

FIFTEEN ROPE FERRY ROAD
WATERFORD, CT 06385-2886



PHONE: 860-442-0553
www.waterfordct.org

**FIRE SERVICES REVIEW SPECIAL COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA**

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2025 5:30 P.M. APPLEBY ROOM (TOWN HALL)

1. Establishment of quorum; call to order
2. Public Comment
3. Approval of minutes for July 9, 2025, meeting.
4. Consideration and possible action on the RTM's charge to the committee (RTC 6/7/21):
Review issues including performance, policies, and staffing and present their findings/recommendations on any changes needed to enhance public safety, creating a steering document and strategic plan.
 - a. Review and act upon proposed "housekeeping" and edits to the Draft Final Report submitted to RTM July 23, 2025.
 - b. Discuss process and potential action to deliver revised report to RTM.
5. Adjournment.

encl: July 9, 2025, Minutes
Revised Full Report Draft #3 9/7/25

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1.0 Executive Summary

Firefighting has occurred in Waterford from the earliest days of its villages as more structures were built which needed to be protected from the destructive damage caused by intermittent fire events. This largely community-based private firefighting effort took on a more organized form about a hundred years ago when four private firefighting companies, all started by volunteers, were established in the 1920's and the fifth was created in the early 1940s. The Town had financially supported these efforts in various ways for decades, which support was codified in a formal agreement with the Companies in 1978 and 1979. The Town established a Fire Commission under state statute, ordinance and ~~charter~~ Charter provisions to oversee the Town's financial participation of this private community-driven firefighting model. As the costs associated with firefighting in Waterford grew, for large, specialized fire trucks, equipment, gear and training, the Town contributed millions over the last century to Waterford's private fire service operation. In the early 2000s more and more discussion occurred about a larger Town role in the management of community fire services, culminating in a 2010 change in Waterford's ~~charter~~ Charter moving from the management of fire service by the Fire Commission to a Town Fire Department supervised by a Director of Fire ~~Administrator~~ Services. Serving as a department head in Town government, the ~~Fire Administrator~~ Director works under the daily supervision of the First Selectman as ~~chief~~ Chief executive Executive. A Paid Fireman Ordinance was adopted at the same time in recognition of an emerging need to have Town staff supplement the efforts of volunteers in the reliable provision of fire services across Waterford. Over the last fifteen years the Town has administered this emergent "combination" model of both paid and volunteer efforts with new issues arising constantly regarding the health and safety of firefighters, technological development and effective resource deployment strategies.

The Fire Services Review Committee was charged with studying this historic evolution of fire services in Waterford from a largely private endeavor to an increasing ~~Town~~ Town-managed, staffed and funded effort. The Committee has reviewed extensive documentation provided by Town staff (primarily the previous Director of Fire Services), engaged in vigorous discussion over 25 meetings within the Committee and with members of the Committee. The Committee has identified numerous issues the Town will need to address as Waterford's fire service continues to evolve.

The Committee's objective is for the deliberative effort described above to be reflected in this report to the RTM and through them to the community so Waterford's decision-makers can make better informed decisions going forward about the Waterford's fire service, which performs a critical government function by protecting lives and the Town's 4.4 billion dollars'

worth of taxable property, real and personal property tax base currently valued at approximately 4.3 billion dollars.

The precise path of the continuing evolution of Waterford's fire service will be largely driven by collaborative decisions made each year in the budget process by the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance and RTM as informed by input and recommendations from the Fire Administrator Director and First Selectman regarding both annual operations and current as well as projected capital requirements.

2. Introduction

2.1 At the June 7, 2021, meeting, under new business initiated by the Chair of the Public Protection and Safety Standing Committee, the RTM voted to create a special committee, "Fire Services Review Special Committee". The charter charge of the new committee was "to review issues including performance, policies, and staffing, and present their findings / recommendations of any changes needed to enhance public safety, creating a steering document and strategic plan". Per the approved motion, the committee ~~shall~~ was to consist of five full voting members as follows:

- 2 RTM Members (appointed by the RTM)

- 1 Public Protection and Safety Committee Member (appointed by the Public Protection and Safety Committee)

- 1 Board of Finance Member (appointed by the Board of Finance)

- 1 Board of Selectmen Member (appointed by the Board of Selectmen)

And five advisory non/ voting members as follows:

- Fire Services Director

- Emergency Services Director

- Waterford Ambulance Manager

- One Volunteer Fire Chief (appointed by consensus of the ~~5-five~~ Waterford Fire Companies or the 5-five chiefs)

- One Full Time Career Fire Fighter (appointed by the consensus of the Waterford Full-time Firefighters)

It is noteworthy to highlight that there was a recent compilation of ~~fire-Fire services~~ Services studies entitled "Fire Service Study, 2018" which is a collection of Fire Services related

information dating back to 1995 including *Task Force 95 Study*, and *Fire Service Study, 2001*. This compendium is a very valuable and relevant historical reference, covering substantial portions of Waterford's rich and diverse Fire Services history.

The balance of information surveyed is listed in the bibliography and copies are included in the Committee's transmittal to the RTM.

The process then, ~~that the committee~~ Committee followed in generating this report and the findings-/recommendations herein was one of deliberate discussion and debate on the topics of interest, as well as solicitation and retention of both quantitative and qualitative information as primarily provided by the Director of Fire Services, other advisory members, and the public as captured in meeting minutes. All information used by this committee (including various revisions based upon year / time) and used in this report has been originally presented to the committee. The source materials used to create this report are provided on the Waterford Town website under the Fire Services Special Review Committee title.

In January of 2023, an Interim Report was prepared and approved in a 3-0-1 vote and delivered to the RTM.

The report recommended that the Oswegatchie Fire Station, described as being in "extensively deteriorated condition", be demolished and that a new Fire Station be built to replace it. The findings of the interim report were presented at the February 3rd, 2023, RTM Meeting by the ~~chairman~~ Chairman, at which time, partly because of the findings, the RTM unanimously voted to create the Oswegatchie Fire Station Building Committee.

3.0 Fire Services History

Prior to the incorporation of the private fire stations which occurred between 1920-1940, according to *An Illustrated History of Waterford Connecticut*, a bucket brigade was organized to put out the Baptist minister's neighbors' neighbor's house fire, and housewives used brooms to put out stubborn brush fires... Since the early 1900s the five private fire stations listed in Table 1 have served the Town of Waterford. Along the way, changes were made in how fire services were managed and administrated to grow with community changes.

In 2010, the Waterford Fire Department was created and the historic management structure for fire services in Town, the Fire Commission, was disbanded; in accordance with a Town charter revision. The new department was created via the Code of Ordinances (Chapter 2.36), and ~~charged the RTM with appointing one person from each fire district to serve on a board of five commissioners. The commission had the authority to elect officers, establish rules of procedure, set meeting frequency; and possessed authority as vested by State Statute.~~

~~The board oversaw the funding of fire services. It worked with each fire station in determining equipment and operation needs, although it did not have direct control over the day-to-day operation of the individual fire districts. The board set policies for fire and rescue services and coordinated the provision of those throughout the Town.~~

~~The board had oversight of the over the Fire Marshall's office and the Town Communications Center.~~

The Town is divided into ~~5~~five fire districts, each with its own fire department and fire station. Each fire department is incorporated as a non-profit corporation under the General Statutes of the State of Connecticut. Each fire department has an individually signed legal agreement with the Town stipulating that ~~they~~ it will provide fire services in exchange for an annual funding appropriation from the Town. ~~Historically, Each~~each fire department was required to prepare and submit a budget to the Board of Fire Commissioners, who then would tabulate it with input from the other fire departments, the Fire Marshall's Office, and the Emergency Communications Center, and submit this to the Board of Finance for review. Each fire department is independently managed and operated, in accordance with bylaws established by each, and has its own hierarchy of officers. Each department provided volunteer fire-fighting activities to the Town, and there were provisions made to provide mutual aid among companies.

In essence, with funding provided by the Town, until 2011 the Board of Fire Commissioners managed Fire Services for Waterford. The organization was largely distributed with multiple levels of volunteer oversight, ~~few if any~~limited checks and balances, and no direct Town accountability to the Town. But it was a step towards a more centralized organization to better address Waterford needs.

The Board of Fire Commissioners was replaced in 2010 by Charter ~~revision~~Revision by a Town Fire Department with more centralized management structure, ~~featuring~~administered by a Director of Fire Services. This position eliminated the second tier of management over the private fire departments, instead creating a direct line of reporting and accountability from the individual fire departments to a professional Town Fire administrator. This change in organization established accountability for the efforts of the fire companies, as well as the full and part-time paid fire fighters, ~~by~~to the Director and ultimately the First Selectman of the Town, as Chief Executive. It also centralized the budget creation and allocation process. The ~~current~~ Director of Fire Services, per Town Ordinance, is responsible for all fire service-related functions including:

- Policy development and management
- Equipment, ~~procurement~~ and maintenance
- Hiring of paid firefighters in association with the Human Resources Department

- Training of personnel and maintenance of standards
- Maintenance of the firefighting infrastructure
- Department Staffing
- Volunteer recruitment and retention
- Emergency Communications
- Fire Marshalls Office
- Budget development and long-range planning
- Fleet Management

In addition to creating a leaner more accountable fire services organization, ~~it the new~~ Department also consolidated data collection and management. It formalized and centralized record retention. This information, including examples like response type and frequency, volunteer participation, training, expenditures, fleet maintenance, capital planning, equipment inventories, etc. were collected and tabulated for management review and use as opposed to being mined periodically from the ~~sourced five private departments~~ or the former Fire Commission. The formal collection and tracking of these streams of data contributed to a greater ability to evaluate current fire services activity and overall performance and as well as forecast future needs. This evolution in Waterford's fire services management structure was the single most impactful step taken by the Town in recent history regarding Fire Services. It was essential to unify and modernize policy and practice. This change also encouraged the use of data-driven decisions, supplanting previous decision making that depended on more subjective ~~the Board of Fire Commissioners'~~ consensus for recommendations.

Along with this change came vertical organization and consistency in policies and practices.

As a result of the ~~Community's~~ community's decision, ~~through by~~ revising the Charter, to move to a different management structure, ~~Fire services~~ Services today is more organized and in a better position to deliver firefighting services to the Waterford taxpayer in a safer and more cost-effective manner.

Fire protection in the Town of Waterford was originally provided by volunteers, working out of the five stations. At one time there were hundreds of registered volunteers. The town was flush with people looking to give back and to provide public service. The stations thrived based upon local fund raising and were ~~in essence~~ to a great degree, self-supporting.

Volunteers were the backbone of Fire Services until 1961, when the first part time firefighter was hired by the Town of Waterford. Over time and for a variety of reasons, the ranks of volunteers have shrunk. The reasons are mainly economic, with fewer people able to take time off from work to provide service. The drop in volunteers has resulted in the need to hire paid

fire fighters as replacements to provide acceptable levels of fire service to the Town. Currently there is an active list of 30 volunteers, as characterized by responding to at least one incident annually, as reported in data provided by the previous Director of Fire Services. Some fire departments stations have a more robust level of volunteer support while others are nearly at risk of becoming non-functional and therefore in breach of the Agreement with the Town, due to their limited volunteer participation.

In general, the volunteer fire fighting corps of the past has dramatically declined, and the future is pointing to the need for more paid firefighters.

The Town of Waterford now functions as a "combination" fire service composed of both paid and volunteer firefighters. Due to similar economic issues nationally, this is becoming the normal situation for many municipal fire services. What cannot be achieved historically with volunteers is being augmented by part time or full time paid fire fighters.

Combination fire ~~services~~ departments have consequences, some good and some not so good. Among the upside consequence is that coverage of certain parts of Town can be provided part or full time by paid fire fighters. They can also be deployed to various stations as need dictates. They are independent of a specific fire station. Among the downsides is that the additional coverage comes with increases in operational costs and unfortunately has resulted in occasional chafing between the paid and unpaid ranks, despite all certified firefighters, volunteer or paid, being trained to the ~~exact~~ same standards. The failure to sometimes get along is a potential distraction and if unaddressed a possible detriment to Waterford's fire services.

