

# **CHILMARK FIRE DEPARTMENT**

## **STRATEGIC PLAN**

**2019 – 2024**

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## Forward

In order to paint a realistic picture of what the Chilmark Fire Department, (CFD) aspires to become, it is necessary to first understand the current state of the CFD and its membership profile. This topic is discussed in the “Introduction/Background,” “Community Profile,” and Land, Real Estate, and Demographics sections of the CFD Strategic Plan 2019 – 2024. In the “Operational Analysis,” section of this document we discuss the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the CFD, and finally in the “Strategic Planning,” section we discuss those topics that need to be addressed as the Department moves forward for the next five years and beyond.

The CFD Strategic Plan outlines the cumulative vision of the current Officers and members of the CFD as to our vision and values moving forward. The “Strategic Planning,” section focuses on those activities necessary to meet and achieve our Value and Mission goal more effectively over the next five years. This Strategic Plan also delineates those activities that will better prepare the Department for challenges beyond that horizon, into 2025 and beyond. The plan is designed to provide a foundation to meet our challenges, however it must be recognized that it is a living document that should be reviewed, upgraded and re-written if necessary every five years.

This document serves multiple functions; First and foremost, it is a planning tool formulated to insure that our department will be able to continually offer “Best in Class” emergency services to our community, in a fiscally sound manner, now and in the future. It will also serve to inform members of our Fire Department as well of member of Town Government and the citizens of Chilmark of the necessary steps, preparations and actions required to realize our Vision, Value and Mission goals. It is also designed to present to the Chilmark Town Government realistic insight into the Departments existing and future operational and budgetary requirements.

The CFD Strategic Plan represents the efforts of all the members of the Chilmark Fire Department to honestly evaluate our department, to anticipate future needs of the department and community, as well as those resources anticipated to be required to meet those needs. In addition, the goal of this document is to develop the Mission and Vision of the CFD and, most importantly, to formulate a plan designed to insure that the CFD will continue to deliver superior, comprehensive, and cost-effective emergency response services to our community. Thanks go out to all members of the CFD for their collaborative efforts to produce, edit and refine this document; and for all the effort we must now make to insure that the goals of this plan become a reality.

## **Mission/Visions/Values**

### **Mission Statement**

The mission statement of an organization is intended to describe, in succinct terms, the purpose of the organization's existence. The mission statement articulates the principle reason for the organization's presence within the community. To this end the officers of the CFD developed the following mission statement:

**The Mission of the Chilmark Fire Department is to provide to the citizens of Chilmark superior emergency services dedicated to the protection of life, property and our environment.**

### **Vision Statement**

In addition to knowing who they are and understanding and adhering to their core beliefs, all successful organizations need to define where they expect to be in the future. Therefore after establishing the organizations specific mission, the next logical step is to establish a vision of what the organization should be in the future. As such vision statements provide targets of excellence that the organization will strive towards, as well as, providing a pragmatic and philosophical basis designed to guide the organization moving forward. The following vision statements were developed by the current members of the Chilmark Fire Department.

## **CFD Vision Statements**

- Continually exceed our community's expectations to protect life, property, and the environment.
- Be recognized by our community, peers and neighboring agencies, as a dedicated, well trained, and professional organization capable of providing effective protection of life, property and the environment.
- Strive to provide our firefighters with the skills, tools, education and equipment necessary to effectively and efficiently protect our community.
- Provide our community with a fire department that is responsive to the needs of the community, through teamwork, communications and community interaction.
- Maintain a supportive, respectful and safe environment for all its members.

## **Values**

Establishing values embraced by all members of an organization is extremely important. Values define those features and ideals that make up the personality of the organization. The Chilmark Fire Department felt it absolutely necessary to declare the following statement of values for the department.

Chilmark Fire Department Core Values:

We value:

- Safety first
- Commitment to our community and to its citizens
- Providing quality service
- Continuous improvement
- Careful stewardship of financial, physical and natural resources
- Responsibility and initiative, by every member and by our organization as a whole.
- Honesty and integrity
- Performance and task accountability.
- Respect and tolerance in the workplace and community.
- A positive work environment for all employees.
- A workforce that reflects the diversity of our community.
- Working hard while still having fun.

## **Background and Community Profile**

### **Community Profile**

#### **Population**

The Town of Chilmark supports a year-round population of approximately 850 individuals. However due to its status as a tourist destination, the summer population of the Town increases significantly. This fluctuation in population significantly impacts the operations of the CFD in two ways: First, the increase in summer residents generally leads to a significant increase in the number of response activities which can put a serious strain on existing fire department resources. Secondly, in general, the type and nature of responses required in the summer period differ in nature from the type and nature of response required in the non-summer months. This “Two Season” difference in the type of responses required of the CFD puts additional training and equipment burdens on a department that currently is operating with very limited personnel resources.

#### **AGE**

The median resident age of Chilmark residents is 50.7 years which is significantly above median age of residents of the State of Massachusetts which is 39.2 years. It is likely that the summer population demographic somewhat mirrors the age dynamics of the year-round residents however data supporting that contention could not be found.

While it is hard to determine, what, if any, the existence of a relatively aged population has on the types and numbers of responses required by the CFD, this age dynamic currently has a significant impact on the operational capabilities of the CFD.

