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## ***Town of Mount Desert***

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# **Memo**

To: Durlin Lunt, Town Manager

From: Mike Bender, Fire Chief

CC: Basil Mahaney, Crew Chief, NEH Ambulance

Date: September 30, 2020

Re: Fire Department 10 Year Strategic Plan

Strategic Planning can be defined as a “continuous and systematic process where the members of an organization make decisions about its future, develop the necessary procedures and operations to achieve that future, and determine how success is to be measured.” Effective fire departments must be in a position to execute change, solve problems, collaborate on issues, assess community needs and the resources required to meet those needs to formulate a plan to provide comprehensive and cost-effective services to our customers – the residents, businesses and visitors of Mount Desert. With that in mind, I would like to present this Ten-Year Strategic Plan that would enable the department to accomplish its mission to save, serve, and protect the citizens and their property and reflect the department’s vision of being a model of excellence into the future. The plan is aimed as a guide for the development of our department over the next ten years. It is intended keep department members informed concerning preparations for the future, while at the same time serving as a foundation document for informing policy makers and addressing the budget process

The success of this plan should not be measured strictly by the implementation of goals and objectives but rather from the realization of our vision along with the support received by the elected officials, members of the department, and the community. This vested interest will ultimately enable the department to execute this plan as it strives for organizational excellence.

In November of 2019 I presented the Select Board with a “Fire Department Personnel Analysis” that underscored the steady decline of available “on-call” or volunteer fire fighters. In that report I recommended “that consideration be given to assure the Town has sufficient fire

protection coverage outside the present full-time staffing hours. This may involve the hiring of additional fire fighters to work either overnight or for twenty-four hour shifts. If hiring additional staffing is chosen, then expanding the existing fire station(s) or constructing a new one to provide overnight quarters will most likely be necessary”.

The time has come to begin preparing for the transition of the fire department to a 24/7 staffing model. With the decrease of on-call firefighters, the projected “aging out” of a number of current firefighters, and the difficulty in recruiting new members, a progressive approach will need to be undertaken to maintain the stabilization of the department within the next decade. Since 1994 the percentage of firefighters in Maine has declined more than 33%. Since 2002, the percentage of volunteer firefighters in Mount Desert has dropped by 58%. With the decline in the availability of our call personnel coupled with increasing requests for services, the ability of our organization to meet the demands of the community and maintain the incident scene safety of our personnel is becoming uncertain. The combination type (career/call) system that we have utilized to deliver these services has performed adequately for the past several years, but it’s an inescapable conclusion that the town will have to hire more full-time firefighters, especially in the near future.

Currently the Department has a roster of 14 active on-call firefighters. The Department responded to 252 incidents in 2019. Well over 50% of those calls are in the village of Northeast Harbor. Below is a snapshot of the current Department staffing and incident responses.

**18 to 29 Y.O**

	<b>Status</b>	<b>Training Level</b>
Firefighter A*	Active	Firefighter I & II
Firefighter B	Active	Firefighter I & II
Firefighter C*	Active	Firefighter I & II
Firefighter D*	Active	Firefighter I & II
Firefighter E*	Inactive	Firefighter I & II

**30 to 39 Y.O.**

	<b>Status</b>	<b>Training Level</b>
Firefighter F*	Active	Firefighter I & II
Firefighter G*	Inactive	Firefighter I & II
Firefighter H*	Inactive	Firefighter I & II
Firefighter I*	Active	Firefighter I & II

**40 to 49 Y.O.**

	<b>Status</b>	<b>Training Level</b>
Firefighter J	Active	Firefighter I & II
Firefighter K	Active	Firefighter I & II
Firefighter L	Active	No training - new
Firefighter M	Active	Firefighter I & II

**50 to 59 Y.O.**

	Status	Training Level
Firefighter N	Active	Non-Interior
Firefighter O*	Active	Firefighter I & II
Firefighter P*	Active	Firefighter I & II

**60 to 69 Y.O.**

	Status	Training Level
Firefighter Q	Active	Non-Interior
Firefighter R	Active	Firefighter I & II
Firefighter S	Active	Non-Interior
Firefighter T	Active	Firefighter I & II