At the other end of the fire services spectrum, there are some towns, for example New London, which have fire services composed entirely of paid fire fighters. Moving to an all-paid firefighter service will come with a large cost that will only grow with time, based upon annual increases in salary, benefits, and retirement costs.

The Town has historically benefited greatly from depending on an all-volunteer service for ~~many decades~~ nearly a century. The only financial burden previously born by the Town was associated with training, materials, ~~and equipment, and maintenance (vehicles and buildings)~~. Salaries, and the associated benefits, were not part of the equation.

A significant takeaway from the change in composition of Waterford's fire services is the focus on performance and cost. The use of data, emergency response type, time, frequency and from which part of town, now become important in conducting ongoing cost/benefit analysis analyses by the Town. Are there adequate responders to address the risks? Does the Town have adequate enough funding to provide adequate staffing of fire services?

Not having significant numbers of volunteers to augment the efforts of paid staff creates ongoing resource allocation decisions for the Director and ultimately the First Selectman. These

staff resource decisions should be based on quality data properly utilized. If possible, it is in the best interest of the Town to continue to recruit and maintain a corps of volunteer firefighters to not only maintain the rich history of the town, but more importantly help manage growth in fire services costs.

The town ~~is~~ continues to be supported by ~~5~~ five fire companies, described in Table 1, located on the map provided in Figure 1, and depicted in Figures 2-6.

Fire Company	Fire Company Name	Street Address	Date of Incorporation
1	Waterford Fire Engine Company	89 Rope Ferry Road	1923
2	Quaker Hill Fire Department	17 Old Colchester Road	1927
3	Goshen Fire Department	63 Goshen Road	1928
4	Oswegatchie Fire Company	441 Boston Post Road	1930
5	Cohanize Fire Company	53 Dayton Road	1942

Table 1- Private Fire Company Demographic Data Companies and Date Established

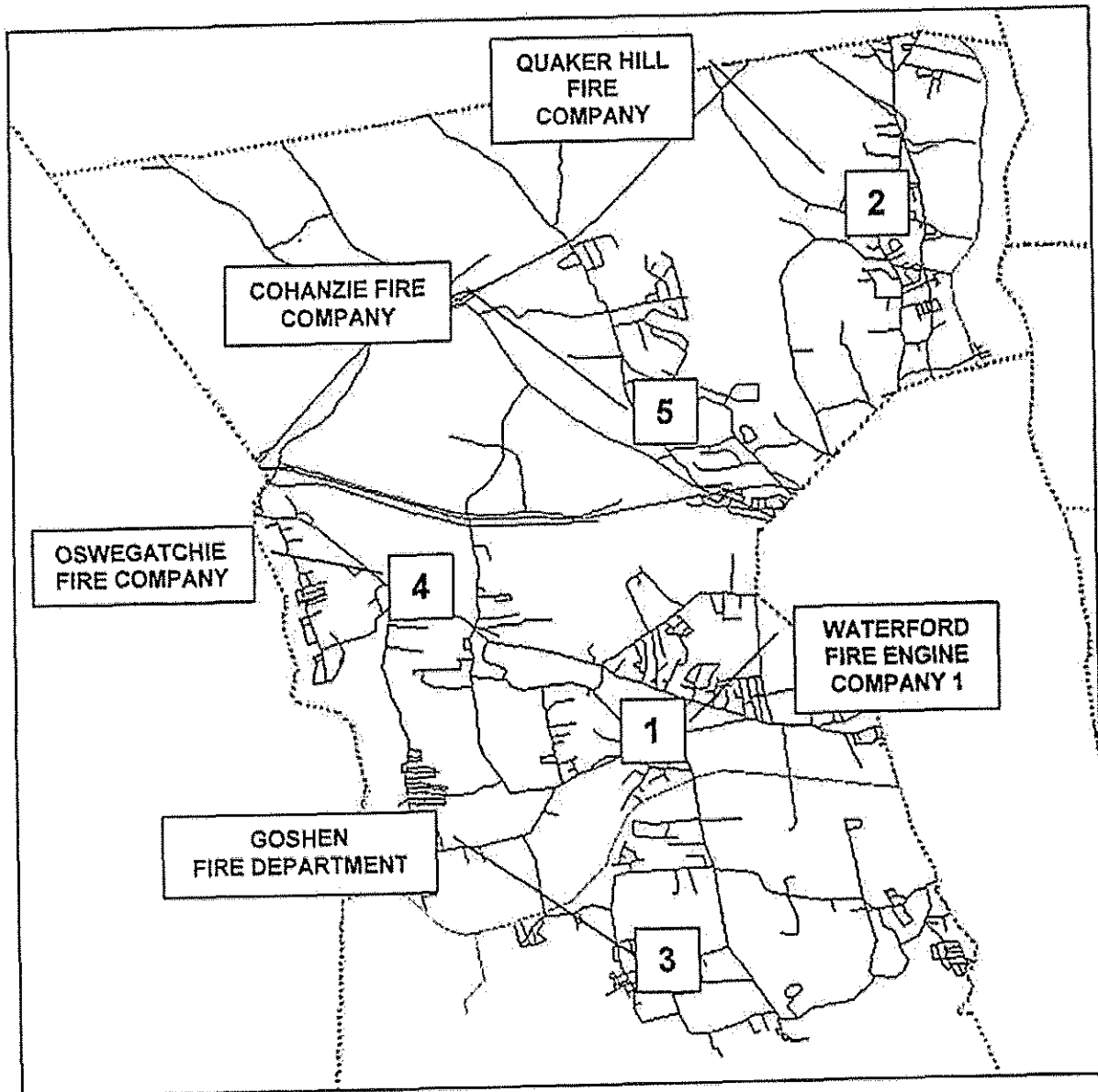


Figure 1- Map of the Town of Waterford Depicting Locations of Fire Stations and Fire Districts

