



LAGRANGE FIRE DISTRICT

504 Freedom Plains Rd • Poughkeepsie, NY 12603



MINUTES BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS Regular Meeting Tuesday, September 8, 2026

ATTENDEES: Commissioner Marc Komorsky
Commissioner Robert Taft
Chief Anthony Champion
Attorney Michael Hekle (via Teams)
Secretary Bria Le
Jeff Lenkowski - IT

Commissioner Vincent Tierney
Commissioner Jeff Kaiser
Deputy Chief Scott Merritt
Treasurer Mark Pozniak (via Teams)
Bookkeeper Jen Kaiser

At 6:02 PM, Chairman Komorsky called the Board of Fire Commissioners Regular Meeting to order for Tuesday September 8th, 2026, and led the Pledge of Allegiance. He asked for a moment of silence in remembrance of the 25th anniversary of 9/11 and for all of those who perished. He stated this is always a very sad time of year for all Americans but especially those in the first responder business. He stated it is something he hopes will never be forgotten. He then welcomed everyone to the meeting. He stated this is the budget season and it is occupying a lot of their time as they move forward with this process. They will be discussing some of this at this meeting.

MINUTES: - 8/25/26 Regular Meeting Minutes

Upon a MOTION made by Commissioner Taft and SECONDED by Commissioner Tierney, the Board RESOLVED to approve the 8/25/26 Regular Meeting minutes. Kaiser – Aye, Taft – Aye, Tierney – Aye, Komorsky - Aye. **Motion Carried.**

CORRESPONDENCE: -

- Check – A check from Janet Gain for a donation after the ambulance responded to her emergency call, in the amount of \$100.00 was received. Those on the call were Firefighter/Medic Andrew Kemmerer, Firefighter/EMT Michael Mendez, and Firefighter/Medic Thomas Cummings. Chairman Komorsky asked that a copy of this be put in their files. He also requested that a thank you letter be sent to Ms. Gain.

Upon a MOTION made by Commissioner Kaiser and SECONDED by Commissioner Tierney, the Board RESOLVED to deposit the \$100.00 check from Janet Gain into the General Fund. Kaiser – Aye, Taft – Aye, Tierney – Aye, Komorsky - Aye.

Motion Carried.

- Check - A check was received from Karl and Janet Hein in the amount of \$200 as a donation for an EMS response. Responders for this call were Firefighter/EMT Casey Higham, Firefighter/Medic Diane Hackett, and Firefighter/Medic Jacob Rand. Chairman Komorsky asked that a copy be put into their files and a thank you note go out to Heins.

Upon a MOTION made by Commissioner Taft and SECONDED by Commissioner Tierney, the Board RESOLVED to deposit the \$200.00 check from Karl and Janet Hein into the General Fund. Kaiser – Aye, Taft – Aye, Tierney – Aye, Komorsky - Aye. **Motion Carried.**

BoFC Regular Meeting 9/8/26

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ROOM USE REQUESTS:

- Station 3 – Deputy Chief Merritt has requested use of Station 3 on October 10th, 2026, and October 24th, 2026, from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Chairman Komorsky asked if Deputy Chief Merritt had checked with Mr. Price to make sure there was no conflict and the Deputy Chief said yes.

Upon a MOTION made by Commissioner Tierney and SECONDED by Commissioner Taft, the Board RESOLVED to allow Deputy Chief Merritt use of Station 3 on October 10th, and October 24th, 2026, from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Kaiser – Aye, Taft – Aye, Tierney – Aye, Komorsky - Aye. **Motion Carried.**

OLD BUSINESS/UNRESOLVED ITEMS:

- Station 1 Building Update – Commissioner Tierney stated he has not heard back from the DDS person. He did reach out to her today and was told she is working on it. They will need to discuss part of this in executive session. In general everything is done. There is one outstanding small bill for painting and he has one small item to work out and it should be worked out by the next meeting. Chairman Komorsky stated everyone keeps asking when they are going to move back into the building. He stated one of the key issues is having Mr. Lenkowski come in to do what he needs to do to get everything finished up. He asked if there was any kind of lead time to give. Commissioner Tierney stated he and the Chief spoke tonight and they are good to go. Mr. Lenkowski stated everything is finished. He just needs to schedule the actual move from the trailer back into the building. Commissioner Tierney stated he will work that out with the Chief. Mr. Lenkowski stated it has to be the day that they move back in. Mr. Kaiser stated the Chief can't pick the date to move in because they don't have the proper paperwork to move in yet. Chairman Komorsky stated that is why he is bringing it up now because he wants to eliminate the confusion with everyone asking what the date is. They need to get things ironed out and they cannot get a CO just yet. Commissioner Tierney asked Attorney Hekle if they could discuss the issue now or if it had to be executive session. Attorney Hekle stated it is a legal matter so it should be discussed in executive session.
- Station 1 Phase 2 Update – Commissioner Taft stated this will need to be discussed during executive session.
- Station 2 Brick & Roof Repair – Commissioner Tierney stated the parapet was sealed and completed. Commissioner Kaiser asked why the flashing is a different color than the rest of the building. Commissioner Tierney stated he believed they were trying to match the doors. He stated the brick is as close of a match as possible. They are trying to match 30 year old brick. It won't match perfectly, but they did get as close as they could. He does believe they are still working on the bottom façade. Commissioner Kaiser stated he did not believe the corners were done yet. He asked if they were going to do the stucco underneath the window and Commissioner Tierney said yes. He stated the vendor is coordinating it all.
- Station 2 Emergency Generator - Chairman Komorsky stated the generator was ordered. It is still a work in progress with nothing new to report at this time. He is waiting to hear back from Caterpillar.

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- Staffing Community Events – Chief Champion stated with the 25th anniversary of the remembrance of 9/11 there are numerous events going on. They are looking to participate in the remembrance at Stringham Park and LaGrange Middle School on September 11th. He has given the order for the on duty staff, barring emergencies, to be present at a ceremony/recognition on the evening of the 10th at Arlington High School. He just received a request today to join a remembrance ceremony for the earlier game at Arlington High School at 3:30 so he is looking to see if he can coordinate staffing for that as well. It will be busy between the 10th and 11th. Later this month the Fire Prevention Officer, Tyler Edgar, will be going to Abilities First to do a career avenue discussion.

Chief Champion stated there is a request before the Board for the fire prevention budget. Firefighter Edgar has looked at three different vendors and the vendor he presented is AlertAll. He looked at Foremost Promotions and Positive Promotions as well. AlertAll came in most in line with their operational needs in regard to public safety and education for youngsters in the Town. That is the budget for fire prevention going to the schools and also includes the items they will need for Safety Day later this year. Commissioner Kaiser asked if they had looked through NFPA because they always have items referring to whatever the theme is for the year and Chief Champion said he will verify that with Firefighter Edgar as that was not stated specifically. He does know that they give out small packets and they can get the banners up at all three firehouses with the theme for this year. There is no charge for that. Commissioner Kaiser stated they used to order all of the school supplies, posters, and banners from there because it was free and they promote whatever the theme for the year is. Chief Champion stated some of the products they get carries over from year to year and is not tied to a specific theme. They have run the NFPA theme in the past as well as purchasing from AlertAll or another vendor. He is looking for the approval to spend \$10,220.50 for fire prevention materials this year. Chairman Komorsky asked if this was within the budget line for the year. Treasurer Pozniak stated if that is the only purchase for the rest of the year they are fine. Chief Champion said yes. He stated this is usually a once a year allocation.

Upon a MOTION made by Commissioner Tierney and SECONDED by Chairman Komorsky, the Board RESOLVED to approve the purchase of fire prevention supplies in the amount of \$10,220.50. Kaiser – Aye, Taft – Aye, Tierney – Aye, Komorsky – Aye.

