

Running Head: ALTERNATIVE STAFFING FOR VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENTS

Executive Development

Alternative Staffing Methods used by

Volunteer Fire Departments in Rapid Growth Communities

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Certification Statement

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of others.

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Abstract

Hampden Township has experienced rapid growth. The volunteer fire company has struggled to staff for fire response. The author attempted to answer the questions: how do similar size communities in Pennsylvania and Ohio staff fire departments, what is the governance in volunteer organizations, what incentives are there for volunteers, and what factors effect integration of career and volunteers? Fire departments in Ohio have an organized staffing method. Pennsylvania has no clear preferred method of staffing. Ohio departments are municipal based, in Pennsylvania most are private non profit corporations. None of the departments use any unique incentives to increase volunteer participation. Some hired career members and implemented duty crews. Finally, career and volunteer members must be held to the same performance and conduct standards.

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Introduction

Since the days of Ben Franklin volunteer fire departments have provided essential community service responding to fires and other citizen needs. Since 1984, Pennsylvania has experienced a steady decline in the number of active volunteer firefighters. Conversely many suburban communities in Pennsylvania have experienced rapid growth. Hampden Township is considered a suburb of Harrisburg, the state capital of Pennsylvania. The problem is Hampden Township has experienced an increase in population and target hazards. The call volume associated with the growth has created additional demands on the volunteer fire company. The demand on the limited volunteer personnel has the potential for creating increased response times and inadequate personnel for safe operations at fire and rescue emergencies.

The purpose of this research is to provide Hampden Township management and Hampden Township Volunteer Fire Company (HTVFC) leadership examples of alternative staffing and deployment strategies that will ensure adequate emergency response time and personnel necessary for safe fire and rescue operations.

Descriptive research will be used to outline the current situation. The author will interview key department leadership, review current reference material and conduct a World Wide Web data search. The outcome of the research will be used to identify best practices that can be used as potential solutions. It is important to research and review a community with similar demographics prior to implementation of any change. This paper will address the following research questions:

1. How do similar size communities in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the State of Ohio staff Fire and EMS departments?

2. What are the governance and leadership structures for volunteer organizations?
3. What legal and effective incentives are there for volunteers and how do they relate to level of commitment (availability)?
4. What factors effect performance and integration of career and volunteer work forces?

Background and Significance

The HTVFC provides fire, rescue and first response medical services to Hampden Township and bordering municipalities. According to the 2006 Annual Report, Hampden Township is a First Class Township with a resident population of 25,658 with 9,990 housing units and a median family income of \$70,000. The suburban area is 17.7 square miles and consists of many residential housing developments, commercial establishments, and industrial occupancies. The largest employer is the Naval Support Activity with 5,500 employees (Hampden township annual report, 2006). The HTVFC also provides emergency response to local roadways and Interstate 81 and 581. Since the early 1960's the community has experienced steady growth with farms turning into residential developments and commercial establishments multiplying (F. Conte, personal communication, August 14, 2007).

The HTVFC is an all volunteer company that has 34 active firefighting members and four active fire police members. Active is defined as responding to at least 10% of emergency calls. The Township Government provides a full time Fire Administrative Officer / Emergency Management Coordinator and a part time Emergency Vehicle Technician for maintenance. Three additional township employees are permitted to respond to daylight emergency calls. The official By-Law's of the HTVFC indicate the organization is classified by the IRS as a Chapter 501 (c) 3.

The membership selects its leadership thru popular vote. The Fire Chief and President are elected to two year terms. The Deputy Fire Chief, 1st Assistant and 2nd Assistant Fire Chiefs and the administrative officers are elected to one year terms. Other line officers are appointed by the Fire Chief with input from the other chief officers. The company responds from two modern fire stations geographically located in the north and south areas of the Township. Fire and rescue apparatus consists of four engines, one heavy rescue, one 95 foot tower, one traffic support unit, and several staff vehicles. The company operates on a budget of \$363,000 which is provided by community donations and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Firefighters Relief Association Fund. The Township Government provides \$514,000 under budgetary control of the Fire Administrative Officer for township related expenses such as building, insurance, fuel, hydrant rental and other miscellaneous expenses. The total protection budget is 1.2 million dollars. There are no specific contract or performance standards between Hampden Township Government and the Hampden Township Volunteer Fire Company. Fire company and key township leaders meet on a regular basis to discuss issues of mutual concern. This group is called the Big-Five.

The problem is serious in our organization because over the past 10 years there has been a steady increase in emergency calls and requests for service. Emergency response is primarily provided by core group of dedicated community volunteers who respond from home and college students who live in at the fire station. In 2000 the HTVFC initiated a college student live in program. The program allows students who attend nearby colleges to bunk in and respond to emergency calls when not in school. The students are trained firefighters and have performed very well on emergency calls. Currently there are a total of eight college students at the two stations. The program has provided the much needed firefighting personnel that augment the resident volunteer members.