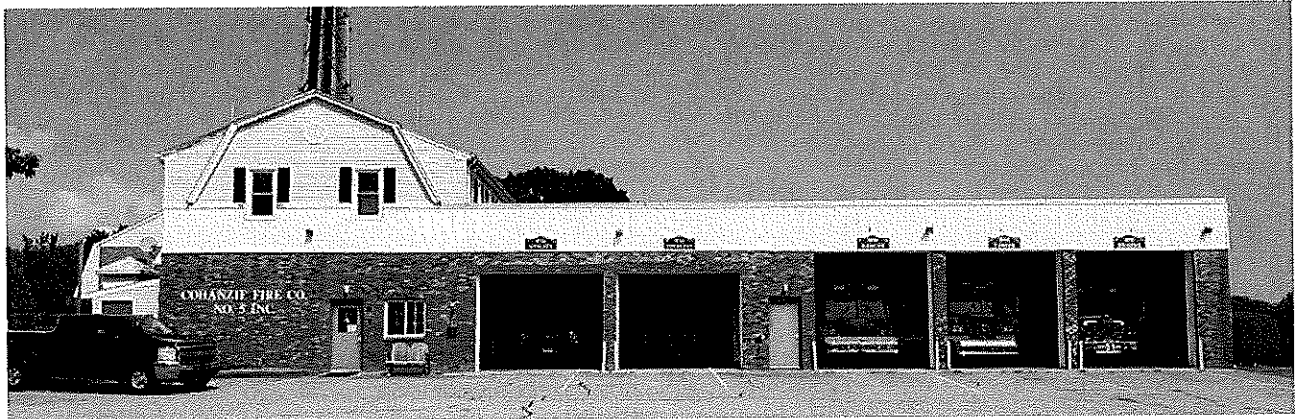


Figure 2- Cohanzie Fire Station

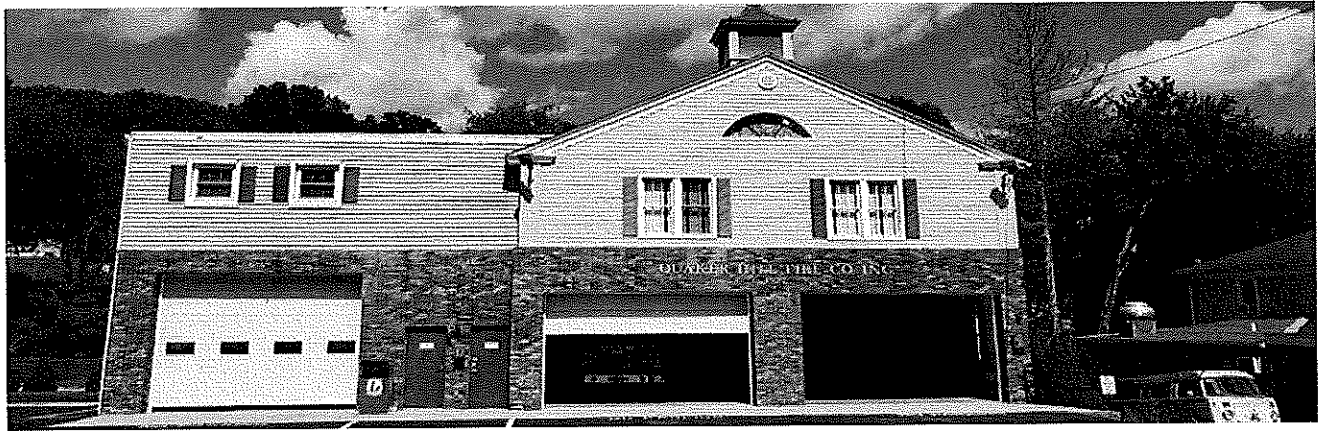


Figure 3-Quaker Hill Fire Station

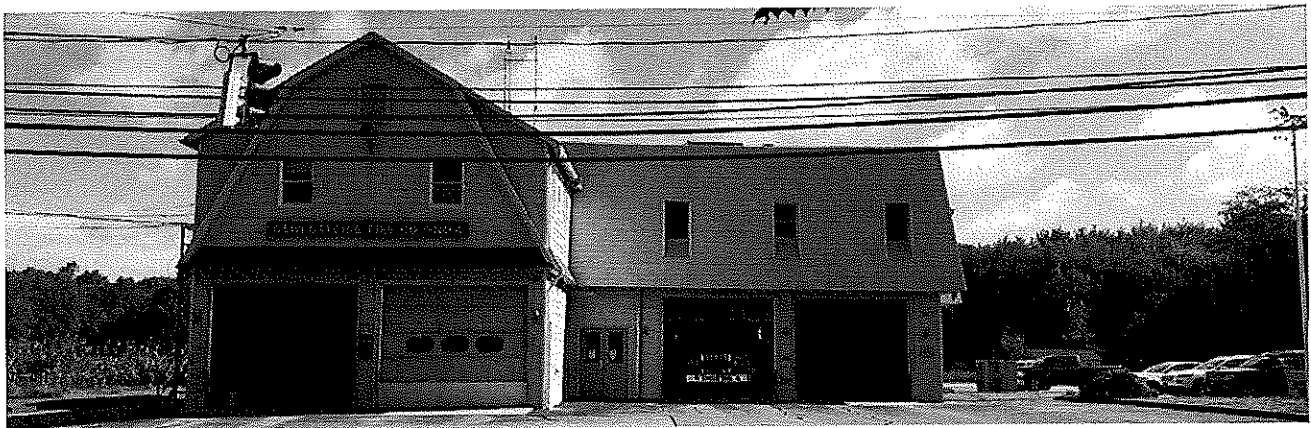


Figure 4- Oswegatchie Fire Station

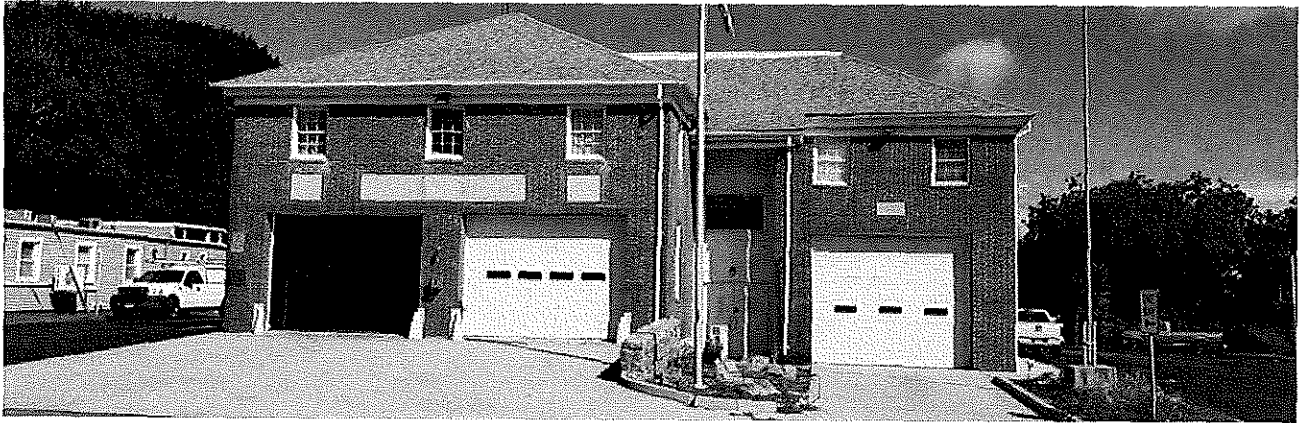


Figure 5-Jordan Fire Station



Figure 6- Goshen Fire Station

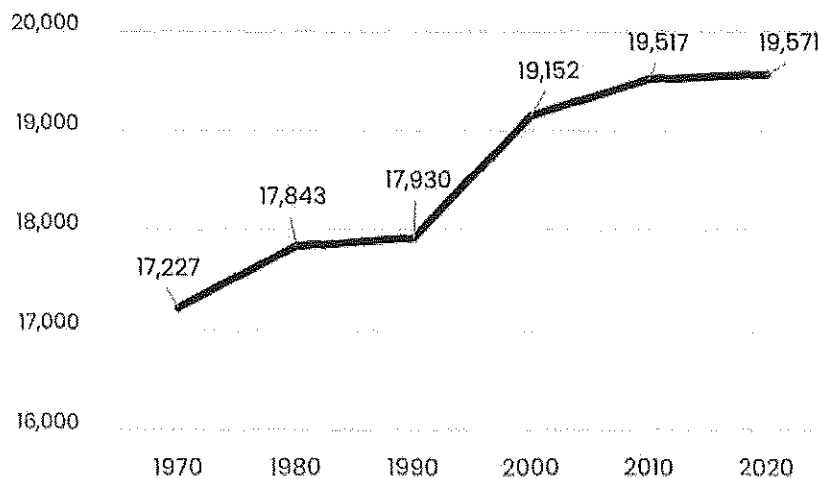
4.0 Demographic Information

The Town of Waterford was incorporated on October 8, 1801. It is a partly rural/partly suburban town 36.7 sq. miles in size, with 23 miles of coastline and a population of 19,554 +/- and is part of New London County. Waterford has grown at a slow but steady rate since the 1970's, although State projections completed in 2016 expect Waterford's population to decline through 2040.

Despite these projections, the population continues to enjoy modest growth, and recent employment announcements from local businesses (for example Electric Boat) suggest that area populations including Waterford could increase. The Town's Director of Planning and Zoning notes noted that the population appears to be increasing slightly. Figure 6 demonstrates

the census trend, Table 2 depicts current development underway as of March 2025. Additional commercial growth is likely with the revitalization of the Crystal Mall and the potential for the eventual development of the airport property on Crossroads South and a possible data center on the Dominion property.

Figure 3.1. Population Change by Decade (1970 - 2020)



Source: U.S. Decennial Census 1970 - 2020

Figure 6-Population Change by Decade

(Town of Waterford, Key Demographics and Trends)

Recent Newly Constructed, Approved & Pending Housing										
Development	Status	Total Units	Affordable Units	Single Family	Townhome / Duplex	Studio	1 BD	2BD	3BD	ES School
Waterford Heights	Approved	284				30	122	100	32	Quaker Hill
Brookside Apartments	Constructed	40	35				16	24		Oswegatchie
Kathryn Court Estates	Constructed	10		10						Oswegatchie
Waterford Woods	Constructed	204					126	78		Great Neck
Ivy Hill Village	Under Construction	40	4	32	8					Great Neck
Waterford Central	Under Construction	216	44				144	72		Great Neck
Clark Lane Community	Under Construction	47	15	47						Great Neck
Robert's Village	Pending	24	8	16	8					Cusher Hill(?)
Total		865	106	105	8	30	408	274	32	

Source: Town of Waterford Planning & Development Department, Sept. 2024

Table 2-Summary of Current Residential Building Units as of September 2024

The population density is 435 residents per square mile, less than the state average of 648 residents per square mile, but more than the New London County, average density of 348 residents per square mile.

More resident workers commute out of Town for employment than the number of employees who travel ~~to~~ into Waterford for work.

~~Both The~~ the number of workers commuting into Town and the share of residents working in Town ~~has~~ have decreased since 2010.

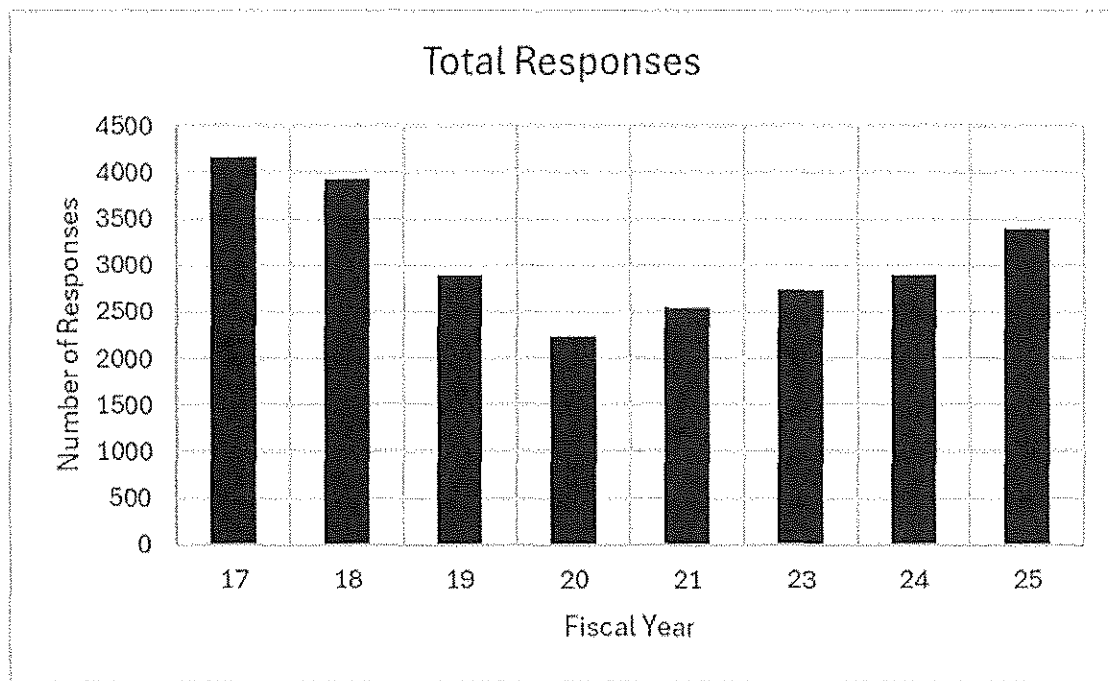
Waterford is nestled between Montville to the North, East Lyme to the ~~west~~ West, and New London to the ~~east~~ East. The former two are like Waterford demographically, while New London is a small city with approximately one third more residents (approx. 28,000) than Waterford.

5.0 Findings and Discussion

5.1 Emergency Response Types and Frequencies

Data on types and frequencies of responses as well as response times was provided by the Department of Fire Services to the Fire Services Ad-Hoc Special Review Committee and was distilled into graphs to better display pertinent information.

Response types and frequencies are depicted in Figures 7-11.



Note: Responses for year 2025 have been extrapolated based upon responses through March)