Motion Carried.

Commissioner Tierney asked if the 10 x 10 pop-up would have the district logo on it. Chief Champion stated they are working to get the district logo put on it. Commissioner Tierney asked if that was included in the price and the Chief said yes.

- Chief Champion stated he had one contractual issue regarding a community event, a contractual discussion regarding apparatus, contractual equipment discussion, and one personnel item offer executive session.
- Grant Update – Chief Champion stated they have not received any word on the SAFER Grant at this time, nor have they received anything regarding the Firehouse Subs Grant. They do have a copy of the submission to the State for Hurricane Irene for just under \$500. This is a Federal Emergency Management Agency Project Completion Certificate Report. The upper end of the allowance is \$500.00 so they did submit for just under \$500.00. Chairman Komorsky stated they need to make sure they do not miss the application for the MIG Grants when they become available. He stated there are also some grants out there from local nonprofits that they need

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to look into. He will pass that information on to the Chief as well. The Chief stated he will keep them informed regarding the status of the large grant they applied for as well. He heard they should be announcing the results for that grant shortly.

- Grant Writing Update – Chairman Komorsky stated there was no report in Deputy Chief Zittel's absence.
- Town of LaGrange Board Meeting update – Chairman Komorsky stated he has been forwarding information to Secretary Le. He stated he would like to reiterate that they had a meeting with the four commissioners, Chief Champion, Secretary Le, and the full Town Board today in a workshop. Thanks to Commissioner Taft there is an outline of what they presented to the Town Board (attached). They will get Attorney Hekle a copy of it. Chairman Komorsky feels that the presentation was detailed and well done. They received little to no formal feedback from anyone on the Town Board, and no suggestion of a follow-up meeting at this point. The Fire Commissioners will give them some time to digest everything they discussed and then decide when they should request a follow up meeting.
- Building Repairs/Repair Requests – Chairman Komorsky asked if there was anything else that they had not yet discussed. Chief Champion stated they continue to have discussions regarding moving equipment around at Station 2 in anticipation of the new rescue coming in. They're looking to get quotes for moving the gear extractor from where it is to under the stairs. Movement of that machine would include moving water lines and electrical service. They are also waiting for a quote for the wooden door frame for the ALS closet at Station 2 as it is broken and in dire need of repair. Chairman Komorsky stated moving the water lines and electric would not be a quick job. Commissioner Kaiser stated they should discuss this in executive session. He stated he has concerns. He does not believe that is the correct place for it. Chief Champion stated at Station 1 he has followed up on the status of the transfer switch. Now it is being pushed out until the middle of next week so he will follow up again at that point. It will be coming from Protective Power to get to Giamo for the repairs.

Commissioner Kaiser stated the garbage companies have consolidated and they have basically created a monopoly so there is only one service here. There is another service out of Westchester County that is coming to this area so they we'll have a second choice. However, he did get pricing and it does appear at this point that the company they have is still the lowest price.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Septic Quotes - Chairman Komorsky stated this afternoon he went to Arlington High School to discuss the possibility of having the students come and dress up the Conex with logos on some plywood. He met with the head of the Art Department. She was very excited to make this a class project. They could do it through the high school art department, the middle school art department, and/or the art club. She is going to get him all of her contact information. She did ask for some suggestions and pictures of logos and a picture of the Conex and the area around it. Previously Commissioner Kaiser had suggested putting something on the ambulance about supporting Arlington school. Commissioner Taft stated they have three different school districts in the Fire District that they support. It is Arlington, Millbrook and Wappingers. His

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concern would be alienating the other two school districts if they put one specific name on the ambulance. He stated LaGrange ambulance services residents in both the Arlington and Millbrook school districts. Chief Champion suggested something along the lines of supporting general education of the residents in the town. Chairman Komorsky stated that could be discussed further. The intent of him bringing this up was that the art department was very excited about the opportunity to do this. He did show them the Maltese Cross and was told they would do anything that they are provided. Commissioner Taft stated they could probably create something that would intertwine the Fire District and the School District. Chairman Komorsky told her that they do have some connections with Mid-Hudson News and they could probably promote it in the paper and the art director was excited about that. They can sit together and compile everyone's ideas. There are tons of logos out there to look at as well. They can even incorporate all of the school districts if they want to.

REPORTS: (by officers present)

- **Treasurer Pozniak** - Treasurer Pozniak stated tonight they need to discuss the budget. He stated that the output they had from the workshop last Thursday was regarding a property tax increase of 30%. The motivation behind that is largely to fund the reserves to acquire apparatus in the future. They do have a 10 year plan that has mapped out the different apparatus they will need to replace. It is also for the buildings, as there are some significant building investments coming up over the next 10 years. There is also equipment for emergency services and IT equipment that will need replacement as well. Once those reserve requirements were mapped out, they were coming up significantly short in their funding. They would have to do 10% to 12% increases over the next three to four years but the Board decided it would be better to do it all at once. That is the primary reason why they would be requiring that 30% increase. There are some other reasons as well because things like fringe benefits are increasing at a faster rate than they have in the past. They use historical numbers to project the future and in the past they were able to project costs for health insurance going up at a 5 to 7% range. That is no longer the case based on the last five years. It is closer to double digit increases and this is a large number to begin with. Health insurance represents approximately \$2,000,000 annually. A 10% increase in health insurance is difficult to absorb. In the past the pension rates went up and down but over time they have seen a consistent increase. Last year was approximately 20% alone. This is a large base number of approximately \$1.5 million annually. These numbers can't be sustained without some adjustments. The rest of the budget for things like fuel, office supplies, minor repairs and maintenance, audits, physicals, et cetera have been increased slightly. Annually they normally budget those line items pretty tightly. If something happens that is unexpected it will throw things out of whack so this year they have been increased to avoid crisis mode if one line item, such as fuel, increases drastically. That has happened in the recent past so even though it is not expected to happen they have to be somewhat prepared. Chairman Komorsky stated these are feasible unknowns because a lot of them rely on world events. They are also facing an interest rate increase that could hit as soon as this week. There are tariff issues going on that are affecting the inflation aspect and cost of goods as well. These are unknowns that can happen and can affect things dramatically. He does appreciate the way the Treasurer has reviewed and planned for this. This is a business that cannot shut down. Treasurer Pozniak stated they have projected the need to replace one ambulance in each of the next four years. The pricing on that is above \$500,000 up to \$700,000 that were bought for \$300,000 ten years ago. Engines have gone from \$1,000,000 to \$2,000,000. The Fire District cannot operate without these things. He has projected out

