A meeting of the Mendon Citizens Advisory Committee for Town of Mendon Fire Service was held on Wednesday, January 25, 2023 at the Mendon Community Center, 167 North Main Street, Honeoye Falls, NY 14472.

PRESENT: Muffy Meisenzahl; Mendon Supervisor, John Moffitt; Chief Cory Trewer; Mike Arman; Karen Jenkins; David Smith; Robin Stewart Ha; Ryan Wilsey; Anothony Militello on Zoom at 7:47

ABSENT: Chief Peter Kester, Gerald Lonthair, Steve Tschiderer

OTHERS: Brian Anderson; Danny Bassette, IT support.

Minutes were taken by Bonnie Toomey

Ms. Meisenzahl opened the meeting without a quorum at 7:04 p.m. to allow discussion. Chief Trewer arrived at 7:07 so the meeting continued as scheduled.

HOUSEKEEPING

Ms. Meisenzahl pointed out the exits and restrooms.

INTRODUCTONS

Ms. Meisenzahl acknowledged others present and noted no one on Zoom.

MINUTES for the January 11, 2023 meeting were approved.

COMMITTEE ORGANIZATION

Ms. Meisenzahl stated all the materials for the meeting are posted at least 24 hours before the meeting and are on the Town website. There are no new materials for the notebooks, all new information has been shared electronically.

Communication

Ms. Meisenzahl shared and reviewed a letter from Supervisor Moffitt that addressed the question of a cost estimate of career firefighters. It included the tax implications of adding the cost of one paid firefighter at the cost of one hundred thousand dollar for the districts as they currently stand. It also included an estimate of tax rate for a townwide district. In each example the rate was applied to a home with an assessment of two hundred thousand dollars. Ms. Meisenzahl added that this is not a concern of this Committee, it is not part if the charge. She respects the question and believes this gives an answer. The letter will be in the Town file.

There were no questions.

COMMITTEE CHARGE

Task #1 – Chapter Two narrative, Authorities and Jurisdiction, was emailed with figures that will be part of it. Chapter Three the Committee has had.

Task #2 – The Committee has had Chapter Four which is Demographics, Exposure and Experience. The Natural and Target Features Tables went out with the full document in email.

Task #3 – Ms. Meisenzahl finished Chapter Five yesterday which is Resource Considerations. This takes some of the information discussed at the last meeting and wraps up the information gathered in the front part of the report putting it in a story context to say this is what we have and what it means in terms of staffing, equipment, finance and administration. It puts it in such a way that it sets us for working on sustainment models. Everything that has been drafted and put in a reporting format is now available. Some of the charts and graphics that were sent out originally have been updated with complete data for 2022 and some with some basic editing has been done but not in that version yet. Mr. Bassett is helping with getting the draft report in an electronic platform. There were no questions.

Ms. Meisenzahl proceeded to review a modeling worksheet she provided.

 MODELING NOTES & WORKSHEETS

As you review modeling options, please consider that the only occurring change is due to

Department initiatives.

What else do we need? What options best achieve these needs? And, what do you recommend?

Chapters 2 through 5, document Fire Protection governance, the resources in-hand to deliver

Fire Protection services, the risks, vulnerabilities and exposures within the Town, and

challenges to Fire Department operations for both HFFD and MEND.

New York State structures Fire Protection in four (4) jurisdictional options:

 Municipal

 Fire District

 Fire Protection District

 Joint Fire District

Our current model includes three (3) of these options each presenting Town taxpayers with

independent, autonomous boards of Elected Officials; and, two (2) Fire Departments: Mendon

delivering service within the Mendon Fire District, and HFFD serving the Village and two (2) Fire

Protection Districts (Mendon #1 and North Bloomfield). Although the Town of West Bloomfield

is not within our purview, the models you consider may include their Fire Protection District if they opt to continue fire service delivery from our locale.

The additional pages provided information to consider relating to recommendations and what change would and would not occur with each one.

There was discussion on what a Joint Fire District actually looks like. Ms. Meisenzahl further detailed other options the Town Board can consider in relation to Mendon Fire Protection District #1. There are many legal way the Town can frame fire protection, it all depends on the frame of reference of the Town Board. She cautioned that just because the Committee makes a recommendation, it doesn’t mean they are going to take it. There was discussion on what the Committee charge is and how their recommendation can lead to the desired changes. The Committee has to make a recommendation on a model (or two) and justify why (this is what it will do). Change can happen within a reasonable amount of time if there is agreement with the authorities. There was discussion among the Committee Members on the value of combining the Departments.

Chief Trewer expressed his frustration on the need for more staff, he stated the Honeoye Falls Fire Department is in a worse position than they were a year ago. He stated call volume is up and the number of volunteers is down. This is a serious problem. He asked when the Committee needs to come to an agreement. Ms. Meisenzahl answered, the next meeting.

Mr. Militello (Zoom) added his recommendation for a Townwide Fire District. He believes that model is the best way to maintain the culture of both fire departments and allow volunteerism while still providing for a capacity to ensure that there are means to provide reliable amount of staffing to respond to incidents in the town. He listed the following recommendations to happen in the next three years:

1. Capital reserves established for the replacement of aging fire suppression apparatus that services the Fire Protection District.
2. Responding agency to fire related emergencies can consistently provide at least one fire apparatus with four interior qualified firefighters to all fire calls in the Fire Protection District 90% of the time.
3. Fiscal resources to be committed to either the hiring of paid personnel or the incentivization of volunteers of both in order to provide a reliable response force.
4. All of these apply regardless of the structure.

Ms. Meisenzahl noted that we are not telling the Town Board what to do but making a recommendation to the Town Board for a structure to allow some of these things to happen in an environment that has one board of authority that has the maximum ability to aggregate assessment within the community for the purpose and focus of fire protection. It’s a good thing to look at from a number of perspectives, it gives the district the opportunity to evolve as the industry changes.

Ms. Stewart Ha stated that the Townwide model seems like what is needed.

Ms. Jenkins stated that what the Committee has done here is put together data and before this she had no idea, she didn’t know anything (to do with the fire service). She didn’t want to speak for others, but guessing the Town Board Members do not have the insight that she has gained from these meetings.

Ms. Meisenzahl stated that what this Committee has done hasn’t been done before. It has not been wasted time. You have taken a townwide approach, all jurisdictions, both fire departments and said this is what we have and this is what we need. You have shown it in numbers and data that displays patterns and trends. Ms. Jenkins added that it isn’t some anecdotal thing, we have numbers and proof. Ms. Ha added that we have data to support the recommendation so others can make a better decision.

Ms. Meisenzahl stated she will write the introduction to the report, Chapter 6 is trends and projections and Chapter 7 is your model. There was discussion on coming to a consensus towards a townwide district. Ms. Meisenzahl will start scripting the narrative for the next meeting.

There was no Public Comment.

The next meeting is February 8, 2023.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:47 pm.