Figure 7- Eight Year Trend of Responses

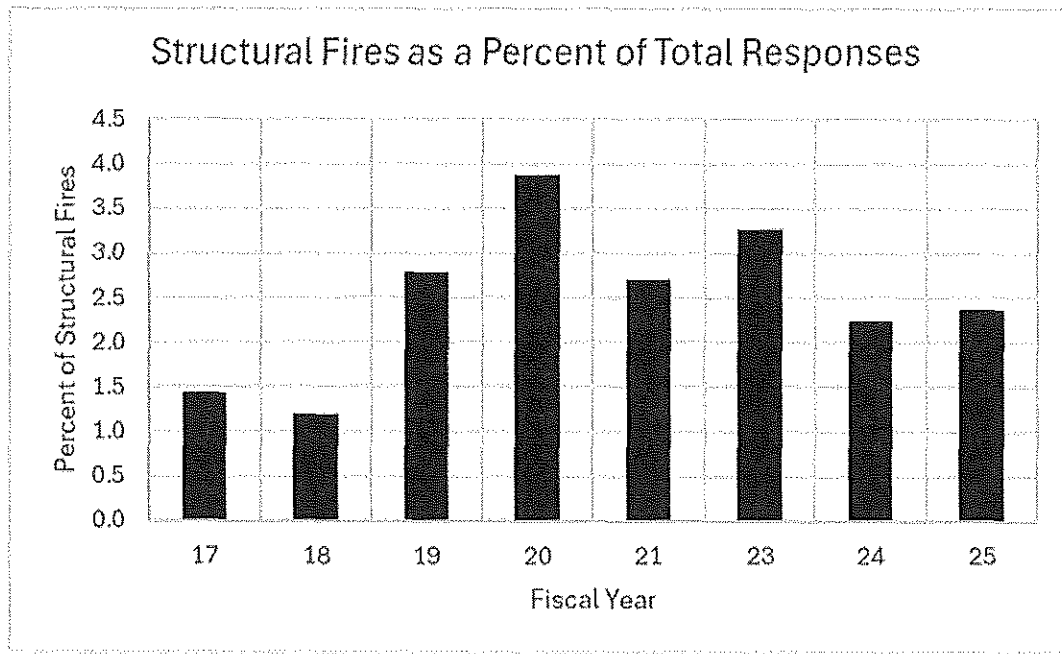


Figure 8- Percent of Total Responses that Are Structural Fires

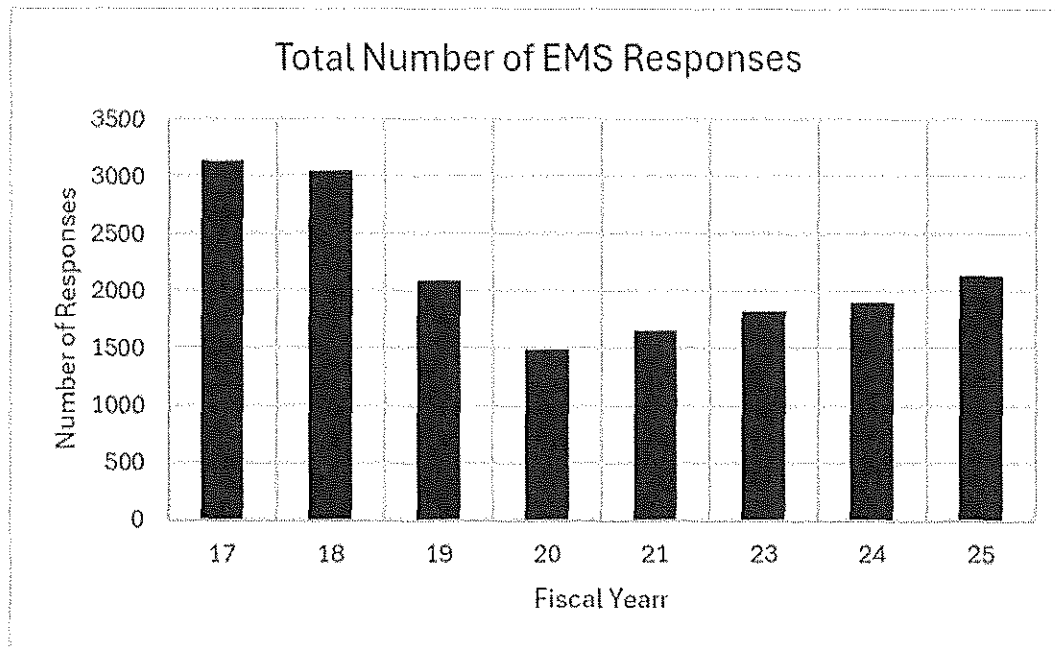
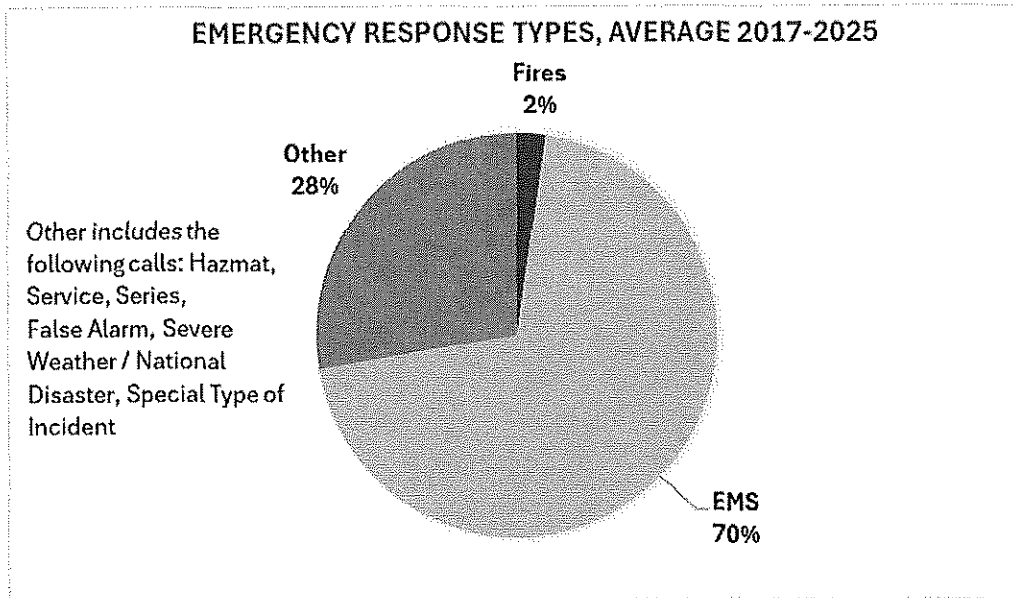


Figure 9- Eight Year Trend of EMS Responses



– Figure 10-Eight Year Summary of Percentage of Structural Fires, EMS, and Other Incident Types

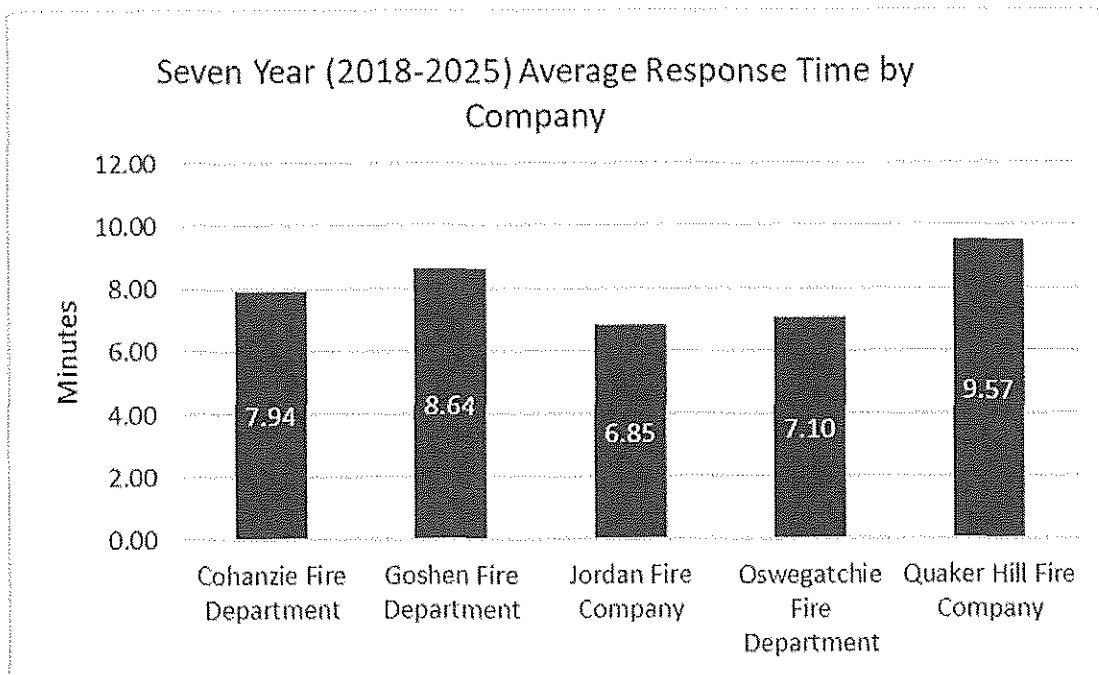


Figure 11- Average Response Times by Company

As seen from the data, most responses are responses to EMS calls throughout town as well as motor vehicle accidents with and without injuries, structural fires hazardous conditions, service calls, good intent calls, false alarms, and severe weather incidents_{7.2}

5.2 Capital Plan

An abbreviated capital / facilities plan was provided by the previous Director of Fire Services. A copy is attached as Appendix A, and is distilled here in Table 2

STATION	YEAR					Totals	COMMENTS
	24	25	26	27	28		
Jordan	\$ 100,000.00			\$ 65,000.00	\$ 55,000.00	\$ 220,000.00	Kitchen in 2027
Quaker Hill		\$ 150,000.00				\$ 150,000.00	Bunk Room Renovations, Bathroom Renovations
Goshen		\$ 150,000.00				\$ 150,000.00	Includes items pushed out from 2023 and 2025, Roof replacement 2030
Oswegatchie	\$ 80,000.00					\$ 80,000.00	On hold pending new building
Cohanzie		\$ 30,000.00				\$ 30,000.00	Bunk room, bathroom, day room renovations, new windows and doors
						\$ 630,000.00	

Table 2- Out year Year Maintenance Planning of for Existing Stations,
per Town's approved Capital Improvement Plan

5.3 Staffing Findings

The Town of Waterford Fire Services are currently staffed full-time as shown in Figure 12.

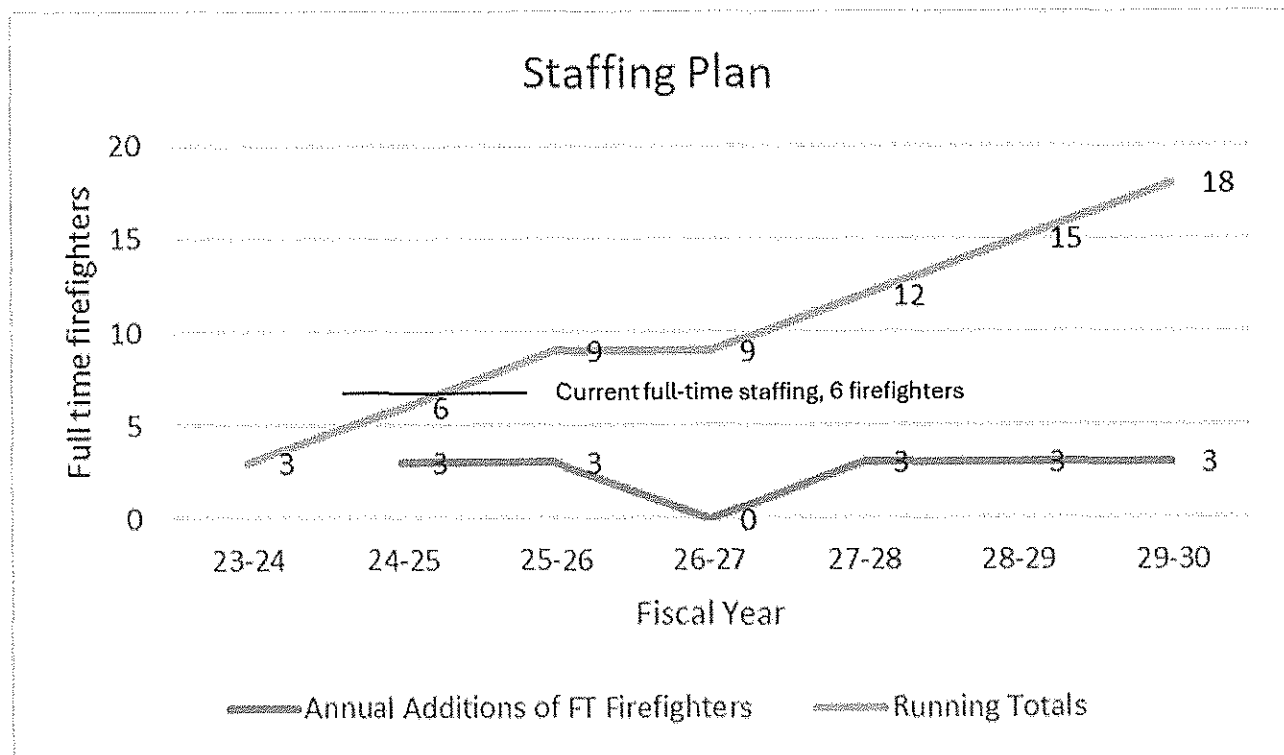


Figure 12- Current and Projected Staffing

This is an increase in the previous numbers of firefighters from the previous year. Appendix B outlines the previous Director of Fire Services' recommendation for staffing the fire stations in Waterford over the next 5 years. A summary of his assessment is provided herein. Figure 12 also graphically depicts the proposed increase. The dip in hiring reflects a pause to assess needs. The new Director of Fire Services will be making his own staff recommendations to the Town in next year's budget cycle.

It is important to underscore that staffing levels for the Waterford Fire Department have increased since the inception of the Ad Hoc Fire Services Review Special Committee.

The previous Director of Fire Services has expressed a strong belief that staffing should continue to grow to meet both the current and future demands facing the community. This view has been echoed by the new Director. Increased construction, population growth, and rising call volumes will require additional response capabilities to maintain Waterford's public safety standards.

Key Takeaways from the Director's January 2025 Staffing Report

- Full-Time Staffing of Three Fire Stations
The Director ~~recommends~~ recommended that three fire stations should be staffed full-time with career (paid) firefighters:

- Company 1 (Jordan)
- Company 4 (Oswegatchie)
- Company 5 (Cohanzie)

Although specific justifications are not explicitly ~~listed~~stated, it is presumed that these companies were selected because they have:

- The largest call volumes.
- Strategic geographic distribution: one station near each east and west end of Town and one centrally located station providing rapid access across Waterford.

- Part-Time Staffing of Two Fire Stations

According to former Director Howley, The the remaining two stations, Quaker Hill and Goshen should be staffed with part-time paid firefighters to ensure broad coverage while managing costs.

- Importance of Maintaining Adequate Staffing

Maintaining sufficient staffing is critical to:

- Protecting personal safety and property.
- Maintaining ~~a~~as high Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating as reasonably achievable, which directly affects residents' insurance premiums.

- Review of Staffing Growth Every Three Years

Staffing levels and the pace of growth should be formally revisited on a three-year cycle to adapt to changing community needs.

- Competitive Salaries

Until 2024, Waterford's starting firefighter salaries were below the state average. However, the most recent labor contract addressed this disparity, helping facilitate the hiring of ~~3~~three new firefighters.

- Pursuit of SAFER Grants

The former Director ~~recommends~~recommended aggressively applying for SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response) grants to offset hiring and personnel costs.

