

530 Spring

CITY OF NORTHAMPTON, MASSACHUSETTS

FIRE DEPARTMENT

***FORGING A NEW IDENTITY AND SPIRIT OF
SERVICE FOR THE 21 ST CENTURY***

***AN ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
ACTION***

***PREPARED BY
MUNICIPAL RESOURCES, INC***

Municipal Resources, Inc.

The Honorable Mary L. Ford, Mayor
City of Northampton
City Hall, 210 Main St.
Northampton, MA 01060

September 5, 1997

Dear Mayor Ford:

We are pleased to transmit our report entitled "City of Northampton Fire Department, Forging A New Identity and Spirit of Service For The 21st Century, An Analysis And Recommendations For Action".

We appreciate the opportunity to serve Northampton as well as the spirit of cooperation and openness which we encountered throughout City Government. We hope that this report will be a useful focus for the policy discussions and management decisions ahead.

A few words about this report and the Fire Department: We have tried to be constructive throughout, but we have pulled no punches and we pull none now. The Fire Department, as an organization, has a long way to go to become an effective emergency organization and a contributing partner with other organizations within City Government. The challenges to be overcome stem from an antiquated organization and approach to operations as well as a very self defeating and internalized organizational culture.

However, we found most members of the Department anxious to become more professional, better trained and well disciplined contributors to the protection of life and property in the broadest sense. They are doing their individual best now but they know they can do better.

For them to really do better, the organization and its culture must change fundamentally and significantly. This report recommends that significant organizational and cultural changes be made. It is time to shed the self pity in which the existing organization has been mired since the Proposition 2 1/2 cuts. It is time for the Department to challenge itself to become all it can be with the resources now available. It is time for them to focus on the development of logical and defensible longer range programs and present them in a way that make sense to City policy makers and administrators so they can make informed policy decisions.

This report proposes the adoption of a significantly new, modern and much different formal organization than is now in place. This proposed organization reflects the experience gained as the fire service everywhere has had to deal with a significantly more complicated regulatory world which governs its own activities while being constantly faced with a more complicated (albeit often subtle as compared to 5 alarm fires) emergency response requirement universe all the while getting the job done with fewer resources. It reduces the number of deputy chiefs from five to two while restructuring the two to have Department wide responsibilities and places a much greater responsibility for conducting operations deeper down in the organization and directly with those who are doing the heavy lifting in operations, anyway--the captains and the fire fighters.

To the firefighters we would say that, "you can't change the wind, but you must adjust your sails. It is your responsibility to run your ship and make the most of what you have". It is time to stop looking back and to start turning your attention to your responsibilities in forging a more positive future.

To the policy makers and administrators we would say that once the Department has shown it can make all the adjustments they can under the conditions, it will need your most favorable winds.

To all, thanks from Chief Pepler, Chief Nadeau and myself for your cooperation and assistance during this study.

Sincerely,

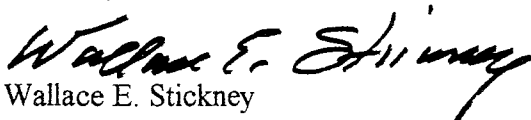

Wallace E. Stickney

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Scope of This Report

This report assesses the present capabilities of the Northampton Fire Department and makes recommendations for actions required to forge a new identity, a new mission and a renewed spirit of service for the 21st century. The goal is to provide the Mayor, the City Council the Fire Department, the Community and future Department officials with a presentation of the key issues which must be discussed and decided in order for the much needed transformation to occur.

After a general discussion to set the context, detailed analyses and recommendations for action are provided in the following specific areas:

- The role and mission of the Fire Service in the context of the City's delivery system for public safety services;
- The formal organizational structure;
- Staffing levels;
- Management practices, both personnel and operations;
- Safety practices;
- Staff training and professional development programs and standards;
- Fire prevention /education activities
- Fire Chief job description and qualifications necessary

Report Methodology

The analyses and recommendations followed extensive fact finding based on existing records, a wide range of interviews (listed in appendix III) and discussions initially and return visits to check information. All is based on the experience of the authors (summarized in appendix IV), accepted fire service organization and published codes of practice.

We want to especially note the cooperation and assistance of Mike Vito, John Musante and Acting Chief Passa. They helped set up schedules and dug deep to find the requested information. Acting Chief Passa also deserves a "E" for effort in attempting to change the Department direction and culture while working in difficult organizational circumstances.

A word about report organization: We have placed our recommendations pertinent to each section immediately following our analysis. This, we hope, will make it easier for the reader to compare our evaluations with our analysis. We also hope it will encourage readers to read the whole report rather than picking out their favorite recommendation and ignoring others which are just as or maybe even more important. Critical recommendations (the most important ones) are printed in bold type and noted as either operationally critical, organizationally critical or both. **An operationally critical recommendation deals with a matter of health, safety or fireground performance of the**

firefighters and they should be considered short term, get-it-done efforts. Organizational critical recommendations are also very important but by their very nature, take much longer to accomplish.

A Gentle Caution to All Readers

Historical information is useful for understanding context, making sure the analyst is well grounded and making sure that everybody learns from the past, no more and no less. It will not be helpful to use this information to condemn the past. Rather all energies must be spent in improving the future. The historical information, our analysis and our recommendations are presented with this purpose in mind and the hope that energy and attention will be focused future improvement rather than past travails. Our recommendations for action in this report are grounded in the knowledge that good firefighters and officers want to be liberated from their self made organizational prison so they might accomplish more in their chosen profession and not left to toil there with little hope to be able to serve in and be part of a well disciplined highly trained lean, tough, broadly based and modern fire and safety organization.

A concise review of each of the subject areas follows:

The Role and Mission of the Fire Service in Northampton

Presently the fire service plays a very limited role. The mind set seems to be that their existence resembles that of an insurance policy which is nice to have when needed but allowed to languish on the shelf until something happens. The Department, apparently already mired in a 50's mindset, seized upon the cuts imposed as a result of Proposition 2 1/2 as a reason to feel sorry for itself rather than accepting the challenge to deal with the imposed change. After years of this attitude they have fallen significantly behind the times organizationally and operationally--so far behind, in fact that adding personnel to the existing organization and its culture offers no assurance at all of additional protection for the Community.

wait on add'l personnel

The Department has consistently exhibited an unusually cantankerous and sometimes adversarial relationship with City government in general. It has resisted change and several attempts by City administrations to be helpful. The focus and culture of this organization needs to change and change quickly. Firefighters need to function as fire fighters and fire officers as fire officers and they must cease trying to run the City from the central station. Individual members who believe their roles are to set Community policy should resign and pursue a career in the policy making aspects of public service and not sap energy from the professional firefighters to want only to "be the best that they can be" in any given situation. The report suggests a process through which the Department and the City can agree on future actions and general goals.

In general, the mission of the fire service must be the preservation of life, property and the environment. Responding to emergencies is but a single element in accomplishing this mission and much more can be done with the resources available. These elements are listed on page 6 of the report.

In a sense, the text and recommendations in this section are a workbook which does not lend itself to summary form. Consequently, we have not tried to do so in this summary and we encourage that it be read and tested against the reader's experience.

The Formal Organizational Structure:

The Northampton Fire Department, has operated for nearly one hundred years. It is now staffed by 56 employees, including a fire chief, a secretary, five deputy chiefs, eight captains, one mechanic and forty firefighters. Only the fire chief, fire prevention deputy, secretary and the mechanic work days, Monday through Friday. All other officers work firefighter shifts.

The Board of Fire Engineers is composed of the Chief and the Deputy Chiefs. This "Board" has been in existence since the beginning. ~~They meet once a month to review and discuss issues. A Board of Engineers is a very old tradition in the fire service, but few communities still utilize this method of management because of its inefficiency.~~ In Northampton's case, Deputies work shifts which further reduces their overall contribution to unified management.

~~This management challenge has lead inexorably to the creation of a department having four distinct management and operating personalities (actually five if the Prevention Deputy is included). This is evident both within the Department and to those on the outside trying to communicate with the Department. Department wide commitment to culture, mission, strategy and tactics is impossible to achieve in the present organization.~~

One deputy (acting as shift commander), two captains and ten firefighters (a total of 13) are assigned to each of the four groups on shifts that rotate to insure 24 hour coverage. The shifts are divided into "companies", two, three or four firefighters assigned to specific equipment or tasks on the shift. One company is assigned to Florence, all other personnel to the central station.

The organization must provide adequate resources at the strategic, tactical and task levels. The existing organization fails to do this. Only the fire chief and a secretary are responsible for planning, organizing, directing and evaluating services as well as day to day management of the department as a whole. The position of deputy chief should carry with it department wide responsibility and authority, but, the deputy chiefs in Northampton operate at the tactical level as narrowly focused shift commanders.

Captains, not deputy chiefs, should operate at the tactical level as shift commanders. While this study team supports the concept of supervisors not being in the same bargaining unit as subordinates (Captains and firefighters are in the same unit), Captains, not Deputy Chiefs belong in the front seat of an attack engine company. The bargaining unit issue is less important than the organizational issue.

Captains currently function as single company officers or first line supervisors (working foremen). One is assigned to each station on each group. In modern fire service organizations, captains typically serve as shift commanders with operating responsibility for several companies, and often are assigned limited staff responsibilities as well. The first level of supervision (the working foreman) is typically a lieutenant. There are no lieutenants in the present structure.

