

**Town of Rolesville, North Carolina
Fire Service Unification Initiative
Session #4 Working Notes**

August 31, 2021 - 3pm-5:25pm – In Person – Rolesville Town Hall

Attendance:

- Mayor Ronnie Currin, Town of Rolesville ron.currin@rolesville.nc.gov
- Commissioner Jacky Wilson, Town of Rolesville jacky.wilson@rolesville.nc.gov
- Commissioner April Sneed, Town of Rolesville april.sneed@rolesville.nc.gov
- Town Manager Kelly Arnold, Town of Rolesville kelly.arnold@rolesville.nc.gov
- Finance Director Amy Stevens, Town of Rolesville amy.stevens@rolesville.nc.gov
- Human Resources Director Lisa Alston , Town of Rolesville Lisa.Alston@rolesville.nc.gov
- Pres. Spence Jones, Rolesville Rural Fire Department (RRFD) Spence@actelectricinc.com
- Frank Pearce, Jr., RRFD Board Secretary/Treasurer N/A
- Herbert Holding, RRFD Board hholding@rolesvillefire.com
- Chief Rodney Privette, RRFD chief@rolesvillefire.com
- Assistant Chief Donnie Lawrence, RRFD AsstChief@rolesvillefire.com
- Captain Jacob Butler, RRFD jbutler@rolesvillefire.com
- Captain Brian Ward, RRFD bward@rolesvillefire.com
- Darrell Alford, Wake County Fire Services Director Darrell.Alford@wakegov.com
- Greg Grayson, NC Fire Chief Consulting as facilitator only ggrayson@NCFireChief.com

A. Review of Working Notes from Session 3:

1. Town Manager Kelly Arnold welcomed the group and asked Greg Grayson to review highlights of the working notes from Session # 3. One correction was noted under item 8 in a statement by RRFD Board Member Herbert Holding that should read that it was unfair to the current RRFD Fire Chief and other staff for the Town to hire a full-time Fire Chief before getting the working relationship where it needs to be between the Town and the Rural Fire Department Board. Changes were made accordingly to the notes.

B. Subcommittee Report on Town and Current Employee Meeting:

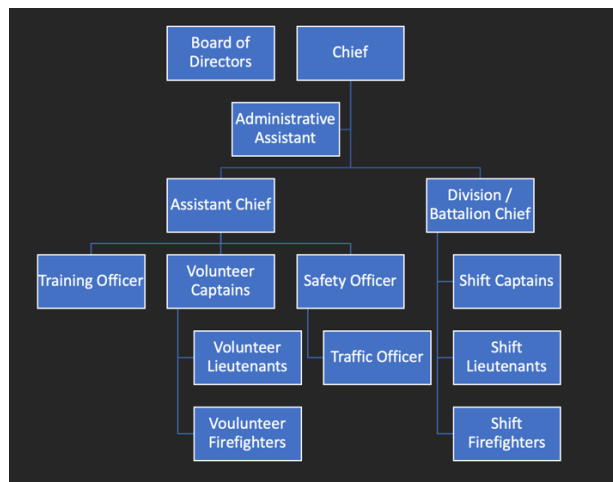
1. Kelly Arnold provided a report regarding meeting with all current RRFD career firefighters, along with Fire Chief Privette and Town HR Director Alston . The career firefighters stated that they have strong support to move forward with unification with the Town. The career firefighters felt that now was the right opportunity.
2. Principal concerns heard from the career firefighters were around transitioning to Town benefits such as with longevity, allowances for shift work impacts on annual and sick leave, staffing and other benefits. Each item will need to be reviewed to ensure equity.
 - a. The Town will put responses to the submitted concerns into written form and provide back to the employees at a later time when the issues have been vetted.
 - b. Some items will also need to be addressed to the volunteers as well.

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3. There was also open concern expressed about health care insurance. However, under both the Town's insurance AND the RRFD's insurance, no coverage is provided when leaving employment. There is no known resolve to this concern at this time.
4. During this section of the meeting, Mayor Currin recognized that a concern had been expressed by a RRFD volunteer that the volunteer firefighters may not be fully represented within this work group.
 - a. There was support from a majority of the work team to add an additional person to the group to represent the volunteers, yielding to the RRFD Board. The RRFD Board advised that they would consider adding a volunteer representative.
 - b. In addition, it was requested that the Town staff seek a method to make a link to the information easier to find on the Town web site.

