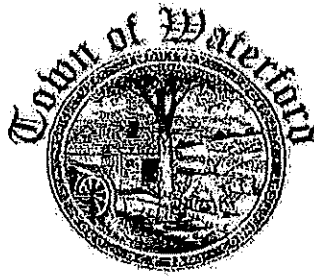


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TOWN CLERK

**Fire Services Review Special Committee
Minutes—Special Meeting January 17, 2023**

Members Present: Robert Tuneski (BoF), Richard Muckle (RTM), Greg Attanasio (RTM), Susan Driscoll (RTM/PP&S), Rob Brule (BoS), Michael Howley (Director, Fire Services), Steven Sinagra (Emergency Mgmt), Mark Greczkowski (WAS)
Members Absent: Todd Patton (Chief, Goshen FC), Tom Martin (Captain, WFS)

1. **Call to order:** Chair Tuneski called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.
2. **Public comment:** None
3. **Approval of previous minutes:** Motion by Attanasio, second by Muckle, to approve December 13, 2022, minutes as presented. Voice vote: Unanimous.
4. **Consideration of FSRSC's charge from the RTM (6/7/21):** Discussion focused on the areas noted in agenda:
 - A. **OSW firehouse statement:** Chair Tuneski distributed a draft statement/interim report (*attached*) on the OSW firehouse and asked members to review for discussion at next meeting. Director Howley reported that while the tarp seems to be doing its job, problems continue to arise: new roof issues, with anticipated mold issues; sewer line backups into the building; yet another heating pump failure; and the boiler remains a serious concern. Consensus to adapt wording of executive summary of draft to get the issue on the RTM's February agenda, then follow up at April RTM with backup information gleaned from the draft. Muckle recommended that when the presentation is made to the RTM, it should be suggested that the building committee include FSRSC members. Brule concurred, adding that he would have a Selectperson serve in his stead; encouraged the Chair to ask Town Attorney for legal review of draft before FSRSC's next meeting; and suggested that the statement presenters disclose to RTM that there will inevitably be emergency repairs needed before final design/construction of a replacement building. Members weighed in on language changes; consensus on this edited version:

"The Ad Hoc Fire Services Committee recommends to the RTM, that due to the extensively deteriorated condition of the Oswegatchie Fire Station, that it be replaced with a new building; and recommend that the RTM establish a building committee to oversee its design and construction."

Motion by Attanasio, second by Muckle, approve the statement revisions and authorize Chair to present to RTM.
Vote: 4-0-1 (Abstain-Driscoll) Motion passed.
 - B. **Projected staffing by firehouse:** Howley shared initial versions of response time data he is gleaming from the previous software and the system adopted two months ago. He noted that tweaking is still needed to extract the requested data and new reports will be available at the next meeting. Chair asked whether the response times fell within recommended guidelines; Howley stated that the times do comply but the data doesn't not show the number of responders at each incident. Attanasio asked if it was possible to break out EMS response times so that committee can confirm that appropriate apparatus is in the right spot. Howley will break out that data; he noted that Fire Services is in good shape with apparatus, just added/upgraded rescue tools, and responds as WAS support to just over 1000 Priority 1 rescue calls in a year. Attanasio reiterated his request for response data showing times to get from a staffed station in one district to an incident in a different district. WAS Director Greczkowski reported that WAS responded to more than 3500 rescue calls last year and that WAS has 2-person units staffed at two stations: OSW has 24-hour coverage; COH is staffed for 16 hrs/day (8am-midnight).

B. (cont'd): Chair asked for status on the request for by-station deployment of projected staffing so that FSRSC can request cost projections from the Finance Director. Howley reported that he is building the database, which includes correcting erroneous records and compiling data that was missing when he came on board. He noted that the three busiest stations currently are Jordan, Cohanzie, and Oswegatchie and expects additional staff would be assigned there first, since having just one individual on duty is not satisfactory or advisable. New developments on Rt 1 and Rt 85 support that, but proposed development in the near future warrant annual reviews of both recommended staffing numbers and most effective placement of full- and part-time firefighters. Howley also explained that revisions proposed for the volunteer incentive program—which are focused on earning points for certification training—acknowledge the 160-hour commitments by volunteers and could help in recruiting.