The task level of this organization consists of 40 firefighters. Everything in this report should be viewed with an eye on supporting this small army.

This report recommends options which establish the position of assistant chief, eliminates three deputy chiefs and re-focusses the responsibilities of the two remaining deputies. places captains in the role of shift commanders (second line supervisor), a role now held by deputies and creates the position of lieutenant as first line supervisor or working foreman.

REORG.
SUMMARY

All officers with five years service or more should be allowed to compete for these positions. Present deputy chiefs who are not selected for the reorganized and fewer deputy chief positions should continue to function as shift supervisors as they do now and their title eliminated when they retire or leave. The creation of lieutenants offers a logical career progression for firefighters and the opportunity for management to evaluate their capabilities as they progress. Details and explanations are presented in the main body of this report and should be carefully evaluated in their entirety.

Staffing levels

Staffing of a contemporary fire department is based upon the level of risk a community is willing to accept given event history and potential as well as the willingness and ability to pay for stated levels of protection, interviews with community leaders, the basic level of service desired included the ability to extend search and rescue services to entrapped occupants and to confine fire to a building of origin. Many of the downtown buildings are complex challenges. The ability to respond to and manage two incidents simultaneously was also mentioned as a desired service.

The level of fire protection service offered by communities varies tremendously. Staffing is a critical component of a comprehensive fire protection system, but not the only component. Building construction, size, access, time of day, built in fire detection and

alarm systems, topography, travel distances, water supply, weather conditions, training, equipment, personnel fitness, strategy and tactics all play a role on the outcome of a fire incident. Staffing alone does not ensure that the stated levels of protection will be afforded. What really counts is the effective use of staff. Simply adding more help is not the answer.

STAFFING
LEVELS

It is neither cost effective nor the recommendation of this report that the city routinely staff enough handle "the big one" with on duty personnel. We do, however, endorse a plan to provide for an adequate on duty force along with a rapid call back capability and an effective and operational mutual aid system that will insure adequate personnel are available when a large magnitude but low frequency incident occurs.

Over the long term, the Department should strive to meet a total shift strength of a total of 13 per shift. Of course staff officers, not usually counted in shift strength would assume appropriate operational roles during significant emergencies as well.

Management Practices, Personnel and Operations

The management practices of the Northampton can best be described as "old school." The ways of the past are the ways of today. We have previously mentioned the "five department" situation.

The culture of separate departments is a natural evolution resulting from the existing organization and the traditional lack of attention at the top. As a result, there is a lack of common vision, written guidelines, consensus decision making, employee involvement, team building, discipline and empowerment - all key components of a successful organization in the 1990's.

LEADERSHIP,
MGT.
PROBLEM

Contemporary management practices of involving employees and empowering them to contribute requires more than managerial competence. It requires an organization conducive to getting the job done as well as shared commitment and shared values. Our view is that the city has clearly exercised these practices over the years and tried to inculcate them into the Department which organizationally and culturally could not accept them.

It would appear that all union related issues require the filing of a grievance before any action is taken. This approach is time consuming, but tensions between the city and the union appear to have lessened since Acting Chief Passa was appointed. This situation is similar to that of a family. In a family, life is not always smooth and everyone does not always agree. But, in the end, a family works things out for the benefit of the family, in this case, the fire department and the city, and ultimately the citizens. One underlying issue that must be discussed and worked out is the belief by the firefighters that the City continues to try to chip away at agreements by appealing essentially all issues. This belief should be put on the table for discussion, its accuracy must be determined, the facts agreed to and an understanding reached.

The report offers many recommendations for establishing a program of modern personnel practices to with which to manage the new organization.

Operational practices are similarly archaic.

OPERATIONS
MGT. "archaic"

There is no organized approach to the management of emergency operations beginning with dispatch and ending with operations. The Department does not use an incident command system. This is a dangerous and unacceptable practice. Incident command is not a new concept. The argument that sufficient staffing is not available is not valid. Incident command is a system which maximizes the utility and safety of any size group and provides the mechanism through which the available resources are logically expanded to meet the needs of the situation. It is designed for both small day-to-day operations as well as very large and complex incidents.

Incident
COMMAND

Taken to its ultimate, for a cataclysmic situation, the incident command system would expand (if the situation requires) to the activation of the City Emergency Preparedness Plan. This plan is an excellent outline of how the entire City Government should function cooperatively and efficiently during an extreme emergency situation. Now, there is no way of logically expanding the response to include such an activation and no guidance as to when it should be done.

The risk to the community and to individual firefighters, if allowed to continue to operate without it, is significant. A Department implementation team should have the essentials of incident command in place within a few months, starting right now.

Safety Practices

The Department appears to be devoid of routinely accepted safety practices. Driver training, personal equipment, personal communications, and fireground operations must be improved. Training and equipment maintenance is self explanatory. Communication and operations deserves an explanation.

SAFETY

As a minimum, all crews operating inside a building should have a portable radio capable of at least reaching the personnel outside the building. Portable radios should also be able to reach the dispatcher from outside the building. Radios should have multiple channels to provide dispatch frequencies, tactical frequencies, and the ability to communicate with other city departments and mutual aid companies. All the mutual aid in the world is useless if you can not talk to them.

Although the need for incident command was discussed earlier in this summary, we will revisit it here because it is also a major safety issue. Presently, there is no formal control at the scene of an emergency. Incident command significantly improves fireground safety.

This report recommends the establishment of commonly used programs such as wellness, physical fitness, annual physical examinations, infection control, program, firefighter decontamination, health and safety committee, annual physical ability testing, mandatory fire retrained station wear, provisions to wash turnout gear, and a safety officer. All are critical components of safety in the fire service. Many of the programs identified do not cost an enormous amount of money to initiate. They simply need management attention.

In all several pages are devoted to the specifics of these concerns.

Staff training and Professional Development Programs

Management and supervisory training does not exist in the Department, yet when personnel are promoted they are expected to function effectively as managers.

We have discovered numerous training problems within the Department. These range from untrained new personnel to the lack of individualized training programs and documentation, individual by individual, of training successfully completed. The report includes a comprehensive review and recommendations.

~~The City has a responsibility here as well. Personnel should not be required to use vacation time do training which is part of an overall approved plan. Obviously, there would need to be control parameters including a fair distribution of available training opportunities, the specific number of personnel who can be absent at any given time and a no overtime clause, regardless of the actual time an employee spends in class. This develops into a win-win situation.~~

Fire Prevention and Education Activities

As with health and safety, significant improvements need to be made in these programs. While fire inspections do take place, the Department and the Community loses a significant amount of "value added" because they are not a participatory activity with the Department or with other City departments to the degree they should be. Educational activities are very important. There are many programs which are well suited to schools and there is no program of routine visits of on-shift visits to classrooms. These programs and visits demonstrably save lives and reduce injuries. They must be an integral part of a reorganized Department.

Fire Chief Job Description and Qualifications Necessary

To move successfully into the future, the Fire Department needs a leader capable of changing the existing culture as well as developing and managing the fire department in dramatically changing environments. He/She must be a smart, tough, nice and modern manager.

The new fire chief will need the support of the elected officials, citizens, business leaders and the members of the fire department, especially the deputy chiefs and the union and ~~employ strategies to overcome the autocratic, power-focused, and controlling environments of the past.~~ Significant value shifts in management philosophy must take place. Among the challenges the new chief must successfully face are firefighter safety, human resource management, effective customer service, labor/management relations, diversity of the community and the work force, and financial realities.

Specifically, the fire chief must be an experienced fire chief, meaning he/she presently holds the position of fire chief in another community. The City of Northampton needs a person who already has the knowledge and experience to come into the department and "hit the street running." There is no time for someone to "learn the job." Necessary skills include labor relations, budget preparation and management, a vast knowledge of the technology presently available to the fire service today, master planning, the ability to communicate with personnel at all levels of the organization, team building, knowledge of state and federal laws that impact emergency services, and empathy for his fellow firefighters.

The search should be made on the national level for an experienced chief with a record of progressive operation and management of a unionized fire department. The justification for this is as simple and straight forward. ~~The Department must go through significant cultural, organizational and operational changes which are imbedded in generations of history.~~ A strong, new and experienced hand is needed to achieve this difficult task. Changing it from within the system will be more than difficult and may be impossible.

Summary

This Executive Summary, like the entire report is longer than we as authors wish it to be and for this we apologize; but there is much to be done, and to summarize further would not be a service to those who must now make their own evaluations and take action. The entire report is commended to your review.

NEW,
OUTSIDE
CHIEF

Scope of Report

This report assesses the present capabilities of the Northampton Fire Department, offers recommendations for corrections needed and suggests solutions to the problems presently plaguing the Department and its traditional relationships with elected leaders. It provides the Community, Mayor, City Council, members of the Fire Department, and potential applicants for the position of fire chief, a comprehensive analysis of fire department organization and operation. As such it is intended to provide a basis for the much needed discussion of specific issues which must take place when new policy directions and new Department leaders are selected. This report provides specific recommendations in the following areas: role and mission of the fire department, formal organizational structure, staffing levels, management practices, both personnel and operational, safety practices, training, fire prevention/education and the fire chief's job description and necessary qualifications.

Report Methodology

This analysis of the Northampton Fire Department began with extensive fact-finding. After an initial informational meeting with the Honorable Mary L. Ford, Mayor, several follow-on meetings were arranged with key City administration officials, City Councilors having direct responsibility for the Fire Department, City department heads every shift and nearly every member of the Fire Department, the Fire Station Site and Building Committee, and emergency management officials from Cooley Dickenson Hospital and nearby towns. In some cases repeat sessions were requested and granted. A complete list appears in Appendix III.

