

**Town of Rolesville, North Carolina**  
**Fire Service Unification Initiative**  
**Session #8 Working Notes**

**March 23, 2022 – 3:00pm-4:40pm – In Person – Rolesville Town Hall**

**Attendance:**

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

**Absent:**

- Finance Director Amy Stevens, Town of Rolesville [amy.stevens@rolesville.nc.gov](mailto:amy.stevens@rolesville.nc.gov)
- Herbert Holding, RRFD Board [hholding@rolesvillefire.com](mailto:hholding@rolesvillefire.com)

**A. Review of Working Notes from Session 7 :**

1. Key highlights of Session #7 were provided to the group by Greg Grayson.
2. Errors and omissions in the report were requested. No changes were noted and the notes can be posted on the Town website.

**B. FY 2022-2023 Proposed Fire Budget Review:**

1. Chief Privette, Mr. Arnold and Mr. Alford all reported on this item and advised the group that the overall emphasis had been to “right size” the Rolesville Fire budget this year as the three different entities had worked collaboratively together. The FY 22-23 budget process enables the county, town, and fire department to all use the same systems and structures to make the budgeting more streamlined moving forward.
2. Mr. Alford advised that the county budget was in the “recommended” phase at this point and was still subject to final approval by the Board of Commissioners. However, he reported that within the recommended budget, there was a significant increase for Rolesville Fire from Wake County with the FY 22-23 budget totaling **\$1,724,893**. Wake County’s portion of this budget is 45.66% (or \$799,586 with twelve equal payments of \$65,632 per month).

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The Town of Rolesville's portion is 54.34% (or \$925,307).

The Town of Rolesville's payment distribution frequency for FY 22-23 for the operational budget will be made in twelve equal payments, just as Wake County utilizes.

3. Personnel increases within the FY 22-23 proposed budget for Rolesville Fire include accounting for part-time personnel for 1,600 hours that had not previously been included in the budget.  
There was also a \$2.50 per hour increase for personnel due to the county's recent fair labor market study.  
In addition, the recommended budget did include the weekday supervisor (Battalion Chief) position that the department had requested.  
Furthermore, there will be \$1,800 per full-time person allocated for cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) plus a 4% merit allocation.  
Last, there will be some mid-year pay compression increases for employees that will be effective in January 2023.  
All of these pay adjustments will require the Town of Rolesville to provide additional Town funding to cost match the County contributions at the 45.66%/54.34% County/Town ratios.
4. Mr. Alford reported that any other additional staffing requests from Rolesville were not included in the FY 22-23 budget at this time because Rolesville Fire was able to respond to 90% or more of all emergency calls for service in 7 minutes or less and that on structure fire calls in the primary fire district, there were 16 people or more on scene in 12 minutes or less 90% of the time.  
This demonstrated performance measurement factor includes automatic aid and includes structure fires of significance where hose lines are deployed on the ground. This overall analysis is run by Wake County every six months and will be continuously re-evaluated.
5. Beyond the personnel related increases, Mr. Alford reported a lengthy list of capital replacement items for Rolesville Fire.  
In each of these items, Rolesville Fire will purchase the item that has been approved, then Wake County will reimburse Rolesville Fire for that item up to the amount that has been approved in the budget.  
This is the typical process to ensure that the fire department uses the funds to only purchase the capital items that have been approved and not for any other purpose. The most significant on the long list of capital replacements for Rolesville Fire were several self-contained breathing equipment units (SCBAs).  
During the interim period, the Town of Rolesville will use the same reimbursement process for capital expenditures that Wake County uses, with Rolesville Fire purchasing the approved capital and then the Town reimbursing.

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6. The Town of Rolesville acknowledges that they will have expenses beyond the 54.34% in the following three items where there is existing debt service:
  - a) Debt service payment on the ladder truck,
  - b) Debt service for the Old Pearce's Road property, and
  - c) Debt service on the 2022 Rescue truck that has been ordered.
  
7. Mr. Arnold asked Mr. Alford about Wake County funding the Rolesville Fire Station 1 building condition analysis by an architect at a cost of approximately \$15,000 to determine the feasibility of renovating the building and the projected cost of renovating the building to bring the facility up to industry/construction standard. Mr. Alford advised that Wake County would be willing to do that in the FY 21-22 budget under contracted services with remaining funds. Furthermore, Mr. Arnold asked Mr. Alford about supporting the merger/unification process facilitation costs and Mr. Alford advised that he would again look at assisting with that for FY 21-22 as well under contracted services, with further discussion.
  