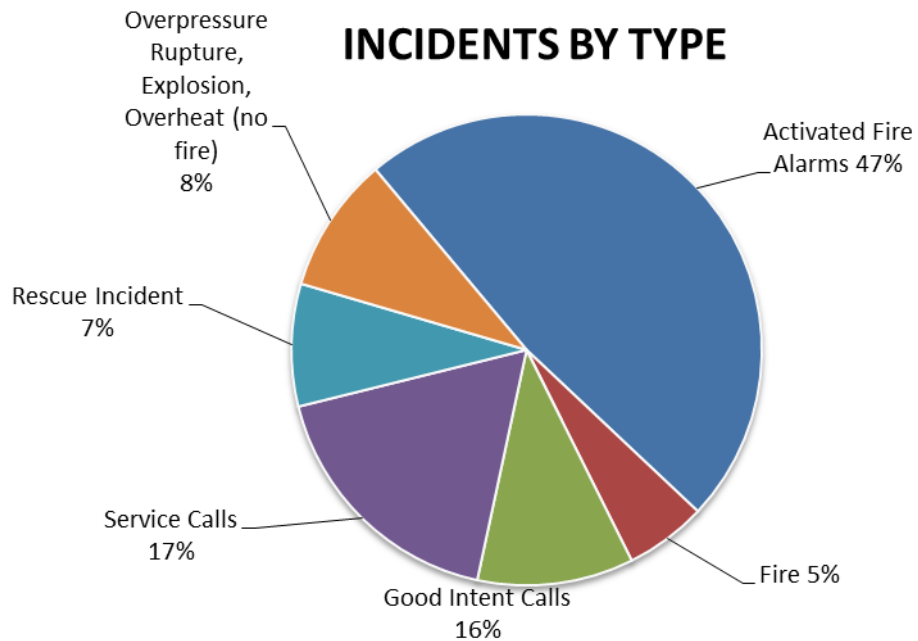
**70+ Y.O.**

	Status	Training Level
Firefighter U	Active	Non-Interior

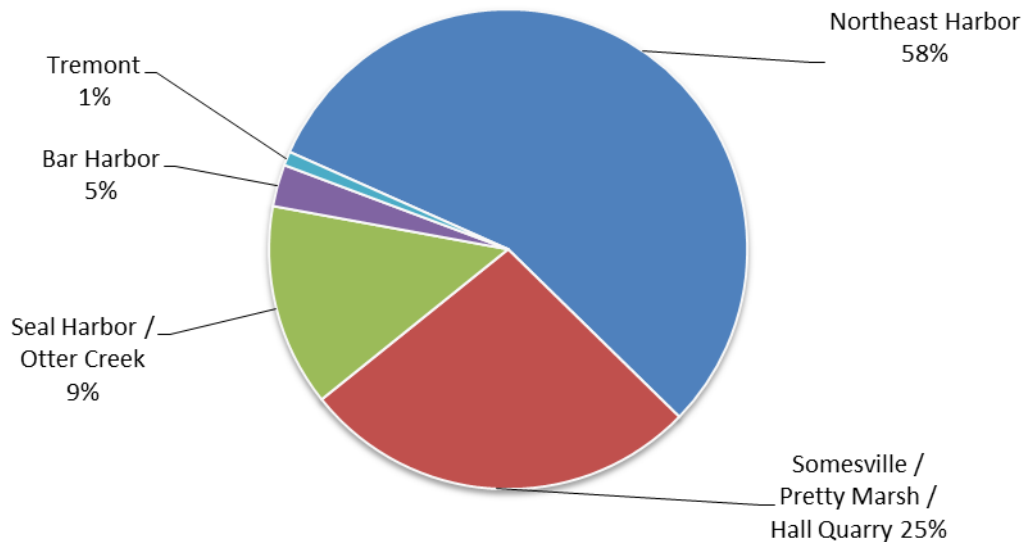
Total Staff:

- 4 full-time
- 14 on-call

\*indicate belongs on other fire department(s)



## INCIDENTS BY DISTRICT



It is my recommendations to work towards the hiring of three more full-time firefighters over the next three years to bring the total to six. This will meet our goal of having two on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You will see where my plan calls for hiring one next year, then two more once a new station is available. This is intended to spread the cost of additional staff out over a 3 year period.

I have discussed this with a majority of the on-call members and most, if not all, agree with the urgency with which this needs to be done. The two month period last spring where we staffed the Department on a 24/7 basis during the initial COVID outbreak was viewed as a success by everyone involved. So much so, that most would like to see 24/7 coverage continue on a permanent basis.

As you review the proposed objectives below, and the anticipated timeline to meet those objectives, one must keep in mind that an important aspect of this process includes anticipating the future in terms of building a flexible organization. Our organization must respond to change, solve problems, collaborate on issues, assess community needs and the resources required to meet those needs, and formulate a plan to provide comprehensive and cost-effective services to our customers – the citizens of Mount Desert. This plan is intended to bring to focus the predictable need for additional staffing, and a fire station that can house that staffing. One cannot be attained without the other.

