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# Town of Wheatland Village of Scottsville Informational Meeting

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SCOTTSVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT

NOVEMBER 2019





WHAT IS OUR FUTURE and WHY NOW?

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One principal we in the fire service live by is:

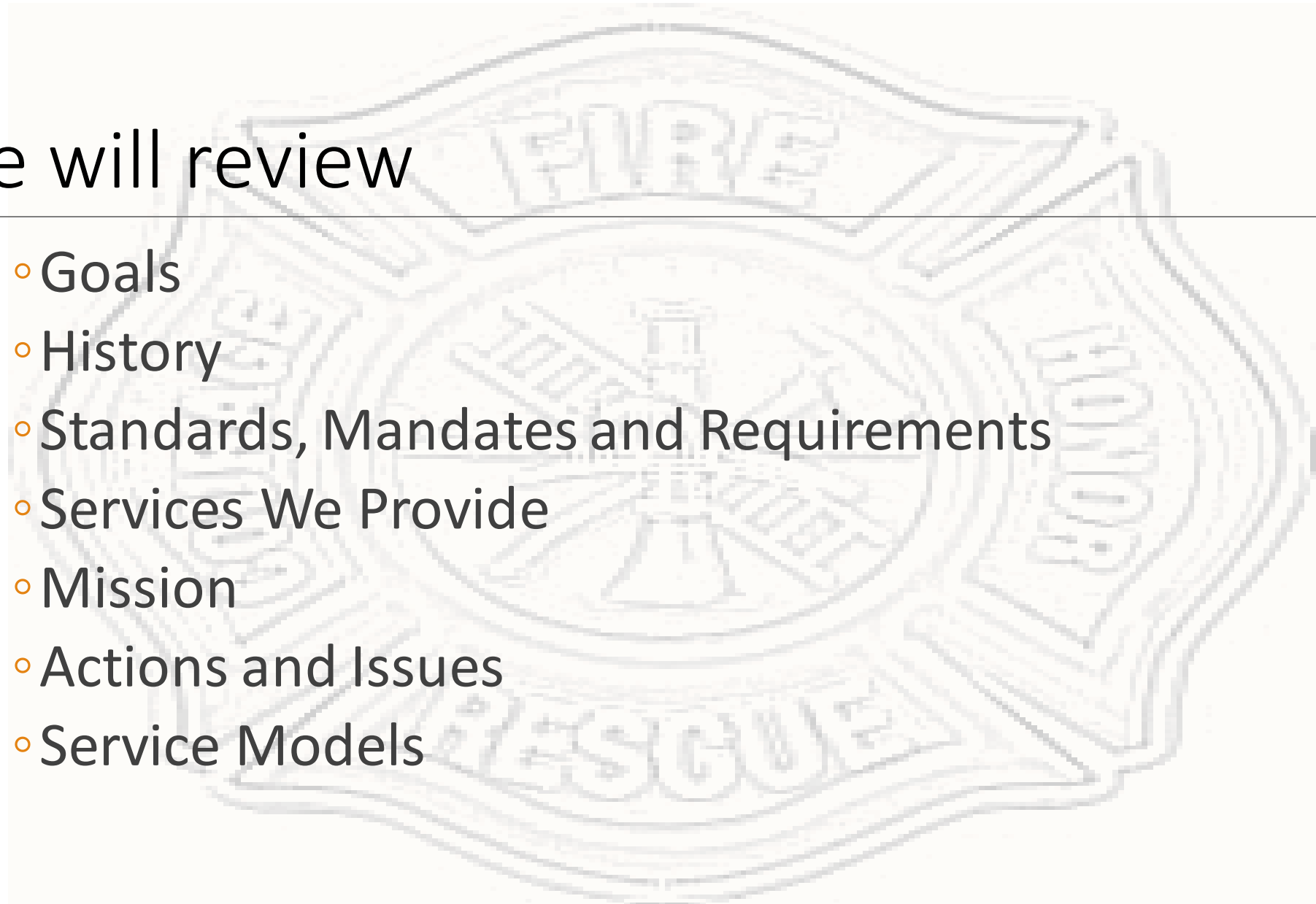
**FAILURE TO PLAN IS  
PLANNING TO FAIL**