Although the official records show that 34 members are active, 24 respond to at least 15% of the calls. There are times when the volunteer staffing consists for three to six members (HTVFC year end call report, 2006). HTVFC utilizes an automatic aid response system with different fire companies who have different personnel on a regular basis. The responses are usually for structure fires and consist of high risk, low frequency tactical and task level operations. The alarm assignment is based upon target hazard risk and specific township location. HTVFC utilizes the closest unit automatic aid concept. Reported residential house fires will receive three engines, 1 truck (aerial), 2 heavy rescues, and one BLS ambulance. The first alarm mutual aid to HTVFC is provided by nine separate fire departments geographically located east, south and west of the Township. The balance of the calls is usually handled by one or two single units and an officer from HTVFC. Our current method of deployment consists of responding in a personal vehicle from home to the fire station or by crews who happen be at the fire station when a call is received. In August of 2006 a duty crew schedule was initiated at Station 1. This schedule covers the hours from 10 PM to 6 AM and includes a driver/operator and an officer. Five members have regularly used the schedule to ensure apparatus response on minor or non emergency calls. If the call is a first alarm or serious accident, all members are encouraged to respond. In 2006, HTVFC responded to 876 emergency calls (HTVFC records management system, 2007).

Impact of this problem on HTVFC could be significant. As the call volume continues to increase the ability of the all volunteer fire force to meet the demand is threatened. Daylight response is covered by the Fire Administration Officer, college live in members, and other available members. If the call is a working fire or other significant event, the township government permits three employees who are trained firefighters to leave their primary job and respond to the fire. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standard 1720, *Standard*

for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments recommends that the fire department identify minimum staffing requirements to ensure that a sufficient number of members are available to operate safely and effectively. In Pennsylvania the authority having jurisdiction (Hampden Township Government) has the choice to determine staffing and response time capabilities. As identified in NFPA 1720, Hampden Township's demand zone is classified as suburban with demographics of 500 – 1000 people per square mile. The standard recommends a staffing of 10 firefighters on the scene within 10 minute of dispatch 80% of the time. Basic fire science principles using the fire propagation curve indicate the longer it takes to get water on the fire the greater the chance of the fire extending beyond the room or origin creating increased damage (NFPA 1720, 2004). Currently Hampden Township government has not developed any performance standards for the Hampden Township Volunteer Fire Company. It is the hope of this author to identify different methods of deployment that will specifically assist fire department leaders and township management make informed decisions on alternative staffing. As the demands for service continue to rise, the ability of the all volunteer force will continue to be strained. A combination of alternative staffing and innovative volunteer incentives should preserve the tradition of the HTVFC and ensure adequate emergency response to the community by meeting the NFPA 1720 standard.

This problem will require the author to utilize leadership and research skills developed in the Executive Development class. Specifically, to assess different methods of emergency service deployment the author will have to conduct interviews with fire department and municipal officers from other communities. This problem is related to the USFA operational objective dedicated to reducing the loss of life from fire related hazards.

Literature Review

There are seven kinds of fire departments in the United States. They include military, federal, state, local, county, intergovernmental, and private. The kind refers to the source of the department's authority. The type of fire department is the function of the relationship between the fire department and the parent organization. This relationship produces four types of fire departments: volunteer, career, combination, and public safety (Freeman, 2002, P. 110). It is also important to note that volunteers protect 80 percent of the area of the United States and career firefighters protect 60 percent of the population. Some larger and complex urban or outer ring communities are protected by volunteer or combination departments. An example is Pasadena, Texas which has a population of 120,000 in 52 square miles. Thru statewide contacts, the author has noted an increase interest in combination departments. In 2006, two communities have contacted the HACC Fire Academy expressing interest in sending fire recruits from combination departments.

Kiesow (2006) reviewed different staffing methods for the Town of Menasha Fire Department. His research noted advantages and disadvantages in the career, combination and volunteer systems. The type of fire department staffing must be determined by the local community. He stated there are no set guidelines to use when choosing what staffing level is appropriate for the community.

To identify information about Pennsylvania the author chose to contact a number of fire department leaders to discuss staffing methods. The author learned about the Fire Department of Montgomery Township in a series of news articles in 2003. The township government established a new fire rescue organization after having difficulties with the long time fire company. The author interviewed Chief David Vosconez from the Fire Department of

Montgomery Township in Montgomery County. The chief described a combination department that is staffed by township government employees who are firefighters during the day and by volunteers in the evenings and overnight. The department reports to the Township Director of Fire Services who is also responsible for Emergency Management and the Fire Marshall functions. The career personnel work rotating 10 hour days maintaining staffing of three firefighters. The department does not use any formal scheduling or staffing method for volunteer response. Members who are on station or are at home respond to emergency calls. In 2006 the department responded to 683 calls for service (D.W. Vasconez, personal communication, August 8, 2007).