8. The need for conducting a full fire station location analysis was brought up again. Mr. Alford advised that Wake County would not be able to help fund that initiative in either the FY 21-22 or FY 22-23 budgets. However, that request could go into the FY 23-24 budget request process and could be considered at that time.  
Cost for such an initiative would be in the \$15-\$20K range for Rolesville.

**C. Review of Drafted Resolutions for the Town of Rolesville and the Rolesville Rural Fire Department, Inc.:**

1. Greg Grayson reviewed key components of two parallel DRAFT resolution documents with the group.  
The next step in the progression of the merger/unification process is for each governing board to adopt a resolution that takes formal action demonstrating a firm commitment to following through with a merger/unification and directing the staff and/or officers of each group to form a "definitive agreement" or contract between the Town of Rolesville and the Rolesville Rural Fire Department, Inc.
  
2. The purpose of the resolution is not to be all inclusive or legally binding. That role will be for the contract document that will follow.  
However, the resolution can address the most essential elements that both parties agree to up front. These resolutions may be thought of as "foundational" or "building blocks" for the much more detailed contract document.

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The resolution is also a document of good will or good intent that more formally declares what is most important to each group and gives some direction to the staff or representatives of each group how to best move forward together.

The resolution needs to give direction to actions and expectations for both parties between now and the final contract document being signed.

It is envisioned that the resolutions could be developed and agreed upon between now and July 2022. The contract component may take six months or so of work to complete and would require assistance from each group's respective attorneys.

3. The two DRAFT documents virtually mirror each other with the elements, only the perspective or viewpoints are different. Several key items that have been discussed in this larger group are noted in the resolution, including:
  - Providing NCLGERS is an essential component for the current RRFD employees.
  - The effective date set is July 1, 2024.
  - The Town agrees to accept responsibility for providing fire and rescue services in BOTH the Town and the unincorporated district.
  - Full-time employees are to be offered employment with the Town if they meet the minimum criteria and they will have the Town's typical 12-month probationary period waived.
  - The Town agrees to dedicate all RRFD financial reserves to only providing fire and rescue service capital needs and not for other Town purposes.
  - There is a plan for the interim budget years of FY 22-23 and FY 23-24.
  - During this interim time, the RRFD agrees to not make any material changes without the consent of the Town and comply with the contracts.
  
4. The DRAFT documents provided to the two groups are meant to be a starting point of discussion. It was suggested that each group take the DRAFT documents back and review those and begin noting areas of concern or points that they were uncomfortable with.

**D. Other Report Outs from the Group:**

1. None were made.

**E. Next Steps/Proceed with Smaller Working Group:**

1. It was agreed a working group of six people to work with the process facilitator on the resolutions and ultimately the contract document would be ideal.

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2. During the meeting, the Town named three people – Town Commissioner April Sneed, Town Manager Kelly Arnold, and Town Finance Director Amy Stevens to represent the Town.
3. The RRFD requested to defer until their next Board meeting to name their three representatives to this working group. The next RRFD Board meeting is scheduled for April 11, 2022, and the RRFD agreed to notify who their three representatives will be at that time.
4. This smaller working group will meet as soon as possible with the goal to reach consensus on the joint resolutions, so that the resolutions can go to the respective governing boards for their consideration. It is the goal to have these resolutions before each respective board before July 1, 2022.
5. This working group will plan to meet in late April 2022 and will plan to use Zoom as much as possible to be efficient.

The full group will plan to come back together in June 2022 at a date and time yet to be determined.

**Key Group Decisions Made During This Session (Session #8):**

The Town of Rolesville will mirror Wake County’s method of distribution of operational and capital funds to Rolesville Fire in the interim period by providing twelve equal payments for operational funds and reimbursements for approved capital expenditures.

A working group of six people, composed of three from the Town and three from the RRFD, will develop the resolutions that will be needed to enable both boards to officially adopt a plan of action to begin developing a “definitive agreement” or contract to merge/unify the Town and fire department.

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**Previous Key Group Decisions:**

7a) The Wake County budget process would be used as the common platform to transition to one singular budget and that RRFD, the Town and the County would all work collectively together to submit a FY 22-23 budget and work collaboratively through the upcoming budget process. This work would involve the Financial sub-committee that has already been formed.

6a) Wake County fiscal support for Fire Station 2 will be possible only under the municipal cost share model with the Town of Rolesville. Current data does not support Wake County funding Rolesville Fire Station 2 in another manner under the current County policies.

5a) There was consensus understanding that a written agreement must be in place and that the Town must own property that any building was constructed upon using Town funds.

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.

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.

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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.