# We will review

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- Goals
- History
- Standards, Mandates and Requirements
- Services We Provide
- Mission
- Actions and Issues
- Service Models



# DEPARTMENT GOALS

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- 1. Local Fire Department Survival**
- 2. Service that meets the highest standards**
- 3. Be Sure that the Fire Department has a Secure Financial Future**
- 4. Provide high levels of service to our neighbors and those we serve**
- 5. Be successful in a multi-hazard environment**
- 6. Maintain a volunteer service as long as possible**

# Fire Department History

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The first homeowners insurance company wasn't started until 1752 (by Benjamin Franklin) and didn't become common until the 1800's. By that time, Americans had developed their own tradition of fighting fires as a grassroots collective. The first response of those communities was what would later be called a “bucket brigade.” Neighbors from all around the fire would run to help or at least toss their buckets into the street for volunteers to fill with water and pass forward to be dumped on the fire.

**NO TRAINING or STANDARDS**

# Original Priorities

There was big difference in priorities in the 1800's:

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If a house caught fire, it was probably going to be a loss. But it was likely that the fire will burn slowly enough that at least some things can be salvaged, the bed was most likely your most valuable single item.

It was also a priority to keep the fire from spreading

**1871 Peshtigo Fire - 2,500 deaths**

**1871 Great Michigan Fire - 500 deaths**

**1894 Great Hinckley Fire - 418 deaths**

**1881 Thumb Fire - 282 deaths**

**1871 Great Chicago Fire 300 deaths** and burned 3.3 square miles 100,000 homeless and destroyed 1,000's of buildings

# The 1990's -The Start of BIG Changes

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OHSA began issuing regulations/standards- examples- bloodborne, hazardous materials, respiratory protection

Firefighter Training requirements began to increase

Volunteers began to face competing priorities- 2 income families, job losses

Firefighting Equipment requirements and costs began to drastically change and increase

Scope of services began to increase

Priorities were basically still:

- Firefighting
- Emergency Medical Services
- Rescue especially automotive and we saw the beginning of specialized technical rescue

# Since 9-11 Until Today

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- Drastic increase in demand for services of varied types
- Significant increase in training requirements
- Improved and increased standards
- Technology advancements resulting in increased costs and requirements.
- Increased Incident Command structural requirements and training
- Decrease in volunteers
- Increased costs
- Funding challenges especially in New York State
- Increased Litigation



# Services We Provide and Must be Ready For

## Everything in bold we have all ready had here

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Must be prepared to respond to ALL HAZARDS

### **Structure Fires**

**Incident Command** Fire must be ready to be the lead incident command for all non law-enforcement events

### **Airplane Crash**

Pipeline events (we have 5 pipelines)

### **Hazardous Materials Incidents**

### **Major Storms**

Terrorist Events

### **SWAT/Hostage/Police Events**

### **Water Rescues**

Farm accidents and rescues

Industrial accidents

Active Shooters

### **Emergency Medical Responses**

### **Mass Casualty Events**

**Auto and truck collisions**

**Train Wrecks**

**Searches**

**Off-Road rescues (parks and greenway)**

**Grass fires**

**Natural gas/CO calls**

**Animal Rescues**

**Everything else – Campfires, pump basements, wires down, service calls, check the welfare, lift assist**

# MISSION

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There is no lack of clarity of our mission

We are a Fire Department ready and able to respond and successfully manage any event any time any place.

We are here protect the health, safety and property of our neighbors at our own risk.

# Fire Training Then and Now that has impacted the Fire Department

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## 1980

Firefighting Essentials 30 hours

Advanced First Aid 30 hours

OSHA 28 hours

## 2019

Firefighter1 100-120 hours

EMT Basic 150-190 hours plus 10 hours in field

EMT- Paramedic 1200+ hours

Firefighter Municipal-229 11-15 weeks at fire academy

Incident Command, Hazardous materials response, Bloodborne Pathogens, Respiratory Protection OSHA Department and annual training, Officer Training, Specialized Training

# CURRENT TRENDS In Volunteer Fire Departments

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70% of Fire Departments are Volunteer In New York (FASNY)

12% Decrease in Volunteers Nationwide 300% Increase in Calls (NVFC)

