Town of Wendell Transition to Shared Fire Chief

Case Study on the Transition Process to a Shared Fire Chief between the Towns of Wendell and New Salem, Massachusetts

PREPARED BY THE FRANKLIN REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS AND MUNICIPAL RESOURCES, INC. ON BEHALF OF THE TOWN OF WENDELL

August 15, 2014
Funding Provided by the Massachusetts District Local Technical Assistance Program
I. Background and Overview

In 2013, the Town of Wendell’s Fire Chief turned 75. He had served his community in the fire department for almost 60 years and was Chief for almost 40 years. His impending retirement prompted the Town to review options for a new Chief. The Wendell Fire Department Succession Planning Committee was established to develop possible options for a new Chief. The Succession Committee was assisted in their work by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) and Municipal Resources, Inc. (MRI), a municipal consulting firm. Following the initial planning phase, MRI provided the Committee with a Management Letter reviewing Wendell Fire Department and offering options and recommendations for the Succession Committee (see Appendix B) to review.

On the recommendations of the Succession Committee, the Town of Wendell interviewed for the position of Fire Chief and hired the current Fire Chief for the Town of New Salem. The Chief would also remain in his position in New Salem. The Select Boards from both Towns met and agreed that this was an advantageous solution for both communities, as it would meet the needs of both towns to have a part-time Chief while providing full-time employment for the current Chief (and any subsequent Chiefs).

To assist in their transition to a shared Fire Chief, the Town of Wendell requested assistance from the FRCOG through the Massachusetts Local Technical Assistance grant program. This work included 1) assistance with development of agreements and scope of Fire Chief as part-time employee of two towns, and 2) transition assistance from current Chief to the new shared Chief model. The FRCOG worked with MRI to facilitate the process. MRI was chosen due to their earlier work with Wendell and New Salem and their familiarity with the ongoing project.

The Towns of New Salem and Wendell have a strong history of working together. This is in part due to their shared boundary and their similarities. Both are small (the population of New Salem is 990 and the population of Wendell is 848) with similar per capita income (the per capita income of New Salem is $30,664 and the per capita income of Wendell is $28,766). They currently share a town administrator and a school district. The Towns’ past work together was invaluable in moving to a shared Fire Chief.

Municipal Resources, Inc., a municipal consulting agency, provided expert consultation on the project, and FRCOG staff facilitated the process. This case study provides a summary of the process in developing and implementing the shared Fire Chief, and includes an appendix with relevant documents. These may be particularly useful for other communities interested in exploring a similar type of project.
II. Lessons Learned and Applicability to Other Towns

Planning for and implementing the shared Fire Chief position was a success. Following a review of the process, interviews with current firefighters from both departments, and an assessment from MRI (see Appendix A), it is evident there were four major tenants leading to the project’s success. These were: a strong history of the two towns working together; attrition; mutual benefits realized for both towns; support and technical assistance through the planning and transition phases.

History of Working Together:

As is true for many similar types of shared service projects, having an established history of working together is an important element of any future collaborations. Due to this collaborative background, a strong level of trust already existed between the two towns.

Attrition:

Municipal collaboration is often dependent on timing. Staff retirements provide a good opportunity to explore collaboration. In the case of Wendell, their previous Fire Chief retired in 2014, providing the Town with the opportunity to look at various options for their future Fire Chief. This is not necessarily a requirement for successful development of shared services, but attrition can often help.

Mutually Beneficial:

Sharing a Chief was determined to be mutually beneficial for both towns. The current New Salem Fire Chief was employed part-time. Working for both towns provided the Chief (and any future Fire Chiefs) with the opportunity to work and be paid for full-time hours. The towns continued to budget for the services of a part-time Fire Chief. While the two departments have a long history of working together through mutual aid, the new shared Fire Chief has been working on implementing new avenues of collaboration to benefit both departments including shared trainings and shared grant-writing.

Availability of Support in Transition

Having the resources available (in this instance, the Massachusetts Local Technical Assistance grant through the FRCOG), allowed for the development of the original Management Letter. The Management Letter provided the Town of Wendell with options for the transition from their current leadership to new leadership, and detailed the needs of the Wendell Fire Department going forward in determining their transition path. The Letter was very influential in the Town’s decision to pursue a shared Fire Chief with the Town of New Salem.
III. Future Issues to Address

Benefits:

One area of issue is lack of benefits, including health insurance, for the Fire Chief. The position in both New Salem and Wendell did not previously provided benefits. However, since the position (as Fire Chief in two towns) is now basically full-time, providing benefits will likely need to be addressed in the near future. Lack of benefits may be an impediment to finding qualified candidates in the future.

Position in the Future:

The current situation has so far worked out positively for a number of reasons, not least of which is the current Fire Chief’s relationship with the Town of Wendell. However, any future shared Fire Chief between the two towns may not enjoy the same initial ties to both towns. Establishing a thorough job description approved by both towns, keeping lines of communication open between the two Select Boards, and providing benefits (see above discussion on health insurance), are all important elements for continuance of this program in the future.