Brule noted that since he took office, he has never gotten a phone call because “an ambulance never showed up.” He stated that WAS and WFS have a complementary arrangement that worked well in the past and is still working well, and that his support for hiring three new firefighters is not because WAS is not doing their job. [Brule left at 6:50pm due to scheduling conflict.]

C. Radio, pagers update: Howley reported that funding request for new pagers for volunteers was approved. He noted that communications upgrades are at the beginning of a lengthy process; Fire Services had the immediate need—with safety issues due to different kinds of equipment being utilized; and that he and Sinagra (Emergency Mgmt) are working together on this initiative and Greczkowski (WAS) supports the direction they’re heading.

D. Late-breaking issues: None brought forward.

E. Deliverables: Committee reviewed list of information requested and/or received to date (*attached*). Chair confirmed by consensus that FSRSC is not charged with overall review of Fire Services operations policies that are not codified in ordinances, but rather address any problems that are brought forward regarding the policies. Howley noted that copies of operations policies are now available at each firehouse.

5. Next meeting: Set for February 14, 2023, subject to availability.

6. Adjournment: Motion by Muckle; second by Driscoll to adjourn at 7:35 p.m. Voice vote: Unanimous.

Submitted by

Susan Driscoll, FSRSC Secretary

encl: Deliverables, Jan 2023

Draft 1 Interim Report/Statement

DELIVERABLES

	Requested Information	Requested	Status/Date Rec'd
	WAS response data by district	Jan 2023	
	Phasing of staffing growth projections by firehouse, by year	Dec 2022	<i>Being compiled</i>
	5- or 10-year Emergency Mgmt staffing plan	Dec 2022	<i>Working with union on schedules</i>
	Data on impact of development in past 12 months on Dispatch call volume	Dec 2022	<i>Being compiled</i>
	Fire companies' bylaws	Nov 2022	
	Response times from staffed firehouses to incidents in each district	Jul 2022	<i>Partial/data being extrapolated</i>
✓	Home/business development growth projections	Jul 2022	<i>Aug 2022 (Planning Dept info)</i>
✓	Current housing/census/demographics data	Jul 2022	<i>Aug 2022</i>
	Response times and call type/location stats	Jul 2022	<i>Jan/Feb 2023</i>
✓	FY22 volunteer incentive analysis	Apr 2022	<i>RTM PP&S Committee revising program</i>
✓	Fire Services Org chart	Apr 2022	<i>May 2022</i>
✓	OSW Engineering Report	Apr 2022	<i>Nov 2022</i>

Jan 2023 update

Executive Summary

The Ad Hoc committee in a 3-0-1 vote recommends to the RTM, that due to the deteriorated condition of the Oswegatchie Fire Station and the physical and psychological impedance to work and living caused by existing repairs to the structure the fire house be replaced with a new building pursuant to certain design considerations, to be determined independently, and existing legal action underway between the Town and the Oswegatchie Fire Station.

Ad Hoc Committee

At the 6/7/21 meeting, the RTM voted to established an ad hoc committee with the following charter: "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...." The committee is bipartisan, composed of the following members:

- Rich Muckle, RTM
- Greg Attanasio, RTM
- Susan Driscoll, Public Protection and Safety Council
- Robert Tuneski, Board of Finance
- Robert Brule, Board of Selectman

Assisting the committee is a technical advisory panel made up of the following Fire Services representatives:

- Mike Howley, Director of Fire Services
- Steve Sinagra, Emergency Management Director
- Mark Greczkowski, WAS Manager
- Todd Patton, Volunteer Chief, Goshen Fire Station
- Tom Martin, Full Time/ Career Firefighter

The committee has met monthly, since April. To date, inputs for discussion have been received from testimony of the advisory panel, the public, and committee members; data submitted by the Fire Services Director; legacy reports, and fire house tours and meetings with fire chiefs. The committee views its job to review, analyze, and distill the information provided to permit development of positions and resulting recommendations for the greater RTM consideration and action.

The condition of the Oswegatchie Fire Station, fire service staffing, the relationship between volunteers and paid fire firefighters, and methods to establish and maintain effective communication have been identified, and are being discussed and addressed by the committee.