NFPA Nationwide Data 2015 814,850 Volunteer Firefighters

2017- 682,600 lowest since 1983

**Over 50 years old 2015- 16%, 2017 – 32%**

New York 120,000- Peak 80,000 – Low

100,000 Currently. ANNUAL SAVINGS 3.87 BILLION DOLLARS

NY started Recruit NY and offered tax credit

Pennsylvania- 1970's- 300,000

2018 – 38,000

Penn Fire Ems Institute

**We wish to avoid the crisis Pennsylvania is facing**

# PERSONNEL CHALLENGES

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## Negative Challenges

- Training Demands
- Increased Call Numbers
- Time Away from family
- Job Demands many work 2 jobs
- Job Involves Risk to Life and Limb
- Assaults (can and do happen- it has happened locally)
- Stress- responses and what we see
- PTSD and Suicides
- Cancer Risk

## What we have going for us

- Good Working Environment
- Positive mission and team attitude
- Good Facility
- Good Training
- Experienced well trained Leadership
- Good Protective Equipment
- Good Equipment

# LOCAL CURRENT CHALLENGES

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Fire threat is becoming more dangerous- faster burning buildings and contents mean hotter and more deadly conditions for our residents and responders.

Maintaining a Volunteer Department

Public Expectations

- Reality May Not Match Expectations
- Expect more than we can or possibly should deliver

Unexpected Events (New radio system, CAD, MDT, Solar)

# LOCAL CURRENT CHALLENGES

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## Social Media

- Speed is faster than we can react to
- Inaccuracies
- Impact on response operations

## No Public Water in much of our area

- Increase equipment and response

Increasing Costs - significant increases in equipment, vehicle and support costs

# LOCAL CURRENT CHALLENGES

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## Technology

- Rapid Changes
- Costly
  - Example Radios were \$600 NOW \$8,000 each
- Computer Aided Dispatch, Mobile Data Terminals
  - Costs unexpected requires laptops, notebooks and cellular service
- Department is currently behind the technology curve



# LOCAL CURRENT CHALLENGES

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## Finances

- Loss of Revenue
- Approximately 2.3 million debt
- Debt % of budget is increasing
- Postponed Purchases
- Reserve Funding not adequate
- Unexpected costs/repairs

# What Have WE Done So Far?

In 2012 the Department began an aggressive project to reconfigure Department

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- Minimum Standards Set in accordance with New York State
- Policies and Procedures fully revised and brought up to date
- Appointed well qualified experienced leadership team
- Brought Department into regulatory compliance
- Began an aggressive modern training program
- Re –configured the major equipment fleet
  - Reduced fleet from 4 large vehicles to 3 vehicles
  - Began using more light vehicles
  - Upgraded hose, turnout gear, air packs, air compressor, tools, and rescue equipment
  - Fire Company used donations to equip Truck 4616, purchase Truck 4626 and a new thermal imaging camera
  - Began IT upgrades- internet, the Fire Company assisting with software and wifi infrastructure
  - Purchased management and reporting software Red Alert and began upgrade project

# Recent Actions

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Purchased new radios to comply with new County system and interface with Livingston County

Submitted 5 year operating and capital plans

Partnered with other local Departments for joint response (Mumford and Caledonia)

Lowered ISO Rating to 3.0 saves residents money

CURRENTLY WE HAVE SOLID FOUNDATION TO BUILD ON

- Personnel
- Leadership
- Compliance
- Training
- Equipment

# ISSUES ON THE HORIZON

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Need to ensure the local Fire Department thrives

Need to continue to provide high quality cost effective emergency services

Personnel – it benefits us to maintain volunteer membership as long as possible

A secure financial future is required to maintain volunteers, quality leadership and necessary emergency services

# ISSUES ON THE HORIZON

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A long term financial plan that is funded is essential

Adequate funding for reserves is vital for financial stability

Debt reduction is necessary

Firefighter cancer safety concerns an emerging issue that will require changes and increased costs