Other Shared Services:

Based on the initial success of this project, and the persistent issues faced by small volunteer fire departments (lack of volunteers, training needs, costs, etc.), other mutually beneficial shared services within the two fire departments could be explored. The departments have begun working on joint trainings and continue to provide mutual aid to each other. Other option might include further shared back-office administration (beyond what the already does), continued joint trainings, shared inspection program, and joint purchases and shared equipment. The current shared Fire Chief provides a solid base and good example of how other positions or activities might be shared between the two fire departments. Establishing shared services should always include working on ways to provide cost savings to the towns and increased efficiencies within the departments.
IV. Appendices

A. MRI Municipal Assistance Report
B. Fire Chief Succession Planning Municipal Management Letter
C. Signed Memorandum of Understanding
D. Shared Fire Chief Job Description
E. Organization Chart
Municipal Assistance Report

Assistance in developing the position of Fire Chief for Wendell and New Salem, Massachusetts

When the Town of Wendell, MA hired its first new fire chief in nearly four decades the decision was made to hire the current fire chief in New Salem, MA and allow him to serve both communities.

Chief Joseph Cuneo has been the fire chief in neighboring New Salem for the past six (6) plus years. Both of these towns have part-time fire chiefs, so the decision to go with the a single individual held many benefits to both the communities and the chief. Although neither community was in a position to fill the job with a full-time employee, they both realized the need for a dedicated professional in the role.

For this portion of the project, interviews were conducted with the members of the Wendell and New Salem Fire Departments as well as with the Selectboards from the two communities. Although the interview format was the same for both departments, the results of the conversations were much different and provide very different looks into the success of this shared position.

New Salem and Wendell Selectboards
The towns of New Salem and Wendell have a history of shared services and positions which has led to this being a fairly easy concept for them to embrace. Both boards credit, in large part, the success of this position to the individual and Chief Cuneo’s ability to fit in with the both of the communities. Although the work load in either town alone cannot justify a full-time position, both boards feel that there is a distinct advantage to having an individual who has the fire service as their only real job running their departments. They also acknowledge that there are still a few of the details that need to be worked out regarding specific payments and reimbursements between them, but none of this will have an impact on the success of the project.

New Salem Fire Department
The interview with the New Salem Fire Department began on June 9 and was interrupted after the first few minutes due to an emergency call. The interview was subsequently completed on July 7.
Appendix A: MRI Municipal Assistance Report

The members of the New Salem Fire Department do not feel that they have lost anything with their chief now also wearing a Wendell patch. They attribute the following items to the success of the shared position:

- **Simplicity of operations in the two departments** – The department operations in both New Salem and Wendell are not complex and fairly well balanced. If one of the departments were to be more complex, or require significantly more time to manage, then the shared chief would not work.

- **Residence of the Chief** – Currently Chief Cuneo lives in New Salem near the Wendell town line. This allows him to be able to respond easily to either community for both emergency and non-emergency purposes. If the chief were not centrally located, the travel time may impact his or her effectiveness within both communities.

- **History of working together** – The two departments have had a long history of mutual aid and often work together. When Chief Cuneo added the responsibilities in Wendell, the two organizations already had a comfort level with each other and his ability to lead them. If this approach were to be successful in the future, the departments would need to have a history of cooperation and success.

One key observation by their members is that the chief having responsibilities that are outside of the Town of New Salem, could result in a negative impact on their operations. In an effort to minimize these types of issues, the recommendation was that both departments need to have strong, deep leadership. With the Wendell Fire Department being smaller and having less leadership depth than New Salem (currently they only have a Captain,) the chief has been forced to spend a good deal of time in Wendell. This has resulted in more work going to the other officers within New Salem. If they did not have sufficient depth and skill in both administrative and operational areas, there could be a negative impact on their department. It was their recommendation that both departments have another chief officer who had both experience and training in managing the department. This would also help when there were larger events that caused the chief to be absent from town.

**Wendell Fire Department**

The interview with the members of the Wendell Fire Department was conducted on June 19 at a regular department meeting. The former chief in Wendell had served on the department for almost 60 years, 38 of them as chief. Although well-liked and respected by the department, all members felt that there was a leadership vacuum at the top of the department and through the town’s formal succession planning process realized that the current fire department was really a liability and not an asset to the town. Keeping this in mind, they were all aware that significant changes were needed and could not really separate out what was related to the shared role, versus what was simply the fact that they now had a modern, progressive fire chief.

The members in Wendell did however credit the success of the (shared) chief with their previous knowledge of, and trust in, Chief Cuneo. As with any change in leadership, there was a real fear of what was to come, but the members of the Wendell Fire Department were comfortable with Chief Cuneo, and his leadership style, and they were able to welcome him on
board without significant fear of the unknown. They did feel strongly that the two departments must be culturally compatible so that the new chief would be able to move easily between the roles. The individual must also remain focused on the goals of each organization separately and work to ensure that they are being met.
January 27, 2014

Mr. Asa de Roode, Chairman
Wendell Fire Succession Planning Committee
Wendell Town Offices
PO Box 41
Wendell, MA 01379

RE: Wendell Fire Department Management Letter

Dear Mr. de Roode:

The purpose of this Management Letter is to provide an overview and an external perspective regarding succession planning for the retirement of Chief Everett Ricketts. Hopefully the issues raised herein will be helpful in focusing discussions during the selection process for the next Chief of the Wendell Fire Department.