Introduction

This document serves as an interim report to document some of the key findings of the committee and recommendation for the Oswegatchie Fire Station.

Relevant Findings

- At the first meeting, April 2022, the Director of Fire Services stated that five fire stations are currently necessary to address the fire risk for Waterford, and that the locations for the Town are adequate. He further concluded that the Oswegatchie Fire Station should be replaced with a new structure.
- Reference 1a, Final Report on Fire Service Study, Waterford Fire Commission, June 2001, recommended that "the present fire stations be used with the current system which uses staff primarily composed of volunteers...for the delivery of fire and emergency services" stating that "closing, consolidation, or relocation of fire stations could possible (ly) lead to a decrease in volunteer participation". The report also concluded that "The Town of Waterford should continue to maintain the system of five fire stations as long as there is active volunteer participation..."
- Reference 1b, the Board of Fire Commissioners Long Range Planning Committee Long Range Plan dated February 26, 2007 concluded that "the current locations of the five fire stations are adequate and provide for proper emergency responses based upon time frames outlined in the National Fire Protection Association standards".

The findings from the legacy studies and current testimony are unanimous in supporting the maintenance of 5 separate Fire Stations.

- The condition of Oswegatchie Fire Station specifically was inventoried and evaluated in Reference 2 for the purpose of determining how best to renovate and / or rebuild the Oswegatchie Fire House. This included a summary of existing structures and mechanical and electrical systems (as of 2014), their conditions, areas in need of immediate remediation, and general issues with the building. This study recommended not saving the original Oswegatchie 1928 structure, and as a collateral result inferred that complete replacement of four wings (1928, 1960, 1976, and 1985) making up the entire building, would be in the best interest of the town due to the increased cost and complexity, associated with a partial demolition and renovation. This report also provided notional concepts for a replacement fire station.
- Reference 1, a compendium of three separate studies from 1995, 2001, and 2007 analyzed several relevant topics (locations of fire stations, staffing make-up, and staffing levels), and provided contemporary response history to justify the report's recommendations.
- The most current structural inspection of the Fire Station, "Temporary Framing Inspection, Report #1", October 31, 2022 prepared by J.M. Albaine Engineering LLC, is attached as Appendix A. The firm found that "although the structural shoring is intact, acknowledged risks to the building from lateral loading such as that from a severe storm or hurricane". This is a current and significant risk.

- With the exception of one comment made at the November meeting, unanimous support for replacing the Oswegatchie Fire Station was evidenced in testimony of the public and the advisory council. This single comment was predicated on not having a longer-term plan that addresses the entire fire services enterprise, staffing, service, fire station location, etc. This recommendation decouples one of the elements of a total plan allowing topics (staffing, volunteerism, communication) to be addressed individually to the greatest extent possible.
- The testimony was often very emotional and emphatic, citing safety concerns, expressing dismay for the absence of a current plan to replace the building, and highlighting that the current state of disrepair and the absence of action did not properly reflect Town values or respect the Fire Services Department. Most recently (December 13 meeting), Waterford resident, Wayne H. Gilpin, delivered a lengthy impassioned speech regarding the replacement of the Oswegatchie Fire Station. His written remarks were submitted to the committee and are attached as Appendix B.

Table 1 summarizes some of the most significant issues identified and relevant to the Fire Station integrity.

ISSUE	IMPACT
Leaky roof, original 1928 structure	Continued damage to building and equipment, wood rot
Leaky roof, 1985 addition (flat roof)	Internal wall damage, wood rot, mold
Structural shoring and bracing throughout building	Creates impediment to use of kitchen and women's bathroom, lost use of training room, limits access of certain apparatus. If compromised structure collapses, it might pull a portion of the second floors on the 1960 and 1985 wings ¹
Damaged / splintered rafters in original 1928 structure	Risk of collapse, inadequate lateral support of 1960 / 1985 wings
Loose abandoned and exposed and not properly supported or terminated wiring	Safety
No sill plate in original structure	Wood rot
Original boiler exceeded service life *(limited parts, limited number of people who can service it)	Potential loss of heating, catastrophic failure leading to personnel harm and building damage
Existing building code issues*	Additional cost to repair / renovate
Existing Fire Code issues (egress from second floor)	Increased cost upon renovation
Existing insect damage	Reduced structural integrity
Marginal compliance of 1976 / 1980 structure with building with Importance Factor IV* rating (required for Fire Stations)	Increased cost upon renovation