The pace and costs of technology are increasing

Service demands and expectations are increasing

# What Are The Community's Options?

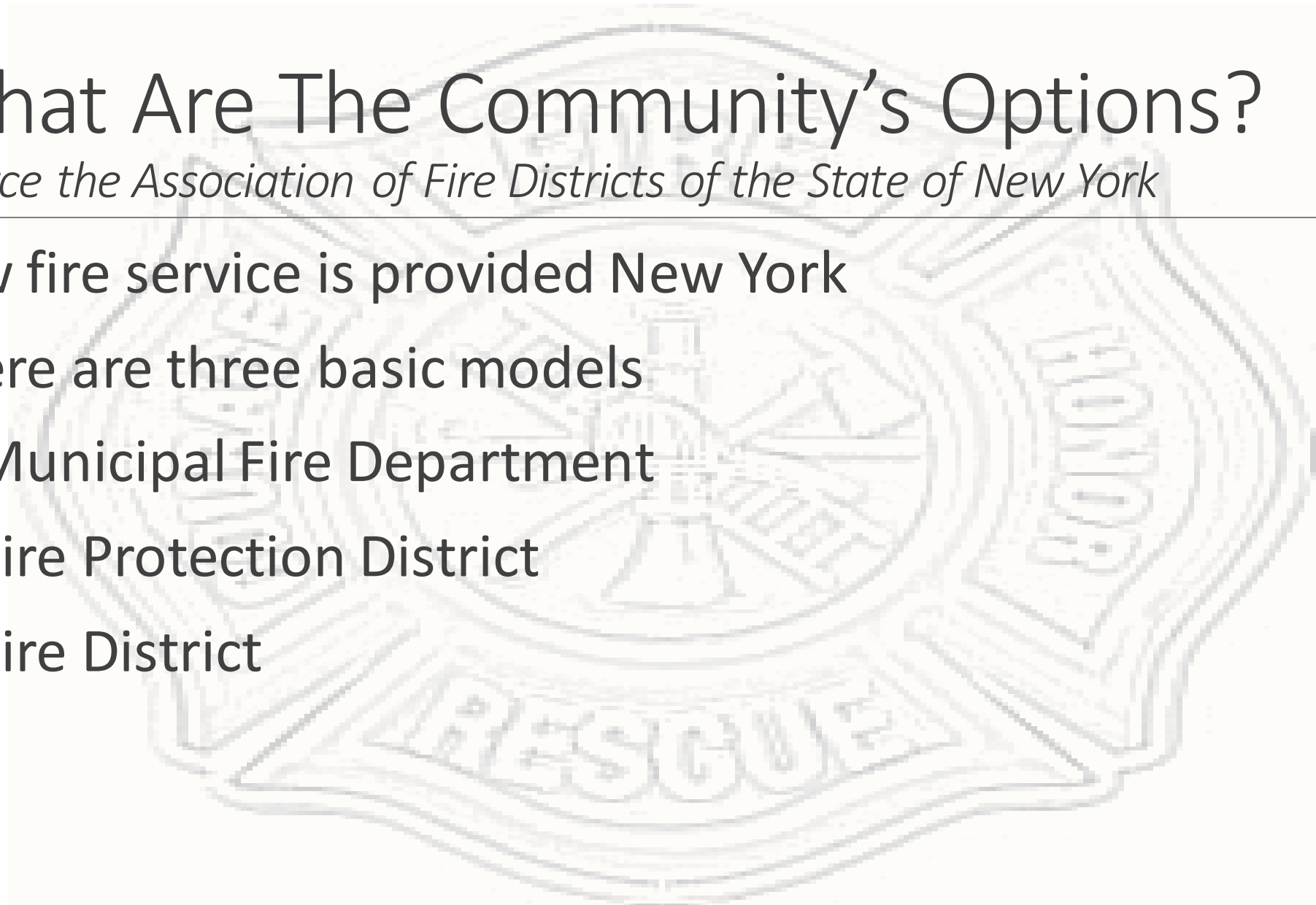
*Source the Association of Fire Districts of the State of New York*

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How fire service is provided New York

There are three basic models

1. Municipal Fire Department
2. Fire Protection District
3. Fire District



# Municipal Fire Department

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May Be a City or Village

Governed by Municipal Government or appointed Board – in our case it's the Village Board

Village funds department in its budget. May receive revenue from contracts to provide services outside village boundaries

- In our case the Village Contracts with the Town for the Wheatland Fire Protection District

Staffing is Mostly volunteer – in our case supplied by Volunteer Fire Company a non-profit corporation.

# Fire Protection District

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Typically for a town outside of villages

The town board contracts for fire protection with city, village, or fire district, or with an incorporated fire company located outside a city, village or fire district.