The author learned about the Upper Merion Township system at the 2007 Pennsylvania Fire and Emergency Services Institute Conference. The lectures highlighted innovative recruitment and retention efforts by several Pennsylvania departments. The author communicated by email with Dr. William Jenaway, Chairman of the Upper Merion Township Fire and Rescue Board in Montgomery County. Upper Merion is a community with over 26,000 residents in 16 square miles. The township is served by three fire companies and one ambulance service who respond to over 1,200 calls per year. The township Board of Commissioners has adopted a standard of response cover performance standard in which the first fire apparatus will arrive on scene within 10 minutes 90% of the time. Dr. Jenaway stated the department does not have any formal staffing requirement for volunteers to be on station, however there are many times members hang out or bunk in at the station. The township currently has 150 volunteers who respond from home and work as needed. The fire departments have an excellent relationship with the township government. The township permits 12 employees from various departments to respond to daytime emergency calls. There is also a local accounting firm that permits employees who are

volunteer firefighters to respond to calls. The board continually reviews the standard of response cover and if the departments begin to fall below the standard they will begin to evaluate the need for paid staff based on statistical trends (W.F. Jenaway, personal communication, August 28, 2007). Fire department staffing in Ohio is very different than Pennsylvania. The majority of alike municipalities have career and combination fire departments. The combination departments have full time career, part time, and paid on call employees.

The author conducted a phone interview with Joe Geiger, the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organizations. Our discussion was based on the question of governance and leadership of volunteer organizations. He stated the majority of non profits are organized under the IRS 501 c 3 tax exempt status. A board of directors usually governs from a strategic viewpoint concentrating on planning, evaluation, and accomplishment of the mission. Members of the board are not permitted to be paid and usually are recruited based upon their talents and skill sets. The board hires or appoints an Executive Director who manages day to day operations. Organizational governance can be effective if members of the board reinforce the mission and vision, stay focused on policy, oversight, and setting of management parameters. Board members also must honor standards of behavior in all decisions related to the organization (J. Geiger, personal communication, August 28, 2007).

The Executive Directors Guide to Non-Profit Management (EDGNPM) recommends a different method to completing board work. The board limits the number of standing committees in favor of ad hoc task forces. The task forces are appointed and meet to accomplish a specific task then disband when the objective has been completed. This method improves board and organizational effectiveness because important meeting time can be focused on larger broad discussions. As with Mr. Geiger's information, the EDGNPM stated that basic organizational

governance must include by-laws that contain specific information about the number of members who will sit on the board, identify length and number of terms, outline titles and roles of board officers, and determine what constitutes a quorum for doing business. The author reviewed two non-profit governance models. The first is the traditional hierarchical model that begins at the top of the organization with the board of directors who develop the mission and vision. The Executive Director manages the organization. Staff and volunteers implement programs and services for the community. The second model is called the Mission-Focused Non-profit. The model has a circular organizational structure. The staff is empowered to implement various programs and work closely with clients. The Executive Director facilitates communication. The board governs the organization and reviews accountability for goals and objectives. The board acts as a partner with the Executive Director.

The author reviewed research conducted by St Joseph's University for the United States Fire Administration on volunteer recruitment and retention (2007). The study identified several factors that lead to a successful volunteer organization. Organizations that consistently seek solutions to problems and adapt to changing personnel environments are more successful. Research showed individuals are still willing to give their time to volunteer emergency services organizations providing (a) the experience is rewarding and worth their time, (b) the training demands are not excessive, (c) the time demands are adaptable and manageable, (d) members are rewarded with a personal sense of value, (e) there are good leaders who minimizes conflict, and (f) there is ample support for the organization in the community.

Marinucci (2003) stated the most effective incentive is to treat people fairly and with respect. He felt it was very, very important to train department leaders in the "soft" type skills. Marinucci felt it was important for leaders to understand why the volunteer member joined the department

and why the member stays. Recognition of accomplishment and a voice in how the department operates are also key factors of satisfaction.

Wilson II (2002) noted that leaders of effective volunteer organizations must develop trust thru communication, provide opportunities to learn, show respect for others, give praise, have patience and understanding for others, and provide a safe environment. His research included information about a United Parcel Service study of volunteerism. The study showed people would increase their volunteer time if the organization made good use of the volunteer's time, had a reputation of a well-managed, made better use of individual talents and had clear defined job tasks.