All members of the Fire Department were offered the opportunity to speak with the consultants privately. Several accepted this offer. This effort provided us with valuable insights and information. While we had been informed of the "issues," these interviews provided "the rest of the story." Informal chats with the shift members were also important.

A long list of supporting documentation was requested from Acting Chief Passa. With the assistance of Deputy Cheverette, all available materials were provided. The list included emergency responses, budget, rules and regulations, existing and proposed standard operating procedures, apparatus and personnel listings, ISO report, City personnel plan, City master plan, background information on several issues, organization chart, and staffing assignments. This information was carefully analyzed and served as a basis for additional questions and interviews. Inspections of all fire houses and mobile equipment were conducted.

The site of the proposed King Street fire station was inspected along with proposed response corridors. Many areas of the City were visited and significant target hazards noted. Several emergency responses were witnessed from the central fire station.

As part of our analysis, we researched several National Fire Protection Association standards. These standards include, but are not limited to, NFPA 1200 (proposed), Standard for Organization, Operation, Deployment; and Evaluation of Public Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services; NFPA 1500, Standard for Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program; NFPA 1901, Standard for Automotive Fire Apparatus; NFPA 1201, Standard for Developing Fire Protection Services for the Public; and NFPA 1001, Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications.

Without question, the future strength of the Northampton Fire Department must, can and will lie within the personnel who now serve with dedication and pride. However, it is apparent that the continuing problems (most of which seem to be self-inflicted) with City Hall and within the Department have become a serious concern for many personnel at all levels of the organization. Our team believes that most members of the Department are now ready to devote their energy to becoming the best department possible rather than trying to run the City from the central station.

It must be noted that we received the utmost in courtesy and cooperation from everybody we encountered in spite of our often very direct and persistent questions and comments. Most were quite frank in their assessment of the past problems plaguing the Department and responsive to our suggestions for changes. While each had their own perspective; most everyone showed a deep concern for the Department and, having learned from the stormy past, looks forward to being part of its transformation to of a lean, aggressive well equipped, highly trained and precisely drilled organization worthy of the City's trust and pride.

Acting Chief Edward Passa should be singled out for his assistance during our research for this report. Chief Passa was instrumental in providing access to and scheduling appointments with key personnel. He also provided valuable insights regarding City affairs in general, labor/management issues, and an overall view of the historic problems plaguing the Department.

In an effort to offer specific recommendations to specific problems, of which there are many, and to reduce the confusion in the reading and interpretation of this report, recommendations pertinent to each section appear at the end of that specific section. This allows the reader to easily compare the recommendations to the analysis. The recommendations that are viewed as critical, meaning they should be addressed immediately, are listed as such and appear in bold type. **Operationally critical recommendations can and should be implemented right away because they deal with the effectiveness and safety of the existing firefighters.** The response to organizationally critical recommendations should be begun right away but it is recognized that

organizational changes, because of their inherent nature, will take a much longer time to put into place.

Introduction

The City of Northampton is located in the Connecticut Valley. It is a lively, diverse community in the heart of the Five College Area of the Pioneer Valley. Home to Smith College, Northampton also serves as the county seat of Hampshire County. It is located at the intersection of Route 9, the major east-west highway that links Amherst and the University of Massachusetts with the hilltowns to the west, and the north-south corridor of Interstate 91. The community is also served by U.S. Route 5 and State Routes 10 and 66.

Northampton is bordered by Easthampton on the south, Westhampton on the west, Williamsburg and Hatfield on the North and is separated by the Connecticut River from Hadley on the east. The population is estimated at 30,000, with a slight increase projected over the next ten years. Special events, day time and short stay visitors, commuters, and vacationers can raise this number substantially on any given day. The Community covers 35.60 square miles and includes several separate and distinct residential communities, including Florence and Leeds. A Mayor-Council form of government is in place.

The City is served by the Northampton Airport, Interstate 91, and an active rail line operated by Springfield Terminal. The Connecticut River flows past the City, and has become a major source of recreation for the area. The downtown has been revitalized, and can best be described as bustling. Shops fill the first floor of downtown buildings while offices, apartments and condominiums fill the upper floors. The Community is long and narrow, causing long response times as emergency vehicles respond east or west, to and from Florence and downtown. Some response times to the Leeds section can approach 15 minutes from Downtown. The Veterans Administration Hospital complex and Smith College are communities in-and-of themselves, requiring specialized service to a large residential population. When all this is combined with the typical hazards of a medium sized Massachusetts community, including an old downtown of brick and timber construction where many buildings share common "party walls", high rise residential buildings, hospitals, commercial and manufacturing buildings, it is easy to see that Northampton has a large fire protection challenge, and a significant potential for major incidents. All this contributes to some fairly unique fire protection and safety hazards not found in every community of its size.

With this in mind, it is essential that the City of Northampton have a fire and rescue service that is progressive, pro active, aggressive, technologically proficient and able to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow. The City does not have this now. The prevailing (and disturbing) mind set of many within the Department is that the Fire Department simply exists to "put out fires". This attitude simply does not recognize the significant changes that have occurred in emergency organizations over the last decade.

'50s mindset;
CULTURAL
Δ
NEEDED

The modern fire department must be expert in many diverse areas, including but not limited to, community outreach in fire prevention and education, and new methods of fire fighting, including Class A foam, technical rescue, including water, ice, collapse and industrial, hazardous materials mitigation, from research of the chemical to the successful control of a leak or spill, emergency medical services, including triage, treatment and transport and do all this and more while facing the constraints of an already overburdened municipal budget. Sound strategic and operational planning along with close cooperation and coordination with other City departments and the surrounding communities is essential to the mission.

The Northampton Fire Department, has operated for nearly one hundred years. It is now staffed by 56 employees, including a fire chief, a secretary, five deputy chiefs, eight captains, one mechanic and forty firefighters. Only the fire chief, fire prevention deputy, secretary and the mechanic work days, Monday through Friday. All other officers work firefighter shifts. This creates a significant management challenge which has lead inexorably to the creation of a department having four distinct management and operating personalities (actually five if the Prevention Deputy is included). This is evident both within the Department and to others in City government trying to communicate with the Department.

One deputy (acting as shift commander), two captains and ten firefighters (a total of 13) are assigned to each of the four groups on shifts that rotate to insure 24 hour coverage. The shifts are divided into "companies" or smaller groups assigned to specific equipment or tasks. One company is assigned to Florence, all other personnel to the central station. When all personnel are available, a captain and three fire fighters staff Florence while a deputy chief, a captain and seven fire fighters staff the central station. However, because of vacation, sick leave and other reasons, the full complement is often not available. The shifts are allowed to be reduced to a total of ten personnel before a firefighter is called in fill in. One person assigned to the shift is designated as the dispatcher, and cannot leave the station. This means that on days of minimum staffing, only nine personnel are available on shift for emergency calls.

The Department operates out of two fire stations. The central fire station on Masonic Street was built in 1873 It is slated for replacement in the next few years, after having been condemned several times in its history. The Florence station was built in 1972. A third (and minimal) fire station in Leeds was closed in 1972. The Veterans Administration Fire Department, once a source of mutual aid (an engine company) closed in 1993, requiring the City fire department to assume this added burden without additional personnel being added to the staff. The city that was once protected by four fire stations is now protected by two. However, given modern capabilities and communication, two are able to provide adequate and efficient protection.

The Department responds to approximately 2,000 emergency calls each year. The majority of these calls are for fire alarm activations. There has been a slight increase in

emergency calls each year, which is to be expected as the population grows and construction continues.

Mutual aid is available but only through a very loose system. While it is safe to assume that a community will respond to Northampton when requested, there lacks a formal structure for how this would be accomplished or an internal plan for when it should be requested. All is ad hoc.

The water system, including storage, supply and distribution and fire hydrant placement, is very good and the result of excellent planning and implementation over the years. According to the Public Works Department, there are more than 1475 fire hydrants (the number increases steadily as development occurs) in the City. The availability of large volumes of water downtown, where the potential for a conflagration exists, is also very good. Hydrant inspection and flushing is done by Public Works during the spring water main flushing program. Some remote areas of the City lack adequate hydrant coverage and probably always will.

The elements which are necessary to insure the essential support mechanisms for a modern emergency program are in place. However, the Department itself is in difficulty. The central station is symptomatic of the problem. There are many fire stations up and down the Connecticut River Valley which are just as old but none which are in such a sad condition. Routine building maintenance is abysmal, necessary building repairs are not made, critical fire apparatus remains out of service because minor parts can not be purchased, and essential operating components are not maintained, including the Opticom emergency traffic control system and the Gamewell fire alarm system. The discussion over the new station is perhaps even more symptomatic. The Community worked years to arrange a five million dollar bond and state and local approval for a new station, an effort which the Department opposed and some members continue to oppose as if oblivious that a supportive policy decision has been made and the Department needs to begin working towards a smooth transition to a modern building on the new site. The commitment on the part of the Department to do this was made in the budget presentation but it is apparently not shared by the Department as a whole.

Some unusual and unfortunate personnel situations have also occurred at the Northampton Fire Department in the past several years. These situations have caused an atmosphere of mistrust, low morale, high stress, and added to the overall negativity.