*11/20/14 Feasibility Study, Oswegatchie Fire Station Waterford, CT, Drummey Rosane Anderson, Inc., Planning / Architecture / Interior Design, 225 Oakland Road, Studio 205 South Windsor, CT 06074

¹Reference 2, Chapter 5, page 3, paragraph 7

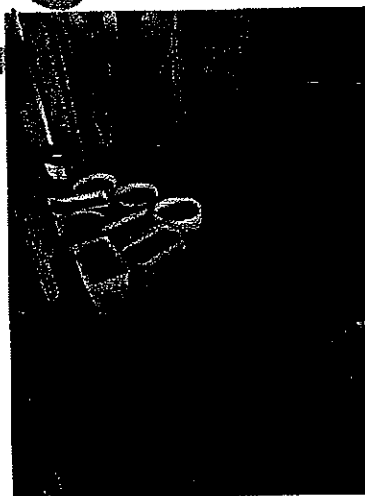
Table 1.- Summary of Most Notable Issues with Oswegatchie Fire Station

Pictorial examples of the items listed in Table 1 are provided in Figures a-p to help illuminate significance and severity.

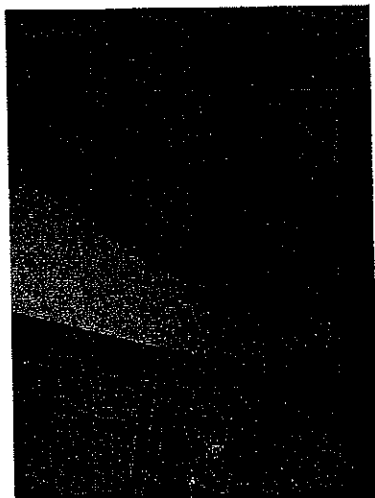


Figures a-b. Leak area in 2018 wing (yellow tarp)

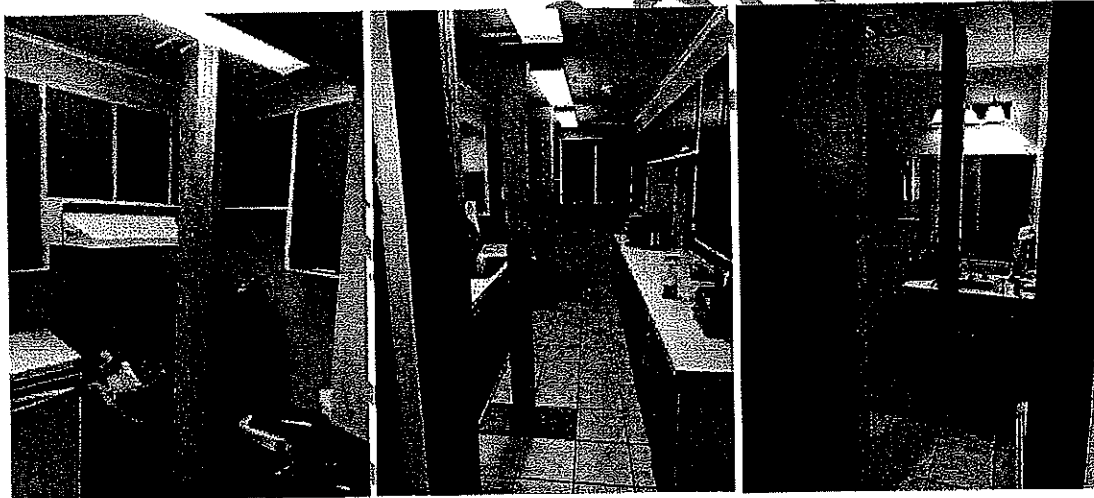
Figure c. Leak area in flat roof area, 1985 wing