Snook (1989) discussed the volunteer fire department's ability to maintain volunteer firefighters. The recruitment and retention is directly related to the organizations ability to manage people. He felt a department must continually attract good people to retain them. Recruitment programs that meet individual needs, provide for reward and recognition, have adequate supervision and leadership, and provide challenges to members are keys to retention.

Hart (2006) researched the implications of attended staffing in Baltimore County. Attended staffing is defined as having fire and rescue volunteers at the station ready to respond to calls. His research recommended that a survey of membership should be conducted to identify the most favorable volunteer incentives. Once the incentives are identified the department leadership must determine cost and feasibility. The research indicated that most volunteers would be willing to staff their stations utilizing duty shifts if a combination of benefits were available for doing so. The types of incentives identified by the volunteers included monetary and non-monetary rewards. The three most popular monetary incentives identified included fuel assistance, tuition

assistance, and healthcare accounts. The three most popular non-monetary incentives were the provision of meals, training, and computer / internet access.

Wirth (2007) conducted a presentation on current issues in recruitment and retention and reported on several concepts. Having a well-organized and well-run workplace that has clear work rules, clear job descriptions, and a formal orientation program are key retention activates. Many non-monetary rewards will also make a difference. They include management having an open door policy, allowing employee input on policies and procedures, and have some type of reward for suggestions that improve morale. Keeping members happy requires an investment of time, talent and money. It is essential that members feel welcome, understand their job, understand reporting structures and can get their questions answered and their concerns heard. Mr. Wirth also discussed monetary benefits of volunteering, standby fees, activation bonus, and stipends for training, mileage, uniforms, and conferences. Other examples include deferred benefit plans and pension length of service programs. There are also numerous non-monetary benefits including family picnics and awards dinners.

The St Joseph's University study that was featured in the U.S Fire Administration Recruitment and Retention text noted that the most successful incentive programs are diverse and appeal to volunteers of all ages and experience. The incentive system must be equitable and fair. The study identified three main incentives. First is direct financial support such as local tax credits, length of service awards, tuition reimbursement or reduction. The second are the social aspects of the organization such as friendships and activities. Praise from peers or leaders promote a positive environment. People like to receive recognition for their work.

Bushnell (2001) stated three factors are essential for successful integration of career and volunteers. Members must be trained to the same standard, held to the same performance standards and rules of conduct, and that volunteer officers should be appointed on the basis of merit. Fire and rescue operations require a team approach to mitigation strategies. If career and volunteer firefighting staff are not working together as a team, tragedy on the fire ground can occur.

Wirth (2007) stated that the organization must address the unique needs of both career and volunteer staff and keep management fair and consistent for everyone. A combination department requires strong communications systems and management staff who are people focused. The organization must be ready with proper by-laws, standard operating procedures, and a personnel handbook with clear rule and regulations.

Friction between volunteer and career staff is the number one key issue that will strain a combination fire department. The Volunteer and Combination Officers Section of the International Association of Fire Chief's Red Ribbon Report (2005) outlined ways to reduce friction in combination fire departments. When developing a combination department it is essential to clearly communicate to all key stakeholders. A detailed strategic planning process that focuses on the vision, mission, and values of the department are essential to success. Objectives, strategies, and goals must cover all aspects of the organization. Selecting the right leadership is very important. The best firefighter who has been with the organization the longest is sometimes not the best leader in a combination department. Other on going recommendations include career and volunteer members training together to promote building of mutual trust and friendships. Have consistent equal policies that apply to both volunteer and career firefighters. Ensure members share station and maintenance duties. The leadership must avoid creating the

impression of any difference between the members. Most importantly, it is essential to keep open lines of communication and address conflicts quickly, do not allow them to fester.

In summary, the interviews and website review showed clear differences in the staffing methods between Pennsylvania and Ohio fire departments. More detailed information will be highlighted in the results section of the paper. Most non profits are organized very similar with the governance structure consisting of a board of directors who provide oversight and professional staff that implements the program or service. Effective non profit organizations must keep the best interests of the community or the client at the forefront. There are a variety of recommended volunteer incentives. It is very important for leaders to effectively manage a volunteer firefighter's time. The organization must have very good leadership who by example foster the mission and values. The Hart paper indicated that volunteers would staff if provided a combination of monetary and non monetary incentives. Successful integration of career and volunteer personnel is directly dependant on the organizations leadership. Equal policies, training, and standards are a must.

