



LAGRANGE FIRE DISTRICT

504 Freedom Plains Rd • Poughkeepsie, NY 12603



MINUTES BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS Special Workshop Meeting Tuesday, September 8, 2026

FIRE DISTRICT ATTENDEES:	Chairman Marc Komorsky Commissioner Robert Taft Chief Anthony Champion <i>(late)</i>	Commissioner Vincent Tierney Commissioner Jeff Kaiser Secretary Bria Le
TOWN BOARD ATTENDEES:	Town Supervisor Anthony Marinaro Councilmember Franco Giangrasso Councilmember Richard Ryan Town Clerk Christine O'Reilly-Rao	Councilmember Susan Condon Councilmember Kelly Robin

At 12:00 PM, the LaGrange Fire District Board of Fire Commissioners sat down with the LaGrange Town Board. In attendance from the LaGrange Fire District were Chairman Marc Komorsky, Commissioner Robert Taft, Commissioner Jeff Kaiser, Commissioner Vincent Tierney, District Secretary Bria Le, and Fire Chief Anthony Champion (who joined the meeting late). In attendance from the LaGrange Town Board were Supervisor Anthony Marinaro, Councilperson Susan Condon, Councilperson Franco Giangrasso, Councilperson Kelly Robin, Councilperson Richard Ryan, and Town Clerk Christine O'Reilly-Rao.

Fire Commissioner Taft said that he is grateful that they can meet together and are hoping to establish a good relationship between the District and the Town. Next he read the attached presentation. Once done with the presentation, Commissioner Taft said that he knows it is a lot of information, but it boils down to that they all live in the town, they have different positions, but they are interconnected. Lengthy discussion followed regarding the challenges facing the fire district and the ever-increasing costs to maintain the level of emergency services in the town.

At 1:21 PM, the discussion concluded.

Respectfully submitted by
Bria Le, District Secretary
Approved by the Board of Fire Commissioners on 9/22/26

BoFC Special Meeting 9/8/26

Please note that this meeting was conducted in person at 120 Stringham Road in LaGrangeville, NY.

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.