



## WEST BRIGHTON FIRE DEPARTMENT, INC.

MONROE COUNTY, NEW YORK  
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September 6, 2011

Brighton Town Board  
2300 Elmwood Avenue  
Rochester, NY 14618

RE: Study of the Fire and Emergency Medical Services within the Town of Brighton.

Dear Board Members:

The MMA Consulting Group has made recommendations for alternate service delivery options based on information provided to them at the time the study was conducted. This letter is in response to and limited to recommendations regarding the West Brighton Fire Department. A summary of the issues precipitating this opinion are outlined in the *Service Delivery Organizations* section of the study, pages 61 – 65 with reasons for their conclusion bulleted on page 64.

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The West Brighton Volunteer Fire Department, established in 1926, has been the sole provider of Fire and Rescue Emergency Response for our community. The Wbfd is the only First Response organization located within our community. The citizens of our community are the driving force of the Wbfd and volunteer their time to the effort of preserving life and property within it. The effort of our community's citizens, for the past 85 years, has consistently proved our resolve for self preservation. Throughout our history we have seen many peaks and valleys in the economy and membership. Economic status is directly proportional to and reflected in a volunteer fire department's recruitment and retention status. Over the past 85 years, we have seen far worse times than we currently are experiencing and we have always rebounded. Many of today's volunteers are having to work two jobs to make ends meet, effectively reducing their ability to respond as frequently as they once did prior to the economic downturn.

The West Brighton Fire Department provided 24/7 coverage for Fire and Rescue services to the West Brighton Fire Protection District for 74 years, from 1926 to 2000 entirely with volunteers. The status of our local economy began changing in 2000, the pinch began taking its toll on our volunteer's availability. In 2000, in an effort to maintain response times, Wbfd hired part time career firefighters to work two 8.0 hour shifts, Monday through Friday, from 8:00am to 5:00pm, to supplement volunteer availability during these hours. In 2006, we extended the shifts to

8:00pm then went 24/7 in September 2011. We also entered into a contract with the City of Rochester to respond with us to structure fires. The addition of paid staff was not entirely a result of volunteer availability. We recognized the benefits of having responders that can exit the firehouse within 60 seconds to respond to 911 calls and primarily EMS calls, which are a significant portion of our call volume. Response time on these call must be as short as possible as BVA cannot respond to a significant portion of our district as quickly as we can.

Nationwide, volunteer departments have lost an average of 8% of their firefighters. Prior to 2006, it was standard practice to send all apparatus and firefighters to the incident scene. Our SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) still reflect this practice. Although we may have lost volunteers, the important distinction is we still have a sufficient response and reserve compliment that meets the needs of our district, we just achieve the objective more efficiently than past practice. The days of sending the entire fire house to every incident scene have been replaced with an appropriate, measured response that fits the needs of the incident. The MMA Consultant Group considers this to be a degradation of response capability. However, if the study group has issue with sending one truck to an incident scene, as WBFD is criticized for, then how is the situation improved when all RFP candidates propose staffing only one truck to replace us? Additionally, WBFD regularly has a reserve compliment at the station to respond to a second call. None of the RFP candidates have a reserve compliment at the station, they will have to dispatch from another station outside the district or call for mutual aid. Either way, the response time will be considerably longer than what we are already capable of achieving with volunteers.

The West Brighton Fire Department is our communities best option to service ourselves. It is every communities right and responsibility to provide services for the preservation of life and property of its citizens. WBFD has successfully performed these services since 1926. MMA Consulting Group, a Massachusetts based firm, is suggesting we give up our independence for a state of dependence on a neighboring community to take care of us. As a citizen, a property owner and volunteer fireman in the West Brighton community, this condition is not an acceptable solution. It is far better to be in a position to help our neighbors and neighboring communities than it is to be in need of it. We need to support and strengthen our organization, not replace it with an unsustainable solution that will ultimately require far more resources than each candidate's initial proposal, resulting in an additional tax burden for our residents.