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approximately 8 years and everything that they have on the list of items to be replaced for both apparatus and building improvements would be funded with this proposed increase. That is assuming there is nothing massive in the terms of the unexpected. Commissioner Taft asked if he had a projected fund balance for the end of the year. Treasurer Pozniak stated it would be roughly \$2,000,000. Commissioner Taft asked about the SAFER reserve and if it got drawn back out of the increase. Treasurer Pozniak stated they had set aside money as the SAFER reserve that they were planning on drawing down. In the new model he is not drawing it down, he is leaving that money in their fund balance. They would not be drawing down fund balance intentionally starting in 2027. They will leave that money there for future emergencies. Commissioner Taft was just wondering if they could lower that 30%. Treasurer Pozniak stated if they needed to lower that 30% that would be one place to start. Chairman Komorsky stated as an aside, today they had mentioned at the meeting with the Town Board that they have no debt in their budget. The response to that from the Town Board members were that they were astounded. He stated it was a nice feeling to be able to say that and hopefully stay that way. That is part of the reason why they were looking at the 30% increase, so they could stay debt free. The Town Board budget is not in the same condition. Treasurer Pozniak stated another way to reduce that 30% would be by borrowing and kicking the can down the road, but all that is doing is pushing off the problem to a future generation. Chairman Komorsky stated he does not feel the Board as a whole would want to do that. They all seemed to be in agreement with staying debt free. Chairman Komorsky stated they also explained to the Town Board that nothing in their business is cheap. Equipment and apparatus are very expensive. Everything they need to operate as well as the training is very expensive. They also need to deal with the growth in the Town as well as the increased traffic from the thru roads. Commissioner Tierney asked if Treasurer Pozniak and Chief Champion have discussed what his requests are for next year. Treasurer Pozniak stated he does believe he has worked in everything that Chief Champion and the Deputy Chiefs have requested. Chief Champion stated the estimation of expenses that were provided this evening are numbers that they have looked at for apparatus and future equipment costs. Those numbers have not been provided to Treasurer Pozniak yet. Treasurer Pozniak stated they need to adopt the proposed budget by September 29th. They could adopt the budget he has submitted tonight if they like or they can wait for the next meeting and adopt it then. Then they need to hold a Public Hearing in the third week of October, which is the 19th to the 23rd. Once the Public Hearing has happened, they can make changes but they cannot increase the budget. They can decrease or change budget lines and then they need to adopt the final budget no later than November 4th. Commissioner Taft asked if there was any benefit to approving it tonight or was there any possibility of possible changes. Treasurer Pozniak was unsure if the numbers that Chief Champion brought up tonight would change anything but they did appear to be a fairly small amount. He stated there is no harm in waiting if anyone wants to hold off until the next meeting. Treasurer Pozniak asked if the EMS equipment Chief Champion sent him was redundant with the information that Deputy Chief Merritt had sent him. Chief Champion stated it is the same equipment, just spread out over a few years. Treasurer Pozniak stated that is all been accounted for. He stated the Station 1 bays might be the only thing they had pushed off. They had \$900,000 earmarked for the bays in 2029. The numbers from Chief Champion had \$100,000 starting next year. That appears to be the only difference. Chief Champion stated his numbers were just estimations and not final. He will use the Treasurer's numbers if he has a better working algorithm. Chairman Komorsky suggested that they table the dollar amounts regarding the Chief's proposals for executive session as there are some variables

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that they would like to discuss. He also stated that the other aspects of the proposed budget he is fine with but suggested they table approval on the proposed budget at this point.

- **Chief Anthony Champion –**

- Policy - Chief Champion stated the next policy meeting with the local for the district policies will be September 23rd at 9:00 AM. He can schedule meetings later this month with the Town Supervisor, the Building Department, and the Highway Department to collaborate building codes, highway codes, and allowances.
- Civil Service - Chief Champion stated he is still seeking answers on the steps needed to adjust the residency parameters in regard to the civil service lists.
- Membership - Chief Champion stated in their packet they have the numbers for LOSAP and the 2%. It is a combination of the ESO and First Due calls for most of categories. In 2025 they were in ESO until the end of the year through June 1st. On June 1st they switched over to First Due. That is why there are two columns for that. It also lists the ride along points and the meeting points, training points, and drill and duty nights. It shows those who have earned LOSAP and those who have not. He has spoken with the active and life active members and provided this sheet to them in a preliminary form. It will be posted in the firehouses this evening. It needs to be posted for 30 days in case there are any disputes. They have to be done within that time frame as well. The membership has had approximately a week to look into this and they have been asked to verify their records with what is recorded and come back with any concerns or issues. Chairman Komorsky stated he feels it is important that everyone knows they are speaking about 9 active volunteer members. Today the Town Board asked how many volunteer members they have. Chairman Komorsky stated at one point they had as many as approximately 60 out of each house. He has heard the number 135 as the number of volunteers over the years. Now they are down to six as of today. This is a nationwide problem getting volunteers to do this job. A lot of it is due to the training and time constraints and what is entailed in volunteering. Chief Champion stated the report outlines who did or did not make their LOSAP credit last year. Behind that is a listing of the membership for 2025. Members in red are people who were dropped. Members in yellow are on new member probation or performance probation. People in blue are on personal leave. There are three members that are on member probation for 2025, four members were dropped, one member was on medical leave for total active volunteers for 2025 of 4. The 2% funds were allocated to LaGrange Fire District and are waiting for distribution. The total amount of that is \$68,953.74. That gets divided between Stations 1, 2, and 3, and the career staff. Station 3 does not have any members that met the LOSAP requirements, Station 2 had one member, Station 1 had three members and then the active career staff is 22 people. Those numbers were then divided out appropriately. Commissioner Tierney asked if all stations had to have members who are active to get the 2% funds. Chief Champion said yes, they have to be active. They can be on medical for part of the year. The ones that are not counted are those that are on probation, whether it be a new member or performance probation from a previous year. Commissioner Tierney asked if the 2% stops when there are no longer active members. Chief Champion said no. In theory if there are no active volunteers the money still comes to LaGrange Fire District and they sign the check over to the career staff.

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Treasurer Pozniak stated the money comes in independent of the number of members. And then it gets divided up based on number of members. Chief Champion stated he would send copies to both Treasurer Pozniak and Attorney Hekle.

- New Hires - Chief Champion stated they have some new hires that just started at the Westchester Academy this week. They are on a Tuesday through Friday schedule. They should be getting back any time soon if not already. Chairman Komorsky asked if there would be frequent reports and follow-ups and Chief Champion stated there will be. He may even get a report from later this week. He stated usually no news is good news but they are trying to continue the positive relationships with both academies to get good news, bad news, and anything that might need addressing. The training in Utica is going well and they are expected to graduate. Their graduation date is the day before Thanksgiving. He asked if any of the Board members would be planning on attending. He stated he would be attending. It would be a one day trip. Chairman Komorsky stated he would probably reserve a seat with the Chief. Commissioner Taft would like to attend as well.
- Out of County Training - Chief Champion stated there was an individual who has requested to attend Montour Falls for a Rope Operations training. It will be November 30th. Room and board is covered in the attendance and he believes that course is \$25. It is for Firefighter/Medic Andrew Kemmerer. Chairman Komorsky asked if they are doing any rope training in house and Chief Champion said yes. He stated frequently they come across staff in the bays transferring from one anchor point to another and traversing in the bays. It is being overseen by the in house technicians who come up with the plans and discuss the safety avenues and aspects and set up all the redundancies. Chairman Komorsky asked if Mr. Patrimonio was available to come in for any training like this. Chief Champion stated he is unsure if they have reached out to him. Commissioner Kaiser stated he was part of the state team but he does not know if rope rescue was something he taught. Chief Champion stated if he is still active in it they will reach out to him. It would be a consultant at that point. Bookkeeper Kaiser stated there was a second person interested in that class as well. Firefighter/EMT Philip Scarano had expressed interest. Chief Champion stated they would need a vehicle and shift coverage for the time they would be away.