- Projected Staffing Model for FY 2030–2031

The former Director's plan ~~envisions~~envisioned:

- 10 career firefighters on duty always (requiring 30 career firefighters total)

- A 24/48 schedule (24 hours on, 48 hours off)
- A blend of part-time staffing seven days per week
- Full operations from all five ~~fire~~ Fire stations Stations
- Deployment of a variety of apparatus tailored to incident needs.
- Standards of Response Coverage (SOC) Analysis
The Department should consider conducting a Standards of Response Coverage (SOC) analysis to formally evaluate operational efficiency and identify opportunities for improvement.

In presenting his Staffing Plan, the ~~former~~ Director ~~also provides~~ provided a brief history of the Waterford Fire Department's staffing evolution. The trend reflects a slow but steady migration toward paid firefighters, driven by challenges in retaining and recruiting sufficient volunteer personnel.

The Director ~~identifies~~ identified four critical factors justifying the continued expansion of paid staffing:

1. Nationwide Decline in Volunteer Firefighters
Recruitment and retention challenges mirror a broader national trend.
2. Increased Calls for Service
Higher call volumes place additional strain on the fire response system.
3. Commercial and Residential Development
Development in Waterford is progressing at a pace that threatens to outstrip current service capabilities.
4. Service Response Times and Their Impact
Variations in response times can have serious consequences for life safety, property protection, and insurance costs.

Establishing appropriate staffing levels of fire stations can be a challenging task. There are no definitive legal requirements, whether federal or state that dictate the specific number of firefighters each town or station must have. There are two primary organizations whose standards influence fire departments throughout the state and nation. These are:

OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration)- a federal agency under the U. S. Department of Labor responsible for setting and ensuring safe and healthy working conditions for employees, through the issuance of enforced standards.

NFPA (National Fire Protection Association)- a global not-for-profit organization that develops and publishes over 300 standards and codes that target the elimination of economic loss, injury, and death due to fire, electrical or related hazards. Their standards are widely recognized and commonly adopted but not mandated.

Two primary organizations, OSHA (~~Occupational Safety and Health Administration~~) and NFPA (~~National Fire Protection Association~~), publish many standards that significantly influence fire department operations and fire service deployment. Among these are several overarching standards that impact fire department staffing, either directly or indirectly. The most referenced include:

- OSHA 29 CFR 1910.156 – Fire Brigade Standard
This standard establishes requirements for fire brigades, including organizational structure, training and education, personnel requirements, and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE). It specifically applies to fire brigades performing interior structural firefighting.
- OSHA 29 CFR 1910.156 Revision – Emergency Response Standard
A proposed revision of the Fire Brigade Standard, this updated Emergency Response Standard—once approved—will impose a significant number of new requirements. These will largely focus on expanded training, qualifications, and safety procedures for fire stations. The revision has completed its public comment period and is pending final issuance. However, the official effective date remains uncertain as of the publication of this report.
- OSHA 29 CFR 1910.134 – Respiratory Protection Standard
~~These~~ This standard addresses requirements for respiratory protection in hazardous environments. Critically, it establishes the “Two-in / Two-out Rule,” which mandates that two personnel must remain outside a hazardous environment to monitor and assist two personnel operating inside an IDLH (Immediately Dangerous to Life or Health) environment.
- NFPA 1710 – Standard for Career Fire Departments
NFPA 1710 sets standards for the organization and deployment of fire suppression operations, emergency medical operations, and special operations provided by career fire departments.
- NFPA 1720 – Standard for Volunteer Fire Departments
NFPA 1720 outlines similar standards tailored for volunteer fire departments, focusing on deployment expectations based on community demographics.

Neither OSHA nor NFPA directly prescribes exact staffing levels for fire departments. However:

- OSHA influences staffing indirectly by establishing mandatory safety standards, including equipment, working conditions, and training requirements.
- NFPA affects staffing through its emphasis on response times and the minimum number of personnel required based on population density.

For example, NFPA 1720 sets the following staffing guidelines:

- Rural areas (population density of 500 or fewer people per square mile): A minimum of six personnel should respond within 14 minutes or less for 80% of incidents.
- Suburban areas (population density between 500 and 1,000 people per square mile): A minimum of 10 personnel should respond within 10 minutes or less for 80% of incidents.

The Town of Waterford contains both Rural and Suburban areas, meaning it must plan accordingly to meet both standards.

In addition to the regulatory standards and guidelines outlined above, fire department staffing is determined by a combination of critical factors:

- Community Needs: Including call volume, types of emergencies encountered, and population density.
- Budgetary Constraints: Municipal governments operate within limited financial resources, primarily based on tax revenues.
- Risk Assessment: Considering the hazardous nature of buildings, presence of industrial facilities, building sizes, and related factors.
- Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ): The individual, office, or organization empowered to make and enforce regulations affecting fire services (e.g., fire marshal, building official, or other regulatory authority).

In the Town of Waterford, the Authority Having Jurisdiction is the Waterford Fire Department.

Staffing Determination Process:

The exact determination of appropriate staffing levels is a multi-faceted exercise. It requires balancing objective data, expert judgment, and available financial resources.

- Objective Data:
The importance of data collection, trending, and reporting—as depicted in Figures 6-11 cannot be overstated. This data serves as a key indicator of departmental performance and represents the only consistently quantifiable, objective factor available for evaluating staffing evaluation allocation.

- **Subject Matter Expertise:**
Local fire service experts, notably the Director of Fire Services and his team of experienced professionals, play a vital role in assessing staffing needs based on *operational demands and evolving community risks*.
- **Municipal Leadership and Financial Oversight:**
The Town's Chief Executive (First Selectman), along with the Board of Selectmen (BOS), Board of Finance (BOF), and Representative Town Meeting (RTM), are responsible for reviewing staffing recommendations, balancing financial realities, and ensuring that fire service funding decisions align with the broader public safety interests of Waterford residents and businesses.

5.4 Fleet Management Findings

Waterford's Fire Services maintains a substantial fleet of emergency vehicles—currently 26 in ~~total~~ service with another new vehicle arriving soon—primarily designed to support fire suppression operations. This fleet includes:

- Fire engines
- Ladder trucks
- Specialized apparatus
- Support vehicles

A detailed inventory and status assessment of the fleet is provided in Table 3 and the Appendix C.

Fleet Asset I.D.	Town Asset ID	Model Year	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Mileage	Hours	5-Year Total Repair Cost	Years of Service	Replacement / Refurbishment Point System
W-51	101405	2016						30,589	2461	\$ 37,991	9	16
W-53	100515	2009				\$ 31,500		10449	1419	\$ 2,943	16	16
W-55	100079	2004		\$ 2,200,000				41812	4816	\$ 132,074	21	28
W-56	101012	2011		\$ 73,000				54224		\$ 4,925	14	18
W-57	101011	2010							2512	\$ 40,740	15	18
W-16	101615	2018						22833	1180	\$ -	7	6
Car 115	101354	2018						35500		\$ 1,250	7	13
Car 55	101203	2013	\$ 64,000					117000		\$ 2,489	12	24
Car 85	101409	2016		\$ 64,000				118000		\$ 3,001	9	20
New	-				\$ 65,000			0		-		
W-31	101236	2014						16669	1539	\$ 25,046	11	13
W-32	100203	1998						39230	4295	\$ 49,062	27	33
W-34	101127	2012						9183	701	\$ 2,778	13	14
W-36	100310	2007			\$ 74,000			53206	2355	\$ 28,619	18	25
W-93	100376	2007						1139	1028	\$ 25,601	18	21
W-94	-							218	20			
W-11	101321	2014						38156	3287	\$ 50,574	11	18
W-15	101536	2016						32844	2866	\$ 66,333	9	16
W-41	101809	2018						9105	822	\$ 11,901	7	8
W-42	100433	2007						43720	4831	\$ 61,882	18	25
W-43	100256	2006		\$ 226,206				12834	1294	\$ 13,930	19	20
W-46	-	2020						15127	566	\$ 840	5	5
W-21	100311	2006				\$ 925,000		35488	3503	\$ 59,406	19	26
W-23	100257	2006						8374	1329	\$ 15,545	19	20
W-25	101432	2018						7808	1075	\$ 24,603	7	11
A19	100216	2006			\$ 72,000			54800	3373	\$ 6,232	19	
W-26		2021						2150				2
			\$ 64,000	\$ 2,563,206	\$ 211,000	\$ 956,500	\$ -					
								\$ 27,823.54	Average 5-Yr Repair Cost per Vehicle			
								\$ 667,765.00	Total 5-Yr Cost			
								\$ 133,553.00	Average Cost Per Year			

Table 3- Summary of Fleet Maintenance and Capital Acquisition Costs

As fire suppression now represents only a small percentage of emergency call responses, Waterford's current fleet, geared heavily toward traditional firefighting, may warrant strategic realignment over time to better match the evolving mission of an Emergency Services or First Responder organization.

Regardless of future adjustments, effective fleet management today remains essential to ensure the reliability, safety, and fiscal responsibility of this critical public asset.

Using *Fleetio* Software: A Modernized Approach to Fleet Management

To optimize fleet performance, Waterford utilizes *Fleetio*, a modern fleet management software platform designed specifically to:

- Track vehicle condition and maintenance
- Monitor vehicle utilization
- Manage repair records and costs
- Improve budgeting and forecasting accuracy
- Support asset replacement planning

Fleetio provides real-time, centralized data that allows the Fire Services leadership, Town executive staff, and financial officials to make data-driven decisions about asset maintenance, replacement, and allocation.

This technology represents a significant advantage for Waterford, enabling the Town to extend the useful life of its vehicles, improve operational efficiency, and strengthen long-term financial planning.

Existing Town Resources: Building a Collaborative Maintenance Model

In addition to *Fleetio*, Waterford has internal resources that can be leveraged for fleet management efficiency:

- Department of Public Works: Potential to expand the use of Public Works mechanics and facilities for standard maintenance tasks, achieving economies of scale.
- Shared Procurement: By coordinating purchases of routine parts, supplies, and service contracts across departments, the Town can further control costs.
- Cross-Departmental Asset Review: Collaboration between Fire Services, Public Works, and the Finance Department can ensure objective evaluations of fleet needs, promoting smarter capital investments.

A central component of this effort is the use of a maintenance score, a tool designed to evaluate the operational integrity of each vehicle. This scoring system assists in proactive planning for maintenance needs, scheduling repairs, and determining appropriate timelines for vehicle replacement.

5.5 Communications Findings-

The Town purchased new pagers for the volunteers, and the Town is in the process of transitioning to the state radio system to replace the current one. Appendix D is a letter provided by the Director of Emergency Services summarizing the state of emergency communications in the Town of Waterford. In short, plans laid in place years ago are being fulfilled to the Director's satisfaction.

5.6 Waterford Ambulance Findings-

Waterford Ambulance is a private contractor operating out of its privately owned own building located at 454 Boston Post Road. They operate all their ambulances out of this one location, providing one ambulance serving Waterford 24 hours a day. And and one another

ambulance for 16 hours from 08:00 a.m. ~~00:00~~ to midnight. Waterford Ambulance is a private contractor whose employees are not employed by the town of Waterford. The Waterford ambulance service pays Waterford an annual fee for using our radios, radio system, and dispatching services.

The extent to which the Town will enter into providing ambulance service via Fire Services is a TBD topic for the future to be assessed by the new Fire Services Director, Emergency Services Director and appropriate decision-makers.

5.7 Mutual Aid Findings

Mutual aid refers to a formalized agreement between neighboring fire departments and Waterford emergency services to assist one another during incidents that exceed the immediate capacity of a single department.

In practical terms, mutual aid means that if Waterford's Fire Services are fully engaged in an incident—or if a particular incident demands specialized resources or additional manpower—neighboring towns such as New London, East Lyme, Montville, or others can be requested to assist. Similarly, Waterford is obligated, when obligated, to respond to aid requests from neighboring communities when called upon.

Mutual aid covers a wide range of situations, including but not limited to:

- Structure fires
- Hazardous material (HAZMAT) incidents
- Major vehicle accidents
- Emergency medical situations
- Natural disasters and severe weather emergencies
- Large-scale public safety events (e.g., mass casualty incidents)

Legal Basis and Responsibilities

Mutual aid arrangements are typically codified in formal agreements or memoranda of understanding (MOUs) between municipalities. These agreements clarify roles, expectations, operational procedures, and financial responsibilities when one jurisdiction assists another.