We typically respond to approximately 700 calls per year. If WBFD is dissolved, the replacement will be absorbing these calls into their current district call volume and they most certainly will be responding to calls in their district from West Brighton's station. Since each candidate is staffing only one truck, all assets in our district will go with them on the first call. If a second call comes in, the response will have to come from outside the district and given their call volume, how long will it take to get a response? This is not a step forward for our community, it is a step backwards for us and our neighboring communities. We are talking about eliminating the resources of an entire fire department of 51 fire and rescue responders, 3 engines, 1 heavy rescue truck, 1 light rescue truck, a shuttle van and replacing it with 2 to 4 firemen on one engine who will have to request mutual aid on a regular basis to assist with call volume.

Currently, WBFD has 35 volunteer firemen and 16 career firemen who provide 24/7 first response services to the West Brighton Fire Protection District. The distribution of WBFD's manpower qualifications appears to be in need of clarification.

Firefighters:	51 (35 volunteers and 16 career)
Certified Interior Firefighters:	35 (19 volunteers and 16 career)

Exterior Firefighters:	16 (volunteers, including Safety Officer and Fire Police)
Certified EMTs:	24 (8 volunteers and 16 career)
Certified Engine Drivers:	32 (16 volunteers and 16 career)
Certified Heavy Rescue Drivers:	40 (24 volunteers and 16 career)
Officer/Command experience:	28 (15 volunteers and 13 career)
Certified fire Instructors:	6 (various disciplines)

The MMA Consulting Group claimed: *In January 2010, the department responded to 52 alarms, 26 of which were EMS calls. 23 of the 26 calls resulted in no volunteer response to the incident, however some responded to the station.*

The audit for this time period is in agreement only with the number of EMS calls, which amounted to 26. Volunteers responded on the truck, with the paid staff, to 20 of these calls, volunteers were the only responders on the scene to 1 of the calls and career staff responded to 5 calls with no volunteers on the truck. This is common for basic EMS calls. The primary response apparatus must leave the station in a minute or less for EMS calls. Typically, basic EMS calls do not require more than two responders at the scene. Career staff and any volunteers on the premises at the time of the call will respond immediately on Engine 503 (E503). Within a minute or two after E503s departure, the volunteers arrive at the station.

It is not our policy for volunteers to respond directly to an incident scene. Additionally, it is not our policy to send all assets to an incident scene that does not require them. A significant portion of our calls are EMS related. E503 will always be the first responding vehicle. Depending on the known details of the call, it could be the only responding apparatus to the scene. It is the primary apparatus for career staff and volunteers present in the station at the time of the call. If the call is an injury related to an MVA, we will send out E503 and our heavy rescue truck 508 (R508), which will transport volunteer staff arriving a minute or two after E503 is on route. Volunteers arriving after R508's departure communicate with whomever arrives on the scene first, an officer or E503 driver, to inquire if additional manpower is needed. If not, the crew at the station is on standby in the event a second call comes in, which happens frequently. Essentially, the initial size-up of the assets required to respond begins with the details dispatched to our voice and digital pagers. An MVA incident involving multiple vehicles will bring upwards of 16 volunteers to the incident scene and as many on standby at the station. It's more about asset management than it is about maintaining service award credit as proposed by the MMA Consulting Group.

There is always a degree of risk involved for emergency response vehicles and it's crew, on route and on scene. Vehicle congestion at an incident scene introduces additional hazards to the responders, which increases the risk of injury. It is perfectly sensible and cost effective to make every attempt to determine the appropriate response as quickly as possible and ideally just prior to deploying the response. Sometimes the on-scene size-up details are not coming in fast enough to predetermine the appropriate measured response. In this case, all assets are dispatched to the incident scene.

The MMA study claims the Wbfd does not have a sufficient number of volunteers to ensure a strong initial response to a major incident or capacity for a sustained response. However, we have not had a major incident to respond to from which a performance assessment has been made to qualify this statement. Regardless, this statement is true for most fire departments in the United States. A major incident will by definition require more assets than any one fire house can possibly hope to burden its taxpayers with. One station simply cannot sustain a major incident without assistance from neighboring departments. It simply is not cost effective to purchase and maintain apparatus for "the big one". This is what mutual aid is for.

Emergency Responders lend assistance across jurisdictional boundaries in the event an incident requires more resources than locally available. WBFD has utilized mutual aid and we have reciprocated.