Staffing- may be volunteer or career it depends on composition of fire department and/or fire company providing coverage under contract(s) with Town Board.

Town budget includes funding for fire protection contract(s).

- In our case a specific area of the Town east of Wheatland Center Rd.



# Fire District

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Typically for a town outside of villages

Governed by an Elected Board of Fire Commissioners

Staffing is mostly volunteer

A Fire District adopts a budget after a public hearing. Almost all funding is from property taxes levied on properties within the district; district may receive revenue from contracts to provide services outside district boundaries.

Also includes a Joint Fire District that covers both a Town and Village

# CURRENT ORGANIZATION

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The Scottsville Fire Department is a Village Fire Department

The Town of Wheatland contracts with the Village of Scottsville for the Wheatland Fire Protection District. Which by NYS law must be negotiated.

The Scottsville Fire Company provides volunteer staffing

The Scottsville Fire Department is a department of the Village and answers to the Village

Funding is included in the budgets of the Town and Village

# What are the Advantages of Forming a Fire District?

*Source Association of Fire Districts of the State of New York*

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**According to the Association of Fire Districts of the State of New York the Advantages of a fire district are:**

- It's in the best interest of the residents to eliminate differing tax rates; rate is based on combined assessed valuation. All residents within the District will pay the same rate.
- Tax levies by the fire district will free up town or village property tax revenues
- Fire protection tax levy no longer applies to town or village real property tax cap
- Consistent and stable budget for the fire district will allow the department to implement long range planning and purchases.
- Eliminates the instability of funding from year to year due to annual negotiations with different jurisdictions which may be financially stressed due to the tax cap.

# Advantages

*Source Association of Fire Districts of the State of New York*

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- Provides transparency as they operate under state laws and regulations for governance under the watchful eye of the Office of the State Comptroller.
- Provides for self governance, positive morale and a focal point of responsibility.
- District is an individual governmental entity, governed by state laws.
- Provides stable governance and management, not subject to the fiscal pressures of others
- Village and Town politics removed from fire district governance and operations.
- Can concentrate on the sole mission the provision of fire protection.

# Advantages

*Source Association of Fire Districts of the State of New York*

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- The State has greater oversight over fire districts unlike village controlled departments or fire protection districts, there is increased accountability. That includes annual audits and a host of regulations laid out in state statute.
- All voters would have greater influence over fire protection spending by electing commissioners and voting on all debt incurred.
- If the Town reduces funding for contracted areas covered by a Village, the Village in turn may reduce service to the Town requiring the Town to find additional funding.
- Exposure for VFBL coverage is transferred to the fire district
- Budget accountability, separate from town or village, taxpayers see where money is going

# Advantages

*Source Association of Fire Districts of the State of New York*

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- Fire Districts may establish taxpayer approved reserve funds.
- Districts save on interest costs by use of reserve funds for large purchases.
- Creates a legal mechanism for residents to participate in capital project referendums
- Creates a legal mechanism for residents to have equitable ownership of fire protection assets for which they fund.
- Operation of Districts is based in Statute, Town Law and General Municipal Law et al, which Boards must follow.
- Fire protection managed by local publicly elected officials who complete specialized training course and concentrate on providing one service to the community.

# Negative Aspects of Forming a Fire District

*Source Association of Fire Districts of the State of New York*

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**According to the Association of Fire Districts of the State of New York the disadvantages of a fire district are:**

- *Perceived loss of control, by Towns that Contract for fire protection.*
- Opposition by local elected officials
- Differences in union contracts, wages, retirement systems or benefits
- Turf wars
- Potential of loss of membership due to consolidation or elimination of station

RESOURCES "How to" Consolidate Fire Protection in Fire Districts, Fire Protection Districts and Villages  
Download Available At: [www.dos.ny.gov/LG/publications/Fire\\_District\\_Consolidation.doc](http://www.dos.ny.gov/LG/publications/Fire_District_Consolidation.doc)  
[https://www.dos.ny.gov/lg/publications/Fire\\_District\\_Consolidation\\_Brochure.pdf](https://www.dos.ny.gov/lg/publications/Fire_District_Consolidation_Brochure.pdf)

# Summary

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The Fire Service is rapidly evolving  
As a community we need to plan for the future of  
our fire department

Thank you for your time.

QUESTIONS?