In the case of Waterford:

- The Town has entered into mutual aid agreements that bind Waterford legally to provide reasonable assistance when requested.
- Assistance must be provided to the extent possible without compromising Waterford's own public safety obligations.
- Waterford retains discretion—typically via the Fire Services Director or Chief Officer on duty—to determine the level of aid that can be safely offered without endangering its own residents.

Key Legal Considerations:

1. Duty to Provide Aid Once Dispatched

Once Waterford dispatches resources under a mutual aid request, there is a legal and operational expectation that those resources will perform professionally and safely under the requesting *jurisdiction's incident command structure*.

2. Risk to Waterford's Assets

When Town personnel, vehicles, or equipment are sent outside of Waterford's jurisdiction, the Town assumes certain liabilities and risks, including:

- Potential damage to equipment
- Potential injury to personnel
- Potential exposure to legal claims (though many agreements include indemnification clauses)

3. Workers' Compensation and Insurance Coverage

Firefighters, whether paid or volunteer, remain covered under Waterford's workers' compensation insurance while operating under mutual aid, ensuring protection in the event of injury or death while assisting another community.

4. Cost Recovery (Rare but Possible)

Generally, mutual aid is provided without direct financial compensation. However, in certain extraordinary situations (especially extended deployments), Waterford may have the right to seek reimbursement for extraordinary costs under disaster declarations (e.g., FEMA reimbursements after federally declared emergencies).

5. Right of Refusal Based on Capacity

Importantly, mutual aid agreements do not require a town to endanger itself to aid another. If Waterford's available resources are insufficient to safely respond to both local needs and a mutual aid request, the Fire Director (or highest-ranking officer) has the legal and ethical duty to prioritize allocation of the Town's Fire Service resources.

What Mutual Aid Is Not

- Mutual aid is not a replacement for adequate staffing and equipping Waterford's own fire and emergency services.
- Mutual aid is not guaranteed: other towns might not be available at critical times, especially during widespread regional emergencies (e.g., hurricanes, major storms).
- Mutual aid does not absolve Waterford of its primary legal responsibility to independently and adequately protect its residents

Strategic Importance for Waterford

Given the Town's legal obligations and operational realities, mutual aid should be understood as:

- A valuable supplemental tool, not a core component of service delivery.

- A safety net for rare, high-demand incidents, not a routine staffing solution.
- An obligation of reciprocity, means that Waterford must be equally prepared to both request and provide aid without compromising its own community's safety.

As Waterford continues to modernize its fire services and evolve toward a combination department structure, mutual aid will remain critical—but it must be managed wisely, with full recognition of its benefits, limitations, and legal responsibilities.

6.0 Five Fire Stations - History and Structure of Waterford's Fire Stations

As referenced earlier, Waterford has a long-standing tradition of volunteer fire service, dating back to the early 20th century. The Town's five volunteer fire stations emerged as a direct response to growing local needs, with each station strategically located in areas experiencing population development. Notably, all five stations were constructed by volunteers, using funds they independently raised.

To formalize and distribute responsibilities, a series of fire districts were created, providing an organized framework for managing the growing fire services system.

Since 1942, Waterford has maintained five fire stations, all incorporated within a span of 19 years. These five stations remain operational today.

Waterford's population continues to grow steadily, and the current infrastructure of fire stations remains largely supportive of existing development patterns. According to the most recent census, Waterford's population stands at 19,554.

While census projections suggest the population may stabilize or even decline slightly in the future, recent development activity—as illustrated in Table 2—indicates the potential for continued population growth, which could influence future demand for fire services.

Waterford's proud tradition of volunteer fire service has evolved over decades to meet the needs of a growing and changing community. Originally founded around local volunteer efforts, the Town's five fire stations—established through a historic, mutually beneficial agreements (Appendix E)—provided critical coverage and protection. This agreement, whereby volunteers deliver fire protection services in exchange for the Town maintaining stations and funding, equipment, and training, remains foundational today, granting Waterford access to a network of five strategically located stations.

As Waterford grows, the Town has a unique opportunity to honor its rich legacy while thoughtfully planning the next generation of emergency services—services designed not only for today's challenges but for tomorrow's vision.

While census projections suggest that Waterford's overall population (currently 19,554) may remain stable or decline slightly, other trends paint a more dynamic picture:

- Growth in the Senior Population:
An increasing proportion of older residents will drive greater demand for emergency medical services.
- Recent Development Activity (Table 2):
Despite ~~broader~~ more modest population forecasts, recent residential and commercial building activity suggests a ~~blossoming~~ slowly growing population.
- Town Size and Diversity:
Spanning 37 square miles, Waterford features a challenging mix of rural, suburban, and commercial properties, each requiring thoughtful, responsive fire and emergency service coverage.

Several factors are shaping the evolving mission of Waterford's Fire Services:

- Significant Commercial Entities:
 - Dominion Energy's Nuclear Power facility
 - The proposed Data Center
 - The Crystal Mall complexThese assets represent critical infrastructure requiring specialized response capabilities.
- Changing Building Patterns:
Newer construction often features:
 - Higher population densities
 - Multi-story structures
 - Fire-resistant materialsThese improvements enhance safety but also introduce new challenges, such as greater exposure to hazardous synthetic materials in fires.
- Expanded Scope of Emergency Responses:
~~Today~~ In recent years, structural-structure fires have represent-represented a small fraction of calls. Firefighters are now routinely responding to:
 - Hazardous material incidents
 - Severe weather events
 - Service calls

- Medical emergencies
- False alarms
- Distribution of Service:
Analysis of call data indicates that emergency call volume is distributed across the Town, reinforcing the critical value importance of maintaining all five fire stations.

6.1 Why Having Five Stations Matters

Maintaining a five-station model continues to provide tangible, town-wide benefits:

1. Good Response Times
The current station locations enable fast, reliable service delivery in alignment with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards.
2. Volunteer Retention
Reducing or closing stations could diminish volunteer participation and necessitate more career staff, increasing costs.
3. Strategic Coverage
Stations are located near high-density neighborhoods and key assets such as the Crystal Mall, Dominion Nuclear Power Station, Interstate 95, Interstate 395, Route 85 and Waterford's schools, Town Hall, Community Center, Beaches, Niantic River, and the Thames River all spread over 37 square miles.
4. Cost effective Insurance Rates and ISO Ratings
Maintaining five stations helps preserve Waterford's favorable Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating, protecting residents from higher insurance premiums.
5. Resiliency and Emergency Sheltering
Each station provides a critical-free accessible, safe location for residents sheltering during townwide emergencies and supports Waterford's integrated Task Force emergency management approach.
6. Infrastructure Readiness
Except for Oswegatchie (which the RTM has determined requires replacement), the other stations are maintainable through repair or renovation.
7. Emergency Operations
As Waterford's Fire Services evolve into a broader Emergency Services Organization,

each station will play a key role in housing resources, personnel, and shelter facilities across the community.

8. A Proven, Successful Model

The five-station approach has effectively served Waterford for over 100 years—providing life-saving protection, community reassurance, and continuity.

Looking Forward: Waterford's Vision for Emergency Services

As Waterford embraces the future, its fire ~~services~~service must continue to evolve and potentially grow into a modern Emergency Services and First Responder Organization, ready to address a broader range of public safety needs. As noted earlier, such a change may warrant ordinance revisions and a charter update. A suitable name could be Waterford Fire and Rescue.

Key elements of this future vision should include:

- Investing smartly in facility upgrades, apparatus modernization, and training.
- Expanding partnerships with local and regional agencies.
- Applying for grants (such as SAFER grants) to enhance staffing and resilience.
- Adapting tactics to meet the challenges of changing construction patterns, population shifts, and evolving threats.

By recognizing the value of its current infrastructure and proactively planning for the future, Waterford is charting an exciting and responsible course—one that builds on its proud past while preparing for a bright, resilient and nimble future.

The future of Waterford's fire services is not about standing still. It's about growing, adapting, and leading—and the Town is with careful planning can be ready to meet the responsibilities it will face in the future.

6.2 The Case for a New Oswegatchie Fire Station

In January 2023, the ~~Ad Hoc~~ Fire Services Review Special Committee released an interim report recommending the replacement of the Oswegatchie Fire Station due to extensive structural and mechanical deficiencies. At the same time, the Committee strongly reaffirmed the Town's five-station fire service delivery model as the most effective and strategic approach for meeting Waterford's emergency response needs.

In addition to the broader reasons supporting the five-station model, the following specific points highlight why replacing the Oswegatchie Fire Station is critical to Waterford's future:

1. Strengthens Public Safety

- A new OFS Ensures ensures continued fire and emergency support for the Oswegatchie Elementary School and surrounding neighborhoods.
- It Provides provides a modern, safe, and secure facility for housing part of the Town's paid firefighter workforce.
- It Creates creates an ideal location for a future operational/educational hub command center for Waterford's growing team of career firefighters.

2. Supports the Town's Vision for a Combination Fire Department

- A new station Advances advances Waterford's transition toward a combination fire services model, blending career firefighters and volunteer support—consistent with national best practices and Waterford's evolving needs.
- It Positions positions the Town for a stronger, more resilient flexible fire service well into the 21st century.

3. Enhances Recruitment and Retention

- A new, state-of-the-art station will boost the recruitment and retention of both career and volunteer firefighters.
- A modern facility focused on firefighter safety, training, and well-being demonstrates the Town's serious commitment to public safety services.

4. Protects Waterford's Long-Term Financial Interests

- Repairing and renovating the existing station is not cost-effective according to the Town's architect and construction project manager. The construction program manager provided an estimate of \$11.1 million to renovate the building as new, while a new building could cost approximately \$12.6 million, with contingencies and soft costs included in each.
- Delaying construction would significantly escalate costs—potentially requiring \$15–20 million within 7–10 years for new construction and interim repairs.
- Building the new station now is the fiscally responsible choice for taxpayers.

5. Continues a Century-Long Success Story

- Oswegatchie Fire Company has served Waterford from its current location for over 94 years.
- Maintaining a station at this location honors a proven, historic fire station model that has effectively covers-protected all 37 square miles of the Town.

- Every major study and both recent Directors of Fire Services have strongly supported the five-station model for Waterford.

6. Enhances Townwide Emergency Preparedness

- Provides a local shelter for residents during emergencies.
- *Maintains a strategic outpost for the staging of apparatus and personnel for rapid, effective responses to any emergency.*

7. Aligns with Town Plans and Community Values

- Building a new station at Oswegatchie is consistent with both the existing and proposed draft Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD).
- Reflects the Town's values of community investment, public safety, and smart growth.

8. Reinforces Waterford's Commitment to Public Safety

- Waterford protects a community of 19,554 residents and a \$4.4 billion grand list of residential, commercial, ~~and industrial~~ and personal property.
- A new, centrally located fire station will significantly strengthen life and property protection across the Town.

9. Demonstrates Strong Community Leadership

- In February ~~2022~~2023, the Representative Town Meeting (RTM) took decisive action:
 - Established a Building Committee charged with constructing a new Oswegatchie Fire Station.
 - Committed to maintaining the old station only as necessary until a replacement is built.
 - Approved funding for architect and Project Manager fees and accepted the conveyance of OFD property to pave the way for the first Town-owned fire station.

The preservation and modernization of Waterford's five-station fire services model is critical to meeting current and future community needs.

Building a new Oswegatchie Fire Station is more than a construction project—it is a clear investment in:

- Public safety
- Community resilience
- Long-term financial responsibility
- Waterford's future growth and success

Waterford's vision is bold, responsible, and clear: continuing to invest in the systems that protect its people, its property, and its proud tradition of excellence.

7.0 A Strategic Vision

Evolution of Waterford's Fire Services

Like many small towns, Waterford's fire services have evolved over time—shifting from a fully volunteer model to today's combination fire department and moving steadily toward greater professionalization.

