local training opportunities.

### ***Theme 4: Budget and Administration (Page 20)***

- *Budgeting:* Greene County should complete an annual needs assessment for the delivery of fire and EMS services in an effort to determine proper funding based upon quantitative data and analysis of call data.

- Greene County should implement an annual audit of all fire and EMS providers with line by line budget reports for all allocated county public funds.
- *Standardization and Central Purchasing:* The County Administration should develop and implement a centralized purchasing option to leverage purchasing power and reduce operational expenses.

***Theme 5: Delivery of Services (Page 22)***

- *Emergency Medical Services:* The County should work with the Office of Emergency Medical Services to explore additional options to move forward with a local career Emergency Medical Service by using the funds previously allocated for the UVA contract
- *Recruitment and Retention:* The County 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. Looking at new ways to retain and recruit new volunteers.

**THEME 1: ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Greene County has three separate volunteer fire companies that serve the county and provide fire services to the County; Dyke, Ruckersville, and Standardsville Volunteer Fire Companies. The County currently has one Volunteer Rescue Squad and a contracted EMS service with the University of Virginia (currently this contract is pending termination). These services provide fire prevention and suppression, public fire and life safety education, hazardous materials mitigation, technical and water rescue, and emergency medical services.

Currently the county has the Emergency Services Board that meets the third Tuesday of every month to discuss issues within emergency services throughout Greene County. While we applaud the county for its efforts to bring together groups of stakeholders each month, the board lacks structure. It currently operates with no bylaws or record retention, so there is little information on historical actions of the board. All three fire companies must agree before any action can be taken.

The Emergency Services Board and Greene County as a whole lack accurate data and reporting upon which to make informed performance assessments. They therefore lack a rational basis upon which to plan or implement improvements. Performance of each operating unit (dispatch, the volunteer fire companies, and EMS) should be tracked and reported at least quarterly using standard performance measures.

Currently each department operates without any coordinating efforts to work together to improve emergency services. The citizens' impressions of Greene County's existing emergency services are also missing. Community engagement should be undertaken to gain community input on the adequacy of existing emergency services and on what levels of service should be envisioned and planned for the future.

### ***Centralized Authority for Fire and Rescue***

1. Greene County should examine the feasibility of hiring a career Chief/Director of Fire and EMS/Rescue Services as the central position responsible for the coordination and authority for all fire and rescue issues.
  - a. The position should be codified through a local ordinance outlining specific responsibilities and expectations.
  - b. The current Emergency Services Board should provide recommendations to the Chief/Director of Fire and Rescue Services on ways to improve overall fire-rescue service delivery.
  - c. An organizational chart should be generated and distributed to all affected parties.

### ***Strategic Plan and Unified Vision***

1. Create and implement a communication system throughout the organization to effectively and efficiently achieve all operational goals. Communications was mentioned by each company outlining various problems caused due to the lack there of.
2. 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. Greene County should create this plan to serve as a road map to move forward in sustaining and improving countywide services.
  - 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
  - Retention and expansion of volunteer workforce

Moreover, the locality must pursue to establish a strategic plan that represents the collective efforts of Greene County 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.<sup>1</sup> The county 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. Greene County government should adopt and implement a strategic plan for its fire and EMS services so it is able to improve performance efficiency.
  - 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 county 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 County Administration must establish a system of measurable performance goals and objectives. These measures will serve as the basis for the strategic plan.
  - a. Greene County government, in cooperation with the Greene County Sheriff dispatch center, should develop and adopt uniform and consistent assessment tools and apply such tools to provide regular reports to the governing body and to the community concerning the frequency of emergency calls of all types, the emergency services response times achieved by type, and the general locations to which emergency services are summoned, so as to be able to establish a base of accurate data with which to assess existing emergency services needs and performance and plan for the future.
  - b. Strategic plans should identify immediate, intermediate and long-term goals with reasonable target deadlines.
  - c. The Board of Supervisors should routinely review the achievement of these performance measurements and alleviate any barriers to their completion.

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<sup>1</sup> Preserving and Improving the Future of the Volunteer Fire Service, March 2004

3. In developing its strategic plan, Greene County should use incident analysis and reporting, to include the Virginia Fire Incident Reporting System (VFIRS).
  - a. The county 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.
  - 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 Board of Supervisors 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 county 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.”<sup>2</sup> Standard operating procedures (SOPs) are written guidelines that explain what is expected and required of fire service personnel in performing their jobs.<sup>3</sup> SOGs are, in their simplest form, a “how-to” guideline for firefighters to follow to achieve a desired goal. SOGs should not be viewed as rules and regulations but rather as a roadmap to achieve specific goals and objectives. SOPS, however, are formal policies that specify a firefighter’s course of action, thereby ensuring efficiency, predictability, consistency, and safety for all firefighters.

