



MECKLENBURG COUNTY FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

Fire Services Assessment for Mecklenburg County

Meeting Minutes

September 1, 2009

Present: *Phil Angelo, Mark Auten, Ryan Baker, Jim Barbee, Jim Bartl, Dawn Blobaum, Hazen Blodgett, Jeff Bostian, Melissa Burgess, Ron Cheves, David Cobb, David Conrad, Harley Cook, George Dunlap, Greg Ferguson, Mike Fox, Randy Frazier, Tom Glen, Andrew Grant, Dennis Green, Chris Hardin, John Hunt, Kevin Icard, Larry Irvin, Kirk Killian, Mike Petleski, Jim Phipps, Troy Pollard, Eddie Prince, Gary Reagan, Bobby Reynolds, Jeremy Russell, Cary Saul, Trim Sawtelle, Bobbie Shields, Rebecca Simcox, Renee' Smawley, Kurt Stansberry, Richard Wallace, Brian Welch, David Yergeau*

Mr. William Jenaway, Executive Vice President of Emergency Services Education and Consulting Group (ESECG), conducted a formal presentation of the Fire Services Assessment for Mecklenburg County on Tuesday September 1, 2009. Mr. Jenaway was the lead consultant on the project.

At the end of his presentation he opened up the floor for discussion and questions and comments.

Phil Angelo, District 4 representative to the Mecklenburg County Fire commission, stated that he had found numerous discrepancies in the report. He offered a few of his findings.

- Mint Hill Fire Department in the study is identified as a Municipal Fire Department. Mint Hill is not a Municipal Fire Department. The Fire Department is a “not for profit” organization in North Carolina. They are under contract with the Town of Mint Hill and Mecklenburg County to provide fire protection.
- Mint Hill Fire Department is rated as a class 6, in the report. It is actually rated as a class 5. In the report the tanker was rated as a 4, which is poor condition. The reports states if given a 4 there will be an explanation and there is not one listed. The department’s tanker is 10 years old and in excellent condition.



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- The funding potential model you used for Mint Hill Fire Department is a service district covered by unincorporated area. The amount shown that Mint Hill Fire Department would generate in this study could not be correct.
- He asked how data used in study is determined to be creditable. Mr. Jenaway replied the data came from several sources: the Mecklenburg County Fire Marshal's Office, County Communications, County Departments and the web site. We have to assume this information is correct as collected from a reliable cited source.
- He stated that the report should be looked at to determine areas that could be inaccurate. This study should be close to correct in all areas before being presented to the Board of County Commissioners.

.Other comments included:

- The time line for a target date for the study to be a final report to go before the Board of County Commissioners will determine on how soon any discrepancies with the study are sent to Mr. Jenaway and he is given time to research and correct the data.
- The current number of stations broken down and represented by the several Fire Commissioner has proven to be very effective and a more positive way to represent the Fire Departments.
- The goal of sending out documents for review and opening up a round table discussion is the best way to get more accurate information in the study and all this directly affects those in the Fire Service.
- Annexation is a wide spread process and given the time and money invested into the volunteer fire service this becomes a challenge to implement a change that works well with everyone, this process takes years to take effect and be a positive change.
- The State of Delaware has the same challenges and were faced with the same issues that Mecklenburg County faces, with combining some departments they have made positive changes for all those effected. Texas has similar annexation issues as Mecklenburg County just not as aggressive as in this county.
- By continuing the use of Volunteer Fire Departments in, it will constitute a considerable amount of savings to the County. Otherwise the County would have to contract with the City Department to provide coverage and this could become very costly.

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- Suggestion was made to clarify the term Volunteer in this study.
- The conflict in meeting dates for the Board of County Commissioners and the Volunteer Fire Departments which both meet the first Tuesday of every month makes it hard for a representative to be present at both meetings, however by appointment the Volunteers have been able to meet with the County Commissioner to discuss issues they are having.
- Fire commissioners will assume more responsibility. All parties of government should be represented. Elected officials should not be a voting member of the commission for system to work the best.
- It was asked: what are some examples of other communities that have conducted studies and have a similar situation as Mecklenburg County. Carteret County was given as an example as well as locations in Delaware, NY, Ca., Va., Md., SC., and FL. Ponderosa Texas merged four small departments into one department. This area has an aggressive annexation policy such as NC.
- The issue of establishing service districts was discussed at length.
- Mr. Eddie Prince, Interim Deputy Director of Code Enforcement, stated that this is a living document, not a final report. The County Fire Marshal's web site will be a clearing house to get information out to all parties. The Fire Marshal will lead on pushing the project forward by setting up a meeting with all stakeholders involved.
- Mr. Jenaway ended this discussion session by thanking all who gave input to this study and he hopes that what everyone takes away from this study is to make Fire Protection better in Mecklenburg County. He stated that he will take all of the comments and incorporate them into the final document.

Any questions, concerns or comments should be E-Mailed to Fire Marshal Mike Fox (Michael.Fox@MecklenburgCountyNC.gov) no later than September 8, 2009.