During this effort we have particularly appreciated the assistance of yourself, the other members of the committee, the Selectboard and the members of the Wendell Fire Department.

As Chief Ricketts prepares to retire, we would be remiss if we did not recognize his passion for, contribution to, and love of the Wendell Fire Department. It is our observation that the Chief has provided exceptional service to his community.

SCOPE OF THIS MANAGEMENT LETTER

The Municipal Resources Team was retained to work with the Wendell Fire Department Succession Planning Committee to identify options for department leadership after the retirement of Chief Everett Ricketts. The work included interviews with key stakeholders in the community as well as the review of information provided by the committee. This work was intended to assist the committee in their analysis of options regarding department leadership moving forward.
THE REVIEW PROCESS

There were five (5) major work elements involved in this review:

1. A review of the “Wendell Police/Fire Survey Results.”

2. A review of the Succession Planning Committee meeting minutes and other related documents.

3. A review of the “Franklin County Fire Services Study” completed by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments.

4. Interviews with key individuals including the Succession Planning Committee, Board of Selectmen, Fire Department Officers and Firefighters.

5. A tour of the fire station.

MRI STUDY TEAM

Team Leader:

Edmund M. Walker began his fire service career over 30 years ago while a student at the University of Maine Orono on their volunteer fire department. Upon graduation Mr. Walker began his career with the Weston, MA fire department where he was appointed chief of department in 2002. As the chief Mr. Walker managed the operation of the department’s BLS ambulance service and served as the town’s emergency management director. In 2007 Mr. Walker took the position as director of the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy, the training division within the Massachusetts Department of Fire Services (DFS), where he brought fresh ideas and innovation to the division including the incorporation of national certification into the Call/Volunteer Firefighter Training Program and the Chief Fire Officer Management Training Program. In addition, Massachusetts is now a national leader in fire service professional development through the collaboration between the fire academy and higher education across the Commonwealth under the United States Fire Administration’s Fire and Emergency Services Higher Education (FESHE) program. As a member of DFS management team Mr. Walker served in a lead role at the State Emergency Operations Center for a number of disasters including several Presidential Disaster Declarations. Mr. Walker holds bachelor’s degrees in Psychology (University of Maine Orono) and Fire and Life Safety Engineering Technology (University of Cincinnati) as well as an MBA and graduate certificate in Geographic Information Systems from Northeastern University. Currently he is enrolled in the Masters of Science program in Business Continuity, Security and Risk Management at Boston University.
MRI Associates:

Brian P. Duggan now commands the Fire Department in Northampton, Massachusetts, where he has instituted substantial changes to modernize and restructure the entire department including equipment, facilities, personnel, and training. In conjunction with his staff, Brian has created a regional Advanced Life Support Program that currently serves eighteen communities within the Northampton Area. He formerly commanded the Northborough, Massachusetts, Fire Department, and has significant experience with the Massachusetts Department of Fire Services where he held several key positions. Mr. Duggan developed and directed the Graduate and Undergraduate Fire Science Programs at Anna Maria College in Paxton Massachusetts from 1995 - 2003. Mr. Duggan has a Business Management/Fire Science degree from Providence College and a Master’s Degree of Business Administration (MBA) from Nichols College in Dudley, Massachusetts. He is also a graduate of the National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Program and the Senior Executive Program for State and Local Leaders at Harvard University. In December 2012, Mr. Duggan received a Master’s Degree in Homeland Security through the Naval Post Graduate School based in Monterey, California, where his thesis entitled “Enhancing Decision-making during the First Operational Period of Surge Events” was selected as an outstanding thesis. He is one of only a few fire service professionals to be designated as a Chief Fire Officer by the Commission on Fire Accreditation International. He leads the Massachusetts fire service through his affiliation as Chairman of the Fire Chief Association of Massachusetts Technology Committee and as a Regional Director on the Massachusetts State Fire Mobilization Committee. Mr. Duggan has authored several publications, inclusive of writing Section 7, Chapter 3, Fire Department Information Systems, in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Editions of the National Fire Protection Association’s Fire Protection Handbook. Chief Duggan has served as a subject advisor to MRI since 2002 and will occasionally work on a project team.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Wendell Fire Department has been fortunate to have had Chief Everett Ricketts serve on the department for the past 57 years, the last 37 as chief. Despite an increase in department membership over the past few years, like most fire departments in Franklin County, they are suffering from a lack of members and do not currently have any members to assume the role of Fire Chief. In addition, the department has worked with constricted resources for a number of years and the new Fire Chief will face the task of not only building the membership but also looking at significant capital improvements in both equipment and training.