However, it is the feeling of the consulting team that with the right fire chief, an updated organization, an unambiguous chain of command, a long term strategic and tactical program worthy of the Mayor and Council's support, mutual respect between labor and management, mutual respect between the department and city hall, and, the Northampton Fire Department can be returned to the road to recovery in a short period of time. All this is possible and the present leadership is trying hard. The raw material is there. To the credit of every member of the Department, they have never let their personal feelings or

existing problems interfere with the delivery of basic emergency services to the citizens of Northampton to the extent that their organization and operational plans allow.

The Role and Mission of the Fire Service in Northampton

The present role and mission of the fire service in Northampton is to respond to emergency calls, whenever they occur. Specifically, these emergencies include fire related calls and an occasional rescue or motor vehicle accident where fire suppression or assistance in extricating victims is requested. This fire department appears to be the typical reactive type organization that has not changed as times change around them. They hope to maintain a large on duty stand-by force to deal with fires and emergencies but perform little else in terms of pro active activities and try to stand apart from the rest of government. The smoke detector for new babies program is an exception to this and an encouraging indication that a lot more is possible.

The present organizational mind set of this Department seems to be that their existence is that of an insurance policy which is available if needed but left to gather dust until after something happens. This is the wrong analogy. The Northampton Fire Department needs to be a dynamic, positive, and cooperative element of the delivery of community services. Its job is to operate and cooperate.

Our analysis is that this Department, apparently already mired in a fifty's mindset, seized on the cuts imposed by proposition 2 1/2 in the early 1980's as a reason to feel sorry for itself rather than accepting and dealing with the change. Since that time, the Department has continually complained about its inability to do the job with fewer personnel, but has done little to explore other options to supplement personnel, or implement innovative changes to compensate for fewer personnel on duty. Now the Department has ended up in a situation where the tactical and strategic elements have fallen so far behind the times that adding additional personnel to the existing organization offers no assurance at all of additional protection.

Throughout this time, the Department has maintained a most unusual cantankerous and sometimes adversarial relationship with the Northampton city government. Whether this relationship was intentional, or simply a reaction to the way they were perceived, this long term negative relationship has hurt the Department and the City and, unfortunately, in some quarters it is internally encouraged still. The Department has resisted change and several attempts by City Administrations to be helpful.

The focus and the culture of this organization needs to change, and change rapidly. Firefighters need to function as firefighters, and fire officers need to function as fire officers. Individual members who believe their roles are to set community policy should resign and pursue community policy making positions. Mayors and City Councils are not interested in fighting fires but they need to have the information required to set priorities, future directions and overall policy. It is the responsibility of the Department to insure

that this information is based on the most modern and progressive techniques and methods available and then implement the policies to the best of their ability using the most innovative and expansive approaches available anywhere in the fire service.

The real role and mission of this Department must be the preservation of life, property and the environment. Preservation of life, property and the environment is an outcome of defined levels of service. Any mission statement should clearly spell out the services provided and the fire department can and should provide a wide range of community services. These include fire suppression, fire prevention, safety education, rescue of entrapped persons, pre-hospital emergency medical care at basic and advanced levels, ambulance transportation, home based well being checks, home based medical intervention, hazardous materials mitigation, disaster management, community development, building, electrical, plumbing and health code service management, and community ambassadorship services., wants and desires. Most of these services can be performed with the on-board staff that otherwise is waiting or training to be called to an emergency. However, the mission of any particular fire department must reflect community needs and desires and the services offered must be a supportive element of a wide range of comprehensive city services and the result of long range plans and policy.

The Fire Service has a very long and proven history of permanence and tradition. and the New England Fire Service is perhaps the most traditional. Two hundred years of tradition, unhampered by progress is a satirical statement often repeated in fire circles. A number of fire service traditional aspects are valued and worthy of continuance but as technological economic and social environments change, so must the fire service.

In order to assume an appropriate role and mission, many aspects of this department must change to ensure that they have the resources to protect the community.. Fire frequency rates are down but the potential for a severe incident is still a very real potential. The public is demanding increased efficiency and an improved return on their public safety investment. Hence, the basic identity and reputation of this Department needs vast improvement. consistent with the desires of the Community or it will be unable to maintain the capabilities required to protect life and property in significant emergencies. The Department cannot shirk this responsibility.

This fire department can learn a lot from their police counterparts. The fire service is perceived as having too much idle time coupled with a lack of supervision and direction. Conversely, police are highly visible, easily accessible, and offer "value added" services such as bicycle patrols and other community policing programs. Community confidence in the fire department is critical to their ongoing ability to serve. The current configuration has yet to earn that confidence. Change is not only necessary, it is critical.

The need for change is obvious. It needs to start at the top and must be embraced by the organization as a whole. The selection of the next fire chief and the building of a

management team committed to effecting needed change is critical. The significant problems (perceived or real) with which this team must deal are:

- Challenges to the chain of command
- Substance abuse
- Nepotism
- Lack of a modern approach to discipline
- Poor fire/police relations
- Lack of technical training
- lack of management training
- Self imposed isolation from the community
- Higher than normal injury on duty rate
- Poor community image
- Lack of responsibility and accountability
- Inadequate provisions for firefighter safety
- Lack of consistency between groups (shifts)
- Absence of a clear sense of purpose and mission
- Lack of written procedures and standards
- Ad-hoc rather than standardized responses

The following paragraphs expand on the above summary:

Challenges to the chain of command, both passive and active, appear to be routine inside and outside of the Department. All personnel, from deputy chief to union official to firefighter must accept the organizational requirement to follow the chain of command and the chain of command must be clear and unambiguous.

Concerns about substance abuse have been raised by sources inside and outside the Department. It would appear that the investigations of alleged substance abuse incidents were not handled in an appropriate manner. The City needs to develop a strong policy for effectively dealing with substance abuse problems. This policy should cover specific procedures for managers and contain provisions which protect the rights of the accused, the safety of personnel and the liability of the City

Nepotism has also appeared to cause friction in the Department for many years under several fire chiefs. Although the fire service has a tradition of family members following father, brother etc. into the service, that was many years ago. The City now needs to develop a strong nepotism policy that prevents family members from working together. It would be difficult for a supervisor to act appropriately to deal with a problem involving his/her or their supervisor's brother, father, son or sister.

One significant area lacking in the operation of the fire department is the absence of written standard operating procedures or definitive guidelines (SOG's). While several standard operating guidelines have been prepared, they are limited in scope, remain in

draft form and have not been adopted. The comment we have heard is that the personnel know what to do, and that the fire department has been doing things "this way" for years, what ever way "this way" happens to be.

Under the direction of Acting Chief Passa, the Fire Department recently published a list of rules and regulations containing eleven articles. These rules apparently replace rules adopted in 1971. All personnel received a copy and were required to sign for them. This is a good start, but only a start. We were told the union input was also solicited, which is a positive move.

The rules and regulations contain provisions on the following:

Article 1	Rules and Regulations (authority of the fire chief)
Article 2	Deputy Chiefs
Article 3	Captains
Article 4	Firefighters
Article 5	Firefighter/mechanic
Article 6	Bureau of Fire Prevention and Inspection
Article 7	Training
Article 8	General rules
Article 9	Uniforms
Article 10	Records
Article 11	Discipline

These rules and regulations were long overdue. Personnel do not know what is expected by an organization unless told. They need a written document to refer to when questions arise. While this is a good start, the rules and regulations need to be expanded. The areas that need to be added include drug and alcohol free policy, obedience to laws, outside employment, fitness for duty, punishable offenses, and procedures for citizen complaints. The critical component of the rules and regulations is enforcement. Everyone, and we mean everyone, must be held accountable. The enforcement of the rules and regulations must be fair, consistent, swift and progressive and it must begin at the Department level.

All modern emergency service organizations have written procedures to outline what is expected, accepted and required of and by personnel. The absence of clear and concise written procedures allows an organization to become a "lawless" society, where everyone has a different perception of what is expected and what is prohibited. Because the fire department is handling dangerous situations on a regular basis where the lives of personnel could be in danger, it is absolutely essential that everyone know exactly what they must do. Emergency scenes do not allow for interpretation of what must be done, nor is it a time for people to exercise their opinions.

Recommendations: These are really a cookbook for beginning anew and should govern all actions and priorities. In this sense, they are all critical.

1. The City and the Fire Department need to acknowledge the following:
 - The City and the Fire Department are in the same business - to serve the citizens of Northampton. This is a critical component of government which can never be forgotten.
 - The annual community investment in fire protection will not change significantly overnight.
 - The efficiency of the annual operating budget needs to be maximized, providing a reasonable return of services to the community.
 - Efficiency and productivity are not buzz words, they are the order of the day.
 - Major investments in personnel, training, and equipment need to be made by the city.
 - Major changes in productivity, operations, and attitude need to be made by the Fire Department.

2. The Department must formulate and articulate a clear mission, vision and philosophy, consistent with the values, traits, wants, beliefs and desires of the community. See Appendix 1.

3. The Department must acknowledge that the Mayor and Council set community policy. Fire department personnel need to step up to the plate, commit to that policy, support it, and achieve it. The problems of the past must remain there while all parties strive to work together.

4. The Department must review the present rules and regulations manual. This manual should contain a description of accepted behavior while on duty.
 - a. Personnel need to be trained on the contents of the manual and have the purpose of the manual explained. This is not a punitive action but a required step to insure all personnel know the rules and are held acceptable for their actions.