Presently the average age of the members of the CFD is approximately 55 years. While this statistic in some ways mimics the population makeup of the Town it is also reflective of the fact that currently it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to recruit

and retain younger individuals on the fire department. Therefore unless some measures are adopted to encourage the younger residents of the town to join the department, the number of physically capable fire fighters available in the Town will continue to diminish to unacceptably low levels.

### **Land and Real Estate Characteristics**

The Town of Chilmark encompasses approximately 21.0 square miles and has a population density of 45 people per square mile. The Town is surrounded on its north, west and southern sides by water and for the most part is moderately rolling with an average elevation of 91 feet above sea level.

The Town is bisected by 3 major paved roads, with the rest of the roadways primarily being dirt and one lane wide in nature.

The houses in the Town range from modest dwellings to very large mansions some being well over 10,000 square feet in size.

The Town does not currently have any significant manufacturing facilities located within its boundaries nor do significant amounts of hazardous materials typical utilize its roadway system.

Chilmark does support some limited agricultural activities however for the most part the town is composed undeveloped fields comprised primarily of second or third generation scrub oak surrounded by various types of understory vegetation.

- **Impacts of the Towns Land and Real Estate Characteristics on Fire Department Operations.**

While the demographic and topological characteristics of the Town of Chilmark greatly enhance its reputation as a desired resort and summer community, these same characteristic pose somewhat unique challenges to the effective operations of the CFD. These challenges are:

- A large proportion of the single lane dirt roads as well as individual residences currently do not have adequate road or residential address signage. This lack of signage can significantly slow response times both for fire and EMS services. Given that many operations of both the CFD and EMS services are time critical this existing lack of easily readable road and residential address signs can significantly impact the effectiveness of response activities.
- The existence of the preponderance of one lane dirt roads can also have a deleterious impact on the effectiveness of both fire and EMS services as in some

instances it is very difficult to get large response equipment down some of the existing roadways. Understanding that it is cost-prohibitive and probably socially undesirable to change the nature and construction of the roads, the CFD has had to start looking at investing in new equipment specifically designed to function in such environments.

- Due to the fact that the population density of the town is only 45 individuals per square mile, most of the residents in the town are spaced rather far apart. While this spacing certainly enhances the ambiance of the community it also provides some additional hurdles that the CFD must overcome in fulfilling its firefighting responsibilities. Due to the fact that most homes in Chilmark are spread out in an almost rural-like setting it is not economically practical for the town to be serviced by urban type fire hydrants. Thus other than for a small area near Memensha, there are no fire hydrants located in the community. The CFD has addressed the lack of hydrants by investing in a state of the art “Tanker” truck which allows the department to bring water to the fire in a very efficient manner. However it has become very apparent to the officers of the department that the number and quality of water sources in the town is becoming more and more inadequate especially in light of all the new residential construction taking place in town. This fact became very apparent in a recent large structural fire, where tanker operations almost completely drained an established water source. In order for the department to continue to supply adequate firefighting services to the community, new water sources are going to have to be developed.
- As previously indicated Chilmark for all intents and purposes is surrounded on three sides by water and beaches. This geographic fact adds another area of responsibility to members of the CFD that is not typically required of most mainland fire departments. That responsibility is the necessity to rapidly and effectively respond to beach related emergencies. While fulfillment of this responsibility has been partially addressed by the addition of a 6-wheel drive UTV to our equipment inventory, more effective response could be facilitated by the purchase of some additional task specific equipment and the provision of additional mission specific training to some of our members.



## **Operational Analysis**

### **SWOT ANALYSIS SUMMARY**

#### ***STRENGTHS-WEAKNESSES- OPPORTUNITIES –THREATS***

Based upon an evaluation of the current status of the CFD, i.e. facilities, equipment and personal, in conjunction with an analysis of the current and future population, land use and atypical seasonal characteristics of the Town of Chilmark, the members of the CFD developed the following SWOT analysis. This analysis will serve as the foundation of the Strategic Planning Section which will be addressed later in this report. Our SWOT analysis is as follows:

#### **STRENGTHS**

- Experienced and dedicated members.
- NFPA Compliant turnout gear.
- Open communication between department members.
- Variety of expertise on staff- hazardous material response, marine operations, building construction, plumbing experience and communications
- Membership dedicated to continuous improvement of the department.
- Good interaction with the Community through events such as the Back Yard Bash, the annual Halloween and Christmas parties and the provision of scholarships to the communities high school graduates.
- Donations.
- Most all department members are certified “Emergency Medical Responders”.
- Membership is extremely loyal to the Department and to it leadership.

## **WEAKNESSES**

- The condition of the Crossroads fire station is a deterrent to the effective and safe operations of the department.
- The requirement that most training courses, required to maintain or improve professional competency, must be taken “off-island” presents potential significant cost and time issues department members
- Staffing shortages has resulted in not all members being trained on all apparatus
- Because of the lack of road and residential signage, responses to some incidents take an unnecessary amount of time.
- 60% of the current Officers do not live in Chilmark thus further complicating the effectiveness of incident responses.
- Time requirements for the Massachusetts Fire Academy training exceed the time available for squad members.
- Lack of adequate numbers of trained personnel and full time staffing precludes compliance with NFPA 1720 response time goals.
- Department members average 55 years old, thus causing some physical limitations related to the department’s ability to efficiently address some response activities that require high levels of physical fitness
- Membership shortages can lead to a lack of preventive maintenance on department apparatus.
- The shortage of reliable water sources is a detriment to the Departments ability to provide adequate fire suppression capabilities.