As indicated in the Wendell Police/Fire Survey Results there is a high level of community satisfaction with the department and a significant appreciation for the local flavor and leadership across all ranks in the department. Although conservative in their
spending, over the years the community has begun to support public safety and is looking for a strong leader who has the ability to provide vision and direction and build the department while still maintaining the unique culture of the department.

THE TOP NINE CHALLENGES FOR THE NEXT CHIEF

1. Recruitment and retention of firefighters;

2. Development of operational leadership within the department;

3. Conduct a comprehensive inventory of department equipment and formulate a capital plan to replace or supplement equipment that is either lacking or outdated. This plan must be paced to match the fiscal ability of the Town;

4. Ensure the current firefighters maintain their skills through the development and implementation of a comprehensive training plan;

5. Evaluation of the firefighting capabilities within the fire department and the potential use of automatic aid to supplement local resources;

6. Enhance the use of technology within the organization;

7. Adopt industry best practices;

8. Embrace regional partnerships;

9. If the current multi-town Federal Fire Act Grant application for the replacement of outdated self-contained breathing apparatus is unsuccessful, continue to work toward funding this purchase through other grant options or a capital expenditure in the town budget.

FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT

The fire station shares a facility with the department of public works. Although there is one newer engine, a significant percentage of the apparatus and equipment is old and outdated. Although MRI did not conduct a formal survey of the equipment, during the interviews with key stakeholders it became apparent that there are concerns across the board regarding the current condition, operability and safety of some equipment. The study team concurs that significant capital needs exist and feel that the Town will need to make a considerable investment to provide the Wendell Fire Department with the reliable tools necessary to serve the community. As an example, there are concerns as
to the serviceability and safety of some of the equipment particularly the self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA).

**TRAINING**

Most of the new members of the department are trained to, or receiving training towards, the level of Firefighter I. This training is being conducted through a group of local departments and follows a standardized curriculum. The follow up training at the department level has been inconsistent in the past, but is improving with the establishment of a training officer, and the decision to pay firefighters for training.

The training program in the Wendell Fire Department currently consists of the following:

- The Department has three drill nights per month – 2 training and 1 maintenance of equipment;
- Each drill is documented with a sign in sheet and lists the subject of the drill;
- A spreadsheet that lists all the drills and tracks the hours for each firefighter is maintained;

Observations and potential Training enhancements:

- The Department needs to maintain a more detailed outline of the content of training on sign in sheets and records;
- Training sessions need to be more disciplined and focused;
- All members should be trained on incident command at the 100, 700 level;
- Training session should planned out more in advance and on a schedule that is posted. A sample training schedule has been attached;
- Training session should incorporate the participations of other area Departments;
- The Department should actively promote, encourage and facilitate firefighters going to academy classes;
- The Department should request through the Franklin County Fire Chiefs Association to host one or more Massachusetts Firefighting Academy Training programs;
- A Training file should be kept for each Department member;
• Skill sheets should be utilized to document that a firefighter has completed various aspects of the NFPA 1001 Firefighter standard;

• A tiered system should be developed to identify what level of firefighting a member can engage in based on his/her training accomplishments;

• Standard Operating Guidelines should be developed, written down, distributed to all members and at least one SOG should be reviewed at the start of each training session (an example SOG template has been attached);

• The practice of donning and doffing SCBA multiple times during each training session should be continued and this evolution should be timed, many departments record these times as a means of positive competition among members;

• Annual training should include first responder skills, CPR, emergency vehicle operation, equipment maintenance and a minimum of 24 hours of structural firefighting training;

• One meeting per year should include a component in which the members provide input into the training priorities for the next year;

• During our site visit it was clear that some radios needed to be reprogrammed. However, based on the complexity of the radio system the interoperable aspects of the communication system should be part of the regular training routine;

• Specialized training should include:
  
  o Emergency Medical skills;
  o Fire Prevention law and regulation;
  o Ground ladder use;
  o Hazardous materials operations level competency;
  o Ice rescue operations;
  o Inspection procedures;
  o Mayday procedures;
  o Rapid intervention team evolutions;
  o Student Awareness Fire Education (SAFE) training;
  o Training on how to provide customer service and market the fire service in the community

Recommendation – The next Fire Chief should look at the development of a coordinated training program based upon National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and Massachusetts Firefighting Academy standards. Training should be
delivered using a consistent lesson plan and well-documented with records kept on each employee.

OPERATIONS

The department operates out of a single location that is shared with the DPW. There is one newer engine that will not fit on a number of the roads in town and as a result is not always utilized as the first due piece. As this is one of three pieces of equipment and perhaps the only piece suited for structural fire attack, the community should immediately appropriate funding and procure a used quick attack mini pumper. This acquisition would significantly enhance the Departments operational capability. An image of an example unit has been inserted below:

![Example Quick Attack Mini Pumper](image)

Figure 1 - Example Quick Attack Mini Pumper

**Recommendation –**Immediately seek approval to procure a used quick attack mini pumper. An estimated cost for a unit of this type would be $60,000 – $70,000.