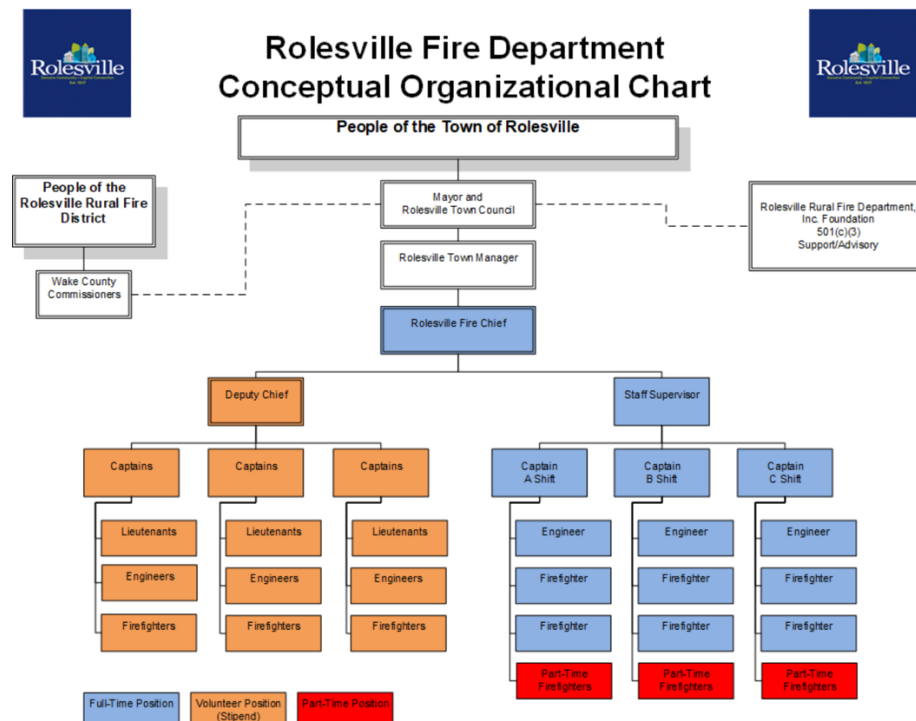
C. Review of the Current RRFD Organizational Chart and Proposals Upon Unification:

1. RRFD Chief Privette reviewed the current RRFD organizational chart. In particular, he reported that he was now seeking to fill a Division/Battalion Chief position that has been vacant since losing Chief Roy Ed Jones approximately 5 years ago.
 - a. This position is currently budgeted as a part-time position and Chief Privette desires to fill this role with a full-time person to supplement daily staffing needs. It was noted that this upgrade was not included in the FY 21-22 county budget.
 - b. Chief Privette reported that daily staffing was generally at 4 firefighters on duty at any time plus part-time firefighters that may be working.
 - i. Typically, two firefighters respond on medical emergencies in a smaller vehicle, which leaves only two firefighters to handle the next call and any fire calls.
 - c. Chief Privette reported that there are currently 33 volunteer firefighters on the department's roster and 44 on the total roster.



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2. Greg Grayson presented a conceptual organizational model that followed the Council/Manager form of government, represented the rural residents through the Wake County Board of Commissioners and utilized the RRFD as a non-profit corporation in a support/advisory capacity and foundation type group. Both career and volunteer personnel were depicted. Specific numbers and ranks of volunteer personnel were not indicated at this time with the information available.
 - a. Chief Privette suggested naming the chart Rolesville Fire Department to reflect the same name on the new fire apparatus that has been ordered.



D. Review of August 10, 2021 “Items of Concern from Rolesville Rural Fire Department Board of Directors”:

1. Chief Privette reported that items # 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 had been properly covered in the career firefighter’s questions and discussion with the Town and did not need further consideration by this group at this time. The Town will need to respond to the career firefighter’s questions in writing to resolve those items.
2. For item #6, Chief Privette discussed the importance of maintaining the stipends for volunteers to help offset their fuel and reimbursable expenses as they had been in place for many years. There was consensus for maintaining the current volunteer stipend program under the Wake County guidelines. Note that this item of interest was previously agreed upon by the work group during session 1.