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

- The new Firehouse, currently under design, will help improve operational capabilities as well as help in recruitment activities.
- Recent Emergency Medical Responder training, received by most members of the department, greatly enhances the overall response skill set of the squad.
- Location of new EMS facility in proximity to new proposed fire station will greatly enhance the potential to cross train EMS with Fire Department personnel.
- Develop workshops to teach the Town’s senior citizens fire prevention and fire suppression technologies.
- Develop a Department web site.
- Enhance revenue through donations and grants.

- Increase communications between the Department and Town governmental officials.
- Capitalize on the close relationship members have with the community.

## **THREATS**

- The average age of members of the department is 55 years old. Unless something is done to recruit new members, to replace existing members as they retire, the size of the department could quickly be reduced to a level where it cannot adequately and safely respond to most incidents.
- The upcoming retirement of the long standing existing Chief could cause a significant moral problem if the opinions of the existing squad members are not weighted heavily in the selection of a new Chief.
- As the Town continues to grow, that growth will put an even greater strain on a department that is already significantly undermanned.
- Aging vehicle fleet
- Lack of adequate water sources.
- Poor Image of Department held by existing Town Officials.
- The proposed implementation of OSHA standards on Fire Departments could have serious consequences on Department finances and operations.
- Increased training requirements.
- High cost of living in Chilmark.
- Changes in technology and changes in the role of the Department.

## **Strategic Planning**

### **STRATEGIC PLANNING TOPICS**

As a result of the SWOT analysis the Department members were able to come up with several Strategic Planning Topics that they felt must be addressed moving forward. For the most part these topics are discussed a descending order of significance, however it was deemed by the members of the Department that topics one and two were of equal importance.

#### ***Strategic Planning Topic #1 - Facilities***

At the time of preparation of this document, the members of the department realize that members of the Town government have begun to move forward with initial efforts to design and construct a new fire station at the general location of the existing Crossroads facility. The members of the Chilmark Fire Department appreciate these efforts and applaud the Town's officials for recognizing the critical need the Town has for a new fire station. As such, the members of the Squad have developed the following narrative related to the design and operation of the new facility.

The proposed new Crossroads fire station should be designed to adequately support the needs of the fire department and the community now and perhaps more importantly, in the future. The proposed facility needs to accommodate extremely diverse functions, including housing administration, training, community education, equipment and vehicle storage, decontamination facilities, locker, shower and bathroom facilities as well as other types of storage spaces.

While it is expected that the new facility will usually be only occupied by fire personnel, the facility may also need to accommodate the general public for community education or outreach programs. It may also be necessary to occasionally utilize the facility in a shelter capacity in disaster situations.

Based upon this criterion, the fire department membership believes that the following building attributes should be considered, if they have not already, in the final design of the new facility.

## BUILDING ATTRIBUTES

- Space Types and Building Organization

It is proposed that the new Crossroads Station include the following major functional areas.

- Apparatus bay(s): This is where fire-fighting and emergency response vehicles are stored. Due to the fact that all the CFD trucks contain tanked water, and therefore cannot be stored outside, it is recommended that the new facility have four (4) apparatus bays.
- Apparatus bay support and vehicle maintenance: These industrial spaces are where the vehicles and other firefighting equipment are cleaned and maintained. It is proposed that the bay at the North Road Station that currently is occupied by Engine 121 be converted to this use upon the retirement of Engine 121. In the interim one of the bays at the new facility could be used jointly as an apparatus bay and a maintenance bay.
- Administrative and training areas: Currently the existing facility offers almost no room to adequately conduct training exercises. It is hoped that the new facility offers space(s) that could be utilized for training as well as offices and conference rooms.
- Residential areas: These include potential dayroom/kitchen and residential support areas such as bathrooms and fitness spaces.

A detailed discussion of these for major functional areas follows:

1. Apparatus Bays: The purpose of the Apparatus Bays is straight forward that is they are needed to store our firefighting and emergency response vehicles. Due to the fact that all our current firefighting apparatus contain water it is necessary that the new station have enough bays to adequately store all vehicles inside. Because of that, we recommend that the new facility have at least 4 bays having the size to adequately store current and future apparatus.
2. Apparatus Bay Support and Vehicle Maintenance: Apparatus bay support functions include cleaning and maintenance areas for firefighter's self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), protective clothing, fire hoses, and equipment. It also includes storage areas for firefighting gear and equipment. Some of these areas are specialized spaces for decontaminating protective clothing and equipment and for maintaining and recharging SCBA's in a clean environment.

The inclusion of these decontamination areas, in the design of the new station is extremely important especially in light of recent data showing the carcinogenic residue is usually found on firefighting gear and equipment after exposure to a typical structural or car fire. It is proposed that the bay which currently is occupied by Engine 121 could potentially jointly serve as an adjunct maintenance bay for the department after Engine 121 is retired, as well as being utilized as storage for some seasonal rescue gear.