Procedures

According to the United States Census data Hampden Township currently has 25,658 residents. The author began by searching an online database from the Pennsylvania Governors Center for Local Government to identify like size communities with a population between 23,000 and 26,999. The goal was to identify 15 to 20 communities in the range. The author also attempted to identify alike municipalities from different geographic areas of Pennsylvania. The statewide data was sorted and analyzed and a total of 17 municipalities were identified. The study group consisted of four career departments, six combination departments and seven

volunteer departments. The career departments were excluded from the study since Hampden Township is covered by a volunteer company. The communities and the departments were further analyzed by the author using a website review followed up by a personal telephone interview. Personal contact was made with eight of leaders from the fire departments or township government. A 30 minute interview was used to answer basic questions and identify any unique staffing methods. A search of the State of Ohio's government website allowed the author to compare alike municipalities with the population between 23,000 and 26,999. There were 17 municipalities that met the population criteria. Career departments served seven communities, combination departments served ten and one community was served by a volunteer department. Second, a website review was conducted to extract additional information about fire department organizational structure and staffing method. A phone interview was conducted with the Fire Marshall of the Medina City Fire Department. The Medina City Fire Department was the only volunteer department identified in the population search.

The author also conducted a search of the National Fire Academy's Learning Resource Center online database for information contained in other applied research papers. This search was focused on information about recruitment, retention, and integration of volunteer and career staff. The library at Harrisburg Area Community College was also used to research articles and textbooks on non-profit organizations.

The questions for the phone interview were constructed to identify basic information about the department and focus on the specific staffing method. The basic information requested call volume, provision of EMS, method of staffing, and any unique staffing solutions such as duty crews, paid on call or the traditional volunteers responding from home. Other questions focused on organizational accountability, chain of command of career staff, volunteer incentives,

methods of department funding, relationship with the local government, and if there were requirements for officer positions. The department leaders that were interviewed were first contacted by email. The email message explained the purpose of the research paper and asked for a convenient time for a phone interview. The phone interviews were scheduled and conducted by the author.

This research did not address the financial aspects of fire department staffing and the use of cross trained firefighter / emergency medical technicians and how a municipality can utilize those personnel for effective staffing. The leadership structure of the fire department and the methods of leadership selection were reviewed but not in great enough detail to make any conclusions.

Results

All municipalities are currently utilizing a variety of methods to ensure adequate emergency response. It is important to note there is a blurring in the definition of volunteer and combination in the Pennsylvania data. One fire department leader defined his department as volunteer supplemented by career daylight staff. Another defined combination as township employees hired as firefighters supplemented by volunteers. In Pennsylvania the career departments are located in the third class cities of New Castle, Easton, McKeesport, and Johnstown. The cities were and continue to be the central hub of commerce, industry and housing. The cities growth continued from the 1800's to the late 1950's when the urban hollowing out began. In the 1960's the suburban areas began rapid growth with many single family homes and retail establishments. The growth continued in the 1970's, 80's, and 90's. The remaining 13 municipalities were first

class townships served by combination and volunteer departments. The author focused on areas of rapid growth to determine fire department staffing.

The research revealed that most township governments permit their employees who are trained firefighters to respond to serious fire and rescue incidents. A variety of employee classifications such as code enforcement officer, street department worker, mechanic, and administrative office personnel respond to supplement the daylight volunteer response. Two municipalities, the City of Lebanon, Lebanon County PA and Springettsbury Township York County PA have 15 to 20 career firefighters, an average of 4 per shift with supplemental volunteer firefighters as primary emergency responders. No other government employees assist in emergency response in those communities (Buracker & associates study 2006).

The largest municipality, Upper Merion Township in Montgomery County is served by three volunteer fire companies and one non-profit ambulance service. The annual fire call volume for the fire departments is 1,200. The companies are governed by a township appointed Fire Rescue Board responsible to set policy and provide administrative oversight. The township employees a full time Fire Marshall, however each volunteer Fire Chief has operational control at emergency scenes. Upper Merion has voluntarily adopted a standard of response cover in which the first piece of apparatus will be on the scene with a crew of four within 10 minutes of dispatch 90% of the time. With supplemental township employees during daylight, the volunteer companies consistently meet the standard. The township by written policy allows 12 employees to leave their regular job to respond to fires. The companies do not have a formal duty crew or live in program. Members are permitted to sleep at the station to ensure effective response. Volunteers also respond to the stations from home (W.F. Jenaway, personal communication, August 28, 2007).

In Upper Dublin Township, the Fort Washington Fire Company provides fire and rescue services to the community. A full time Fire Administrator facilitates the relationship between the township management and the fire company. The volunteer Fire Chief has operational control at emergency scenes. The fire company ran 600 calls in 2006. The fire company does not have a formal duty crew or live in program. Volunteers respond to calls from the station or their homes (C.C. Samtmann, personal communication, September 4, 2007).