We currently have 35 volunteers, all of whom readily respond in the time of need. The types of incidents in our district that require a significant manpower response are MVAs with multiple cars and injuries. We can have anywhere from 10 to 16 firefighters on the scene and another 10 to 19 at the station on standby to assist with the incident or respond to another call. At least once every month, we are responding with 10 – 14 volunteers on scene and another 8 – 12 on reserve at the station. In a time of need the career staff are significantly out numbered, mutual aid is not necessary and the incident is closed swiftly and professionally. We do have a Safety officer and Fire Police who respond as necessary. The remaining 50 to 60 calls throughout the month are less demanding of resources at the scene, which effectively reduces our volunteer response. This should not be confused with our ability or capability to respond.

Between January 2010 and February 2011, our career staff worked 8AM – 8PM Monday thru Friday, which supplemented 24/7 volunteer coverage. Our average response time during this period was 0:05:46 Monday through Friday and 0:07:52 on the weekends. Since February 2011, our career staff scheduling went to 24/5 Monday through Friday, our response times averaged 0:05:04, a 42 second improvement. During this same time period, our weekend average response time remained fairly consistent at 0:07:48. On August 27, 2011 we began 24/7 coverage of two career firefighters to supplement 24/7 volunteer coverage. We anticipate our average response time to be 5 minutes or less from this day forward.

Operationally, the WBFD's response times are excellent and our response capability matches the needs of the incident scene. Our leadership and membership would benefit considerably with additional support from the community and we are poised for a membership drive. Our greatest need is a District Administrator, whose objective is to oversee both the fire and EMS policies, procedures, and safety programs, function as an independent and objective body that reviews, approves, and evaluates compliance, safety, ethical issues and concerns within the West Brighton Fire department. Overall statutory authority and responsibility for compliance with laws, regulations and standards remain with the fire chief. The District administrator will ensure faithful creation and implementation of the compliance and safety programs. The District administrator will report to the fire chief as well as the town appointed liaison. Additionally, the District administrator will serve as the safety officer as needed at an incident scene. Funding for this newly created position will be supported through WBFD's current operating budget. The job description is on route to the Brighton Town Board for approval. Once approved, this position can be expected to be filled within 30 days.

We look forward to your support,

Membership of the West Brighton Fire Department

## **District Administrator/Compliance Officer**

### **Position Description**

The District Administrator will oversee the West Brighton Fire Department and manage the part time staff. The position is appointed by the Town of Brighton and will serve in the position until a successor is appointed and trained.

The Administrator will be an independent and objective body that oversees Fire and EMS policies and procedures as well as compliance, safety, and ethical issues. The District administrator will be responsible to create and ensure faithful implementation of such policies, procedures, compliance and safety programs. During operational events, The District Administrator will serve as the safety officer. No other on-scene operational authority is implied, unless directed by the Fire Chief. The District administrator will report to the Fire Chief as well as the Town Appointed Liaison.

### **General Purpose**

The position shall provide guidance for the Fire Chief, BOD, and the Town Board on matters relating to compliance and safety. The District Administrator is authorized to implement all necessary actions to ensure achievement of the objectives.

Duties and responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Under the auspices of the Fire Chief, the District Administrator shall serve as the Health and Safety Officer (HSO), in accordance with NFPA 1500 and NFPA 1521.
- Review existing program(s). Evaluate, develop and ensure effective implementation of Health and Safety programs.
- Review existing conditions. Evaluate, develop, and ensure effective implementation of a comprehensive compliance program for the West Brighton Fire Department. This shall include compliance with: NIOSH, PESH, OSHA, NYS DOH, NFPA, both local and state laws, and any other regulatory or recommended standards.
- Identify operational obstacles that hinder compliance and work with department heads to implement solutions.

