

Good Evening Members of the Town of Waterford RTM,

I am writing you again to voice my concerns with the Town of Waterford's lack of fire protection. In my last letter to you I wrote about how the lack of staffing resulted in the death of a resident, we staff the police with extra officers when there's a spike in crime (which is proven to do nothing to stop crime) but do nothing about the fire service, and the overall lack of leadership in the Waterford Fire Department.

I had written this letter directly to First Selectman Rob Brule, but after no response for a number of weeks I forwarded the letter to you all so you could see concerns of mine and know that the highest level of town government was not only being negligent on the issue, but not answering a concerned citizen about the issue. I was pleased to hear while attending the meeting via Zoom that the RTM wants to send these concerns of mine to an ADHOC. I believe this is the best choice and it's important for these issues to be investigated and a plan be put in place to stop these things from hurting our community anymore.

My specific concerns were:

- Lack of fire protection
- Lack of oversight
- Lack of leadership
- Lack of training.

With that being said I'm going to fill in the gaps between my last letter, which was dated on July 27th, 2020 and now, October 4th, 2020.

Since then I have been contacted by both the Director of Fire Services, Bruce Miller, and the First Selectman, Rob Brule, to speak about the matter. While I appreciate a good follow up, even if it is 3 weeks after the initial complaint, I was not satisfied with the answers.

The Director of Fire Services essentially said he agrees with my concerns and knows that there are problems but that "I know how it is" ...

Here is what I know-

- The Waterford Fire Service is inadequate.
- It does not have the ability to mitigate emergencies in town.
- It relies on the City of New London.
- It has too many trucks and not enough firefighters.
- It hangs its hat on "part time" and volunteer firefighters who frankly do not have the time or desire to handle these calls and supplement paid staff (Proven by statistics).
- And I know that the Town of Waterford is NOTHING SHORT of NEGLIGENT on the matter. Will it take the death of another resident before we start getting serious about fire protection?

The First Selectman said the following- (paraphrasing because I'm a good note taker as he stated on our telecommunication on August 20th).

- He told me that he comes from a world of 24-hour coverage, something not everyone in Waterford has the luxury of.

- He felt some type of way about this going to committee because he said he can "Do things faster than committee" ... Whether that's true or not, we still have inadequate staffing after his 1 year in office... homes burning, people dying.
- When asked about the lack of leadership, because it has been over ONE YEAR since a Fire Officer from Waterford Fire Engine Co.1 has attended a call, Rob said he's looking at calls and response times, incident command "or a lack thereof", ordinances, and a stipend program.

All of these conversations raise more concerns with me. If we know there is a problem, why aren't we fixing it. In the Marine Corps when we recognize a safety issue, we handle it immediately, move it to the top of our priority list, because we understand that lives are at stake. Every day you go on ignoring the facts in front of your face is another day someone could take their last breath due to inadequate fire services in the Town of Waterford.

Just today, October 4th, 2020 there was a call at Springhill Suites on the Frontage Rd in Waterford. If you're not familiar, this is a hotel in town which is 3 stories and can house over 100 people at full capacity (80 Rooms).

- This call came into the dispatcher as a Structure fire- mulch burning up against the exterior wall with smoke on the first and second floors.
- The two "Part Time" firefighters at Jordan with the towns largest ladder truck (105 FT), and most portable ladder, are not qualified to drive it, so they took the fire engine with a lot of fire hose and not a lot of ladders.
- The two "Part time" firefighters at Cohanzie (the closest fire station... with the Towns ONLY OTHER ladder truck) COULDN'T take it because it had become damaged earlier in the shift during "training" (look into that one).
- The city of New London had to be called for their ladder truck and showed up with FIVE firefighters, while we totaled 6 (4 paid, 2 volunteer, and 3 "officers").

We know this- Fire at a hotel in town with the potential to have 80 rooms full of people who are generally unfamiliar with the layout, and if encountered with a smoke condition in the hallway will likely look for egress via window. The windows are too high and there's too many for the firefighters to effect without a ladder truck. But we didn't have one due to YET ANOTHER OVERSIGHT in staffing by having two unqualified people work the same station. Luckily the fire did not penetrate the exterior wall of the building, but if it had, the building would've gone up much faster than the SIX firefighters on scene could have handled....

NFPA 1720 (combination department response) states 10 firefighters on scene within 10 minutes 80% of the time- We missed the mark today.

NFPA 1710 (Paid fire dept response) recommends each truck be staffed with FOUR firefighters ONE of them being an OFFICER. A LEADER. CRAZY!!

2The time for change is NOW. The ADHOC Committee is a must and needs to find a way to put our money to good use. Our police and fire departments have an abundance of gear (3 boats, jet skis, bikes, ATV's, pick-up trucks... a lot of duplicates between both agencies) and no one to use it... no one qualified to use it. Please look into these matters. Thank you.

Respectfully,
Christopher Venditti
(860) 287-4644
Cvenditti21@gmail.com