In Upper Moreland Township services are provided by the Department of Fire / Rescue Services which is in the government organizational structure and the Willow Grove Volunteer Fire Company which is a separate non profit corporation. The fire company responds to 1,100 calls annually. There is a full time Director of Fire and Rescues Services and four career firefighters who are township employees. The career firefighters provide daylight staffing for the volunteer fire company. There is also a volunteer Fire Chief who has operational control of the department. The department recently began utilizing duty crews to cover overnight and weekend times (J. O'Neil, personal communication, October 4, 2007).

Whitehall Township in Lehigh County is served by five volunteer fire companies. The companies respond to an average of 900 calls per year, with the slowest station around 150 and the busiest at 500. The township employees a full time Fire Chief is in operational control of emergencies. Each volunteer company has an elected Assistant Chief who reports to the Fire Chief. The department does not use any duty crew schedule or live in program. Volunteers respond to calls from home and from the station (B. Benner, personal communication, October 7, 2007).

The Horsham Fire Company in Horsham Township hires its own career personnel for daylight staffing. The fire company responds to 700 fire calls and 1,800 EMS calls per year. Horsham Township provides funding and administrative support to the fire company. The fire company board of directors is responsible for hiring and other human resources issues. The volunteer Fire Chief, Board Chairman, and President have administrative and operational control of the company. The board serves as a liaison with township management. A career Captain is in the chain of command and is the supervisor of three career firefighters who are used to supplement daylight response. Horsham Fire Company also provides 24/7 advanced life support ambulance service (T. Flanagan, personal communication, October 4, 2007).

The Broomall Fire Company covers Marple Township in Delaware County. The department responded to 791 calls in 2006. The department does not have any duty crews or live in program. The department attempted duty crews without success. The volunteer Fire Chief is in operational control of the department (J. Tanenbaum, personal communication, October 18, 2007).

In Springfield Township, Delaware County the Springfield Township Volunteer Fire Company currently staffs two firefighter positions during weekday daylight hours. One position is fulltime the other has fulltime hours but is filled by several part time employees. The volunteer Fire Chief has operational control of emergency scenes and supervises the career employees. Springfield has a unique situation in which the volunteer Fire Chief is a fulltime township employee serving as Administrative Officer for the Police Department. The department does not have any formal duty crew or live in programs. During evenings and weekends volunteers respond from the station or from home. The fire company responded to 882 calls in 2006. It is also interesting to note that the Springfield Township Police Department responds to all residential fire alarms and outside wires and trees down. This policy reduces the volunteer fire

company call volume and saves volunteer resources (L. Fulton, personal communication, October 4, 2007).

York Township in York County is served by five separate volunteer fire companies. The companies are coordinated by a “Chief’s Committee” who’s membership includes each company chief and two representatives from township management. The township assigns response areas based on GIS data. Two of the five companies hire daylight apparatus drivers who are part time employees of the fire company. The township government provides over \$100,000 that is split by the departments specifically for recruitment and retention. The Yoe Fire Company provides \$50 gas cards, various gift cards, and dinner tickets to members who reach a certain level of activity or committee participation. One fire company has a formal duty crew (G. A. Milbrand, personal communication, September 4, 2007).

The only western Pennsylvania municipality in the study is Cranberry Township, Butler County. The township is served by the Cranberry Township Volunteer Fire Company. There is a Fire Administrative Assistant who is responsible for fire company paperwork. The Fire Administrative Assistant is an employee of the Township Public Safety Department and is assigned to the fire company. The assistant is a former volunteer Fire Chief but has no operational control over the fire company. The assistant serves as the liaison between the fire company and township management but is also permitted to serve as an apparatus operator for daytime response. The fire company responds to an average of 550 to 600 calls per year. The company has implemented a duty crew concept. Four to five members sign up for duty crew hours of 10 PM to 5 AM. The purpose of the crew is to handle non emergency type calls. This concept provides the membership the ability staff while not over using precious volunteer

resources. If there is a call for a structure fire or serious vehicle accident all members who are able respond as normal (M. Nanna, personal communication, October 11, 2007).

The fire departments in the State of Ohio were organized as follows; seven totally career with full time employees, ten combination which includes career, part-time, and paid on call employees and one volunteer. All of the career and combination departments have firefighters responding to calls from the station and have a full time Fire Chief who is in administrative and operational command. Twelve of the fire departments provide advanced life support ambulance service. The volunteer department located in the City of Medina has a career Fire Chief, Deputy Chief, and Fire Marshall. Volunteer members are paid on call. The city fire department responds to an average of 380 to 400 calls per year. The City of Medina has a joint services agreement with Medina Township to staff an engine crew Monday thru Friday during daylight hours. The township fire company responds to 175 calls per year. Members of each department are encouraged to sign up for the shifts. The departments also share a duty officer program. The duty officer responds to minor calls and assesses the need for further response. The Fire Marshall stated the program works well and has relieved the stress on the volunteer members (M. Crumley, personal communication, October 11, 2007).