The department recently placed a re-built tender into service. This vehicle was substantially fabricated locally and may or may not meet current recommended standards for motorized fire apparatus. The refurbishment of this unit should be completed and the Town should appropriate sufficient funding to accomplish this task.

**Recommendation –** The refurbishment of the rebuilt tanker/tender should be completed. This should include enhancement of warning lighting to meet NFPA 1901 standards, installation of white reflective striping on the sides of the vehicle and installing yellow/orange reflective striping on the rear of the vehicle.
One consistent theme that came up in the interviews was the lack of a command presence at incidents. Both the officers and firefighters felt that although officers are present at incidents, there is often nobody who is clearly in command of the incidents. Although we were not made aware of any situations where this has created significant issues, it was stated that this often leads to fire ground tasks not getting completed in as timely a fashion as they could. The formal use of the Incident Command System (ICS) should be implemented for all emergency responses.

**Recommendation – All personnel should be trained in the National incident Command System (NIMS). Personnel should complete NIMS ICS level 100/700 through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on line learning site.**

**FIRE PREVENTION**

The Wendell Fire Department indicated in a Franklin County Survey that they conducted 26 inspections for the calendar year 2012. These consisted primarily of smoke and carbon monoxide detector inspections for residential sales. All of these inspections were conducted by Chief Ricketts, and there is a general sense from department members that there needs to be more depth in the inspections and related record keeping.

**Recommendation – All personnel should be provided with an overview of the inspection process. (This can be accomplished through the Department of Fire Services “Fire Prevention Officer – Basic” on-line training program.) Inspection duties should be shared by the Fire Chief with at least two other members.**

**EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (EMS)**

The Wendell Fire Department does not provide transport ambulance service however they do respond to all medical calls in the community. This approach works very well for them and should be continued.

**Recommendation – Training should focus on first responder skills, patient assessment and initial emergency care.**

**COMMUNITY RELATIONS/PERCEPTION**

As pointed out earlier, the fire department seems to be well liked within the community. However, many departments deliver more to their communities. These additional services include involvement with community based fire safety education programs, such as SAFE, elderly fire protection, smoke detector give-aways, etc.
With a new Fire Chief coming aboard, it is critical that all parties recognize that the existence of the Fire Department is to provide crucial fire, EMS, code enforcement, and educational services to the citizens of the Town of Wendell. That is the basic premise of providing public safety services to the community. Anything less than that should not be acceptable.

**Recommendation – The Department should pursue SAFE grant funding.**

**Recommendation – The Department should host an annual open house and actively present the role of the Department to the community.**

**CONCLUSION**

The Town of Wendell has been very successful with a part-time Fire Chief for their fire department and based on the current profile of the community we would recommend that this continues. One of the major struggles that the committee faces is that without any current department members who are both qualified and willing to assume this role, is how to best fill the position. A major concern facing the department is ensuring that whoever takes over has the knowledge, skills and abilities to update the department while still maintaining the current culture of the organization. Prior to MRI entering into the process the committee identified four (4) possible solutions:

1. A part-time fire chief.
2. A shared fire chief with another town.
3. A full time fire chief.
4. A full time combination fire and police chief.

Through earlier discussions the committee removed options 3 and 4 as they are not considered feasible by the community. Option 2, although possible to achieve, would require a lot of coordination of resources at the town administration level and future success may be somewhat at the whim of town boards, so this is not considered to be a solid solution.

After all of the discussion, the committee felt the remaining option, a part-time fire chief, is the best solution for Wendell. Although there was some concern expressed by Chief Ricketts that the scope of the rebuilding work that is on the agenda could not be completed on a part-time basis, the committee did not feel that there would be community support for a full-time position and that with the guidance of the Selectboard, the work could be prioritized into a manageable scope.
In the committee’s discussion a common question was the feasibility of having a part-time chief who was also a member of another fire department as this is a real possibility when looking for a qualified individual for the position. The committee discussed this, and the following points were brought out:

- Any part-time Fire Chief will most likely have commitments to an outside employer regardless of where they work.
- A significant amount of the responsibility of the chief is administrative and this work would need to be scheduled around the individual’s other commitments regardless of what or where they were.
- A part-time chief who is in the fire service would be likely to dedicate more of their time to the necessary training and professional development than an individual with other occupational commitments.
- There may be a response conflict if a major incident were to occur in both of the communities where the individual worked. The fire service members on the committee felt that this would not be a major issue, as not only are major incidents rare, but the region is small enough that any major incident draws from, and commits, the resources of most departments in the area.

We have listened to the committee’s concerns relative to developing the position of a part-time Fire Chief. We believe that given the needs of the community, the talent of local chief officers and the growing reality that any major incident involves the response of multiple departments that recruiting a current chief officer for the position would be the best path.