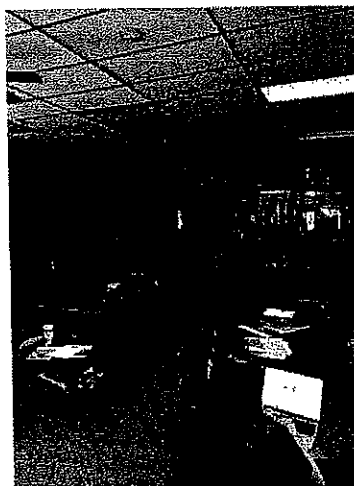
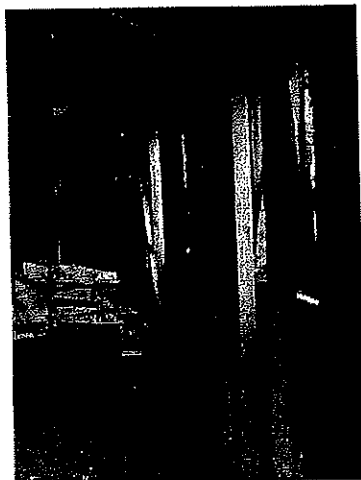
Figures d-e. Internal area of leaky 2018 wing



Figured f-g. Internal damage from flat roof area



Figures h-j. Shoring in kitchen and women's bathroom



Figures k-l. Shoring in 2018 wing and day room



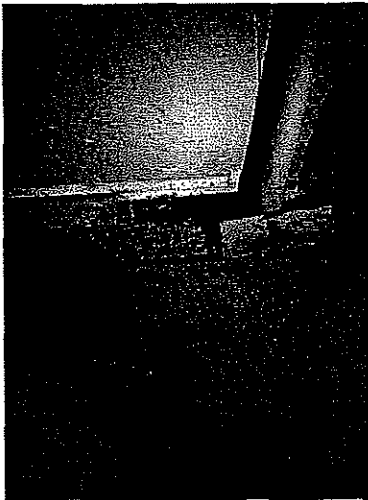
Figure m. Example of splintered rafter



Figure n. Example of no sill plate



Figure o. Original boiler



Picture p. Example of insect damage

Discussion

It is possible that the existing structure can be further repaired incrementally to keep it operational. This could lower future capital improvement costs, but potentially increase the annual cost of operation for the Town. The overall risk associated with building operation and habitability would be marginally improved with each repair. Estimates to fully restore the original condition of the building were not

requested by the committee, but the consensus was that the cost to restore to original condition and retire the existing risk would be competitive with replacement cost.

The committee instead, recommends that Waterford residents, our Fire Services Department, and our paid and volunteer firefighters are better served by replacing the Oswegatchie Fire Station with a new fire station. Although the cost to fully repair the issues identified in Table 1, and restore the building to full operability may be an option, there are additional issues which will require consideration and cost (if they can be accommodated). These primarily are associated with the future use of the structure as it pertains to: 1. Providing additional utility, as a potential location for Waterford ambulance services 2. Complying with current building codes which in some cases are grandfathered. 3. Complying with current NFPA standards; and 4. Addressing future staffing needs including gender, number, and employment status (part / full time / volunteer). All of these issues can be more simply addressed with lowest impact as part of the design process for a new fire station.

Furthermore, a decision to replace the existing Oswegatchie Fire Station does not require immediate action on related issues brought before this committee or the Town, as they will be accounted for by a building committee using information feed from this committee and fire professionals. In other words, recommendations on fire station staffing and additional utility of the building can be formulated independently of the decision to replace the building. The actual building size specifications, etc. will come from additional efforts of this committee and others, and can be feed into the design process. In this way, greater efficiency is achieved at the Town level as collective efforts can be accomplished in parallel, and action can be initiated (e.g. establish a building committee, complete legal actions) prior to the full execution of this Committee's charge.

Reference 1

Fire Services Study, 2018

Reference 1a, Final Report on Fire Service Study, Waterford Fire Commission, June 2001,

Reference 1b, the Board of Fire Commissioners Long Range Planning Committee Long Range Plan dated February 26, 2007

Reference 2

11/20/14 Feasibility Study, Oswegatchie Fire Station Waterford, CT, Drummey Rosane Anderson, Inc., Planning / Architecture / Interior Design, 225 Oakland Road, Studio 205 South Windsor, CT 06074

Salvage of original 1928 structure, Chapter 5, page 1

"It is our opinion that trying to salvage this building will not be in the best interests of the project"