## TIMELINE:

<b><u>May 2021 – Town Meeting</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval for funds to contract with Hedefine for bid and construction documents for new fire station.</li> <li>• Approval for funds to hire one additional firefighter. Estimated cost \$85,584.00. The result will be 4 full-time firefighters and a full-time chief. Firefighters will work in rotating, 10-hour shifts of two. Fire chief will work a normal 40 hour, Mon-Fri work week. Partial funding for the additional staff member will come from a one-time reduction of approximately \$50,000.00 from the Fire Equipment CIP and reducing the operating budget by \$10,000.000 to \$15,000.000. Full funding would come from the FD budget the following year. This will not affect the replacement schedule of apparatus. The approval of hiring additional firefighters will indicate approval for the gradual transition to a 24/7 FD coverage.</li> </ul>
<b><u>Spring 2022</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchase of new FD rescue/fire suppression boat. Funding will come from Equipment CIP.</li> </ul>
<b><u>July 2021</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hire day of additional full-time firefighter.</li> </ul>
<b><u>August/Sept. 2021</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval from BOS to begin soliciting bids to replace Engine 4 with a target delivery date of Sept. 2022.</li> </ul>
<b><u>May 2022 – Town Meeting</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval to fund construction of new fire station to accommodate 24/7 FD coverage for Town of Mount Desert.</li> </ul>
<b><u>July 2022</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction begins on new fire station.</li> </ul>
<b><u>Summer/Fall 2022</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replace roof on Station 3. Funding from Building CIP.</li> </ul>
<b><u>Sept. 2022</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of E4. Funding from Equipment CIP.</li> <li>• Approval to fund two additional firefighter positions to bring the total to 6 plus the chief.</li> </ul>
<b><u>May 2023 – Town Meeting</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval to fund 2 additional firefighter positions.</li> </ul>

<p align="center"><b><u>July 2023</u></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hire 2 additional firefighters approved at town meeting, move into new fire station and begin the transition to a 24/7 staffing model. Start EMS responses with keeping NEHAS a primary transport service for the Town??</li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b><u>2023 – 2024</u></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss feasibility/implement the combining the Somesville fire station and the Town Hill fire station with BHFD to cover responses from the head of MDI to SWH/Tremont town lines in Mount Desert. Propose sharing resources and responses.</li> <li>• Replacement of two thermal imaging cameras, estimated cost \$9,000.00. Funding from Equipment CIP.</li> <li>• Replacement of breathing air compressor on air truck. Originally purchased in 2001. Estimated cost \$60,000.00. Funded from Equipment CIP.</li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b><u>2024 – 2025</u></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consideration of refurb/construct fire station for Somesville/Town Hill area of MDI by joint effort of BHFD and MDFD.</li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b><u>2026</u></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replacement of 2006 GMC air truck.</li> <li>• Replacement of hydraulic spreaders. Estimated cost \$18,000.00. Funding from Equipment CIP.</li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b><u>2027</u></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replacement of hydraulic cutter. Estimated cost \$18,000.00. Funding from Equipment CIP.</li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b><u>2028</u></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replacement of the Department's 16 Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus. Estimated cost \$240,000.00. Funding from Equipment CIP.</li> <li>• Replacement of Truck 9, 2020 F350 utility vehicle.</li> <li>• New personal protective equipment (turnout gear). Estimated total cost \$121,356.00. Funding from CIP.</li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b><u>2029</u></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replacement of 3 Holmatro portable hydraulic power</li> </ul>

	units. Estimated total cost \$66,000.00. Funding from Equipment CIP.
<b><u>2025 -2030</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued discussion of the feasibility of a joint regional MDI fire department.</li> <li>• Replacement of Tanker 5. Funding from Equipment CIP.</li> </ul>

Flexibility, as described above, indicates a commitment to address new issues and opportunities that are not identified in the plan and to expect and absorb changes to the plan as necessary.

While modifications can be made at any time due to priority changes, budgetary constraints, and planning refinements, the Ten Year Strategic Plan provides an overview of anticipated activities and requirements. General economic conditions and, more specifically, the ability and willingness of the Town to fund projects chosen for support will play a crucial role in determining the actual time that resources are secured and projects completed. The plan is intended to serve as a guide toward the development of our Department over the next ten years. It will serve to inform Department members concerning preparation for the future, while at the same time serving as a foundation document for informing policy makers and addressing the budget process.

Thank you.