3. Administrative and Training Areas: Administrative areas include standard offices and conference and training areas. The area should also likely include additional specialized spaces such as the Chief's office in addition to sleeping and shower facilities, as well as, computer training/testing facilities necessary for firefighter continuing education.
4. Residential Areas: A recommended day room should accommodate kitchen, dining and living/fitness functions. Such a room could be separated into subspaces for those individual functions, but an open design may also be incorporated to save costs. Any potential dining space may also double as training or meeting spaces and might include provisions for audiovisual equipment.
5. Other design considerations: Depending upon the adoption of future fire department staffing scenarios, it is possible that design considerations include the potential that the new fire station will be manned 24 hours a day seven days a week by personnel in continuous 24 hour shifts. Therefore it is important that the new station design ensure a comfortable working and living environment for firefighters. As such, it is recommended that the design of the new station provide :
  - Provide ample natural light
  - A small sleeping area if budget allows
  - A study and computer area which allows for continued firefighter on-line training.
  - A small recreational/exercise area, if budget allows.
6. Design considerations for maintaining a Safe and Healthy Environment: As indicated above, recent investigations have shown that firefighters have a much higher incidence of cancer than members of the general public, this is thought to be due to exposure of firefighters to hazardous and toxic materials that are found to be associated with fires involving houses constructed in the last 20 years as well as vehicle fires. As such due to the potential daily and long term occupation of the new facility by firefighters and the presence of hazardous materials associated with firefighting and rescue incidents, special attention must be given to designing the facility to accommodate equipment required to both protect the

occupants and to maintain a healthy environment. Design considerations for the new facility should, therefore incorporate the following suggestions;

- The design should insure that the new building provides a secure facility for both turn out gear and decontamination equipment as well as for the secure storage of hazardous materials and contaminated personal protection gear (PPE).
- The new building should be constructed using non-toxic building materials and future operations of the building should incorporate improved maintenance practices.
- The new design should insure good indoor air quality, through the utilization of robust exhaust capturing equipment and venting equipment where necessary, such as in SCBA and PPE decontamination areas
- The new design should utilize abundant natural light in residential and administrative areas if possible.
- Concurrent to the building of the new fire station, the authors of this strategic plan fully support the utilization of a portion of 8 acers of land off of Middle Line Road for the purpose of a training and small storage facility. We understand that members of the Town Government are discussing using this parcel for a number of purposes including use as a much needed firefighter training facility, and to that end we fully support and appreciate this proposed land use ideas.

## CURRENT BUILDING ISSUES

The current Crossroads facility is over 70 years old and does not meet the present and more importantly, the future needs of the Chilmark Fire Department. Current and proposed fire apparatus do not, and most likely will not in the future, easily fit, if at all, in the current facility. In addition the building is potentially not structurally sound or OSHA compliant and it is constructed, at least partially with asbestos containing materials.

Administrative, training, maintenance and decontamination areas are inappropriate for a fire department of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the ability to easily integrate current and future firefighting and rescue technology into the existing building is limited, if not impossible.

## **Strategic Planning Goals, Objectives and Action Items:**

### **Goals:**

- To design and build a cost-effective state of the art Fire Headquarters facility at the site of the existing Crossroads station.
- To develop a long range plan for the cost-efficient maintenance of the new facility.

### **Objectives:**

- Members of the fire department work with the building committee and the Town government to further study design and build a new fire headquarters building.
- Department members to work proactively to insure that the new building meets the dual goals of being cost-effective while also being built to maximize the operational effectiveness and safety of the Department.
- Until the new station is constructed members of the Fire Department will strive to keep the current Crossroads station in as top condition as possible.
- Develop a proactive and continuous dialog with members of the Town Government and Financial Administration to insure that the design and construction is completed with both operational and fiscal realities as dual objectives.

### **Action Items:**

- Have one or more current members of the CFD work on the study, design and building committee. Develop and receive buy in of the new design from CFD members.
- Work with Town officials to garner support for the new facility from Town Residents.
- Establish a dialog of mutual respect between Town officials and members of the CFD with the goal of expediently and cost-effectively building the new facility with a minimum of disagreements and costly delays.
- Consider the current attributes of the existing North Road station when designing the new Cross Roads facility; i.e. could the existing North Road



facility be used in some operational and fiscally responsible manner to augment the proposed design of the new Crossroads facility.

**Note: The members of the CFD are aware that much work has already been done by many individuals on the design and layout of the new fire station. The above comments are in no way designed to dispute or denigrate the work that has been done so far. The comments and suggestions presented above were included as they were deemed necessary as part of an overall strategic plan for the Department moving forward and not as a critique of the good work done so far.**

### ***Strategic Planning Topic #2 - Staffing/Structure***

The volunteer/call system that that CFD has historically used to deliver response services, has served the community in an adequate manner since the inception of the Department. However it is becoming increasingly apparent that, unless some changes are made into staffing structure, the ability of the Department to meet the expanding scope of community demands will be seriously compromised.

Currently, the CFD simply does not have the human resources needed to meet the time and educational demands required to maintain the comprehensive program of fire inspection, emergency response, facility and apparatus maintenance, training and community outreach that are the goals of all fire department in the country. The existing staffing problem results in the CFD being unable to adequately address required tasks in a timely manner, limits the overall productivity of our personnel and promotes less than efficient operations. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) sets national fire service response and staffing standards. While these standards are not law, they are generally considered as compliance goals and guidelines for fire departments and are often adopted by OSHA and other Federal and State safety and health authorities. NFPA 1710 (Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations and Special Operations by Career Departments) is a guiding document that specifies the minimum requirements for the operation and deployment of fire suppression, emergency medical services, and special operations responses. NFPA while specifically written to be a guideline for "Career" departments it is generally accepted as standard guidance for "Call" departments, such as the CFD, as well. The NFPA 1720 directive requires the minimum

response, and on scene arrival of one engine company staffed by four (4) firefighters within four (4) minutes of notification and a first full alarm (14) personnel within eight (8) minutes 90% of the time. The CFD is not capable of reaching these goals at this time.