 - b. There needs to be a conscious decision that the manual will be enforced and procedures to do this must be established and discussed with management personnel. Everyone, and we mean everyone, in the organization must be held accountable for their actions.

 - c. The rules and regulations must be enforced fairly, consistently and swiftly.

5. Standard operating guidelines must be developed, distributed to all personnel and followed. All personnel must receive training on all policies before they are placed into effect.

- a. Standard operating guidelines (SOG's) are procedures that should be followed at the scene of an emergency, or while performing official duties.
- b. They are flexible. Deviation from the guideline should be allowed if the situation warrants it. If so, the officer or firefighter deviating from the guideline should explain in writing to the Chief why the action taken was necessary. This process prevents, or limits personnel who view the flexibility as an open invitation to do as they please.

6. We recommend the immediate initiation of development of standard operating guidelines for the following areas:

- structure fire response and operations
- high rise response and operations
- technical rescue response and operations
- rural water supply operations
- fire station safety
- emergency scene safety
- emergency driving
- brush fire response and operations
- personal protective equipment, including use, care and maintenance
- SCBA use, care, and maintenance
- motor vehicle accident response and operations
- emergency medical response and operations
- infection control
- firefighter decontamination
- use of incident command
- dispatching
- river rescue response and operations
- rail/train incident response and operations
- airport incident response and operations
- hazardous materials response and operations
- mass casualty incident
- severe storm operations
- release of information/press relations
- training

7. A formal modern and manageable chain of command must be established and followed in the fire department. There is no room in the organization for personnel who desire to operate outside the established process.

8. The City should develop policies on nepotism and substance abuse.

And now the good news. While there appears to be an enormous amount of work to be done, we have found that the vast majority of the Department personnel are ready for the challenge. From the Acting Chief, who is making some inroads, to the Union leadership, to members on every group, Department members are ready for change. They have a significant store of positive ideas and they are willing to share in the redevelopment of the Northampton Fire Department. This does not mean, however, that everyone is happy about the changes needed. Significant change, and there must be significant change for the members of the Department to properly serve the Community and their profession, will mean the reassignment of some personnel and an operational structure that is completely different from the ad hoc approach that everyone is used to. We do not see this as a road block, only an issue that will need to be addressed by the new fire chief.

The Formal Organizational Structure

The Northampton Fire Department is currently organized with a Chief, a secretary, four shift Deputy Chiefs, a Prevention Deputy Chief, a mechanic, eight shift Captains, and 40 firefighters. Much like fire ground organizational structures, departmental organization needs to provide adequate resources at the strategic, tactical and task levels. We will address the organizational structure from these levels.

On the strategic front, we find a fire chief and a secretary. One individual, with secretarial support, is responsible for planning, organizing, directing and evaluating services as well as day to day management. The Board of Fire Engineers is composed of the Chief and the Deputy Chiefs. This "Board" has been in existence since the beginning. They meet once a month to review and discuss issues. A Board of Engineers is a very old tradition in the fire service. Very few communities still utilize this method of management because of its inefficiency. Utilizing deputy chiefs as shift commanders makes the organization even more unwieldy. Delegation of responsibility for various detailed aspects of Department operation is difficult to manage because of shift schedules.

As a result, the entire detailed management burden really falls on the chief and the chief alone. Without question, the chief is ultimately responsible for the entire Department, but sound management practice dictates that the Chief be able to delegate key staff responsibilities and appropriate department wide decisions and communication responsibilities to others.

Major departmental program management areas such as human resources, operations, training, fleet, equipment, buildings and grounds, emergency medical services, hazardous

materials, fire alarm, education, outreach and communications are not assigned or delegated to individual "Board" members. While "Board" members have limited authority in these areas, they do not appear to have real responsibility for achieving goals and objectives, nor are they held accountable for the same.

Essentially, therefore, the Deputy Fire Chiefs are really operating on the "tactical" level. While their titles indicate that they are senior department managers, they are in reality very well paid shift or "company" officers, with operational authority for their shift and little responsibility for the Department overall. Essentially, their present role is to serve as shift commander and respond to emergency calls. The current organization design was popular years ago with both call and full time departments but the fire service environment has changed dramatically since then. Moreover, laws, rules and regulations stemming from Federal regulatory actions such as the Civil Rights Act, Fair Labor and Standards Act, federal labor law, OSHA and EPA regulations, and NFPA consensus standards of good practice have placed greater and greater burdens on fire chiefs to achieve compliance and protect their cities from liability caused by unresponsive management. There is just too much for one person (the Chief) to do at the strategic level in the fire service today to do the job alone. The chief needs the assistance of a senior administrative staff. A Deputy Chief should function at the strategic level with major department wide program management responsibility as well as fireground command under appropriate parts of an incident command system.

Now, however, the "tactical" level of the Northampton Fire Department is staffed with the deputy fire chiefs as well as captains. Captains, not deputy chiefs, should operate at the tactical level as shift commanders. While this study team supports the concept of supervisors not being in the same bargaining unit as subordinates (Captains and firefighters are in the same unit), Captains, not Deputy Chiefs belong in the front seat of an attack engine company. The bargaining unit issue is less important than the organizational issue.

Captains currently function as single company officers, as first line supervisors (working foremen). One is assigned to each station on each group. In modern fire service organizations, captains typically serve as shift commanders with operating responsibility for several companies, and often are assigned limited staff responsibilities as well. The first level of supervision (the working foreman) is typically a lieutenant. There are no lieutenants in the present structure.

The task level of this organization consists of 40 firefighters. Everything in this report should be viewed with an eye on supporting this small army. These are the folks in the trenches, day in and day out, the people who have the first and most direct interaction with the City's customers, the citizens and visitors. We found a genuine interest and desire in this group to support change and their elected leadership to be reasonable in their expectations. We also found this group to show genuine interest in professional development and improved customer service. Many spoke fondly of the opportunity to

attend the State Fire Academy. Many questioned why they were not responding to all serious medical calls and doing more for the community.

We also found a very high level of frustration in this group. The "little" things in fire departments don't seem so little to many of the troops. It is difficult to maintain a positive attitude about the Department and the City when a firefighter knows he/she could be doing more or when they see other City departments managing to plan, budget for and get needed equipment and supplies. They also feel that "the City always fights us on contractually mandated benefits and most often loses, but we always have to fight".

The Fire Prevention Deputy Chief performs routine fire and life safety inspections. As with all areas of fire department/city relations, we have been told that, as on other issues, there is a lack of cooperation and communication between the fire department and other departments. There is also a lack of pre fire planning and company inspections. We have been told the fire companies are not allowed to accompany the fire inspector because they "slow him down." The use of pre fire planning and company inspections are essential components of any fire prevention program. This allows the companies to actually see the building they may be operating in some night, and also allows the development of an action plan before an emergency strikes. This is an expressed goal in the latest budget presentation but it is apparently not accepted by the key individuals in the Department and is not happening.

Recommendations:

1. Establish a new, modern organization. This is a critical management issue

General Summary: The following recommendation establishes the position of assistant chief, eliminates all but two of the five existing deputy chief designations while significantly changing the role of a deputy chief, assigns operational responsibility now performed by deputy chiefs to the existing Captains, and creates the position of lieutenant. Those present deputy chiefs who are not selected for the reorganized and fewer deputy chief positions should continue to function as shift supervisors (as they really do now) and their title eliminated when they retire or leave. The creation of lieutenants provides significant added flexibility to the capability of the shift, offers a logical career progression for firefighters and the opportunity for management to evaluate their capabilities as they progress

In understanding this proposal, we must remind the reader that the usual fire service officer designations are different from police and most military designations. A fire service deputy chief usually carries essentially the same responsibilities (usually staff responsibilities) as a police captain, a fire service captain the same responsibilities as a police lieutenant (operations, shift commander) and a fire service lieutenant similar responsibilities as a police sergeant (first line supervisor/working foreman).

With this background in hand, the detailed recommendation follows:

1. Establish the position of Assistant Chief, the number two command position in the Department. The Fire Chief needs this position to assist him/her in running the department. There is simply too much to be done for one senior manager.

1a. Eliminate the five deputy chief positions as now utilized and create two redefined deputy chief positions, assign two captains positions to days for training and fire prevention duties. Both options will insure critical management functions are performed, while also returning the Deputy Chief designation to the strategic level of the organization.

1b. We strongly recommend **all** personnel with the rank of captain and above who have a minimum of five years on the department and three years as a captain be allowed to test for these positions. We have discovered there are some exceptional personnel in captains positions that could offer much more to the Department. This will insure the new fire chief can build the best team possible from the existing personnel. We do not recommend hiring from outside the Department to fill the new Assistant/Deputy Chief positions.

1c. The following are the responsibilities that should be assigned to each senior manager:

Assistant Fire Chief

Human resources/personnel issues/
All Standard Operating Guidelines, regulations etc.
Budgeting/long range planning
Apparatus maintenance.