~~In the early 1900s, fire protection was provided by a network of privately owned, independently operated stations. Over time, these private companies were managed collectively by a Board of Fire Commissioners. Today, Waterford benefits from a centralized management model, led by a Director of Fire Services, ensuring professional oversight and strategic coordination.~~

This transition has been driven by necessity: a combination of the need for greater efficiency, declining volunteer availability, and the increasing complexity of emergency services. Importantly, consolidation of management has improved operational effectiveness without sacrificing public safety.

Historically, the cost of maintaining an all-volunteer fire service was substantially lower than the costs associated with a combination or career fire service. Early expenses, largely captured through Town agreements (Appendix E), were focused on station maintenance, volunteer training, and equipment provision.

However, as the fire service evolved:

- Buildings and equipment aged, requiring greater maintenance investment.
- Volunteer staffing declined significantly, forcing the Town to hire part-time and then full-time firefighters.
- Annual fire service costs have steadily increased, see Figure 13, reflecting both broader operational demands and necessary modernization efforts.

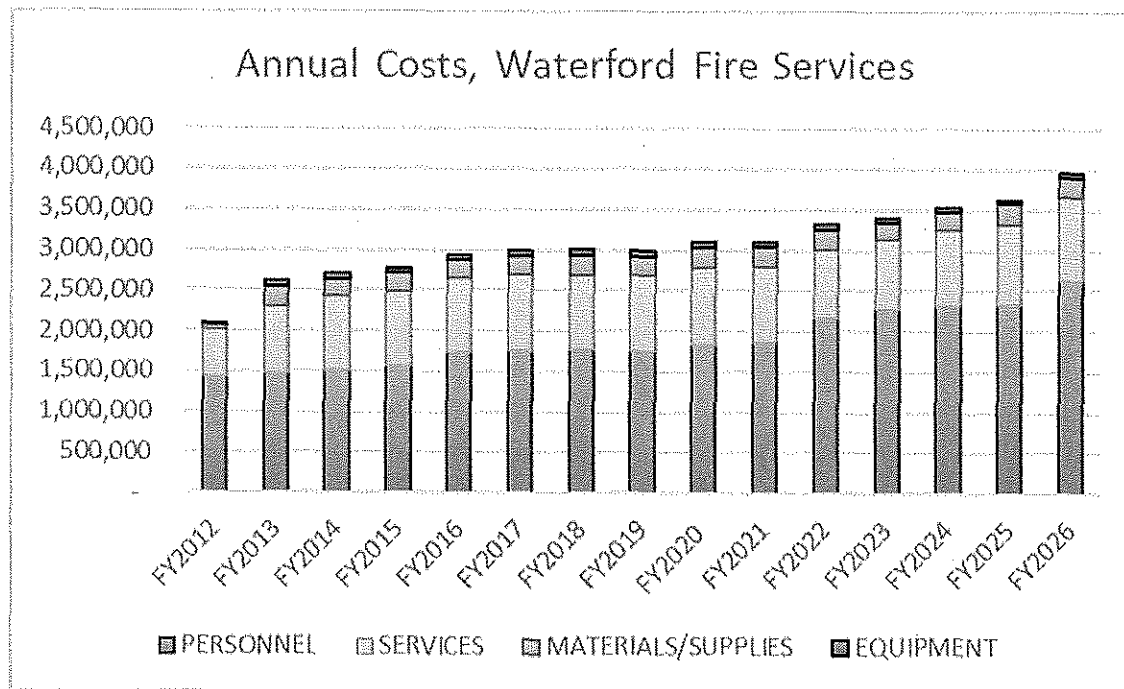


Figure 13-Waterford Fire Services Annual Costs, 2012-2026

Today, while many stations remain crucial geographic and operational assets, they are no longer community hubs filled with volunteers during downtime. Instead, they serve primarily as deployment outposts for paid staffing and critical equipment.

Since the late 1990s, volunteer recruitment and retention have faced major challenges—consistent with national trends. As volunteer numbers declined, Waterford responded proactively by:

- Hiring part-time and full-time firefighters to maintain/improve service levels
- Strategically deploying full-time paid firefighters to Oswegatchie, Jordan, and Cohanzie
- Assigning part-time paid firefighters to Goshen and Quaker Hill

Today:

- Full-time paid staffing covers the Town's busiest districts.
- Part-time staffing supports areas where volunteer activity has declined but where service demands remain critical.

Deployment patterns reflect careful use of demographic, call volume, and risk data (see Figures 7-10), aligning staffing levels with service needs to ensure efficient and economical operations.

Given the challenges associated with sustaining the original volunteer agreements, and with volunteers becoming increasingly scarce, rethinking the model for fire and emergency services in Waterford is both timely and necessary.

Key questions for strategic evaluation include:

- How can existing data be used more proactively to optimize resource deployment?
- Should staffing levels be customized to call volume and risk patterns rather than uniformly distributed?
- Can Waterford maximize the use of all five stations while adapting staffing and equipment strategies?
- How can service delivery evolve to balance cost-effectiveness, public safety, and taxpayer value?

Any new model must reflect the Town's underlying obligations to its residents and taxpayers, including:

- Uniform and consistent provision of emergency services
- Effective and efficient utilization of equipment, apparatus, and buildings
- Strategic deployment of both volunteer and career personnel
- Responsiveness to current and future risks associated with development and population changes
- Prudent and transparent management of operational costs
- Alignment with a defined and forward-looking vision for public safety

Emergency Services: A Broader Mission

Based on the data provided (Figure 6-8), Waterford's emergency services landscape has dramatically shifted:

- Emergency medical and other non-fire calls outnumber structural fire responses by a ratio of 35:1.
- ~~Structural-Structure~~ fire responses now represent only a small fraction of total incidents.

This important trend suggests that Waterford Fire Services is evolving into a broader Emergency Services or First Responder organization—a change that reflects national practice. A formal
formal change of this type may require a charter change.

While the reduction in ~~structural-structure~~ fires is a positive public safety outcome, the Town's new mission must focus on:

- Providing agile, community-wide emergency response capabilities

- Equipping and training personnel for a diverse range of incidents
- Maintaining strategically located stations to optimize response times and service delivery

8.0 CA Strategic Path Forward for Fire Services

8.1 General Framework

Waterford's fire services model must evolve in response to changing demographics, emergency trends, and fiscal realities. By building upon the historic five-station framework—and adapting it through data-driven decision making, flexible staffing, and strategic investment, the Town can protect its residents, support its first responders, and deliver outstanding emergency services well into the future.

The future of Waterford Fire Services is rooted in tradition—but shaped by innovation, efficiency, and a bold commitment to public safety.

a. Development of a 5-Year Strategic Plan

In coordination with the Town's executive leadership, Fire Services administration, and other emergency management personnel, the Town should create a comprehensive 5-Year Fire and Emergency Services Strategic Plan.

Modeled after Waterford's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), or potentially crafted as a subset of it, the Strategic Plan would address:

- Staffing plans
- Capital improvement programs
- Growth and/or contraction projections
- Facility and resource development plans
- Other essential aspects of Fire Services operations

This effort should be an exercise in critical thinking, strategic forecasting, and self-examination, designed to establish a Townwide vision for Fire Services.

The resulting Plan would serve as a codified framework to guide decision-making, align leadership thinking, and provide visible evidence to taxpayers that the Town is actively planning for both the current and future state of public safety.

b. Periodic Fire Services Review

Waterford should establish a formal periodic review process to ensure continuous evaluation of Fire Services operations and policy.

Options include:

- Creation of a public volunteer oversight advisory board with a clear charter
- Scheduled reactivation of a Fire Services Special Review Committee to independently review operations, data, and policy every three to five years

Three prior Fire Services reports (including this one) have built an increasingly detailed and referenceable foundation for future strategic reviews, ensuring that successive evaluations benefit from historical continuity and prior lessons learned.

c. Redefining Fire Services as Emergency Services

The Town should consider redefining Waterford Fire Services to better align with its actual service delivery model.

- *Historical Context:* When the original stations were built, fire suppression was the primary (and nearly sole) function.
- *Current Reality:* Over the last seven years, ~~structural~~structure fires account for only 2% of calls, while Emergency Medical Services (EMS) account for nearly 70%.

Given this transformation, rebranding Fire Services as Emergency Services or First Responder Services would:

- Require a revised Mission Statement that accurately reflects new operational objectives.
- Realign policies, procedures, equipment, and training priorities around broader emergency response needs.
- Lower the training barrier for volunteers, enabling more participation by focusing on non-fire services for those not seeking full firefighter certifications.
- Stimulate broader community interest and better ~~resource~~position the Town for evolving ~~threats~~needs and challenges.
- Allow for a reassessment of apparatus, vehicle mix, and infrastructure needs, potentially reducing dependence on expensive, specialized fire-only equipment.

This rebranding positions Waterford as a forward-thinking leader in modern public safety service delivery.

d. Strengthen Data-Driven Decision Making

Maintaining robust Fire Services data systems is critical to evaluating performance and driving continuous improvement.

Data applications include:

- Optimizing vehicle and equipment placement based on call trends
- Analyzing staffing adequacy and deployment strategies
- Supporting strategic updates to the 5-Year Plan
- Demonstrating service success to the public through objective, ~~believable~~consistent reliable statistics

Data-driven decision-making also helps validate investment decisions and promotes transparency with taxpayers.

e. Prepare for New OSHA Standards

The pending revision of OSHA CFR 1910.156, retitled Emergency Response Standard, represents a transformational shift in regulatory requirements for municipal fire services.

Key anticipated impacts:

- Dramatic increase in required qualifications and training for career fire departments
- New mandates for:
 - Incident and Exposure Recordkeeping
 - Medical Evaluations
 - Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
- Expanded compliance with 22 NFPA standards, which will now carry regulatory—not just advisory—weight

The new OSHA standard is expected to create:

- Significant new costs for equipment, training, facilities, PPE, and recordkeeping
- Substantial operational complexity for towns like Waterford
- Potential volunteer recruitment challenges, as barriers to entry for service increase

Notably, volunteer-only fire departments will not be subject to these new standards, introducing an important strategic consideration for Waterford’s combination department model.

Given the complexity and comprehensiveness of the change, the Town’s legal counsel must scrutinize the final rule to:

- Determine specific applicability to Waterford’s Fire Services
- Identify operational and financial impacts
- Advise on compliance strategies

Proactive planning now will ensure that Waterford remains compliant while continuing to provide high-quality, efficient fire and emergency services to its residents. The Town should prepare for these changes.

f. Strengthen and Redefine Mutual Aid

Mutual aid strengthens regional resilience and fosters inter-town collaboration. However, it is not a substitute for a strong, properly staffed, and equipped Fire and Emergency Services Department within Waterford itself. Strategic planning, staffing, and resource deployment must continue to prioritize Waterford’s primary duty to its own residents, while maintaining respectful and responsible participation in regional mutual aid agreements.

Waterford’s future depends on smart investment in its people, its facilities, and its readiness—because when seconds matter, mutual aid should be a backup plan, not the first line of defense. The Town should continue to investigate how best to utilize mutual aid, including the creation of new models that better suit the needs of Waterford, such as mutual aid for specific incident types.

8.2 Staffing: Strategic Management for Waterford Fire Services

Overview

Staffing is consistently the most expensive element in the provision of fire services for any municipality in Connecticut, including Waterford. Figure 13 depicts this fact.

These costs are driven by:

- Salaries for full-time and part-time personnel
- Health insurance, workers' compensation, and related benefits
- Pension obligations (firefighters often retire after ~~relatively short~~sometimes shorter careers compared to other ~~public~~ employees)
- Ongoing municipal training requirements to maintain certifications, safety standards, and operational readiness

Financial Impact of Staffing

Assuming a typical municipal fire service career trajectory:

- Average hiring age: 20–25 years
- Average retirement age: 50–55 years
- Average years of service: 20–25 years

~~At any given time~~In the future, the Town could be financially responsible for one current salary and up to two pensions per active firefighter when factoring in past retirees. This underscores the long-term budgetary impact staffing decisions have and highlights why municipal governments must approach staffing planning with careful strategic consideration.