**Recommendation – The Town of Wendell should continue the practice of employing a part-time Fire Chief. Based on the needs within the organization consideration should be given to procuring the services of a local part-time Fire Chief / Chief Officer from another community. If this recommendation is adopted, it should be structured in an agreement similar to the agreement forged by Northampton mayor Clare Higgins when a Northampton Deputy Chief was selected as the Fire chief in the Town of Westhampton. In addition, a program of this nature should be evaluated on an annual basis to ensure that the needs of the communities involved are being met.**

**Recommendation – If the town is unable to appoint an experienced Chief Fire Officer, a mentoring services should be provided to guide the new Chief during this time of transition.**

We appreciate the opportunity to be of service, especially at this critical time for the Wendell Fire Department. We have endeavored to provide a professional perspective, identify the challenges facing the Department and the Town of Wendell, and provide recommendations relating to the opportunities for positive, constructive change that
could be pursued. We believe that the next Chief of the Department, in conjunction with the Selectboard and Town Administrator, should consider incorporating these recommendations into the goals and objectives for near term advancement of the Department.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Edmund Walker
Public Safety Advisor

Attachments:

Sample Training Schedule
Sample SOG: Assumption Transfer, Designation and the Responsibilities of Command
# Wendell Fire Department

## Draft Training Schedule

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<th>Time</th>
<th>Topic of Instruction</th>
<th>Instructor(s)</th>
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PURPOSE:

To specifically identify who will be in charge at the scene of an emergency and to insure that unity of command is maintained at all emergency scenes.

To fix responsibility for command on a certain individual through a standard identification system.

To ensure that a strong, direct and visible command is established as early as possible in fire department operations.

To provide a system for the orderly transfer of command at emergency scenes.

To outline the responsibilities of an Incident Commander

SCOPE:

This procedure will apply to all department members and will be used at all emergencies to which the Northampton Fire Department responds.

In order to clarify terms in this procedure the following definitions have been included:

**COMBATIVE COMMAND** - An option available to the first arriving officer who is initially in command of the emergency. Officer will take an active role while carrying out required tactical operations. Decision based upon officer's evaluation of incident needs and resources available. Such officer should be prepared to give synopsis of actions and conditions over portable radio upon arrival of chief officer and the establishment of formal command.
FORMAL COMMAND - An option available to the first arriving officer and required of all officers assuming command after the first arriving officer. Officer takes a command position which is fixed and on the outside of the incident. Officer will not involve himself/herself in tactical operations at the scene.

COMMAND RESPONSIBILITIES

Take an effective command position
Assess incident priorities
Determine strategic goal(s) and tactical operations to support
Develop or approve and implement the action plan
Develop command structure appropriate for the incident (divisions, groups, branches, etc.)
Assign appropriate divisions, groups, and command staff as required
Assess resource needs
Order, deploy, reinforce, relieve and release resources
Coordinate all emergency activities
Serve as ultimate incident safety officer
Coordinate activities of outside agencies
Authorize information releases to the media
Transfer command when incident is de-escalating
Terminate command
Complete and submit NFIRS fire reports *

*Single company response the officer in charge of the company will make out report.

*Multi-company response - if first arriving officer sends companies back before arrival of the shift commander on the assignment, the first arriving officer will be responsible for the report. If command is transferred to the chief officer on the assignment, this shift commander will be responsible for the fire report.
PROCEDURES:

SINGLE COMPANY RESPONSE:

Whenever a single company responds to an incident, the officer of the responding company will be in command of the incident and will assume full authority and responsibility for all actions conducted at the scene.

When operating at the scene the radio designation of the command officer will be the call number of the apparatus. Example: Engine 3 to Fire Alarm please contact Bay State Gas and have them respond to the scene.

If after arrival at the scene, the officer requests additional fire department apparatus and personnel, the procedures for the assumption of command as outlined in multi-company response will be followed.

MULTI-COMPANY RESPONSE - ASSUMPTION OF COMMAND

Whenever multiple companies are dispatched to an incident the first arriving officer will automatically assume command. The assumption of command will occur in the following way:

Officer will announce arrival on the scene and report information based upon size-up, observed conditions and fireground actions that will be taken.

If the officer is assuming the combative command role no radio communication designating command is required. The officer will use the call numbers of the company in all radio transmissions.

For Example: "Engine 3 is on the scene at 228 Elm Street and I have a two story wood residential dwelling with fire showing from two windows on the first floor. Engine 3 will be stretching a line through the front door. Ladder 2 ventilate on side C of the building".

"Engine 3 is assuming combative command".

In this example Engine 3 officer is in command and taking a combative command role.

If the first arriving officer is assuming a formal command role, the officer will announce this over the radio by designating himself as command and naming command. All formal command will be designated using the street that the incident is on.
For Example: "Engine 3 is on the scene at 228 Elm Street and I have a two story wood residential dwelling with fire showing from two windows on the first floor. Engine 3 is Elm Command".

In this example Engine 3 officer is in command and taking a formal command role.

The first arriving officer at the emergency shall have the authority to terminate the response of any additional responding units if after appropriate assessment the officer determines that the resources on the assignment will not be needed. The chief officer on the initial assignment, at his discretion, shall have the authority to continue on the response. All other units are to follow the instruction of the first arriving officer.