While it is probably unrealistic, given the semi-rural nature of Chilmark; coupled with the preponderance of dirt, one lane-unmarked roads, which serve the community, to expect the CFD meet the response time goals set out by the NFPA, it is an unfortunate fact that in many instances we currently do not have available staff to meet the four (4) firefighter initial response goal.

An examination of the CFD squad roster shows that approximately 15 individuals make up the membership of the CFD. However it is a unfortunate fact that out of these 15 individuals only 6 members are currently “Green tagged” that is, sufficiently trained to be able to actively enter structural fires or participate in other incidents requiring the utilization of SCBA’s. In addition, currently only 6 members of the squad have taken and passed the Fire Fighter 1 course, which defines the minimum requirements necessary to function as a professional firefighter.

That is not to say the current members of the CFD do not possess a well-rounded wealth of skills and abilities. Members possess a wide-array of educational and real-life abilities that can be, and are utilized, when the department is required to respond to an incident. A close inspection of our current roster will reveal that among our members you will find, dive specialists, marine and boat handling specialists, experience in building construction, educators and trainers, EMTs, hazardous materials specialists, a civil engineer and individuals experienced in the financial and legal operations of private sector business. Further members of the CFD collectively hold 8 college degrees including 3 master’s degrees and 1 PhD. In short, what that squad lacks in quantity it does make up in the quality and dedication of its membership.

The CFD is not alone in facing the challenges of recruitment and dwindling squad sizes. This is a problem that is ubiquitous to almost all “Call” departments in the United States. While studies have indicated that the specific reasons leading to the drastic decline in the number of individual volunteering to join a fire squad may vary with geographic locations there are apparently two dominate causes which are driving this decrease in volunteer firefighters. The first is the sociological reality that volunteerism among a large percentage of society is no longer the norm especially among those individuals that are of an age that is needed by fire services. Secondly, the existence of new and projected onerous training requirements, which must be undertaken by new recruits, is proving to be too much of a financial and time burden for potential recruits.

In addition to these two primary reasons, specific characteristics related to the demography of the town of Chilmark further exacerbates the recruiting and staffing problems facing the Town. In particular:

- Chilmark is an aging community with the average age of its residents being over 50 years old. Thus the current demographic profile of the town limits the number of potential candidates.
- Secondly, the high cost of living in town either requires its younger citizens to move out of town, or if they remain, to take on numerous jobs just to be able to afford to live in town. Thus they have no time to devote to the CFD

The manpower problem facing currently facing CFD can be best summed up in one statement: “In the last 8 years the CFD has lost, through a variety of reasons, 8 members, while, during the same time period it has only been able to recruit 1 new member.”

There is no way to sugarcoat the manpower situation facing the department, this shortage is a product of the times , as well as, the training and time requirements now facing those wanting to join the department and those individuals wishing to continue in the fire service. Concurrently while it is relatively easy to quantify and define the reasons for the current manpower shortage, developing a solution is a much more complex and perplexing problem.

To that end, members of the CFD have begun a preliminary investigation into potential solutions to the current manpower problem. In general this study was centered on investigating how other public service orientated entities such as Fire, EMS and Law Enforcement solved, or attempted to solve, similar manpower shortages. Where possible, communities that mirrored the physical and demographic characteristics of Chilmark were used as the basis of this study.

Analyzing the individual communities as to the specific solutions they brought to bear to address their manpower issues and amalgamating the results led the members of the CFD to determine, that in large part, one of three (3) solution variants we utilized in solving the manpower issues. These solutions were:

1. **Do nothing new:** That is, continue with the existing staff and structure, while increasing recruiting efforts in the hope that the effort increased both the quantity and quality of recruits. This solution, in a few instances, seemed to fulfill the desired goals of the departments, but based upon the limited sample sized, seemed to be only have been effective in newly incorporated communities with a large population influx of younger individual. In addition, it appeared that

the majority of successes with this approach were achieved in Midwestern agricultural communities and in rural areas. Given the existing demographics of Chilmark and recent lack of success of the CFD in garnering new recruits, it appears that this option does not readily offer a realistic solution to the Departments manpower shortage.

2. **Restructure the Department into a full time “Career” type squad:** In a few instances departments abandoned their volunteer status and changed the structure of the department to that of a Career department. However this transition seemed to be the exception to the rule and was concentrated in western communities that were formally rural but due to population increases had changed into more of a suburban or urban nature. Members of the CFD do not believe that this solution is applicable to Chilmark given the current size and relatively slow growth rate of the community, as well as the significant costs associated with such a change.
3. **Adoption of a “Hybrid” Career/Call structure.** While there were numerous variants of such an option analyzed, it appeared that all variants centered on the creation of a department that centered its day to day operations on the utilization of a limited few full time “Career” individuals and augmented the rest of the staffing with “call” staff. Upon review it appeared that the adoption of such a hybrid structure centered around the concept of utilizing a limited number of full-time highly trained individuals, which could fulfill the majority of response, administrative and operational duties that were required of the departments and would essentially give the departments the option to offer their respective communities equal if not superior services with fewer but more highly trained firefighters, It is felt that, while not perfect, this option under the right legal and fiscal guidance, might offer a potential solution to Chilmark. To some degree a form of this option has already been adopted by a couple of the Fire Departments on the Island and it is the structural variant that is currently utilized by the Tri-Town Ambulance Service. While the members of the CFD see some form of this option being a potential solution to the existing manpower problem, it was agreed among the members that a much more detailed study of potential hybrid structures and their operational and fiscal impacts need to be undertaken, before such an option could be fully recommended.