Challenges in Staffing Decisions

Determining appropriate staffing levels is highly complex, involving a blend of:

- Objective data: such as call volumes, response times, and mutual aid frequency
- Subjective factors: such as organizational culture, volunteer availability, and emerging community risks

Both types of information must be analyzed continuously to adjust staffing models appropriately over time.

To meet current and future needs in a cost-effective, resilient manner, the following recommendations are advanced:

a. Data-Driven Staffing Evaluations

- Maintain comprehensive databases tracking:
 - Frequency and type of emergency responses by station and townwide
 - Response times by station
 - Frequency of mutual aid requests provided and received
 - Active volunteer participation on a station by station basis
- Use this information to:
 - Evaluate the operational health of the Fire Services Department
 - Inform adjustments to staffing patterns
 - Ensure equitable mutual aid contributions among neighboring towns
 - Identify opportunities for reallocating personnel or equipment based on actual demand
 - Substantiate the rationale for increased funding for staff in budget process

Data should be periodically and systematically reviewed and correlated to staffing levels to support continuous improvement of fire service performance and fiscal responsibility.

b. Specific Strategic Staffing Approach

Recognizing the realities of volunteer availability, call volumes, and community needs, Waterford's staffing model must continue to adapt to optimize-meet service requirements while honoring its five-district tradition.

The Through former Director Howley, the Department's strategic approach includes:

i. Full-Time Paid Firefighters at Three Central Stations

- Jordan Fire Station (Company 1)
- Oswegatchie Fire Station (Company 4)
- Cohanzie Fire Station (Company 5)

These three locations serve as primary operational hubs due to their:

- Central or strategic geographic locations
- Higher emergency call volumes
- Rapid access to major corridors and population centers

By staffing these three stations with full-time career firefighters, Waterford ensures a strong, reliable core of professional emergency response capability throughout the Town.

ii. Part-Time Paid Staff, First Responders, and Volunteers at Two Stations

- Goshen Fire Station (Company 3)
- Quaker Hill Fire Station (Company 2)

These stations continue to play a vital role in:

- Maintaining neighborhood-based emergency response
- Serving lower-density areas
- Providing critical backup during larger incidents

By staffing Goshen and Quaker Hill with a blend of part-time firefighters, trained first responders, and community volunteers, the Town can:

- Sustain service coverage without unnecessary costs
- Provide local familiarity and rapid local response
- Preserve the community roots and pride associated with these historic stations

c. Recommend Renewing and invigorating ~~Invigorating~~ the Commitment to Volunteerism

Volunteers have been the historic backbone of Waterford Fire Services and remain a potentially critical resource for sustaining cost-effective service delivery.

However, volunteerism has declined due to:

- Increasingly complex and time-intensive training requirements
- *Competing family and career obligations*

Restoring a strong volunteer corps is imperative both to:

- Strengthening organizational culture and community engagement
- ~~Control~~ Controlling long-term operational costs

To achieve this:

i. Explore Expanding Volunteer Roles Beyond Firefighting

Recognizing the significant barrier to entry posed by full fire training and certification, Waterford should create and promote alternative volunteer roles that contribute meaningfully to the department's Department's mission that which require less training, including:

- Public outreach: Educational programs in schools, safety demonstrations, and community engagement activities.

- Administrative support: Assisting with scheduling, data entry, equipment inventory management, and logistics.
- Emergency Support Roles: Establishing a specialized volunteer unit trained similar to Waterford's Fire Police for non-fire emergency responses, such as:
 - Traffic control at accident scenes
 - Assistance during severe weather events (tree clearing, welfare checks)
 - Support during shelter activations
 - Basic EMS support under supervision (if legally permitted)

This new corps of Emergency Service Volunteers would not need full firefighter certifications, but ~~would~~could still significantly bolster Town resilience.

ii. Promote On-the-Job Training Opportunities

- Continue to partner with local educational institutions and public programs to offer hands-on fire service internships or ride-along opportunities for young adults.
- Establish a junior volunteer program to expose younger residents (ages 16–18) to fire and emergency services careers.

iii. Rebuild Fire Station Culture

Historically, Waterford's fire stations were community hubs where ~~young people~~ gathered, trained, and socialized.

Reinvigorating this station culture can:

- Promote pride and team identity
- Encourage volunteer recruitment
- Bridge generational gaps between volunteers and paid staff

Ideas include:

- Hosting open houses, family nights, and training events
- Encouraging team-building exercises across stations
- Establishing peer mentoring between career and volunteer members

iv. Integrate Volunteers and Paid Staff into a Unified Team

- Foster a single organizational identity, emphasizing that both volunteers and career firefighters are essential to the Town's public safety success.
- Crosstrain volunteers and paid staff together where feasible to ~~ensure~~foster operational consistency and mutual respect.

d. Staffing Cost Monitoring

- Annually assess the costs associated with staffing changes, including:
 - Salaries and benefits
 - Training expenditures
 - Recruitment and onboarding costs
 - Volunteer incentive program expenses
- Use these cost evaluations as part of a broader fiscal forecast model to guide sustainable growth in staffing aligned with emerging community needs and Town revenue projections.

Principles Guiding the Staffing Recommendation and Facility Use

This staffing model is guided by the following principles:

- Respect for All Neighborhoods:
No district is abandoned; all five stations remain critical parts of the Town's emergency services network.
- Equity of Response:
Residents in every part of Waterford will continue to receive professional emergency services.
- Efficient Resource Deployment:
Full-time staff are concentrated where the demand is highest, while part-time and volunteer resources are leveraged effectively where appropriate.
- Community Connection:
Volunteer involvement and neighborhood fire stations help maintain civic pride, local engagement, and disaster resilience.
- Fiscal Responsibility:
Staffing and operational decisions are made with care ~~for taxpayer resources~~, mindful of the existing tax burden on property owners, balancing quality service with sustainable costs.

Recommended Future Considerations

As Waterford continues to evolve:

- Staffing patterns should be reviewed periodically, ensuring alignment with population changes, development patterns, and service demands.
- The Town should continue supporting volunteer recruitment and retention efforts, recognizing that volunteers remain an important part of the Town's public safety model.

- All fire stations should be maintained as critical community assets, providing not only emergency response capability but also shelter, training, outreach, and resiliency functions.

Waterford's approach honors its proud history of neighborhood-based fire protection while modernizing for the realities of today and emerging challenges of tomorrow.

Every resident matters. Every neighborhood counts.

By embracing a balanced staffing model—full-time professionals at three central stations, part-time and volunteers at two—Waterford demonstrates its deep commitment to fairness, readiness, and community pride across all five districts.

A strong, unified, and resilient fire and emergency services network across all five stations will continue to be one of Waterford's greatest strengths.

Waterford's future fire emergency services success depends on maintaining a flexible, responsive, and cost-conscious staffing model.

By embracing data-driven decision-making and restoring a vibrant culture of volunteerism, the Town can deliver outstanding service, manage long-term costs, and build a new generation of civic pride and public safety excellence.

The right people, trained, integrated, and committed, will ensure Waterford's continued fire, public safety and emergency preparedness capability success for decades to come.

8.3 Capital Plan

~~There~~ At this time there is an important opportunity to strengthen the planning and management of maintenance for the privately owned fire stations. Specifically, providing more detailed work scopes and more refined cost estimates would significantly enhance the process. Additionally, establishing a more formal, codified procedure for tracking repairs and ongoing maintenance activities is recommended. This would ensure greater consistency and accountability over time.

While the current rough estimates offer a helpful starting point, the Town would greatly benefit from improving the quality, precision, and consistency of these repair numbers. More accurate estimates would align with the proven practices used successfully by other Town departments, such as Utilities and Public Works, where repair and modification projects are consistently managed on an annual basis.

By adopting these improvements, the Town can ensure that fire station maintenance is planned and executed with the same high standard of care and efficiency seen across its other critical services.

8.4 Infrastructure Management: Respecting All Districts and Building a Strong Future

Waterford has long valued the principle that every resident, in every neighborhood, deserves timely, professional, and reliable emergency services.

This commitment is reflected in the Town's historic support for five fire districts, each with its own station, developed by community members working to protect their neighborhoods.

Today, as the Town continues its transition to a Town-run combination fire service model, it remains critical that respect for all five districts—and the residents they serve—remains at the heart of strategic planning. The future of Waterford Fire Services must balance operational efficiency with the core value of equitable service across the entire Town.

As discussed earlier, a detailed engineering assessment of each fire station is warranted to determine the condition of each fire station, so as to better catalogue, assess and prioritize pending repairs and to populate short- and long-term capital plans.

8.5 Recommended Strategies for Fire Services Fleet Management and Budgeting

To maximize the benefit of *Fleetio* and Town resources, the following strategic actions are recommended:

a. Standardize Maintenance Services

- Evaluate the feasibility of using Public Works for routine fire apparatus maintenance where qualified.
- Centralize fleet maintenance standards across Town departments for consistency and cost savings.

b. Fully Implement a Comprehensive Fleet Management Plan

Using *Fleetio's* capabilities, build a complete operational profile for every vehicle, including:

- Department of Transportation (DOT) condition characterization
- Usage frequency tracking
- Designation of active vs. backup status
- Routine and corrective maintenance records, with actual cost tracking per vehicle per year
- Mileage tracking by usage type (e.g., emergency response, training, routine movement), providing actionable data for future planning

c. Assess Equipment Needs Based on Data

- Use call volume, incident type, and geographic service needs to determine optimal apparatus types.

- Consider transitioning toward smaller, more flexible vehicles if Emergency Services activities continue to dominate responses.
- Consider rotating equipment to insure mileage is uniformly distributed between vehicles to minimize wear and tear and obtain better warranty support.

d. Plan for Asset Replacement

- Establish and adhere to an active service life policy of approximately 15–20 years for major apparatus unless chronic maintenance issues suggest otherwise.
- Routinely retire and liquidate outdated or unnecessary vehicles, using sales proceeds to offset new equipment purchases—keep only those vehicles which are deemed necessary based on contributions to current operations.

e. Buy Standardized Equipment

- Prioritize purchasing "off-the-shelf" apparatus where feasible, avoiding unnecessary customization that adds cost without improving core functionality.

f. Strategically Position Assets

- Match vehicle deployment to population density, risk profile, and response data to optimize readiness (e.g., assigning lighter, quicker vehicles to suburban or low-density areas, retaining heavy apparatus in high-risk commercial zones).

Waterford's investment in *Fleetio* software and its commitment to strategic asset management positions the Town to:

- Improve emergency response readiness
- Extend the life of critical but costly apparatus
- Make smarter, data-informed budget decisions
- Strengthen overall operational efficiency

As Waterford's Fire Services continues to evolve into a modern Emergency Services operation, fleet management will be a key pillar of success—ensuring that both the community's safety and the taxpayers' investments are protected for the long term.

Waterford's future is not just about owning more vehicles—it's about owning the right vehicles, maintaining them properly, and deploying them smartlyeffectively.

8.6 Overall Strategic Plan

The Fire Administrator Consistent with the Fire Department Ordinance, the Director of Fire Services and First Selectman shall annually monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of fire services in Waterford and recommend appropriate revisions to departmental operations including but not limited to staffing adjustments, policy changes and capital expenditures to meet the ongoing requirements of an evolving hybrid-combination department. The respective funding authorities (BOS, BOF, RTM) with input from the community, shall respond to these

recommendations each year through the budget process. The RTM ~~shall~~ should consider re-appoint-appointing a follow-on Fire Services Review Committee to perform an assessment function similar to the Plan of Conservation and Development to identify trends and suggest strategies to be considered by the all Town decision-makers in order to improve or enhance Waterford's fire services, at a frequency ~~decided~~ to be determined by the RTM.

9.0 Closing Comment

Our hope is that the Committee's review of Waterford's fire service will provide important information to assist Town decision-makers understand how ~~firefighting~~ our fire service works in Waterford. The Committee's objective is to assist the Town in addressing the 21st century fire service needs in a manner which best protects the people and property of Waterford.

The Committee thanks all who served this effort, as voting or nonvoting member, staff or support community participant.