Upon a MOTION made by Commissioner Kaiser, and SECONDED by Commissioner Tierney, the Board RESOLVED to approve out of county training to Montour Falls for a Rope Operations class starting November 30th, 2026, for Firefighter/Paramedic Andrew Kemmerer and Firefighter/EMT Phillip Scarano at a cost of \$50.00 plus shift coverage and a vehicle to use. Kaiser – Aye, Taft – Aye, Tierney – Aye, Chairman Komorsky - Aye. **Motion Carried.**

- Equipment - Chief Champion stated he has a contractual discussion for executive session. He does have a request. He is looking to have the Board surplus rescue jacks that were purchased in 2015 and put into service in 2016, With the following serial numbers 108090, 110632, 000193, 000196, 000343, and 000345. The first two are rescue jacks at an original purchase price of \$918 each. The rest of the numbers are the struts themselves at \$941. At this point they are no longer a value or use to the LaGrange Fire District and have no value for resale. Chairman Komorsky stated that the City of Poughkeepsie has just donated

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several larger ticket items to the LaGrange Fire District. He asked Attorney Hekle if there would be an issue with donating to the City of Poughkeepsie. He wants to be sure that there is no liability issue with giving them equipment if it were to break at some point. He asked if there was any way to have them sign off on something. Chief Champion and Attorney Hekle stated they have a waiver that they have used before. He stated he has adjusted it because it was used for the AEDs. It now reads "This disclaimer applies to all rescue jack equipment and associated equipment that is being surplus by the LaGrange Fire District. All equipment that is being surplus in this manner is on an as is, where is basis. LaGrange Fire District makes no guarantees or warranties expressed or implied as to the state of the equipment. All known defects about the equipment are expressed. There are no provisions for pre-sale inspection of property unless specifically noted. All transactions are final. There will be no refunds, returns, exchanges, made after donation of surplus has been made. The removal of the purchased property is the responsibility of the successful recipient. LaGrange Fire District will aid in the delivery of acquired equipment to the recipient. By signing below they hereby acknowledge that they have read and acknowledged the above waiver and liability regarding the donation of the rescue jacks and associated equipment" and it lists the serial numbers. Chairman Komorsky stated he is fully in favor of this but he needs to ask these questions for clarity. He asked Treasurer Pozniak if there is anything they need from an audit standpoint for this transaction. Treasurer Pozniak stated they listed the serial numbers and the original values. He said there is a lot of leeway for municipalities to donate things to each other. They would want a lot more information if this was to a for profit organization. His only question would be why would City of Poughkeepsie wants something that LaGrange finds no value in. Chief Champion stated they recently got rid of their rescue and the confined space rope rescue items that they had. They donated that to LaGrange so they are now in need of this type of equipment. They have never had anything like this. Chief Champion stated LaGrange does not need this anymore. Commissioner Kaiser stated they should mention that someone from LaGrange's training division will go over this equipment with them. Commissioner Taft thinks they should include something in the waiver that when the City of Poughkeepsie takes ownership of this equipment they become fully responsible for its operation and care and any defects. That way there's a definitive end date. Attorney Hekle stated once they sign the waiver, it's in effect. Chief Champion stated he would send his rewritten waiver version to Attorney Hekle for review first. Attorney Hekle did state what the Chief read does sound appropriate for what they need.

Upon a MOTION made by Commissioner Kaiser, and SECONDED by Commissioner Tierney, the Board RESOLVED to approve donating the rescue jacks along with some staff training to the City of Poughkeepsie. Kaiser – Aye, Taft – Aye, Tierney – Aye, Chairman Komorsky - Aye. **Motion Carried.**

Commissioner Tierney asked when these items are originally purchased do they have to be registered with the manufacturer for any updates. Chief Champion stated he will have to look into that. He did not see any documentation in the historical records. If need be they can update the City of Poughkeepsie and the manufacturer.

Upon a MOTION made by Commissioner Tierney, and SECONDED by Commissioner Kaiser, the Board RESOLVED to declare the rescue jacks and straps as surplus with zero value to the LaGrange Fire District. Kaiser – Aye, Taft – Aye, Tierney – Aye, Chairman Komorsky - Aye. **Motion Carried.**

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- **Deputy Chief Fire** – Chief Champion stated Deputy Chief Zittel asked him to bring up the gym renovation update in his absence. The renovation project was delayed due to additional demands associated with the recruits and training and personal vacation scheduling. All of the materials have been ordered and delivered and are currently on site. The work is scheduled to begin on the 18th of September. The initial work will consist of cleaning existing ceiling and the grid cleaning and replacing all ceiling tiles throughout the area. Wall preparation work will include the removal of existing molding and damaged sheetrock. That will then have insulation installed and sheetrock repaired in preparation for finishing and painting. This is all to be done at Station 1. Chief Champion stated he also believes that the material for the floor has been brought in as well. Commissioner Kaiser asked if he could check with Deputy Chief Zittel to see if there is room in the dumpster if they need to get rid of some product, or if they need to schedule an additional pickup for that week. Chief Champion stated he would do that. Commissioner Tierney stated they need to ensure they can throw construction debris in the dumpster first.

Chief Champion stated he did advise the membership of the renewed changes to the LOSAP that the Department voted upon. They do have an updated copy of it so that should help with the answers to the initial questions that get brought up.

Commissioner Kaiser stated he did want to thank Chief Champion for coming to the company meetings. He did a wonderful job going over information so that the volunteers understand what is going on.

- **Deputy Chief of EMS** – Deputy Chief Merritt stated Secretary Le printed out his report for the meeting and it has been given to the Board in their packet.
 - o Response Data - Deputy Chief Merritt stated in the first quarter they were able to respond to 99% of their calls. Their average response time was 6 minutes and 49 seconds. In the second quarter they were able to respond to 97% of their calls and their response time has gone down to 6 minutes and 35 seconds. This is second only to Fairview Fire District, who covers 4.5 square miles. LaGrange has 46 square miles. It looks like they responded to more calls percentage wise than any other department except for Fairview, and their response time is second to them only. Chairman Komorsky stated they should be applauded for that because they are doing an outstanding job. That is a value to the residents and guests to this Town.
 - o Purchase Request - Deputy Chief Merritt stated he has been working with Treasurer Pozniak and Chief Champion regarding replacing the video laryngoscopes. A few months ago they found out that there is a battery system energy management problem with these causing them to take three of the five out of service. These are mission critical pieces of equipment. He and the EMS committee researched several brands and used several demonstration units and the committee has recommended purchasing the Curaplex Onescope video laryngoscope. For five of them and the associated accessories is \$11,199.15. They do have the ability to record, provide video, and pictures. That can be used for QA Qi and uploaded onto someone's charts. Treasurer Pozniak stated they had planned to purchase these in 2027 through the equipment reserve. What he would like to propose is that they reduce the transfer amount to the equipment reserve by the same

BoFC Regular Meeting 9/8/26

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LAGRANGE FIRE DISTRICT

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amount and increase the current year's budget for this item. That is essentially taking money that they were going to put into the reserve for next year and spending it this year. He will have a budget transfer to formalize this for the next meeting. Commissioner Kaiser asked if the Deputy Chief had found out any more regarding the recall and if there was any recourse on that. Deputy Chief Merritt stated there were many manufacturers who put a four year useful life on their equipment. If it is older than four years they don't do anything.

Upon a MOTION made by Chairman Komorsky and SECONDED by Commissioner Kaiser, the Board RESOLVED to purchase five Curaplex Onescope video laryngoscopes and the associated accessories at a cost of \$11,199.15. Kaiser – Aye, Taft – Aye, Tierney – Aye, Komorsky – Aye. **Motion carried.**

- Deputy Chief Merritt stated he has two topics for executive session. One is legal and one is contractual.
- Proclaim - Deputy Chief Merritt stated he sent out an e-mail last week. Proclaim is moving to Waystar for processing of the virtual credit cards. Today those credit card fees are deducted from the money that they receive before they even receive it. Going forward they will be charging after they have received the money. He does believe it is the same amount but he is having trouble finding the exact amount on any invoices. Chairman Komorsky stated they do need to find out that fee and monitor what the charges are after that fee as well. Deputy Chief Merritt stated this sounds like it is driven by the credit card companies so they don't really have much choice. Chairman Komorsky stated that these companies have a habit of just continually raising their fees. Most of the time those are negotiable if there are a lot of charges so it is something they need to keep an eye on. He is willing to call if the charges seem to be getting out of hand. Meanwhile, the Deputy Chief will find out what that charge is today and what they plan on it being moving forward. If the rate is the same it will just be a process change.
- **Department** – Chairman Komorsky asked President Kaiser if there was anything to report. President Kaiser stated they are looking to have a meeting in October.
- **Union** – Chairman Komorsky stated no one was present.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

At 7:22 PM, Chairman Komorsky opened the meeting to public comments.