Operations Deputy Chief

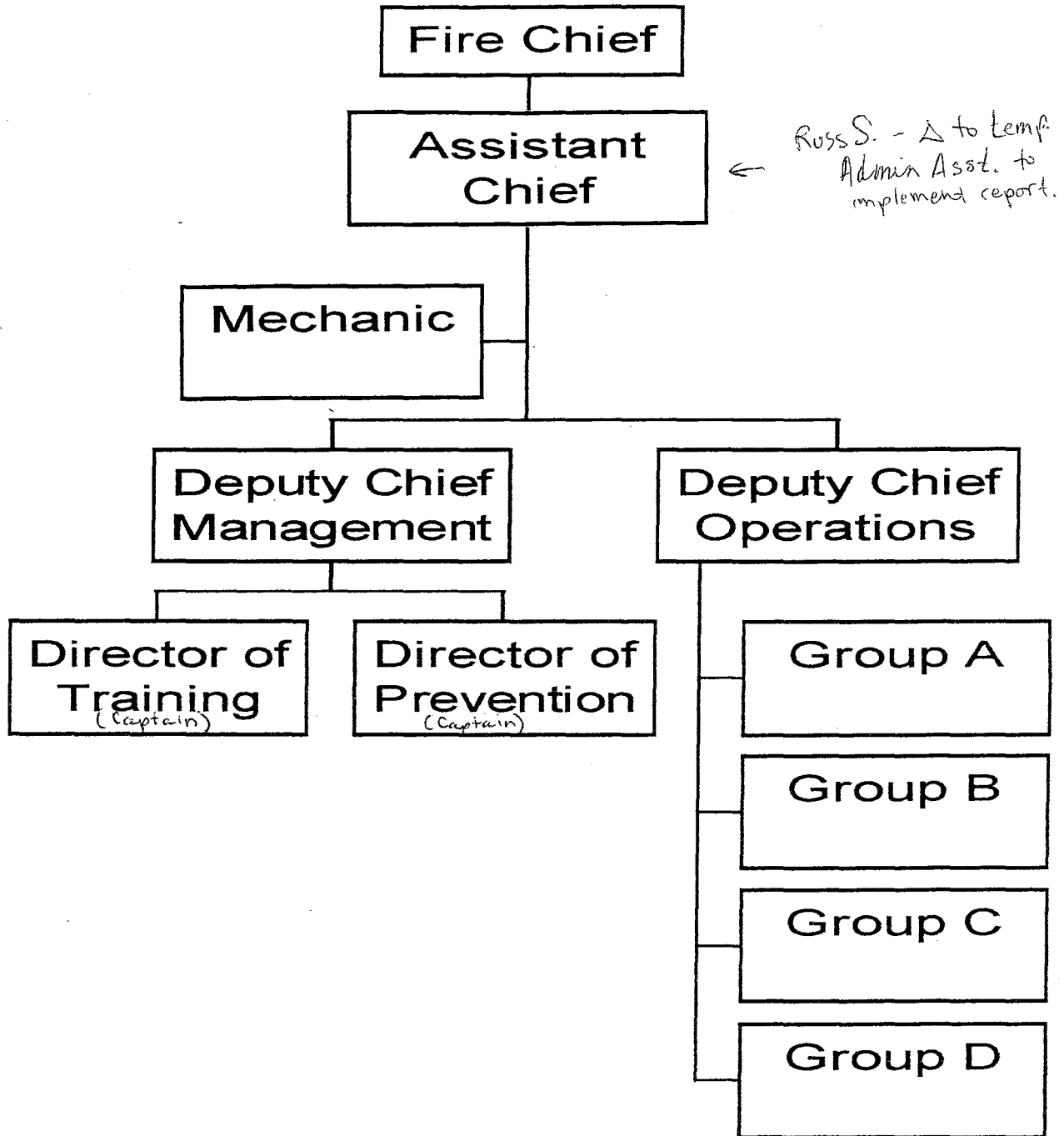
Supervision of groups, day to day operations
Standard operating guidelines for operations
Incident Command
Communications/ dispatch
Emergency medical services

Management Deputy Chief

fire prevention including code enforcement and inspections, public fire education
fire/haz mat training/ coordination of pre plan program
Fire alarm system
Building and grounds maintenance
Vehicle maintenance and replacement
Equipment and supply
Information support management(computers)

The proposed organization chart follows:

Northampton Fire Department Proposed Reorganization Option ~~2~~ 1



2. Whatever the organization, deputy chiefs should not be routinely riding to calls on fire apparatus. A true deputy chief in a community of Northampton's size is a senior management position assigned to days and responsible for several department wide functions.

3. The new senior managers should also be assigned to be the on call Deputy Chief on a rotating basis. This provides a chief officer in the event of a major incident, or if personnel problems can not be handled by the shift commander.

4. The position of Fire Prevention Deputy Chief should be replaced with the rank of captain through attrition. This position does not require the rank of deputy chief, and is contrary to contemporary fire protection practices. The new fire prevention captain should be supervised by the management deputy chief.

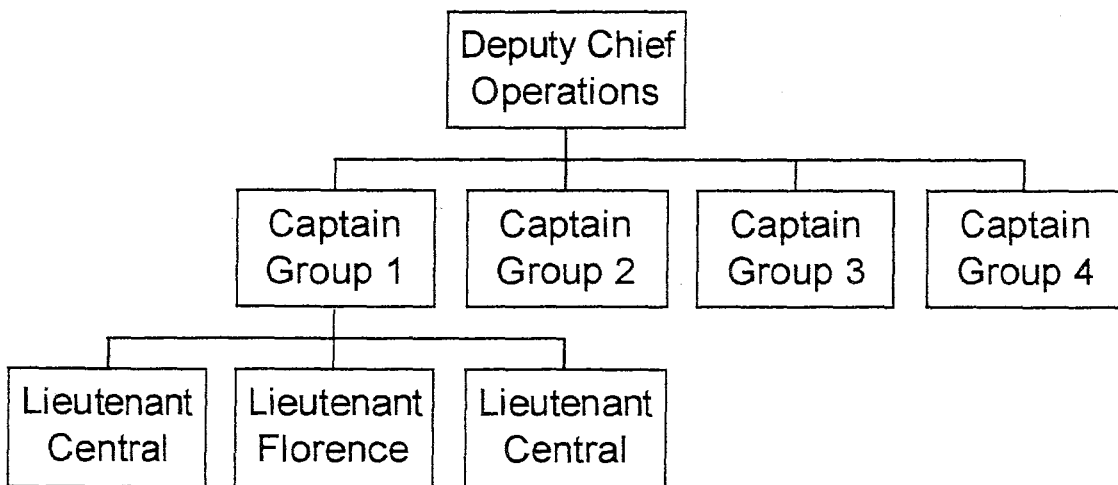
5. Require (and provide) the person holding the prevention position to be trained in contemporary Public Fire Education Training. This would include the NFPA "Learn Not to Burn" Program and the Phoenix Fire Department "Urban Safety & Survival" curricula.

6. Call upon the resources of the Massachusetts State Fire Marshal's Office to provide assistance with the design, training and implementation of an in-service company inspection program targeting multi-family residential occupancies. These properties pose one of the greatest historical fire death risks in the community.

7. A pre fire planning program should be developed as soon as practical. Included in this program should be walk through tours of all new business and commercial construction, along with major residential projects.

8. A closer look at the proposed operations division follows:

Operations Division



8a. Under this operations organization, captains serve as shift (not station) commanders, with responsibility over subordinate company officers (Lieutenants). The use of captains as individual station commanders is typically seen in departments having many companies in each of several stations. There is one captain per shift.

8b. The remaining management slots should be filled by lieutenants. One lieutenant should be assigned to Florence and one to the Central Station, both working for the commander (Captain) who would normally be located at the Central station. This is a standard practice in a contemporary fire service.

8c. All responding apparatus should be staffed with a supervisor, or designated person-in-charge.

Management Practices - Personnel and Operations

The management practices of the Northampton can best be described as "old school." It appears that the ways of the past are the ways of today. The Department completely lacks contemporary fire service beliefs and knowledge. It is simply more of the same. The long standing practice of promoting a fire chief from within the organization has resulted in the stagnation of the entire department. Without the injection of new ideas at the top, the remainder of the organization remained unchanged, in a rapidly changing world. It would also appear that the more the world changed around them, the more the fire department wanted to remain unchanged.

A classic example of the "old ways" which exist today is the recognition that there are actually four fire departments (five if one included fire prevention) in Northampton. These "departments" are comprised of the four groups, who are supervised by a deputy chief, and act independently of each other and any other authority when they are on duty. Because of this situation, there is little consistency within the Department. Each group handles their operations and affairs as they see fit. This diversity ranges from handling of disciplinary matters to the number of vehicles that respond to an alarm. This has been a source of substantial confusion when a member of another group works overtime on a different shift. It is like walking into another department that just happens to have the same name. We have also heard of this problem from other city departments, who said it is nearly impossible to deal with the fire department because of this lack of consistency, because each deputy chief must be contacted and after being contacted there is no central store of information or organizational memory in place.

The culture of separate departments is a natural evolution of the existing organization and the traditional lack of attention at the top. No one was coordinating the activities of the Department, with each shift allowed to run as it saw fit. As a result, there is a lack of common vision, written guidelines, consensus decision making, employee involvement,

team building, and empowerment - all key components of a successful organization in the 1990's.

The deep seated belief that the Department has been on a downhill slide since proposition 2 ½ may have been a perception for some time inside the Department. Unfortunately, it is now reality. This is a 1970's vintage fire department. Contemporary public sector management techniques and the investment in tools, technology and training is an absolute must. This is not new news.