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<sup>2</sup> Developing Effective Standard Operating Procedures for Fire and EMS Departments, December 1999

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

## Recommendations:

1. Working with their volunteer membership and relevant stakeholders – Greene County should adopt a single Standard Operating Procedures and Guidelines (SOPs/SOGs) with an accountability system.
2. Engage all stakeholders in the development of countywide SOPs/SOGs to encourage buy in through a formalized process that encourages all emergency service personnel to contribute
3. Ensure the countywide use of these SOPs/SOGs to ensure a level of service and aid in the understanding across departments.

### *Emergency Services Board*

During our site visit the interview committee spoke with leadership of all emergency service providers within the county and it was determined that majority of the interviewees agreed that the board needed further structure to ensure a prosperous way forward. Efforts to improve in the effectiveness and efficiency of this group will help to shape countywide emergency services.

## Recommendations:

1. The locality should explore options to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Emergency Services Board.
  - a. **Membership:** Membership should consist of all Greene County fire and rescue departments, if feasible; therefore, it should include but not be limited to a minimum of one representative from Stanardsville, Dyke, and Ruckersville volunteer fire companies, a representative of the 911 dispatch center, two members of local EMS services (one to be a volunteer and one to be a career), one member of the Greene County Board of Supervisors, and the Emergency Services Director. All members will be voting members.
  - b. **Role:** The entity would provide valuable contribution on decision-making efforts relating to emergency services operational and administrative procedures to the Board of Supervisors. Furthermore, it must function as a voice for all fire and EMS providers. It is therefore incumbent of all administrators to respect the products that come from the committee.
  - c. **Codification of Association:** This Association should be codified outlining specific responsibilities and expectations to improve the organizational cohesiveness and efficiency. Bylaws and Guidelines should be created and voted upon by the county Board of Supervisors to govern over the process



and work of the board. These bylaws and guidelines should be disbursed to all members and emergency services personnel.

- d. **Organization:** An organizational chart should be generated and distributed to all affected parties. A proper record retention process should be created to retain documents, findings, and determinations of the board.
- e. **Structure:** This entity should elect a chairman each year and follow Roberts Rules of law and Order. Parliamentary procedure will enable the board to maintain decorum, to ascertain the will of the majority, to preserve the rights of the minority, and to facilitate the orderly transaction of the business.

## THEME 2: COMMUNICATIONS

It was the determination of the study committee that the county lacks proactive steps to ensure communications to citizens. Only the Ruckersville Volunteer Fire Department has a accessible website, while the other departments operate solely on the social media platforms. Improvement of the current level of communication has the potential to create a more cohesive relationship with citizens in the county. For a volunteer system to remain effective it must have a clear way to communicate to the constituents they serve. An effective communications process will improve the strategic plan and clearly define expectations for the community. While showing an active and open environment that is attractive to potential volunteers.

### *Levels of Interdepartmental Communications*

During the site visit, the study committee observed a need for improved communication among the county, 911 dispatch services, and volunteer departments. Lack of effective personal and professional communications can have the potential to affect the application of fire and rescue activities within Greene County. These efforts are vital in developing a way forward to fight for a common goal of improving emergency services within the county. The county must identify and resolve the breakdowns in communications and work tirelessly to educate all members. Currently all emergency services operate separately and do not explore further opportunities to work together.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. Greene County should consider hosting a strategic communication session with a professional mediator to resolve existing challenges and barriers amongst all Emergency Services personnel and affected parties to help determine strengths and weaknesses and ways to improve services countywide.

- 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.
  - b. The county 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 joint operations opportunities.
2. The county 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 Emergency Service Departments should look to create public websites to engage potential volunteers and be more active in the dissemination of information of public services within the county.
  4. The county 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](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 Greene County Sheriff's E-911 Office. 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. The 911 dispatch is currently staffed by 9 full time and one part time employee with two open positions. Which has a minimum of 2 trained Emergency Medical Dispatchers on

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each shift. The 911 dispatch operates on Computer Aided Dispatch system and has many policies and standards in place to aid the staff in the completion of their duties.