Peter Turoff stated he had no comments for the evening.

ABSTRACT: \$210,872.91

Upon a MOTION made by Commissioner Kaiser and SECONDED by Commissioner Taft, the Board RESOLVED to pay the bills for the end of August and the beginning of September 2026, as per the abstract in the amount of \$210,872.91. Kaiser – Aye, Taft – Aye, Tierney – Aye, Komorsky – Aye. **Motion Carried.**

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EXECUTIVE SESSION:

At 7:23 PM, upon a MOTION made by Commissioner Tierney and SECONDED by Chairman Komorsky, the Board RESOLVED to go into Executive Session to discuss one legal issue and one contractual issue from Deputy Chief Merritt, a financial discussion from the Board of Fire Commissioners, 3 personnel items and a discussion regarding gear washer concerns from Commissioner Kaiser, a Phase 2 executive session from Commissioner Taft, one legal issue regarding Station 1 from Commissioner Tierney, one contractual item regarding community events, one contractual concern regarding apparatus, and one equipment contract discussion and one personnel issue from Chief Champion. Kaiser – Aye, Taft – Aye, Tierney – Aye, Komorsky – Aye. **Motion Carried.**

OPEN SESSION:

At 8:48 PM, the Board resumed Open Session.

Upon a MOTION made by Commissioner Kaiser and SECONDED by Commissioner Tierney, the Board RESOLVED to approve the purchase of shower doors for LaGrange Station 1. It would be to install a shower slider system with tempered glass, colored to their choice, to include the material and labor in the amount of \$2400 from Standard Glass. Kaiser – Aye, Taft – Aye, Tierney – Aye, Komorsky – Aye. **Motion Carried.**

Commissioner Kaiser stated in the past they have had major issues with ice damming and damage at Station 3. They did receive a proposal from Giaimo & Sons Electric for heat tape and to supply labor to install heat across the firehouse roof and gutters, provide and install a new sub panel in the electric room to accommodate the heat tape, provide all permits and inspections, and remove existing old heat tape and replace with his commercial grade roofed tape at a cost of \$9800.

Upon a MOTION made by Commissioner Kaiser and SECONDED by Chairman Komorsky, the Board RESOLVED to approve the proposal from Giaimo & Sons Electric for the purchase and installation of heat tape for Station 3. Kaiser – Aye, Taft – Aye, Tierney – Aye, Komorsky – Aye. **Motion Carried.**

PREPARE 9/22/26 MEETING AND WORKSHOP AGENDA: Secretary Le will prepare this.

ADJOURNMENT:

At 8:50 PM, upon a MOTION made by Commissioner Taft and SECONDED by Commissioner Tierney, the Board RESOLVED to adjourn the meeting. Kaiser – Aye, Taft – Aye, Tierney – Aye, Komorsky – Aye. **Motion Carried.**

Respectfully submitted by

Julie Beyer on behalf of

Bria Le – District Secretary

Approved by the Board of Fire Commissioners on 9/22/26

BoFC Regular Meeting 9/8/26

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VENDOR	Amount Due	PO #	9/8/2026
AAA EMERGENCY SUPPLY CO ✓	\$ ✓ 172.95	15643	FIRE GLOVES
BOTTINI FUEL ✓	\$ ✓ 3,119.33	15746	STATION 2 DIESEL FUEL
BRAD HILDENBRAND ✓	\$ ✓ 360.00	VCHER	MEAL VOUCHER FOR EMS WORLD EXPO
CASSONE LEASING ✓	\$ ✓ 1,998.00	15784	STATION 1 MODULAR BLDG RENTAL
CRYOWELD ✓	\$ ✓ 124.39	15758	EMS SUPPLIES
DUTCHESS TIRE CENTER ✓	\$ ✓ 1,288.00	15768	47-68 TIRES
ELAN FINANCIAL (TOMPKINS) ✓	\$ ✓ 14,161.32	15769	CC CHARGES
FLEET PRIDE	\$ ✓ 20.00	15764	47-77 AMB 3 INSPECTION
FLEET PRIDE	\$ ✓ 20.00	15767	47-79 AMB 1 INSPECTION
FLEET PRIDE	\$ ✓ 20.00	15770	47-78 AMB 2 INSPECTION
FREIHOFFER ICE ✓	\$ ✓ 125.55	2025BL	5GAL WATER JUGS DELIVERED
FRONTIER ✓	\$ ✓ 329.49	15779	STATION 1 LOCAL/LONG DIST
FUSIONSITE (A-JOHN) ✓	\$ ✓ 4,485.00	15763	STATION 1 PORTABLES RENTAL
GARRISON FIRE & RESCUE ✓	\$ ✓ 239.79	15749	THERMAL CAMERA BATTERY
GLOBAL AUTO REPAIR ✓	\$ ✓ 1,330.77	15748	47-95 OLD CAR 8 REPAIRS/INSPECTION
HAUN WELDING ✓	\$ ✓ 9.13	15771	EMS SUPPLIES
JULIE BEYER ✓	\$ ✓ 230.00	2026BLE	TRANSCRIPTION
KENYON LANDSCAPING INC ✓	\$ ✓ 300.00	15762	SALT FOR STAT 1 & 2
LB LANDSCAPING ✓	\$ ✓ 280.00	15772	STATION 3 LAWN MAINT
MASSMUTUAL ✓	\$ ✓ 442.25	15751	LIFE INS - CAREER
MEDICAL WAREHOUSE	\$ ✓ 1,246.54	2026SM	EMS SUPPLIES
MEDICAL WAREHOUSE	\$ ✓ 219.81	2026SM	EMS SUPPLIES
MES SERVICE CO	\$ ✓ 364.50	15602	UNIFORM-CAREER (B/O ITEMS RECVD)
MES SERVICE CO	\$ ✓ 75.00	15654	UNIFORM-CAREER (PARTIAL ORDER RECVD)
MES SERVICE CO	\$ ✓ 63.00	15655	UNIFORM-CAREER (PARTIAL ORDER RECVD)
MES SERVICE CO	\$ ✓ 202.00	15656	UNIFORM-CAREER (PARTIAL ORDER RECVD)
MES SERVICE CO	\$ ✓ 171.40	15704	TIES/BELTS-NEW HIRES
MES SERVICE CO	\$ ✓ 395.25	15639	UNIFORM-CAREER
MES SERVICE CO	\$ ✓ 60.00	15656	UNIFORM-CAREER (B/O ITEMS RECVD)
MES SERVICE CO	\$ ✓ 60.00	15575	UNIFORM-CAREER (B/O ITEMS RECVD)
MES SERVICE CO	\$ ✓ 327.00	15654	UNIFORM-CAREER (PARTIAL ORDER RECVD)
MES SERVICE CO	\$ ✓ 1,709.08	15754	GLOVES & TURNOUT GEAR-NEW HIRES
MES SERVICE CO	\$ ✓ 251.98	15737	SMALL ENGINE FUEL
MES SERVICE CO	\$ ✓ 193.19	15752	SCBA FLOW TEST
MES SERVICE CO	\$ ✓ 716.22	15753	METERS
NAEMSE ✓	\$ ✓ 190.00	15750	EMS TRAINING
NY FIRE EQUIPMENT ✓	\$ ✓ 1,242.00	15658	HAIX BOOTS-NEW HIRES
NYS DCS NYSHIP ✓	\$ ✓ 155,780.33	15783	HEALTH INS PREMIUM
PHASE II DIESEL ✓	\$ ✓ 3,022.13	15760	47-11 NEW AIR COMPRESSOR
RINGSQUARED ✓	\$ ✓ 915.96	15773	STAT 2 & 3 PHONE SVC
SARJO INDUSTRIES ✓	\$ ✓ 156.68	5764	SHOP SUPPLIES
STRYKER SALES ✓	\$ ✓ 2,352.00	14534	PROCARE SERVICE AGREEMENT PAYMNT #2
TELEFLEX ✓	\$ ✓ 1,995.00	5726	EMS SUPPLIES
THE WORK PLACE ✓	\$ ✓ 4,762.00	15781	ANNUAL PHYSICALS
TOWN OF LAGRANGE ✓	\$ ✓ 186.89	15745	WATER READING
VCI EMERGENCY VEHICLE ✓	\$ ✓ 5,158.98	15747	REPAIR/PARTS
TOTAL SUBMITTED	\$ 210,872.91 ✓		Commissioner Signatures:
changes listed:			Marc Komor sky 9/8/26
			Robert Taft 9/8/26
TOTAL APPROVED			Jeff Kaiser 9/8/26
			Vince Tierney 9/8/26