Contemporary management practices of involving employees and empowering them to contribute requires more than managerial competence. It requires an organization conducive to getting the job done as well as shared commitment and shared values. Our view is that the city has clearly exercised these practices over the years and tried to inculcate them into the Department. Decision processes have been open and attempts at communications have been ongoing. Examples include the convening of numerous committees, protracted contract negotiations, budgeting, and monthly City Council Fire Committee meetings. The Fire Station Building Committee process and product are exemplary and typical of the Administration's commitment to its employees to involve and empower them. This process in particular involved 16 members, an exceptional cross section of the City. The Fire Department had four slots on the group. Each rank was represented. Unfortunately, the organizational culture, the lack of shared values, and the attitude of department members was not and is not consistent with reaching consensus. Decision making by consensus requires very high levels of commitment to shared values, traits and beliefs. The resignation of fire department members from the committee, in light of the culture, was predictable. The department has isolated itself from the community and the department is relatively isolated from contemporary fire services. With department interaction minimal, community interaction borders on the impossible.

Personnel are promoted with only a minimum amount of time on the department and after only passing the written civil service examination. The present policy allows personnel to test for captain after only one year on the job. This results in inexperienced officers attempting to manage an emergency operation, which is neither fair to the new supervisor nor to the firefighters. The complex nature of the fire service requires a depth of knowledge, much of which can only come from experience.

Bad feelings exist between groups, officers, and personnel. While no one can ever expect all personnel to get along all the time in an organization the size of the Fire Department, some problems have been lingering and some have never been addressed. This results in a perpetuation of the bad feelings. Several incidents have resulted in these feelings and it has resulted in reduction in the number of personnel who are interested in call back, especially if certain shifts are working. This is unacceptable.

Overtime

is a necessary component in every emergency services organization, especially fire departments. The unpredictable nature of the business makes this difficult to adequately predict the actual amount required. In the past few years, the City has cut the Fire Department overtime budget in half, now providing \$85,000. While overtime budgets are usually easy target for people hoping to cut the budget, this action compromises the ability of the fire chief to adequately protect the city. There presently does not appear to be an adequate amount of overtime to provide the appropriate flexibility. We recognize that "overtime" is a "hot button" word, but in fact, the judicious use of overtime can reduce the overall long term cost to the City while assuring constant levels of protection. This calculation simply compares the direct and indirect overtime costs for existing employees to the direct and indirect costs of additional employees. It is not a given, however, and Department management should make this case and logically defend it during each budget cycle.

Staff Training and Professional Development Programs and Standards

Management and supervisory training does not exist in the Department, yet when personnel are promoted they are expected to function effectively as managers. While training for many jobs can be handled with on-the-job training, supervisors need a basic knowledge of what is needed to be an effective leader and manager. Some things can not be learned on the street. The essential areas that all supervisory and management personnel need a working knowledge of to properly manage in the 1990's include motivating employees, leadership styles, cultural diversity, incident command, effective communication skills, information management systems, affirmative action, human resource management, firefighter health and safety, the evaluation/appraisal process, the science and art of progressive discipline, the role of the supervisor/manager in the budgetary process, strategic planning, strategy and tactics, and specialized fire protection systems.

Specific training by the department is disjointed and lacks overall coordination. There never appears to have been a directive from the chief (former) that training was a priority and the end result was a haphazard attempt to train personnel; But, training needs to be consistent to insure all personnel receive the same level and type of training. We have heard that attempts to provide training has been successful on some shifts, including smoke drills at the old state hospital. This is a very good start, but unfortunately, all shifts are not participating in this very valuable training evolution. And it appears no one is requiring the shifts to participate.

New personnel should receive intensive training. They don't. When a new firefighter is hired, he/she spends two weeks on days to work with all shifts in an archaic type of unstructured orientation. Upon completion of the two weeks, they are assigned to a shift and "expected" to perform as a equal member of the shift. By equal, we mean capable of

performing all task in all positions assigned. We have heard reports of new personnel driving to emergency calls without receiving any training on emergency driving techniques, and personnel with no experience or training on the fire attack crew. They are just expected to do the job, because that is the way everyone else learned the job. This is an unacceptable and dangerous practice. The potential liability issues alone are staggering. It is also not fair to the new employees or the remainder of the crew.

Documentation is weak throughout the entire department, and is especially weak in training. Training is recorded on the shift commander's log, which is then transferred to a master list for a total number of hours. This is not enough. Each person should have a formal training plan approved by the Department. Each training session needs to be thoroughly documented. The Department needs to maintain specific, individual training records for all personnel. These records should contain dates trained, subjects covered, satisfactory completion and/or score and any certifications achieved.

We also asked about attendance at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland. The Academy offers the best training available in the world and it is available at no cost to the participant or the city, with the exception of a two week meal ticket (approximately \$200). Very few personnel have taken advantage of this opportunity because the Department requires personnel to use vacation time to attend. This is not acceptable. If the City expects personnel to increase their knowledge and skill level, then personnel must be allowed to attend training sessions on City time. Obviously, there would need to be control parameters including a specific number of personnel who can be absent at any given time and a no overtime clause, regardless of the actual time an employee spends in class. This develops into a win-win situation.

The training budget is presently \$6,000, a item new to the city budget within the last three years. This is a good start but it is not nearly enough money to allow the Department to undertake the level of training necessary. Quality training, is expensive, but necessary. Quality training insures several things including that personnel will be proficient in their duties, the citizens get the best service possible, firefighters will operate in the safest manner possible, and the liability of the Department and City will be minimized.

Emergency Operations

The Department does not use an incident command system. Consequently, there is no consistent organized approach to the management of emergency operations. This is a dangerous and unacceptable practice. The primary reason given why incident command is not used is that everyone knows their jobs and they have always operated this way and besides they don't have enough people to employ it. The argument that sufficient staffing is not available is not valid. Incident command is a system which maximizes the utility and safety of any size group and provides the mechanism through which the available resources are logically expanded to meet the needs of the situation. Just knowing jobs is

not enough. A systematic process for efficiently and safely employing resources is essential.

We have heard stories of officers who are inside the building with no one outside in charge, personnel "freelancing" or acting on their own, no orders being given on the scene of an emergency, no communications, the pump operator giving commands, and a situation of confusion on the scene. None of these situations are acceptable and could well result in the death or injury of a firefighter. Someone must be in charge, outside of the building, coordinating the response and attack and monitoring the firefighters.

An incident command system consists of procedures for controlling personnel, facilities, equipment and communications at the scene of an emergency. It is designed for both small day-to-day operations as well as very large and complex incidents. The use of the incident command system insures someone is in charge of the operations, and not just assumes that someone is in charge simply because he/she is present or has a senior rank. The incident command system insures several critical components of emergency operations are conducted, including one person in charge who develops an action plan, and, depending on the size of the emergency, one person communicating with the dispatcher, one person looking out for the safety of the crew, or appointing a safety officer if necessary, and one person coordinating the responding resources, or appointing a staging officer if necessary.

Taken to its ultimate, for a cataclysmic situation, the command system would expand (if the situation warrants) to the activation of the City Emergency Preparedness Plan. This plan is an excellent outline of how the entire City Government should function during an extreme emergency situation but, as it stands now, there is no way of logically expanding the response to include such an activation or no guidance as to when it should be done.

Without an incident management system to encompass the command function, as well as procedures for effective control and communication throughout all the responding resources, chaos could result. If response personnel are not functioning as part of an emergency management system, firefighting effectiveness is reduced, as is the potential communication and coordination with other agencies that may respond to the scene.

Incident command is not a new concept to the fire service. It was developed in 1970 and has been taught at the National Fire Academy for many years. The National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS) has been developed to provide a common system that emergency service agencies can utilize at the local, county, state and federal levels. Federal OSHA regulations now mandate the use of incident command at all hazardous materials incidents and NFPA 1500 recommends the use of incident command at all emergency incidents. There are many first hand accounts of how the use of incident command enabled communities to successfully deal with otherwise impossible situations and the authors of this report have each employed incident command on a regular basis.

The Department has a plan to implement the incident command system during the next two years. The plan is to use two free classes per year from the Massachusetts Fire Academy each year. The two year plan is not acceptable. The risk to the community and to individual firefighters, if allowed to continue to operate without it, is significant. A Department implementation team should have the essentials of incident command in place within a few months, starting right now.

The Department is devoid of most modern technology and equipment. For instance, the use of large diameter hose has not been considered. Large diameter hose allows a fire department to move large quantities of water in a single supply hose, as opposed to laying multiple hose lines at the scene of a major fire. This hose reduces the personnel needed to deploy and use this hose. It does not require the maintenance of the older, double jacketed cotton hose. The department should also explore Class A foam for wildland and structural firefighting.

SOP's associated with incident command should establish specific recall and assignment procedures for use during a major incident. In-house command needs to be established, second alarm companies need to be staffed in priority order, and pilots need to be provided to in-coming mutual aid units. The system needs to be efficient so that dispatchers are not overly burdened during the height of a major or during multiple incidents.

Hazardous Materials

The City is a member of Haz Mat District 4, operated out of Chicopee and covering Hamden and Hampshire Counties. This provides the city with adequate personnel and equipment in the event of a chemical spill/leak/release. Two fire department personnel trained to the technician level and operates a small vehicle with some haz mat equipment. The remainder of the fire department is trained to the awareness level, a level usually used for police and public works personnel.