- Ensure appropriate operating policies, standards, internal controls, and code of conduct policies are adopted, published, and practiced.
- Provide education and training about legislation and regulations that affect fire operations.
- Supervise all Incident Safety Officers
- Act in the capacity of an absent Incident Safety Officer (ISO)
- Ensure an effective system for staff members to raise questions, obtain advice, and reports misconduct regarding compliance and health and safety without fear of retaliation, and with appropriate follow up.
- Review, evaluate and implement policies to control worker's compensation costs. Determine areas for increased workplace safety, including evaluating hazardous conditions, implementing education, engineering controls, administrative controls, and/or personal protective equipment.
- Perform other related duties as directed by the Fire Chief, BOD, and Town Board

### **Qualification Requirements**

- **Education and Experience:**
  - High school diploma
  - Four (4) years management experience in a combined fire agency
  - Fluent in the English language
  - Possess and maintain a valid NYS EMT certification within 12 months of appointment
  - Possess and maintain a valid American Heart Association Health Care provider CPR within 3 months of appointment
  - Possess and maintain a valid NYS drivers license, and meet insurability requirements of the department
  - Firefighter I or equivalent
  - Fire Officer I or equivalent
  - Incident Safety Officer
  
- **Necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities:**
  - Knowledge of fire fighting, rescue techniques, and emergency medical techniques
  - Comprehensive knowledge of NYS Consolidated laws, as they pertain to the Fire Department
  - Comprehensive knowledge of OSHA, PESH, and NFPA
  - Must be proficient in computer programs, including word processing, spread sheets, and databases

- **Other Skills and Abilities:**

- **Strong interpersonal and communication skills**
- **Clear, concise and persuasive writing and presentation skills. Must be able to present information to appropriate levels of staff members at all levels of the organization**
- **Strong attention to detail**
- **Ability to work effectively and congenially with staff members at diverse levels**
- **Capable of motivating personal**
- **Decisive and exercise good judgment under pressure**

**Implementation timeline**

**One month after approval**

**Budget changes for the West Brighton Fire Protection District**

Account Name	2010 budget	2011 budget	↕	proposed change
<b>West Brighton Fire Department Summary</b>				
Insurance program costs	52,000	52,000		0
Legal and auditing	17,500	17,500		0
Medical management	10,000	15,000	↑	5,000
General administration	28,000	25,000	↓	3,000
Good will	1,500	1,500		0
Facility Maintenance	44,500	46,000	↑	1,500
Facility Equipment	25,000	15,000	↓	10,000
Utilities - Telephone	11,100	11,100		0
Utilities - RG&E	36,000	37,000	↑	1,000
Utilities - Water	400	400		0
Refuse collection	2,000	2,000		0
Fire Equipment Maintenance	10,000	5,000	↓	5,000
Fire Equipment	45,000	30,000	↓	15,000
Training	12,000	8,000	↓	5,000
Fuel	15,000	17,000	↑	2,000
Uniforms	5,000	12,000	↑	7,000
Vehicle Maintenance	10,000	30,000		0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>325,000</b>	<b>324,500</b>	↓	500

**Fire Protection District Summary**

PT Firefighter Wages	127,075	350,000	↑	222,925
District Administrator	4,205	65,000	↑	60,795
Town Liaison	0	2,000	↑	2,000
Wage Increases	0	0		0
Hrs for Military Leaves	0	0		0
General Liability Ins	9,770	9,770		0
RFD contract	148,125	0	↓	148,125
SAP Administration	4,200	4,200		0
Administrative Charges	6,545	0	↓	6,545
Fund Balance Deficit	75,000	0	↓	75,000
Misc Exp Fire tax Disbursement	12,500	0	↓	12,500

Principal on BAN (Fire truck)	0	0		0
Interest on BAN (fire truck)	0	0		0
Retirement system contributions	22,760	28,220	↑	2,460
SAP contributions	250,000	75,000	↓	175,000
Employer FICA Contributions	10,045	11,045		1,000
Workers Compensation Benefits	3,355	4,000		645
Employee Assistance Program	220	250		30
<b>Totals</b>	<b>673,800</b>	<b>549,485</b>	↓	<b>124,315</b>

#### **District revenues**

Payments in lieu of taxes	11,855	11,855		0
MCC Mitigation Payment	28,000	28,000		0
Intrest Earnings	3,500	3,500		0
NYS 2% Fund	12,500	12,500		0
	55,855	55,855		0
WBFD summary	325,000	324,500	↓	500
WBPFDD summary	673,800	549,485	↓	124,315
	998,800	873,985	↓	124,815