31 c/w

Supervisor, members of the Town Board, Town staff, fellow Fire Commissioners, members of the Fire Department, and members of the public:

Thank you for meeting with us today.

I suppose the easiest way to begin is with a simple question:

Why are we here today?

It is not because the four Fire Commissioners suddenly decided we were not attending enough meetings.

And we are certainly not here because we want to become the Town Board, the Planning Board, or the Zoning Board. We have enough to do already.

We are here because the Town Board and the Board of Fire Commissioners have different responsibilities, but those responsibilities increasingly intersect.

The Town Board is responsible for planning how LaGrange develops and grows.

The Fire District is responsible for making sure we can safely protect LaGrange as that growth occurs.

We serve the same residents, the same businesses, and the same taxpayers.

Ultimately, we have the same goal: to maintain a safe, financially sustainable, and responsibly growing Town of LaGrange.

That is the purpose of today's discussion.

Growth and Public Safety Must Move Together

The Fire District is not opposed to responsible growth and responsible projects.

We understand that new projects can bring housing, economic opportunity, businesses, investment, and additional tax base.

But new projects also bring additional demands upon public safety.

A new subdivision means additional homes requiring fire and EMS protection.

A multifamily project means additional residents and additional calls for service.

A larger commercial project means more building area, more occupancy, more traffic, and potentially more complex emergency response.

And a taller building is not simply another floor of taxable square footage.

From the Fire District's perspective, it can change rescue operations, fire attack, apparatus requirements, staffing requirements, water-supply needs, and firefighter safety.

Our concern can be summarized in one word:

Parity.

Growth and emergency-service capacity need to remain in reasonable parity.

The Town should not be planning tomorrow's LaGrange while the Fire District remains staffed, equipped, and funded for yesterday's LaGrange.

At the same time, the Fire Commissioners cannot responsibly spend millions of taxpayer dollars preparing for projects that may or may not occur.

That is precisely why our two organizations need to plan together.

New Projects Do Not Mean a Dollar-for-Dollar Increase in Fire District Revenue

There is also an important financial point that needs to be understood whenever a new project is discussed.

We frequently hear that a new project will increase the tax base.

That is true.

But an increase in taxable value is not the same thing as a dollar-for-dollar increase in revenue available to the Fire District.

The Fire District adopts an annual budget and determines the amount that must be raised through the property-tax levy. That levy is then spread across the taxable property within the District.

When additional taxable property is added to the roll, it enlarges the tax base over which that levy is distributed. It does not simply hand the Fire District an amount of new money equal to the taxes associated with the new project.

New construction is recognized within New York's property-tax-cap calculation through the tax-base growth factor. For the 2027 fiscal year, the State has established the La Grange Fire District's tax-base growth factor at approximately **1.0043, or 0.43 percent**.

So when we hear that a project will "pay for itself" through additional taxes, we need to look at that carefully.

A new project certainly can strengthen and broaden the tax base.

But the additional Fire District revenue does not necessarily correspond with the additional service cost created by that project.

A project may add taxable value while simultaneously contributing to the need for additional firefighters, additional EMS capacity, specialized apparatus, an aerial apparatus, or major station improvements.

The proper question is therefore not simply:

"How much taxable value will this project create?"

It should also be:

"How much additional Fire District revenue will actually result, and how does that compare with the additional emergency-service cost created by the project?"

Those numbers are not necessarily equal.

The Fire District Has Grown With LaGrange — And Our Mission Is Broader Than Fire Protection

The LaGrange Fire Department was established in 1941 as a volunteer organization.

As LaGrange grew, the Fire District repeatedly had to adapt.

Additional growth led to additional stations.

Increasing emergency medical demand led to ambulance service and eventually Advanced Life Support.

Increasing call volume and decreasing daytime volunteer availability eventually led to the hiring of career firefighters.

As career staffing continued to grow and operations became more complex, the District also had to expand its command structure.

More recently, the District established Captains and Lieutenants and strengthened its Fire and EMS command responsibilities.

That restructuring was itself a response to a growing Department.

As staffing increased, responsibilities expanded, EMS operations grew, and simultaneous calls became more common, additional supervision and a clearer chain of command became necessary.

It is also important to understand that LaGrange today is much more than a traditional fire department.

The District provides **both Basic Life Support and Advanced Life Support emergency medical services and ambulance transportation**, integrated with our fire and rescue operations.

LaGrange maintains paramedic capability as part of its in-house emergency response. Career personnel are cross-trained in fire and emergency medical services, allowing the same organization to respond to structure fires, medical emergencies, motor vehicle accidents, rescues, and other emergencies.

The quality of that EMS operation has received outside recognition.

The Dutchess County EMS Council selected the LaGrange Fire District as its 2021 EMS Agency of the Year.

At the same time, LaGrange Firefighter/Paramedic **Steve Daly was selected as ALS Provider of the Year.**

That is something we should be proud of.

It also demonstrates the level of emergency medical service our residents have come to expect and that the Fire District has an obligation to maintain as LaGrange continues to grow.

There is another characteristic of LaGrange that significantly affects our service demands.

The Taconic State Parkway runs directly through our response area.

That creates a demand that cannot be measured simply by looking at the population of LaGrange or the number of taxable parcels in Town.

Thousands of motorists travel through our community who may never live here, own property here, or contribute directly to the LaGrange Fire District tax base.

But if they are involved in an emergency while traveling through LaGrange, they become our responsibility.

Parkway incidents can involve high-speed motor vehicle accidents, entrapment, serious trauma, multiple patients, vehicle fires, hazardous conditions, prolonged operations, and the simultaneous need for fire, rescue, BLS, and ALS resources.

Our service demand is not created solely by the people who live in LaGrange.

We protect our residents.

We protect our businesses.

We protect people working here.

We protect visitors.

And we protect a major transportation corridor carrying people through our Town every day.

The Fire District did not grow simply because Fire Commissioners wanted a larger organization.

It grew because LaGrange grew, because emergency medicine evolved, because our service responsibilities expanded, and because the demands placed upon our personnel grew with them.

We believe we are approaching another one of those points today.

Three-Story Projects

One of the immediate reasons for this discussion is the issue of three-story projects.