**Strategic Planning Goals, Objectives and Action Items:****GOALS:**

- Development of a staffing and structure plan which addresses the existing and future manpower issues facing the Chilmark Fire Department:
- Development of a plan that insures that any formulated staffing structure, meets the dual criterion of being both operationally effective, and financially realistic and responsible.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Complete a detailed analysis of potential staffing structures before the hiring of the new Chief, in order to insure that the new hire is comfortable with the proposal
- Make sure that any new hiring structure, if adopted, is compliant with all appropriate personnel requirements and is developed in conjunction with the Town Administration and Financial Committees
- If warranted, explore other potential solutions to the manpower shortage problem.

**ACTION ITEMS:**

- An ad hoc committee consisting of one or more private citizens members as well as members of the Town Administration, Personnel Board, and Finance Committee in addition to two (2) current officers of the CFD should be set up to explore and develop a long-term solution to the manpower shortage by the middle of July 2019.
- Concurrent to the convening of the aforementioned committee, members of the CFD will continue to explore technologies and innovations which might allow the CFD to operate in a more efficient and safe manner in the event that it is decided that the department should move into the future with the same staffing levels and structure that it currently possesses
- It is important that members of the CFD convey to the Town Officials and general public that the current manpower shortages is based upon fact and not upon operational bias or unwarranted desires. It is a real problem that needs to be quickly resolved in one way or another

### ***Strategic Planning Topic #3 – Equipment and Apparatus***

While the discussion relating to Equipment and Apparatus is a stand-alone topic and should be discussed as such, it is important to realize that the type, size and quantity of apparatus required by the department, in the future, will greatly depend upon the final design of the new fire station and, perhaps even more importantly on the personnel structure, and size of the squad moving forward. It makes small sense to invest in a piece of major apparatus if there is simply not the man-power available to man it effectively. Therefore the types, numbers and function of major apparatus investments will depend almost solely on the resolution of the issues facing the new station as well as manpower staffing and structure of the squad.

In regards to apparatus and equipment, just as technology changes in the private sector, technology evolves in the fire services as well. This change in technology is predicated upon the changes in the types and numbers of incidents the fire department is asked to respond to. In previous times the majority of calls responded to by fire departments were structural fires, either residential or commercial. In the past a resident living in home that was experiencing a typical structural fire had somewhere between 14 and 17 minutes to exit their home safely. However, because of the use of more man-made materials in the building of homes, constructed in the last 15 years, residents now have only 3 to 4 minutes to safely exit their homes. Because of this fire departments need to have the ability to respond to a typical structural fire in a much quicker time frame than in the past.

Just as the utilization of man-made building materials has required a more expedient response time to a typical structural fire, the utilization of man-made building materials has presented fire departments with new significant personnel safety issues that were not typically associated with historic fires. Modern materials, when combusted, give off extremely toxic gases and smoke containing potentially high levels of cyanide and phosgene, both chemicals being extremely carcinogenic . This fact has required the modern firefighter to utilize significantly more personal protection technology just to maintain their personal safety. The use of SCBA's, thermal camera's, gas monitors, NFPA compliant personal protection gear, and PASS systems are now a part of standard operational procedures that were not available or necessarily required in the not too distant past.

In the CFD the equipment we use is ideally being continually upgraded to NFPA standards. In addition, there is also the possibility of defective and damaged equipment as a result of operations and training. This equipment must be replaced and also

comply with the latest standards possible. Plans to replace both major apparatus and equipment should be implemented, if not already in place, on a regular basis. The goal of the upcoming year would be to inventory all equipment, set up a computerized records management system, and establish an agreed upon replacement plan.

It cannot be emphasized enough that the formulation of a specific apparatus and equipment replacement plan will depend entirely upon the final disposition of the new fire hall and the determination of the future structure and size of the department staff.

### **Strategic Planning Goals, Objectives and Action Items:**

#### **GOALS:**

- Provide and maintain quality equipment and facilities.

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Develop a small equipment replacement plan. – Perform an inventory of all small equipment.
- Develop a comprehensive large apparatus needs assessment.

#### **ACTION ITEMS:**

- Develop a comprehensive end of life apparatus replacement plan
- Have the vehicle replacement plan accepted by the Finance Committee and Town officials.
- List all small equipment currently in service and apply the industry standard of its usable life.
- Develop a small equipment replacement and budget plan.
- Investigate the acquisition of surplus equipment where beneficial and appropriate.
- Predicate the purchase of apparatus based upon an analysis of the number of qualified individuals it takes to operate it. Man-power efficient equipment should be studied in detail.

### ***Strategic Planning Topic #4 – Training***

The most important firefighting component possessed by any fire department is not its apparatus, or equipment but its cadre of well trained and experienced firefighters. A well trained squad can in some measure mitigate the need for some capital equipment and can, at times, reduce the loss of capabilities commonly associated with a fire department that, like the CFD is short of manpower.