According to interviewees, 911 dispatch services does not give clear communication to emergency service providers on the operation of the county dispatch and does not provide adequate reporting of call volume to Greene County Government. It was also expressed that the radio system has many faulty challenges in transmitting information especially in certain areas of the county and in the patient's homes via the portable radios. Many times the crew has to go back to the unit to transmit communications (it was identified that the county had just purchased a new contract for a new radio system). Upon further interviews with the dispatch center this is something that the 911 center has identified and in response has started stronger data collection and retention. They communicated that they will be providing the county with further data as requested.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Greene 911 Dispatch should continue to collect and improve data collection to provide to Greene County administration to further assess the effectiveness of emergency services in the county.
2. It was the view of the study committee that 911 dispatch serves a vital role within providing emergency services in Greene County and further transparency is needed. Greene 911 Dispatch should make efforts to be more transparent with all local departments.

### **THEME 3: TRAINING**

Development of important skills is the basis for safety and improving services received by the citizens. The county does not currently have standard operation procedures and no standards for their fire departments in regards to training. The departments of Ruckersville and Standardsville have taken an active approach to ensure training of the volunteers who may respond to fires, while Dyke volunteer department showed little to no training and lacked the structure to ensure proper response in the case of an emergency.

#### ***Coordinated Training Program***

Although the county 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 Greene County. In essence, there are no opportunities that would enable departments the ability to train with relevant entities.

### **Recommendation:**

1. Greene County should pursue a comprehensive training program and assess it annually. Such assessment will enable the adoption of warranted changes.

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- a. The Board of Supervisors should appropriate all the necessary resources to fulfill the counties identified training challenges and fully train existing firefighters and rescue personnel.
  - b. Set up training goals and standards for fire personnel
2. Joint or collaborative training opportunities must be pursued by Greene County to ensure countywide training of emergency provider personnel.
- a. The county should develop a countywide training program to coordinate classes amongst the three volunteer fire companies
  - b. Coordinate joint live fire training exercises between departments
  - c. Work with VDFP Division 3 staff to discuss local training opportunities

#### **THEME 4: BUDGET AND ADMINISTRATION**

According to the study groups individual interviews each volunteer company receives the same amount of annual operating funds from the County. The study committee observed that these amounts while fair for all three companies to receive the same initial funding, lacked sufficient evidence as to smart budgeting practices. It was determined that there was not sufficient accountability for reporting of public funds that were being disbursed and spent by each department.

#### ***Budgeting***

From the study committees interviews it was determined that improvements in the budgeting of Greene County should be improved to find cost savings. The county does not currently require any form of documentation for public funds expended by the volunteer fire companies or rescue squad. By not doing so, the county may not access whether the level of funding currently expended is adequate to support the departments.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. Greene County 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 County continuously evaluate whether it is getting the appropriate return on its investments.

- c. The County must develop an accountability process for public funds disbursed to emergency services. Greene County should implement an annual audit of all fire and EMS providers with line by line budget reports for all allocated county public funds. This process will aid in the determination of further need and the proper expenditure of public funds.
2. The county 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 Greene County. It is imperative that the county 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 led to cost-savings countywide.

#### **Recommendation:**

1. County 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 Equipment<sup>4</sup> and Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus<sup>5</sup>  
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 Board 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. Greene county 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 <sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See NFPA 1971 Standard on Protective Ensembles for Structural Fire Fighting and Proximity Fire Fighting

<sup>5</sup> See NFPA 1981 Standard on Open-Circuit Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) for Emergency Services

<sup>6</sup>NFPA 1901, <http://www.nfpa.org/aboutthecodes/AboutTheCodes.asp?DocNum=1901>

- b. NFPA 1911 – Standard for Inspection, Maintenance, Testing and Retirement of In-Service Automotive Fire Apparatus <sup>7</sup>

### **THEME 5: DELIVERY OF SERVICES**

The counties' 3 fire departments consist of all volunteer members. Each department has their own distinct area based upon location in the county. During the study teams visit it was determined that each of the 3 volunteer departments has roughly 15- 20 members on their roster, but a small number of the members were actually active and responding to calls. Interviewees from all three departments expressed the need for more volunteers to ensure the proper delivery of service in Greene County.