The four 3rd class city fire departments, New Castle, Easton, McKeesport, and Johnstown are formal departments in the city organizational structure. The Fire Chief reports to the Mayor or City Manager. The Lebanon Bureau of Fire is a city department. The Fire Commissioner reports to the Mayor. In Springettsbury Township, the Fire Chief reports to the Township Manager. The Department of Fire Rescue is a township department in the formal organizational structure. The Hazleton Fire Department is a city department, the Fire Chief reports to the Mayor. The governance of these departments is very clear. There is a unity of command and accountability

from government to the fire department. The other fire companies are organized as a separate 501 c 3 non-profit corporations. The corporations are governed by by-laws which outline the mission, how the organization selects its leadership, defines active membership status, indicates when meetings should be held. The by-laws are general and do not give specific policy or procedure direction. At the annual meeting, the active members of the corporation elect by popular vote the officers of the corporation. In most cases the officers, with membership approval have delegated authority to set specific policy and procedures.

The six fire departments in Pennsylvania offered the typical incentives described in textbooks. They included yearly awards and installation dinners, family picnics, gym memberships, free fire department clothing, and gift cards. The Cranberry Township Volunteer Fire Company and Springfield Township Volunteer Fire Company offer life insurance policies for qualified members. There were no unique incentives that surfaced. In Ohio, the Medina City Fire Department pays each volunteer on a per call basis. The Medina Township Fire Department provides a local gym membership. The persons interviewed did not have any one single reason why members continue to be active. One described the training and certifications; another described the action of a busy department.

Examples provided by the Medina City Fire Marshall and a Montgomery County department Fire Chief showed the importance equal standards for career and volunteer firefighters. Ohio has three levels of firefighter training, a basic level, certified Firefighter 1 and certified Firefighter 2. All career and part time firefighters must be certified Firefighter 1 and 2, paid on call firefighters do not. This unequal standard has created tension. The Chief noted that career and volunteer members in a neighboring department have different rules.

Discussion

Any alternative method of staffing requires innovative leadership. Organizations can wait for a crisis to happen before reacting or they can be proactive, implementing change that prevents problems. Fear and resistance to change lead to stagnation. Some fire companies do not recognize the need for change or because of dysfunctional governance, wait for crisis to occur and become overwhelmed and defensive when the decision to add career or alternative staffing is proposed. In Montgomery Township, the local government stepped in and started a new combination fire department when the former department refused to change.

The question of organizational governance leads to the question of innovative recruitment and retention. The assumption can be made that if you have good leaders, good ideas will lead to good outcomes. The HTVFC is governed by an elected board of officers who are members of the company. The review of non profit governance showed that the typical organizational board is made up of members with different skill sets. Professional management and staff conduct day to day operations of the organization. This research did not reveal any unique organizational structures or ways to make better decisions. Mr. Geiger's comment about how a board must have time to have *thoughtful discussions* on difficult topics was very insightful. In the author's experience, most volunteer fire departments are organized very similar. All members of the board must be elected by the general membership. This traditional method of leadership selection does not always result in the best possible board members who have the best interest of the organization in mind. Two of the departments report to a Director of Fire Services who is employed by the township government. The Director has administrative and operational oversight of the volunteer fire department. Other departments seem to operate independently with no formal link or tie to the township government even though the government owns most

of the facilities and fire department assets. Friction between the funder (township government) and the non profit (fire company) can greatly affect the well being and sustainment of the organization. The development of a contract or memorandum of understanding between said parties can avoid the majority of concerns and problems. The majority of leaders contacted for this research stated their companies have very good township financial support. Most facilities and capital equipment is purchased by and owned by the township government. Some townships provide funding for career personnel. The Horsham Fire Company Chief stated the fire company has an excellent relationship with the township.

The author was surprised that most of the like departments interviewed did not have any formal staffing requirement such as duty crews. Only the Cranberry Township VFC and the Willow Grove VFC used the concept. A clear duty crew schedule for overnight and weekend responses can “organize” a volunteer’s time. The reliance on township government employees and members hanging out at the station is also a very popular method of staffing. Some governments and fire departments seem to feel this is adequate emergency response in those communities. In reality, when there is no crew in the evening and weekend hours the responsibility falls on a small group of dedicated members who in the authors experience eventually get burned out.

It was interesting to note that four communities have fully paid fire departments. Those communities were traditional Pennsylvania company cities, like Easton and Johnstown. Hampden and York Township began as farming communities and transformed into suburban cities. As the townships grew in population and target hazards, the fire departments adapted to the change but never moved to a combination or career concept. The township government did not have the need or did not want to change the method of fire service delivery.