However as fire departments take on more responsibilities and duties, the training required to adequately fulfill those duties and responsibilities is imposing a greater time and financial burden on squad members, especially in those departments that are primarily made up of call members such as the CFD.

In that last several years the advent of new rules and regulations related to training requirements and certifications has put a significant time, and often times, financial burden on those firefighters wishing to be compliant with the latest professional requirements.

The time and financial burdens imposed on firefighters living on Martha's Vineyard is currently exacerbated by the fact that currently most all of the classroom and practical training required by the fire service is not given on the Island. Thus any candidate currently wishing to keep current with the skills and knowledge require to be an efficient firefighter, must with few exceptions, travel off-island to a mainland training location. This can impose a significant financial burden on that member seeking to continue their education if travel and per-diem costs are not covered. In addition to out of pocket expenses, most all members of the CFD are not employed by the department and rely on other venues for their income, i.e. self-employed or employed full time by another entity. As a result off-island travel generally burdens those wishing to further their education not only with potential out of pocket expenses but also with the potential of loss wages. The combination of out-of-pocket costs and lost wages can lead to a significant financial burden for that individual wanting take that training required to increase their fire scene effectiveness.

Currently the CFD does provide reimbursement for travel and per-diems for most training activities. In addition, the department does offer an hourly compensation for the time utilized by an individual attending a training class. These benefits have been



utilized and appreciated by those CFD members that have availed themselves of training opportunities. However, the availability of these benefits, in most cases, does not outweigh the inconvenience and costs incurred by those squad members participating in required training events.

As was previously mentioned a well trained and experienced squad can, in some instances, reduce or eliminated the loss of incident response effectiveness, sometimes associated with a fire department that are operating under the duress of not having the necessary numbers of fire fighters required to be an effective unit. Therefore it is incumbent of the CFD and Town Officials to jointly investigate ways that will allow current and future squad members the opportunity to get the required training without having to incur prohibitive time or fiscal burdens.

### **Strategic Planning Goals, Objectives and Action Items:**

#### **GOALS:**

- Insure that members of the CFD are trained up to the latest Fire Service standards all the while insuring that acquisition of this does not pose unnecessary time or financial burdens on the attendees.

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Mitigate the financial and time burdens imposed by new and ongoing training requirements on department members.

#### **ACTION ITEMS:**

- Work with the Massachusetts Fire Academy and other Island fire departments, to investigate the potential of more classes being held here on Martha's Vineyard.
- Work with the Massachusetts Fire Academy with the objective of increasing the number of "on-line" courses available to students.
- Insure that the line item in the Fire Department's budget relating to training costs adequately projects training needs including those costs associated with travel, per-diem and a potential training stipend.
- Identify and quantify the specific training needs of individual department members and utilize those needs in the formulation in the training budget.
- Improve the quality of training facilities and resources.
- Designate a company officer to obtain necessary "train the trainer" credentials so that more training classes can be offered in-house.

- Work with other island fire department to more effectively identify joint training opportunities.
- Work with other island fire departments to share both physical and personnel training resources.

### ***Strategic Planning Topic #5 – Water Sources***

As previously mentioned, for the most part the community of Chilmark lies in a semi-rural setting and except for a few fire hydrants located in and around Menemsha, the town is not serviced by fire hydrants. To overcome this lack of hydrants, the CFD utilizes its Tanker and portable pools as functional water sources when needed. Historically this technique has served both the fire department and the community quite well. However as the community continues to grow and homes become larger and larger the need to develop or construct more water sources in town has become more apparent. This need was highlighted in the structure fire which recently occurred in a new home being constructed on Middle Road. In total, over 90,000 gallons of water were used in fire suppression activities with the water being taken from a stream/small pond complex located on State Road near Chilmark Chocolates. Once the fire was extinguished it became apparent that department suppression activities had almost completely drain all available water from that source. While, in this instance, water availability was not a problem, should the fire been larger, or if it had continued to burn for a longer period, the availability of easily accessible water to serve that location would have been problematic.

Another issue facing the CFD associated with the utilization of existing water sources is the fact that certain geographic area of the town are not privy to as many or as robust water sources as other areas. As such fire suppression activities in some locales within the Town might not be as efficient as those in other areas having a higher density of natural or man-made supply sources. Because of this members of the CFD are recommending that the Fire Department in conjunction with the Town Government look into the development and/or construction of additional water sources

***Strategic Planning Goals, Objectives and Action Items:*****GOALS:**

- Identify and develop or construct five (5) new fire suppression water sources at the rate of one new source each year for the next five years.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- The identification, development and construction of new water sources should be designed to result in enhances fire suppression capabilities for the Town of Chilmark:
- One new water source should be added per year each year for the next five years

**Action Items:**

- Members of the CFD should review the accessibility, location and potential volume of existing water sources and then identify new potential water sources that could either be developed or constructed.
- Weighted evaluation should be given to those water sources that are; First located in parts of Town which may not currently be adequately served by available water resources; 2: If possible natural water sources should be developed before man-made artificial ones due to the probable differential in cost of construction/development.
- Members of the CFD should investigate the most cost-effective construction methods available that can be applied to the building of a man-made water sources such i.e. tanks. The objective of this investigation should be to insure that any necessary cost incurred by the Town in the development of this new man-made source is minimized to the fullest extent possible.