The Town has previously examined buildings exceeding **two livable and commercial stories** because of legitimate fire and emergency-service concerns.

Those concerns included the lack of a locally owned aerial apparatus, increased difficulty with upper-floor rescue, reliance upon mutual-aid aerial companies, water-supply concerns, increased fire and EMS demand, and firefighter safety.

If the Town is considering expanding opportunities for three-story construction, greater density, or similar projects, we respectfully believe the Fire District needs to be involved before those decisions are finalized.

We are not asking for zoning authority.

That belongs to the Town.

We are asking for a meaningful opportunity to explain the emergency-service consequences of those decisions.

The question should not simply be:

Can this project be built?

It should also be:

Can the emergency services responsible for protecting it safely and sustainably serve it?

What an Aerial Apparatus Really Means

If a proposed project creates the need for aerial firefighting capability, the solution is not as simple as saying:

Buy a ladder truck.

Our current planning has used an estimated cost of approximately **\$4 million** for a modern 100-foot aerial apparatus.

The acquisition and delivery period could approach **four years**.

Efficiently operating a dedicated aerial company could require approximately **four personnel per shift**.

Across four shifts, that could represent approximately **16 additional career positions**.

But there is a very important distinction here.

The aerial apparatus would not replace the personnel and apparatus we already need to operate the Fire District.

Our existing fire engines still need appropriate staffing.

Our ambulances still need appropriate BLS and ALS staffing.

Our rescue apparatus still needs personnel available to operate it.

Our tankers and other necessary apparatus still have to be available and appropriately staffed when incidents require them.

And we must continue to maintain coverage at our existing stations while responding to simultaneous emergencies throughout the District.

We cannot create an aerial company simply by taking firefighters away from the engines, ambulances, rescue apparatus, or other existing assignments.

Doing that would not create additional emergency-response capability.

It would simply move the staffing shortage from one apparatus to another.

A ladder truck arriving at a three-story structure does not eliminate the need for engines.

It does not eliminate the need for hose lines.

It does not eliminate the need for water supply.

It does not eliminate the need for search and rescue.

It does not eliminate the need for EMS.

It does not eliminate the need for additional apparatus.

In a significant structure fire, many of those functions have to occur **at the same time.**

That is why the discussion needs to involve the staffing of the **entire response system**, not simply the four firefighters assigned to the aerial apparatus.

When we talk about future staffing, the question is not merely:

“How many people does it take to operate the ladder truck?”

The more complete question is:

“How many firefighters, EMTs, and paramedics are necessary to properly staff the entire emergency response while adding an aerial company without reducing the services we already provide?”

That is a much larger operational and financial question.

And then there is another major issue.

Where Do We Put It?

From an operational and geographic standpoint, an aerial apparatus would need to be located in the Station 1 response area.

The existing Station 1 parcel, however, is not conducive to simply constructing another properly sized apparatus bay.

A 100-foot aerial apparatus requires appropriate bay length and height, door clearance, apron and maneuvering area, safe ingress and egress, equipment storage, and support facilities.

If additional personnel are going to be assigned there around the clock, the station also needs appropriate bunk rooms, bathrooms, lockers, kitchen and living areas, and other support space.

Therefore, providing aerial capability could potentially require either a major expansion or reconstruction of an existing station, if that is even physically feasible, or the acquisition of another property and construction of a new fire station.

That changes the conversation significantly.

We may ultimately be discussing:

A multimillion-dollar aerial apparatus.

Additional staffing for the aerial company.

Continued appropriate staffing of our existing engines, ambulances, rescue apparatus, tankers, and other emergency resources.

And a major fire-station capital project.

That is why this discussion needs to occur now.

Our Current Financial Reality

This discussion is occurring while the Fire District is already under significant financial pressure.

Our preliminary planning for the **2027 Fire District tax levy currently anticipates an increase of approximately 30 percent.**

That number is preliminary, and the formal budget process is not complete.

But the magnitude is important.

Even an anticipated 30-percent increase does not resolve all of the District's existing issues.

It does not provide a dedicated aerial company.

It does not provide the additional staffing potentially necessary for that company.

It does not solve the Station 1 facility issue.

And it does not resolve every existing apparatus, staffing, and capital need.

Most importantly, our obligation is not simply to staff one new truck.

Our responsibility is to maintain an effective emergency-response system.

That means maintaining appropriate personnel for fire suppression, EMS, rescue, water supply, and the other apparatus and functions already required today while preparing for whatever additional capabilities future projects may require.

Growth in the tax base is beneficial.

But it should not be confused with an automatic increase in Fire District revenues sufficient to pay for those additional service demands.

That is why we believe this conversation has to happen before the project occurs rather than afterward.

Mutual Aid

We have tremendous respect for our neighboring fire departments and fire districts.

Mutual aid is essential to the fire service.

We rely upon our neighbors, and they rely upon us.

But mutual aid is intended to supplement local emergency-response capability.

It should not become a permanent substitute for a foreseeable local need.

A neighboring ladder truck may already be committed elsewhere when LaGrange needs it.

The same is true of engines, tankers, ambulances, and rescue resources.

During significant incidents throughout Dutchess County, every surrounding department is dealing with its own responsibility to maintain coverage for its residents.

So we think the issue can be stated very simply:

Mutual aid is an essential safety net. It should not become LaGrange's permanent staffing or apparatus plan.

Strengthening the Planning Board Liaison Process

We also want to recognize that LaGrange has already taken an important step in improving communication between the Fire District and the Town's project-review process.

Our current Fire Chief serves as a **liaison to the Planning Board**.

We appreciate that arrangement, and we believe it should remain in place.

The Chief is in the best position to address the operational aspects of a proposed project, including apparatus access, road widths, turning radii, hydrants, water supply, fire flow, emergency access, building configuration, rescue concerns, and other matters that directly affect fire and EMS operations.

That is valuable, and we are not asking to replace it.

We are asking to build upon it.

When we looked at what some of our neighboring communities are doing, we found that both **Pleasant Valley and East Fishkill** have taken additional steps to formally include fire-service concerns in the land-use review process.

Pleasant Valley has established a **Fire and Life Safety Review Board** that includes the Fire Chief, the Town Fire Inspector, and fire-service representation recommended by the Board of Fire Commissioners.

Importantly, applications going before the Pleasant Valley Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals are also reviewed for fire, life-safety, and emergency-service concerns, with recommendations provided back to the appropriate land-use board.

East Fishkill has taken a similar approach through its **Fire Advisory Board** and direct fire-service participation in Planning Board review.

East Fishkill has also recognized that identifying fire-service concerns early in the process can actually help a project by addressing access, water supply, fire protection, and other issues while plans can still be modified rather than after approvals or construction.

We are not suggesting that LaGrange needs to duplicate either town's exact structure.

We already have an important foundation through our Chief's role as Planning Board liaison.

What these neighboring communities demonstrate is the value of making that participation **formal, consistent, and broader when a project creates significant Fire District consequences.**

For routine projects, the Chief should continue to provide the operational review he provides today.

But there needs to be another level of review when a project moves beyond routine matters and begins to affect the Fire District's overall resources.

If a proposed project may create a need for additional career staffing, additional EMS capacity, specialized fire or rescue apparatus, an aerial

apparatus, additional staffing for our existing engines, ambulances, rescue apparatus, tankers, or other units, significant alterations to an existing station, acquisition of additional property, construction of a new fire station, or another substantial capital expenditure, then we believe the **Board of Fire Commissioners should also be formally brought into the discussion.**

There is an important distinction between the responsibilities of the Chief and the responsibilities of the Commissioners.

The Chief's responsibility is to explain:

“This is what we need operationally to safely protect this project.”