**TRANSFER OF COMMAND**

Command will automatically be transferred from the first arriving officer to the shift commander on the initial assignment.

If there is no shift commander on the initial assignment command will be transferred to the senior-ranking officer.

Once command is transferred from the first arriving officer, command will be Formal and will be designated by the street that the incident is on.

For Example: Using the incident on Elm Street and there is a officer in charge on the assignment “Engine 3 is Elm Command”.

Once formal command has been established, all radio communications to or from the incident commander will be made using the term (Street name) Command

Once formal command has been established, all command transfers will be made using face to face communications.

For Example: A Deputy Chief responds to the incident on Elm Street. "Car 3 will be arriving on Elm Street". Command will not be automatically transferred to the Deputy Chief, Command will be transferred only after the following procedure is completed:

Officer contacts present Incident Commander using face to face communications

Incident Commander being relieved will provide a briefing which includes:
- Situation Status
- Deployment and assignment of resources
- Tactical Needs
Officer assuming command will assign relieved officer to a position or function as required.

As command is transferred the officer who is taking command will announce the transfer over the radio. For Example: Deputy Chief assumes command from Engine 3 on Elm Street, the Deputy Chief will say "Car 3 is now Elm Command".

Any requests or notifications to Elm Command will now be answered by the Deputy Chief instead of Engine 3.

When the incident is no longer escalating and command officers will be leaving the incident, command will be transferred back to the initial officer on the assignment or the senior officer on the assignment. Command will be transferred by a face to face notification and notification of the transfer will be made via the radio.

When an incident that required a formal command is over, the incident commander will terminate command and return on the appropriate signal.

For example: The incident on Elm Street is over and command will be returning all companies. Elm Command to Fire Alarm, Elm Command is terminated, Engine 3 and Engine 4 will be continuing to pick-up, E-5 will remain at the scene.
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

BETWEEN THE TOWN OF NEW SALEM AND THE TOWN OF WENDELL

REGARDING FIRE CHIEF EMPLOYMENT

Made as of March 17/1, 2014

WHEREAS, the Town of Wendell has elected to employ, on a part time basis, Joseph Cuneo as Fire Chief; and

WHEREAS, the Town of New Salem presently employs Mr. Cuneo as its Fire Chief, also on a part time basis; and

WHEREAS, each town wishes to confirm its acknowledgment and consent to the other town’s separate employment of Mr. Cuneo in accordance with the following terms.

NOW, Therefore, the towns agree as follows:

1. Mr. Cuneo is responsible, in accordance with his determination and as required by the duties to be performed for each town, to allocate his time to his duties as Fire Chief in each town. Each town will require Mr. Cuneo to track his hours of service for each town.

2. Each town acknowledges that Mr. Cuneo has a separate employment relationship with New Salem and with Wendell.

3. The Fire Chief expenses incurred by Mr. Cuneo, including automobile operation costs and mobile telephone/telecommunications will be divided equally between the towns.

4. Each town will be separately responsible, according to the terms of its agreement with Mr. Cuneo, for the payment of compensation and provision of benefits, if any, on account of the town’s separate employment relationship with Mr. Cuneo.

5. The towns will communicate and cooperate with each other and Mr. Cuneo for the purposes of information exchange, options for joint training or other similar exercises, and coordination of fire department and fire prevention activities that may be of mutual benefit to the towns.

6. If a town terminates its employment relationship with Mr. Cuneo, it shall promptly notify the other town in writing.

7. This Memorandum of Understanding may be amended by further written instrument signed by each party’s authorized signatories.

8. This Memorandum of Understanding shall be deemed to include any provision of law required to be set forth herein.
TOWN OF NEW SALEM

By its Selectboard

[Signatures]

493627/WNDL/0001

TOWN OF WENDELL

By its Selectboard

[Signatures]
TOWN OF NEW SALEM
By its Selectboard

TOWN OF WENDELL
By its Selectboard

493627/WNDL/0001
Addendum #1 to Memorandum of Understanding between the Town of New Salem and the Town of Wendell regarding Fire Chief Employment.

Payment of Expenses: Fire Chief's Cell Phone, Fuel, repairs and other expenses for Fire Chief's Town Vehicle

Expenses for the Fire Chief's cell phone and for fuel, repairs and other costs related to the Chief's town-owned vehicle will be split by the Towns of New Salem and Wendell as follows:

a. Cell phone, fuel costs and minor vehicle repairs will be paid by the Town of New Salem; an assessment for 50% of these costs will be sent to Wendell on a quarterly basis with back up documentation attached.

b. Major repairs or other expenses related to the Fire Chief's vehicle will be billed to each town separately. (for example, a company installing $3000 of equipment on the vehicle will bill New Salem for $1500 and Wendell for $1500)

TOWN OF NEW SALEM
By its Selectboard

[Signatures]

Date: 04/28/2014

TOWN OF WENDELL
By its Selectboard

[Signature]

Date: [Blank]
NEW SALEM & WENDELL FIRE CHIEF JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Definition
Responsible for maintaining preparedness and directing the fire, rescue and other emergency services operations of the Fire Department. Responsible for the protection of life, property and the prevention and extinguishing of fires, in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws and Fire Codes as well as local bylaws. Responsible for all other related work as required.