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3. Related to Item #7, there was significant discussion on the implementation timeline. There was a review of the original analysis report, a review of the progress made since the original report and agreement that the key reason bringing the group to the table was to help the career firefighters with necessary benefits.
 - a. The group discussed the long-term need for Fire Station 2. Wake County Fire Services Director Darrell Alford clarified that if the County built the fire station, it must in response to the county's data analysis depicting that the fire station was essential to the overall service delivery system using the standard of cover of a 7-minute travel time.
 - b. However, it was clearly noted and agreed upon that a 7-minute travel time was extensive for a municipal area and that a shorter travel time would be expected of most municipal residents. Should the Town build Rolesville Fire Station 2, Wake County would cost-share on the fire station, just as they do on Fire Station 1 today – as well as many other municipal fire stations across the county that serve both a municipality and unincorporated area.
 - c. There was agreement and consensus that a merger/unification date would be effective on July 1 of a year. However, there was not enough information at this time to make a commitment on the effective year for the RRFD and the Town of Rolesville. The specific implementation date was placed in a temporary "parking spot" for the immediate time.
4. Chief Privette reported that items # 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 were to leave those persons and structure in place only until the full unification occurs. There was discussion that the current Fire Chief would need to work together with the new municipal Fire Chief in order to make a smooth and orderly transition.
5. On item # 13, Chief Privette outlined that the RRFD Board would like to retain the name of Rolesville Rural Fire Department, Inc., and the Town's fire department to be Rolesville Fire Department.
6. For item # 14, Chief Privette advised that the RRFD Board requested an annual budget allocation of \$15,000 as well as retaining title to a building (the Chamber Building) that would not be titled to the Town within the transition agreement to house the private, non-profit corporation and the vehicles that the private, non-profit organization would retain ownership and maintenance of (1958 Fire Truck, 1967 Brush Truck as noted in Item #19).
 - a. The RRFD would also desire to keep a storage building for access to Fireman's Day cooking equipment (Item #21) and keep the related Firemen's Day Fund (Item #22).

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7. Item #15 concerned getting Fire Station 2 construction moving forward. RRFD advises that the property at Old Pearce Road is owned by the RRFD and is currently in the unincorporated area of the county but could be annexed by the Town. RRFD would provide restricted funds towards the construction of this station and would desire to see the Town commit to construction of the fire station and begin construction within two (2) years from the date of July, 2021. The designated amount of funds from RRFD towards the fire station was not specified.
 - a. Wake County had acknowledged earlier that if the fire station was primarily for municipal service that the county would only cost share on the facility.
 - b. Manager Kelly Arnold brought forward discussion about collaboration with the Town of Wake Forest for a three-way split for this fire station to serve the Town of Rolesville, Wake County and the Town of Wake Forest. In reciprocity, there were areas where the Town of Wake Forest could help serve the Town of Rolesville through an interlocal governmental agreement.
 - i. The group was agreeable to this approach to service delivery, aligning it to the progressive service model currently being utilized in Apex/Cary/Morrisville with a seamless delivery system.
 - c. RRFD currently has some debt service on the Old Pearce Road property.
 - d. Item #18 notes daily minimum staffing needs will increase with the addition of Fire Station Two.
8. Item #16 noted the needs of the current fire station facility and that attention to that building is needed as soon as apparatus and personnel are located at Fire Station 2.
9. For item #17, the RRFD Board clarified there were agreements made at the time of acquisition on properties for future fire stations that they would be used only for public safety purposes.
10. Chief Privette expressed desire to keep the Firemen's Relief Fund. It was noted under state statute that under the municipal model, the composition of the Relief Fund would shift to being composed to 2 members named by the Town, 2 members being named by the fire department and 1 person named by the Insurance Commissioner.
11. Last, there was desire expressed to maintain or improve both the rural and municipal insurance rating (ISO) schedule under the Town's direction and control.

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Rolesville Rural Fire Department, Inc.