#### **Equipment:**

##### **A. GREENE COUNTY RESCUE SQUAD**

1. 401 ALS / BLS Ambulance
2. 403 ALS / BLS Ambulance
3. 404 ALS / BLS Ambulance
4. 405 ALS / BLS Ambulance
5. 406 ALS / BLS Ambulance
6. 407 Extrication
7. 408 ALS First Response Vehicle
8. 409 BLS First Response Vehicle
9. 410 ALS First Response Vehicle

##### **B. STANARDSVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT – Station 1**

1. Brush 15 300 Gal Tank, Foam Capability
2. Car 10 First Response Vehicle
3. Engine 10 750 GPM Pump, 750 Gal Tank, Extrication, BLS & TRT Equipped, Foam Capability
4. Engine 11 1250 GPM Pump, 750 Gal Tank, Foam Capability
5. Support 12 First Response Vehicle, BLS Equipped
6. Tanker 17 750 GPM Pump, 1800 Gal Tank
7. Station 1 houses a cascade system for the County as well as two (2) ice machines for emergency management purposes.

##### **C. RUCKERSVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT – Station 2**

1. Brush 29 250 Gal Tank, Foam Capability
2. Car 20 Command Vehicle
3. Car 21 First Response Vehicle, BLS Equipped
4. Engine 22 1250 GPM Pump, 750 Gal Tank
5. Engine 23 1250 GPM Pump, 1000 Gal Tank, Extrication, BLS Equipped
6. Haz-Mat Trl Absorbent container equipment and drums

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<sup>7</sup> NFPA 1911, <http://www.nfpa.org/aboutthecodes/AboutTheCodes.asp?DocNum=1911>

7. Tanker 25 1250 GPM Pump, 3100 Gal Tank, Foam Capability
8. Tower 27 75 ft. aerial platform, master stream piped, no tank or pump  
(water must be supplied by another apparatus)
9. Utility 26 Cascade system

**D. DYKE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT – Station 3**

1. Brush 35 300 GPM Pump, 300 Gal Tank
2. Engine 31 1250 GPM Pump, 1000 Gal Tank, Foam Capability, Extrication, Generator
3. Engine 32 1250 GPM Pump, 1000 Gal Tank, Generator
4. Support 36 Equipment (saws, leaf blowers, rakes, etc.)
5. Station 3 houses a 4-wheeler on a trailer as well as portable pumps

***EMS Services***

When it comes to EMS Services within Greene County they currently operate out of one rescue squad building. Greene is currently operating on a hybrid system on contract with the University of Virginia that costs the county roughly \$1.1 million a year. As this study was being finalized the study committee was notified by Greene County that they received a notice of termination from UVA that will cease all currently provided services as of October 14, 2020. The study committee observed the facilities and equipment of the EMS Services during the visit which could use additional capital investment to protect previously expended assets.

**Recommendations:**

1. Develop a plan to move forward without private contract with guidance from the Virginia Department of Health- Office of Emergency Medical Services.
2. Allocate existing funds from contract to establish career/volunteer hybrid EMS service within the county to ensure the continuation of service provided to Greene County residents.
3. Additional capital investment is needed to house vehicles away from the elements to extend the life of the equipment and improve EMS facilities.

***Recruitment and Retention***

Greene County, similar to other parts of the Commonwealth, requires consistent support from local government to help with recruitment and retention. The County Government in collaboration with the individual departments must actively recruit to ensure that an effective successive planning process is present. The volunteer requirements and applications should be clearly outlined on the County and individual department websites. This enables any individual interested in pursuing a career in fire and EMS services within Greene County an opportunity to read and review content without endless inquiries. The

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.

internet has become a place where locally-oriented individuals share material directly with specific audience groups.<sup>8</sup>

The study committee determined that some recruitment efforts have been undertaken by the emergency departments, but many other ways could be deployed to increase engagement and retention of volunteers.

### **Recommendations:**

1. County Administration should identify the needs for 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 County should be able to determine fire and rescue personnel needs, equipment needs and deployment.<sup>9</sup>
  - b. Once needs have been identified the county must look at their options as to a possible career/ volunteer hybrid system to ensure proper response. Look at the feasibility to hire paid staff to augment with volunteer support.
2. Hire an official part-time Recruitment and Retention Officer. This individual could be assigned additional responsibilities.
3. Adopt an official countywide 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 County 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.
  - c. Work with local schools to engage students and educate about the needs of the volunteer agencies.
  - d. County Administration should look at creating further incentives for emergency volunteer personnel participation. Develop programs within the County to reward members with small, tangible and intangible tokens of appreciation for exceptional performance and effort. Rewards such as :
    - Badges/ID cards or other rewards for completing specific training requirements or other achievements;
    - Certificates and thank you letters for a job well done;
    - Remembering family anniversaries, births, etc.;

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<sup>8</sup> Part 5: The role of the internet – Pew Research Center – Internet & Technology

<sup>9</sup> 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.