If a fire department consistently fails in its mission to respond to calls following a consensus standard the movement to a combination system needs to occur. The municipal government must move with caution when developing a combination system. Effective leadership is the key to successful integration of career and volunteer staff. Requiring the same performance standards and having a clear communications process will help the transition. The concept of incentives for volunteers was reviewed and proved very interesting. At the time of writing this paper budget cuts eliminated any type of financial incentive to members of the HTVFC. The number one volunteer retention suggestion was some type of direct financial incentive. The Yoe Fire Company in York County developed the concept to give the \$50 gas card awards. The proper management of the member's time is also a key factor of retention. No one likes to waste time. Meetings with no agenda that run for hours, unclear responsibilities with other public safety providers, and no advanced planning are time wasters. The modern volunteer will dedicate time to the organization if that time is used well. This topic is worth continued research. The municipal populations and target hazards will continue to increase. The local government and the volunteer fire companies must work together to resolve staffing issues. Leaders must be reminded to keep the community interest a priority. Continuing to do the same things and expecting different results is not an option.

Recommendations

The following recommendations should be considered by Hampden Township Management and the HTVFC leadership.

1. HTVFC should conduct a survey of its active members to determine if certain incentives will cause qualified members to commit to a duty schedule.

2. HTVFC leadership should formally endorse the duty crew concept and encourage or require member participation.

3. Hampden Township management should explore the development of performance standards to ensure adequate staffing for fire rescue response.

4. Hampden Township management should consider providing additional funding in the 2009 fire company budget to support the concept of ensuring adequate staffing thru duty crews. The funding would be used for standby, paid on call or other identified incentives.

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Appendix A

Questions for Phone Interview

Introduction

How many calls do you run?

Do you provide EMS?

What is your method of staffing for emergency response

Do you have any formal staffing model?

- Duty Crews

- Paid on call

- Volunteers from home

If you employ career firefighters, who hires them, who is in charge of them?

When did you become a combination department?

Please describe your funding (Who buys what, who owns that)?

Describe the relationship with the local government?

Do they have requirements for the Chief Officer positions?

Do you have specific incentives for volunteers?

Why do people continue to come around?

Appendix B – Pennsylvania Municipalities

Pennsylvania

Pop	SqMi	Local	Type	Contact
26,863	16.8	UPPER MERION TWP	Volunteer (3 companies)	Email
26,309	8.5	NEW CASTLE CITY	Career	Website
26,263	4.3	EASTON CITY	44 Career	Website
25,878	13.2	UPPER DUBLIN TWP	Fort Washington VFC	Interview
24,993	8	UPPER MORELAND TWP	Willow Grove Volunteer FC	Interview
24,896	12.5	WHITEHALL TWP	Volunteer (5 companies)	Interview
24,461	4.2	LEBANON CITY	19 career / combination	
24,232	17.3	HORSHAM TWP	Combination - Horsham Fire Co.	Interview
24,135	17.8	HAMPDEN TWP	Volunteer	N/A
24,040	5	MCKEESPORT CITY	Career	Website
23,906	5.8	JOHNSTOWN CITY	Career	Website
23,883	16.8	SPRINGETTSBURY TWP	18 career / Combination	Study
23,737	10.2	MARPLE TWP	Volunteer - Broomall Fire Company	Interview
23,677	6.4	SPRINGFIELD TWP	Volunteer / Springfield Twp VFC Day Staffing	Interview
23,637	25.5	YORK TWP	5 Volunteer Fire Companies	Interview
23,625	22.8	CRANBERRY TWP	Volunteer	Interview
23,329	6	HAZLETON CITY	18 career, Combination	Website

Appendix C – Ohio Municipalities

Ohio

Pop	Sq Miles	Local	Type of FD	Method
26,914	30	Violet Twp	Career, paid on call, volunteer	Website
26,156	6	Maple Heights City	Career	Website
25,892		Lake Township	3 Vol depts part time	Website
25,586	13	Zanesville City	Career	Website
25,515	33	Deerfield Twp	Combination	Interview
25,243	18	Delaware City	Career	Website
25,139	11	Medina City	Volunteer	Interview
24,811	16	Wooster City	Career 42	Website
24,230		Hilliard City	Contract with Norwich twp	Website
24,230	6	Harrison Twp	Career 32 and Part time 42	Website
24,164	12	Xenia City	Career	Website
24,123	20	Springfield Twp	22 Career and 80 Part time	Website
23,545	17	Riverside City	17 career, 15 part time 4 vol	Website
23,537	5	South Euclid City	Career	Website
23,522	28	Liberty Twp	18 career, 6 part time 5 vol	Website
23,253	8	Alliance City	34 Career	Website
23,239		Ashtabula Twp	Combination	Website
23,024	11	Centerville City	Career paid on call (Wash Twp)	Website