The Board of Fire Commissioners then has to answer a different set of questions.

What will it cost?

What apparatus will be required?

How will the entire emergency-response system continue to be properly staffed?

Where will additional apparatus be housed?

Does the existing station have the capacity?

Will additional land be necessary?

What are the recurring personnel and operating costs?

And ultimately, what will this mean to the Fire District taxpayer?

Those are not simply firefighting questions.

They are capital-planning, staffing, governmental, and financial questions.

That is why we believe the next logical step for LaGrange is to formalize a process in which significant projects trigger broader Fire District review.

The Chief would remain the primary operational liaison to the Planning Board.

But when the Chief determines that a project could create a significant staffing, apparatus, facility, or financial impact, a designated Fire Commissioner—or the full Board of Fire Commissioners when appropriate—should be notified and included.

The Chief would address operations.

The Commissioners would address staffing, apparatus, facilities, capital planning, and taxpayer impact.

And when the discussion involves possible project contributions, incentive zoning, community benefits, or other financial arrangements, those conversations should appropriately involve the **Town Board, Board of Fire Commissioners, Town Attorney, and Fire District Attorney.**

This also protects the Chief from being placed in a position that should not be his responsibility.

The Chief should not be expected to negotiate financial contributions from a project developer or make commitments regarding Fire District expenditures.

His job is to identify the operational need.

The Commissioners' job is to determine how that need can be provided and funded.

We believe this approach would strengthen what LaGrange already has without creating unnecessary bureaucracy.

Learning From Pleasant Valley and East Fishkill

We think there is value in looking at these neighboring towns because they demonstrate that LaGrange is not alone in confronting these issues.

Pleasant Valley has formally integrated fire and life-safety review into its Planning Board and Zoning Board process and provides for Fire District representation in that review structure.

East Fishkill has likewise established formal fire-service participation in project review and has recognized that certain projects can create public-safety impacts that should be addressed during the approval process.

East Fishkill has gone one step further in certain areas. Its Battery Energy Storage System regulations require applicants to enter into a **public benefit contribution agreement benefiting police, fire, Basic Life Support, and Advanced Life Support services**, with the amount and duration determined by the Town Board.

Again, we are not asking LaGrange to simply copy Pleasant Valley or East Fishkill.

We are saying:

Our neighboring communities have already recognized that fire and EMS cannot be an afterthought in the project-review process.

LaGrange already has the beginning of a good system through our Fire Chief's Planning Board liaison role.

We believe the opportunity now is to strengthen that system by establishing a clear process that brings the Board of Fire Commissioners into the discussion whenever a project moves from a routine operational review into a significant staffing, apparatus, facility, or financial issue.

That would give LaGrange the best of both approaches:

Professional operational review through the Fire Chief.

Long-range capital and financial review through the Board of Fire Commissioners.

And most importantly, it would allow those conversations to take place **before a project is approved and before the taxpayers inherit an emergency-service obligation that was never properly planned for.**

Development Should Be Part of the Solution

We believe the Town and Fire District should work together to identify lawful ways to address the additional emergency-service demands created by significant new projects.

We are **not asking project developers to fund the existing Fire District**, nor are we proposing a blanket fire impact fee.

Our concern is with new and identifiable demands created by a project that may require additional staffing, apparatus, facilities, or other emergency-service capacity.

When those circumstances exist, we believe the Town Board, Board of Fire Commissioners, Town Attorney, Fire District Attorney, and appropriate planning professionals should work together early in the process to determine what options may be available.

The goal is straightforward:

Plan for the emergency-service consequences of a project before the project creates those consequences.

Without that coordination, a project can be approved and occupied, additional emergency-service demands can arise, and the Fire District may then be left to address those needs through its existing taxpayers.

We believe those issues should be identified and discussed as part of the planning process, rather than after the need already exists.

What Are We Asking the Town Board to Do?

So what are the four Fire Commissioners actually asking the Town Board to do?

First, we ask that the Fire Chief's Planning Board liaison role be maintained and strengthened.

Second, we ask that major projects involving three-story construction, substantial density, large multifamily projects, unusual hazards, or significant fire-service implications receive broader Fire District review.

Third, if a project has the potential to create major staffing, apparatus, station, land, or capital implications, the Board of Fire Commissioners should be formally brought into the discussion.

Fourth, we ask for better communication regarding the Town's project pipeline so the Fire District can understand what may be coming three, five, and ten years from now.

Fifth, we ask that fire and EMS impacts become part of the overall review of significant projects — not simply hydrants and road width, but:

Staffing for the complete response system.

Engines and suppression apparatus.

Ambulances and ALS/BLS coverage.

Rescue apparatus.

Tankers and water-supply capability.

Potential aerial apparatus.

Station and facility capacity.

Capital costs.

Recurring operating costs.

And the actual Fire District revenue that can reasonably be expected from the project.

Sixth, we ask the Town Board to work with the Town Attorney and Fire District Attorney to investigate lawful project incentives and public-safety community-benefit mechanisms that could be appropriate for LaGrange.

And finally, we ask for a small joint working group involving representatives of the Town Board, Board of Fire Commissioners, Fire Chief, planning professionals, Town Attorney, and Fire District Attorney.

The purpose would not be to create another layer of bureaucracy.

The purpose would be to create communication, establish a clear process, and make sure that project planning and emergency-service planning move forward together.

The One Question

If we could reduce everything we have discussed today to one question, it would be this:

If LaGrange's future includes greater density, substantial new projects, and additional three-story construction, what is our collective plan to make sure the entire emergency-response system keeps pace?

Not simply one ladder truck.

That means:

The engines.

The ambulances.

The rescue apparatus.

The tankers.

The aerial apparatus, if required.

The firefighters, EMTs, and paramedics necessary to staff them.

The stations needed to house them.

The land.

And the financial resources necessary to sustain all of it.

Closing

We want to finish where we started.

The Town Board and the four Fire Commissioners have different responsibilities.

We have different budgets.

We have different challenges.

And sometimes we will naturally view an issue from different perspectives.

That is okay.

But we represent the same people.

When somebody calls 911, they do not care which board approved their project.

They do not care which taxing jurisdiction purchased the engine, ambulance, rescue truck, tanker, or ladder truck.

They do not care which budget pays the firefighter, EMT, or paramedic.

And the person involved in an accident on the Taconic may not even live in LaGrange.

At that moment, none of that matters.

They simply expect LaGrange to respond.

And they should.

We are not asking LaGrange to stop growing.

We are asking LaGrange to **plan completely for that growth.**

We are asking that emergency services be part of project planning from the beginning.

We are asking that the financial and operational consequences of growth be recognized before they become emergencies.

We are asking that the Planning Board liaison process LaGrange already has be strengthened.

We are asking that the Board of Fire Commissioners be brought into the discussion when a project creates substantial staffing, apparatus, facility, or financial implications.

And when we talk about staffing, we are not talking about staffing only a future ladder truck.

We are talking about maintaining the personnel necessary to staff and operate the entire emergency-response system that LaGrange depends upon.

We are asking that LaGrange learn from approaches already being used in neighboring communities so existing taxpayers do not automatically become the only source available to fund every new emergency-service requirement.

And most importantly, we are asking for a partnership.

A partnership between the Town Board and the Board of Fire Commissioners.

A partnership with the Fire Chief and our firefighters, EMTs, and paramedics.

A partnership with the Planning Board and Town professionals.

A partnership with responsible project developers.

And a partnership with the residents and taxpayers whom all of us serve.

Our common goal should be simple:

Make sure the LaGrange we are building today is a LaGrange we can safely and affordably protect tomorrow.

Thank you.