Essential Duties and Responsibilities
The essential functions, or duties listed below are intended only as illustrations of the various types of work that may be performed. The omission of specific statements of duties does not exclude them from the position if the work is similar related, or a logical assignment to the position

Assumes responsibility for departmental planning and ensures that the mission of the department is met.

Provides Incident Command at fires, rescues and other emergency service incidents.

Utilizes the National Incident Management System for department operations.

Requests and coordinates mutual aid as needed.

Responsible for providing training for all department personnel.

Build the functional knowledge and capacity of department personnel through mentoring, training, and appropriate delegation.

Develops and maintains department standard operating procedures and guidelines based on best practices and appropriate standards.

Responsible for fire prevention and fire code enforcement in accordance with Massachusetts General Law.

Develops and maintains good working relationships with mutual aid partners.

Develops and maintains good working relationships necessary State and local agencies.

Develops and maintains good working relationships with Town departments, officials, boards, committees and commissions.

Coordinates educational activities with school officials and administers related fire and life safety education programs.

Maintains an inventory of department-owned equipment.

Maintains a thorough knowledge of the town, its emergency and fire risks and target hazards.

New Salem, Massachusetts
Fire Chief
Oversees repair and maintenance of department facilities and equipment.

Develops and manages the department budget and controls expenditures.

Plans for and implements capital improvements in coordination with the appropriate town boards and committees.

Pursues grant opportunities and oversees grant submission to the appropriate agencies.

Attends various meetings to provide information, training and education on department-related issues; provides information to other town departments.

Meets with the Selectboard as requested.

Maintains current knowledge of all aspects of fire, rescue and emergency medical services and implements changes as necessary.

Maintains active membership in State and regional fire service associations and attends meetings, seminars and other related events to stay current on techniques, procedures, regulations and issues that affect emergency services.

Support and promote an organizational culture that values learning, diversity and inclusiveness.

Prepares and submits department payroll, bills and invoices in a timely manner according to town policies and procedures.

Maintains required files and records.

Performs similar or related duties to those stated above as required, or as situation dictates.

**Supervision**
Works under the policy direction of the Selectboard, and in accordance with applicable provisions of the Massachusetts General Laws including but not limited to MGL Chapter 48, Section 42.

**Supervisory Responsibilities**
Supervises all fire department personnel.

**Work Environment**
Work at emergency scenes and firefighting operations is performed under varying weather conditions, and under conditions which may involve considerable personal danger; the Fire Chief is on call to respond to emergencies.

The Fire Chief works with or operates motor vehicles, fire apparatus, firefighting equipment, medical equipment, power tools, ladders, pumps, self-contained breathing apparatus, communication equipment, safety equipment, computers, various

*New Salem, Massachusetts*
*Fire Chief*
computer software, and standard office equipment. The Fire Chief is required to wear appropriate personal protective ensembles during emergency operations.

The Fire Chief has ongoing contact with firefighters, other public officials, other town departments, and the general public.

The Fire Chief has access to department and town buildings, offices and related confidential information.

The Fire Chief is responsible for all department operations and administration. Errors in judgment could be costly in terms of decreased or less efficient protection to persons and property, damage to buildings, personal injury or death, confusion or delay in response and may have serious financial or legal repercussions.

**Recommended Minimum Qualifications**

**Education and Experience**
High school diploma; fifteen years of firefighting experience; five years of supervisory experience; or an equivalent combination of education and experience.

**Additional Requirements**
Valid Massachusetts Driver’s License
Certification at the Firefighter II Level or equivalent
Certification as a First Responder (mandatory pursuant to MGL Chapter 111, Section 201)
Certification in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation and First Aid
Re-certification as a First Responder as required
Re-certification in CPR as required
Certification at the Hazmat Operations Level
Certification at the Incident Command System Level 400
Credentialed to the level of Fire Prevention Officer – Basic (Level I preferred)
Credentialed as Fire Chief by the Massachusetts Fire Service Commission or ability to obtain the credential within one year of appointment.

**Physical Requirements**
Minimal physical effort is required to perform administrative duties; moderate to strenuous physical effort is required at emergency scenes to operate firefighting equipment and emergency response vehicles. Physical agility is required to access all areas at the scene of the fire. Emergency response requires pushing, climbing, stooping, kneeling, crawling, and reaching. May be required to lift or carry equipment or persons weighing more than 100 pounds. Vision requirements include the ability to read complex documents, use a computer, operate vehicles and other equipment.

*This job description does not constitute an employment agreement between the employer and employee, and is subject to change by the employer, as the needs of the employer and requirements of the job change.*

*New Salem, Massachusetts*
*Fire Chief*
Organization Chart for the Towns of New Salem and Wendell Fire Departments with a Shared Chief