

**TOWN OF CUMBERLAND**

**FIRE MERGER COMMITTEE MEETING**

**45 BROAD STREET, TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**CUMBERLAND, RI 02864**

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29th, 2005 – 4:30 pm**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Town of Cumberland Fire Merger Committee Meeting was called to order at 4:30 pm by Chairman Frank Stetkiewicz, with the following members present:**

**Mayor David S. Iwuc, David Fernandes, Becki Abilheira, Richard Hilton, David Yacino, John Jackson, Tony Nobrega, Lorraine Hynes, Joe Monte, Ernie Cimino, Rick Susi**

**ABSENT: Tom Bruce, Bob Billington**

**I. The Chair opened the meeting by addressing the Fire Department \$5.5 million operating budget and asked members to keep an open mind as this topic gathers interest. Mr. Stetkiewicz stated that no district should be forced to merge, and they should keep the authority and responsibilities they have. For next meeting, two subcommittees need to be set up, one for Firefighters and one for Finances. Chief Ernie Cimino stressed importance that all parties understand the pros and cons of a merger. Mr. Monte of Valley Falls Fire District said he speaks to residents and knows what they want.**

**II. Mr. Jackson states that he has been a resident of Cumberland for 56 years and retired in 1996 from Town Council. He expressed concern for maintaining fine service and keep it economical.**

**III. Mr. Hilton states that he has been with Valley Falls Fire Department for 16 years. Merger of Berkeley and Ashton Districts.**

**IV. Lieutenant David Yacino of Cumberland Hill Fire District and Union President states he has been involved for 19 years and stresses the importance of weighing the pros and cons to benefit firefighters and citizens.**

**V. Mr. Nobrega stressed the importance of maintaining the same standards that exist. His position on the committee will lend insight from a financial standpoint.**

**VI. Mrs. Hynes spoke of North Cumberland Fire District. Nego K. Chair Stetkiewicz said that this is not a criticism of the Fire Departments.**

**VII. Considerations should be merging rescue and fire departments and improvements being made to training. Chair established that**

phone line 728-2400 x134 - Mr. Fernandes would be utilized as the contact for giving input and getting information to the committee members. Mr. Fernandes will be responsible for distributing any information received to committee members.

#### **VIII. Residents acknowledged:**

1. Mr. Marcel Bacon – Chair of Board of Commissions of Cumberland Fire District wants a voting member. Mr. Bob Billington is on the board.

2. Mr. James McLaughlin – Three different unions and different payrolls.

A. One chief – how many firefighters do we have

B. Apparatus – is it sufficient

C. Is it a total merger or independent merger?

D. Nobody knows what the other districts are doing.

3. Mr. Ed Leblanc – Chair of North Cumberland Fire District – speaking on behalf of the board regarding the issue of representation: We are excluded from the panel because no person from the North Cumberland Fire District is on the Fire Merger Committee.

This is an elaborate process and with two (2) districts excluded from the panel, Mr. Leblanc wants to know how the committee feels it can

still proceed. He suggests halting moving forward until committee is inclusive of all districts. Chair states that the committee is formed by Mayor Iwuc, and it is up to the Mayor to get all districts represented on the panel.

4. Mr. Paul Demarcer – Board – help Fire District on October through December 2005. He suggested that (a) taxes must be paid by residents before they get licenses and (b) license renewal is not allowable until Fire District taxes are paid, following along the same rules governing town taxes.

- We have hydrants. Mr. Demarcer's father was the first Chief of Cumberland Fire Department called Rhode Island League of Cities. Mr. Demarcer also points out the fact that nineteen (19) cities have municipal fire departments.

- He suggests a reduction in fire insurance rates and have underwriter's look at homeowner's policy.

Chair asked if there is a merger will it affect insurance rates. Mr. Jim Scullin asked how much was spent on studies on the potential of merging fire districts, at which the Chair states the previous studies will be reviewed and studied.

Mr. Scullin, Valley Falls Warden in the Valley Falls Fire District, asks the status of the current firefighters within the town, wondering if the town would have to hire new people. He mentions that to keep up with basic necessities, Valley Falls District would be in trouble. Chair

**employees of Fire District – subcommittee.**

**Mr. Arthur Johnson – pay more for Fire District taxes than own lots wardens, commissioner's are dead wood and to get rid of them.**

**Chair established next Fire Merger Committee will take place on October 13th, 2005, at 4:30 pm.**

**Exemptions are not the same for each district.**

**Meeting adjourned at 5:30 pm.**