***Strategic Planning Topic # 6 – Fiscal Responsibility:***

Members of the CFD are well aware of the fiscal burden a fire department puts on a town budget. Considering that the Chilmark Fire Chief is responsible for well over a million dollars of large apparatus and probably another half million in small associated equipment, from a Capital asset perspective, the CFD is likely to be one of the biggest, if not the largest depositories of non-building related assets in the Town of Chilmark. If the projected costs of the new fire station, (whatever they turn out to be), is added to this asset evaluation it is likely that the Fire Chief is responsible for the largest percentage of the Town's buildings and equipment. This is a fact that is not taken lightly by the members of the Department.

The members of the department are also aware that the CFD provides the first line of defense for the approximately \$3.3 billion of assessed property in Chilmark (2017 figure), and that its operations are an important component in insuring that our year-round and summer residents and tourists can enjoy the Town with the knowledge that, when needed, the members of the CFD will be there.

In developing this Strategic Plan it was pointed out many times that the implementation of these plans will cost money and in some cases a great deal of money. Keeping this in mind it was agreed by all members of the CFD that all operations of the department and all capital asset purchases large or small would have to pass the joint test of operational need and fiscal prudence. It is the goal of the CFD going forward, when planning new acquisitions or budgeting for new operational costs to only commence with new acquisitions or request new operational budgets, only after it is concluded that the request is operationally needed and financially responsible.

***Strategic Planning Goals, Objectives and Action items:*****GOALS:**

- The goal of the department and all of its members will be to insure that any expenditure, requested or incurred by the department, be as fiscally responsible as possible with the ultimate goal of minimizing the impact of said expenditures on the Town's budget to the maximum extent possible.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- The ultimate objective of this initiative will be to assure Town Officials and Town citizens that any and all expenditures by the CFD will be undertaken in the most cost-efficient manner possible.

**ACTION ITEMS:**

- The Fire Chief or one of his officers will attend every Selectman's meetings with the goal of providing on-going and open communication with the Selectman as to planned or unexpected expenditures.
- The Fire Chief or one of his officers will meet with members of the finance committee on a quarterly basis to update the committee on planned or unexpected expenditures
- Members of the CFD will explore and implement, if beneficial, partnerships with other emergency response agencies including other island fire departments, the Chilmark Police Department, the Chilmark Highway Department and Tri-Town Ambulance in order to: review and update mutual aid agreements, develop programs to share training resources, identify joint purchasing opportunities and establish an information sharing system related to the purchase of new equipment and finally to identify opportunities to share physical resources such as equipment and potentially facilities
- Members of the CFD will continually explore revenue enhancement opportunities including: the application for grants as available and appropriate, utilization of the state, and/or federal surplus program as appropriate, and to continue to solicit donation for capital expenditures where appropriate.

### ***Strategic Planning Topic #7 – Community Outreach***

Members of the CFD have a well-developed sense of community and serve on the department to provide their neighbors and fellow citizens with as many public safety and charitable services as possible. To this end the members of the CFD donate much of their personal time not only in their role as capable firefighters and public servants but also to several activities designed to enhance the quality of life in Chilmark. Quietly the members of the CFD are responsible for many traditional town functions and donations that would otherwise not exist if not for the efforts of the members of the fire department. Through the efforts of the Chilmark Volunteer Fireman's Association, the residents of the Town of Chilmark enjoy the Back Yard Bash, the annual Halloween Party and the annual Children's Christmas party wherein every child in Chilmark under the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, is insured to receive a Christmas gift. All these events are funded by the Chilmark Volunteer Fireman's association at almost no cost to the Town of Chilmark. In addition every spring, those high school seniors, who reside in Chilmark, have the opportunity to apply for academic scholarships once again provided by the Chilmark Volunteer Fireman's association at no cost to the Town of Chilmark. It is planned that as long as the fire department can maintain its membership at a sufficient level, that these events will continue.

In addition to activities conducted by members of the department under the banner of the Chilmark Volunteer Fireman's association, members of the department in their capacity as firefighters provide fire safety introduction to children of the Chilmark Elementary school.

The members of the CFD are proud of their department and its Chief and Officers and willingly give up their time and financial resources to be a member of the department. Perhaps no fact can illustrate the dedication that the members of the CFD have to the department and the Town Chilmark better than the fact that three (3) of the five (5) active officers on the department do not currently live in Chilmark. We have a good bunch of individuals on our squad and we are loyal to each other and to the Department.

That being said, the members of the CFD believe that numerous opportunities exist to encourage further public involvement in the Department.

## ***Strategic Planning Goals, Objectives and Action Items***

### **Goals:**

- Develop and encourage active public involvement in the Department

### **Objectives:**

- To make the citizens of the Town of Chilmark more aware of the activities of the department and to more effectively involve the public with the activities and members of the department.

### **Action Items;**

- Provide open communications with the community through the use of meetings and publication.
- Conduct bi-annual discussion forums with members of the community.
- Develop and maintain a department web site
- Conduct an annual community survey on department operations.
- Increase the amount of public education presented to the community on such topics as, fire prevention, Emergency Planning, CPR and First Aid.
- Work with the Town Clerk and the Chilmark Police Department to develop an inventory of those town residents that might need special services in the event of a storm or some other natural or man-made disaster
- Work with the Up Island Council on Aging to provide fire prevention education, inspections and smoke detector to those seniors that need or may benefit from such services.