VOLUNTEER FIREMEN to SERVE YOU

Rolesville Fire District
PO Box 249
Rolesville, NC 27571

ITEMS OF CONCERN FROM ROLESVILLE RURAL FIRE DEPARTMENT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

REGARDING UNIFICATION

August 10, 2021

1. Fulltime Employees: (grandfather their leave, vacation, benefits etc.)
2. Will employees be able to continue with their seniority from Rolesville Rural Fire Department?
3. Employee's benefits (need in writing what will be grandfathered in) How much cost to employee?
4. What will be the requirements for employee promotions if under the town?
5. What is the history of COLA, merit raises, etc. during the last 5 years?
6. Volunteers (what is in this for a volunteer?) Will they be able to keep their stipend?
7. Timeline to merge 7/01/2022 not feasible. Realistic date – July 2025
8. Chief – (leave in place)
9. Assistant Chief - (leave in place)
10. Secretary/Treasurer - (leave in place)
11. Admin. - (leave in place)
12. Fire Department Board of Directors - (leave in place)
13. Keep the same name and let Town establish a new Fire Department name.
14. Land and properties? Keep? Who will pay the taxes, maintenance, lawn care, power bill etc.? After unification town will commit \$15,000 annually for upkeep and maintenance on 1958 Fire Truck, 1967 brush truck and property next to fire station.
15. Request immediate construction of Old Pearce Road station (contact county to share cost). Deed property to Town once construction is committed and started. Town should commit to funding in budget for Station 2 at Old Pearce Road. Utilize study done by Greg Grayson in 2017. Rolesville Rural Fire Department and Town to notify Wake County to start the substation process and confirm cost share with the Town and County. Start construction within 2 years from July 2021 at which time Rolesville Rural Fire Department will deed property to Town. Rolesville Rural Fire Department will provide restricted funds that have been set aside for this project. This will show good faith in the unification process. Failure to proceed with this project could delay unification.
16. Renovate existing station following construction of Old Pearce Road station. Apparatus will be moved to new station.
17. Deeds have restriction that property be offered back to original owners if not being used as public safety.
18. Increase staffing to man ladder truck, second truck out and cover new station.
19. Trucks (keep old Unit 1 and Brush-159 under current FD name).
20. Public perception. Need statement for town website
21. Keep storage building for permanent access to Rolesville Rural Fire Department and maintain ownership of all fireman's day cooking equipment.
22. Keep Firemen's Day Fund
23. Keep Firemen's Relief Fund
24. Incorporated and unincorporated fire district be treated equal and maintain current or better ISO rating (currently class 3 in town and class 4 in rural).

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E. Is This Working Group Prepared to Enter Into An Agreement for Unification? If so, How To Proceed:

1. Discussion was held regarding setting up realistic steps, duties, and dates to form a legal, binding agreement that both parties could not go back on. This agreement would include all provisions of property, deeds, responsibilities, etc.
2. The Town of Rolesville plans to take the matter to the full Town Board Tuesday, September 7 to determine if the majority of the Town Board is still interested in pursuing such an agreement and if so, how soon.
3. NCFCC was asked to develop a template of an agreement broken down by component for the next meeting that would enable discussion of the different components that needed to be worked out and who would be responsible for which component(s).

F. Next Steps:

1. There was agreement for this group to meet again on Wednesday September 22, 2021, at 3pm at the Rolesville Town Hall in-person again.
 - a. Key topics planned for discussion are:
 - i. Town Board Report
 - ii. Finance Sub-Committee Report
 - iii. Break Down Model of Template Agreement
 - b. Kelly Arnold will send meeting notices out.

Key Group Decisions Made During This Session (Session #4):

4a) There was consensus of the group that it was appropriate for the RRFD Board to handle securing an additional person on this work group to represent the volunteers if so desired.

4b) There was agreement and consensus that a merger/unification date would be effective on July 1 of a year.

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Previous Key Group Decisions:

- 3a) Agreement that the Town's web site will be the platform to house information about the potential merger/unification process to keep all stakeholders up to date.
- 2a) Agreement that the Town will set up a preliminary informational page on the Town web site regarding the unification process to keep all stakeholders up to date.
- 2b) Agreement that under a merger, any antique trucks would remain under the ownership of the private, non-profit corporation and would not become Town assets.
- 2c) Agreement to establish a budget subcommittee to project potential FY 22-23 costs should the fire department be under Town Government and report back to the full group.
- 1a) Agreement was to set the target date of merger/unification for July 1, 2022, with a revisit of that date in December, 2021 to determine the feasibility of that date.
- 1b) Agreement to keep volunteer firefighters and that message needs to be clearly articulated by all, to help counter any inaccurate media reporting.
- 1c) Agreement to support volunteerism and that a volunteer stipend was important and should remain regardless of any changes.
- 1d) Agreement that the mutual goal was to retain good fire employees and be able to recruit good fire employees in the future.
- 1e) Agreement that the current full-time fire employees would remain as Town employees if merged as long as they met the Town's minimum employment requirements.
- 1f) Agreement that after the merger, the Town would have the full responsibility of hiring new firefighters if someone left by attrition.
- 1g) Agreement that all fire employees would be required to operate under the Town of Rolesville requirements once they became employees of the Town.