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- Reading, posting, and forwarding to the County Board of Supervisors, the County Administrator, favorable reports, letters, and commendations, especially those from the public and particularly those related to joint volunteer activities.
  - Possibly tax incentives for volunteer members
- e. Publicize the fact that there are a variety of services for volunteers in the fire and rescue services. Examples include:
- Direct providers of fire, rescue and EMS
  - Support services (equipment maintenance and repair, training, etc.)
  - Administrative services (secretarial, bookkeeping and accounting, legal, data processing, etc.)
- f. Develop a mentoring program so new volunteers can receive assistance from experienced volunteers, to make new volunteers feel comfortable and accepted, and to provide assistance in learning required skills and technical requirements. Encourage career personnel to serve as mentors. •
- g. Encourage the local media in their reporting on fire and rescue activities to emphasize the uniqueness of the County's volunteer service.
4. Find low-cost methods to enhance public-education efforts such as open houses and creating PSAs.<sup>10</sup>
- a. Improve the visibility of the county 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 Greene County Fire & EMS Department's training and educational opportunities.
- c. Social Media Platforms while in use by most departments should be more active in recruitment efforts within the community.
5. In addition, Greene County 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/EMSWorkbook\\_0405.pdf](http://www.vdh.state.va.us/OEMS/Files_page/Locality_Resources/EMSWorkbook_0405.pdf)
  - iii. [http://www.vdh.state.va.us/OEMS/Files\\_page/Locality\\_Resources/EMSWorkbook3.pdf](http://www.vdh.state.va.us/OEMS/Files_page/Locality_Resources/EMSWorkbook3.pdf)

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<sup>10</sup> Fire Service Image Task Force Report: Taking Responsibility for a Positive Public Perception 15

- 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>

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## APPENDIX

### **Appendix 1: Greene County Letter of Request – July 2019**



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR  
POST OFFICE BOX 358  
STANARDSVILLE, VIRGINIA 22973  
434-985-5201  
FAX: 434-985-3705

July 24, 2019

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

**RE: Virginia Fire Services Board Fire & EMS Study Request – Greene County**

Dear Mr. Abbamin:

This is to request the services of the Virginia Fire Services Board (VFSB) in conducting a complete and thorough review of the Fire and EMS system in Greene County. This study has the support of the Greene County Board of Supervisors and County Administration as shown by the attached resolution adopted at the Board's July 23, 2019 meeting.

The requested areas of concentration of this study include:

- Organization
- Budget, Administration, Accountability
- Training
- Level of Service
- Delivery of Services
- Fleet Design and Management
- Communications
- Safety and Operations
- Greene County Emergency Services Board

The Board and County Administration propose a complete and thorough review of the aforementioned areas of concentration and a comprehensive list of recommendations to enhance services to the citizens and visitors of Greene County.

Mr. Mohamed G. Abbamin, MPA  
July 24, 2019  
Page 2

Your consideration of this request at the next available opportunity would be greatly appreciated. I am available to respond to any questions or concerns you may have regarding this request and can be reached by phone at 434.985.5201 or by email at [mtaylor@gcva.us](mailto:mtaylor@gcva.us).

Sincerely,



Mark B. Taylor, Esquire  
County Administrator

Enclosure



**RESOLUTION REQUESTING A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF GREENE COUNTY  
FIRE AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES**

**WHEREAS**, Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is among the highest priorities demanded and expected by our citizens who deserve a prompt and professional response every time they call 911; and

**WHEREAS**, the Greene County Board of Supervisors demonstrates its genuine commitment to our Fire and EMS agencies by appropriating funds each fiscal year for normal, recurring needs, while considering special requests as necessary; and

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Supervisors supports the study in order to assess current and future needs based on the ever-changing environment of public safety;

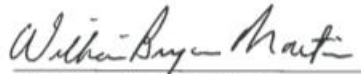
**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED**, that the Greene County Board of Supervisors formally requests the completion of a Virginia Fire Services Board Fire and EMS Study and directs the County Administrator to take necessary action to request the same from the Virginia Fire Services Board.


**ADOPTED BY THE GREENE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ON JULY 23, 2019.**

Motion: David Cox  
Second: Michelle Flynn

Recorded Vote:

Bill Martin	<u>Yes</u>
Michelle Flynn	<u>Yes</u>
David L. Cox	<u>Yes</u>
Marie C. Durrer	<u>Yes</u>
Dale R. Herring	<u>Yes</u>

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
William Bryan Martin, Chair  
Greene County Board of Supervisors

ATTEST:   
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mark B. Taylor, Clerk  
Greene County Board of Supervisors