Proficiency in the handling of hazardous materials incidents is a requirement of a modern fire service organization. Personnel need to be prepared (trained and equipped) for a wide range of incidents from a fuel spill on the river to unstable chemicals in a storage locker at the high school. This does not mean that all personnel must be trained at the highest level. It does mean additional training is necessary. Personnel should also be encouraged to participate in the regional haz mat team and become certified as technicians. This will provide technician trained personnel on each shift, another resource available to the city.

The Department should have the capability of researching chemical information. This capability should include reference books and materials along with ALOHA and CAMEO computer programs. This capability should be available in the station and at the scene of emergency calls. The Fire Department should have access to MSDS and Tier II information. This information is essential in the pre fire planning process. The fire

Department should also be actively working with the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) as outlined in SARA Title III.

The use of multiple monitoring devices should also be explored. Many calls today are for an "odor" investigations. A modern fire department needs to use more than their noses to determine what is present in the atmosphere. The Department should have the capability of detecting the percentage of oxygen in the air, the lower explosive limit of flammable materials, the corrosiveness of a material, the presence of carbon monoxide, the concentration of hazardous materials present in the air, and the presence of radioactive material. While some of these meters require personnel trained at the Haz Mat Technician level, all personnel must be aware of their capability in the event they are needed.

Dispatching

is presently handled by a member of the on duty shift. This takes a trained firefighter away from emergency response to dispatch the Fire Department. The Police Department receives the 9-1-1 calls and transfers the call to the Fire Department. The Fire Department is not always automatically notified of a medical emergency or accident because a cruiser on patrol is considered the fastest way to get help to the scene and the Police Officers have first responder medical training.

When the new central fire station is built, the plan is to consolidate dispatching services using a separate City Department to dispatch police, fire and EMS units from a central dispatching area in the new fire station using professional dispatchers. We have heard substantial opposition for this project from the Fire Department for fear of losing additional personnel if they no longer dispatch for themselves. In our opinion, this is not an option. The Department is under staffed now and can not afford to lose any personnel. However, consolidated dispatch will be a considerable improvement over the existing archaic situation.

The Department does not operate from an adequate run card system when they dispatch a fire call. Running cards clearly denote alarm assignments and dictate which apparatus goes to which call. We have frequently heard that the decision of which apparatus responds is made when every call is received, resulting is different shifts responding differently than other shifts to the same type of incident. In fact, we watched these ad hoc decisions made.

Adequate run cards allow the incident commander to call for additional resources by simply calling for an additional alarm, the apparatus for which has already been selected and recorded on the run cards. The dispatcher simply calls the next apparatus listed on the cards. This simplifies the process during a time when the dispatcher is working at full capacity, and also frees up the incident commander from having to specify exactly who should be called and what should be going on in other locations as reserve forces are mobilized. Presently, the person in charge of a fire specifies exactly who should be called and when. This is an archaic, time consuming and needless thought process, when the

person in charge should be concentrating on his/her action plan to handle the incident. Many Massachusetts Fire Departments have established 10 alarm running cards. In addition, they understand and can activate the Statewide Fire Mobilization Plan.

The proposed professional civilian combined police/fire/EMS dispatch system should be managed as a separate department and not under the direct control of either the Police or Fire Department. In addition to developing a run card system, the fire department side of the operation will require significant technology upgrades including radio voice paging, station voice-alarm notification/activation, base, mobile and portable radio upgrades, and mobile data terminals. Written standard operating procedures should serve as useful training tools and serve to guide all fire rescue dispatch functions. Emergency dispatchers should also be trained in Emergency Medical Dispatching (EMD).

Union/Management Relations

It would appear that all union related issues require the filing of a grievance before any action is taken. This approach is counterproductive and time consuming. A grievance is a process that allows union members to request relief from a decision/situation/problem if other means to produce a satisfactory agreement fail. This approach does not encourage positive union/management relationships. If a antagonistic relationship exists between the City and the Union, there can only be one winner - the attorneys. And everyone else, the City, the firefighters and especially the citizens lose. This approach can also be very expensive for both sides. This results in tax payers money being spent on legal fees for issues that could probably have been settled face-to-face in a meeting with all sides.

Tensions between the city and the union appear to have lessened since Acting Chief Passa was appointed. He has handled labor issues successfully to the satisfaction of both sides. This first step in a cooperative, peaceful coexistence is the realization that all sides need to talk to each other if anyone has hope for success. In the 1990's, everyone must acknowledge that the union is here to stay and is an integral part of the organization. They must be communicated with on a regular basis. This situation is similar to a family. In a family, life is not always smooth and everyone does not always agree. But, in the end, a family works things out for the benefit of the family, in this case, the fire department and the city, and ultimately the citizens.

We have been told that the "bad apples" are sent to the Florence station as punishment and to keep them away from the central station. Transfers should never be used as punishment. Actually, all personnel should be working on a rotating schedule where they work at each station for a certain portion of the year. This will insure they remain proficient in the operation of all equipment and maintain a sense of all areas of the city, including buildings, hydrants and hazards. The unique nature of fire fighting in a city the size of Northampton is that firefighters have to be an "expert" in all areas and apparatus.

The city is not large enough to enjoy the luxury of firefighters staying at one fire station and working on the same apparatus their entire career.

The injured on duty issue has been a significant problem for the Department and the City for many years. There appears to have been some abuse of the system, along with the lack of clear guidelines on how these issues should be handled. The end result is hard feelings on both sides, negative press coverage, a system that pays more to not work than to work, and requires a fight every time an injury occurs. Policies must be developed to handle legitimate injury issues as they occur that will allow the expeditious resolution to the satisfaction of all parties.

Planning

The word "plan" has apparently been considered a four letter word by former fire chiefs and senior managers. The lack of planning for any aspect of the fire department is obvious. The department simply went from day-to-day, complaining about the present but with little or no thought of providing policy makers solid information on how to improve the situation.

The Fire Department, under the direction of the new fire chief, must undertake a master planning process. Long range plans covering 5 to 10 years, medium range plans covering 1 to 5 years and short range plans, covering 1 to 12 months must be developed.

Information management in the fire department consists of two used personal computers. The Department has to enter the 1990's, and with city support, prepare to become part of the information age. With the exception of a few reports, including fire reports, the vast majority of work generated in the department is hand written.

All Department personnel should be computer literate. The Department should install a small computer system what will allow multiple stations and the use of E-mail for all personnel, a calendar manager program, connection to the Internet, and connection to all City departments. The fire chief, deputy chief's and fire prevention officer should have access to lap top computers. The training records, vehicle maintenance, service testing, should be maintained on computer.

Mutual Aid

Mutual aid is a concept in the fire service that has been utilized since the beginning of organized fire departments. It is not conceivable that a city could prepare and staff for the occasional large fire when large quantities of apparatus and firefighters are required. Instead, communities agreed to help each other in their time of need. While senior managers in the fire department appear to understand this concept, it would appear that

they also share an attitude of isolationism, where the prevalent feeling is that they can handle all their own calls. This is an old fashioned, dangerous and foolish thought.

The Fire Department needs to understand how organized mutual aid works, then be willing to provide this assistance, as well as requesting the assistance of others when needed. The city is a member of the County Fire Defense Association, but only by virtue of being in the County. The Hampshire County radio frequency is not used in Northampton. The Easthampton Fire Station is within 4 1/2 miles from downtown, making it closer than the Florence Fire Station.

We have been told the decision of what apparatus and how many crew members that will respond to mutual aid calls is made individually by the deputy chief on duty at the emergency scene. This should be prearranged. A mutual aid plan must be developed, designating who will be called for specific calls within specific areas of the city, and also identify what apparatus and crews respond to mutual aid when requested. Mutual aid is the only way significant situations are handled in most communities. The city should also expand on "automatic" mutual aid, which is employed when city apparatus can reach an area in another community faster than the apparatus from the community itself. This concept is now used to cover the hard to access sections of the interstate. It could well be expanded.

Recommendations:

→ Nadeau: 16 hour curriculum for all FF's

1. **Immediately develop an incident command system and mandate its use. Obtain funding from the city government and do it now. Train ALL personnel while on-duty. Hire outside instructors, video-tape each session for makeups, and require testing competency certification for everyone. This is a critical operational issue.**
2. **New personnel need to be adequately trained before being permitted to engage in emergency operations. A minimum of attendance at the Massachusetts Fire Academy Recruit School is needed. Otherwise the new personnel do not even know the basics. This is a critical management issue.**
3. All personnel in the Department should at least meet the requirements of Fire Fighter I, as specified in NFPA 1001, Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications.
4. Policies should be developed for emergency operations during all incidents. Everyone needs to know what is expected of them. Automatic recall, staffing of reserve apparatus, and provisions for pilots for mutual aid companies covering city fire houses need to be in place.

5. A run card system through the tenth alarm and activation of the City disaster plan should be developed .

6. The promotion and selection processes should be improved. . To simply promote people with limited time on the job who pass the civil service examination is archaic. We recommend a minimum of the written civil service test, an oral review board using fire professionals from throughout the state, and/or a chief's interview with the fire chief and/or deputy chiefs and other community officials. In lieu of the oral board, use an assessment center.

7. Establish the minimum years of experience that will required before personnel can test for a specific position. We recommend five years as a firefighter in Northampton to test for lieutenant, three years as a lieutenant to test for captain, and three years as a captain to test for deputy. This will insure personnel with management responsibility have an adequate amount of time on the job and have accrued the necessary experience and training.

8. Immediately require management and leadership training for all officers, starting with the deputy chiefs. All deputy chiefs should be mandated to attend the National Fire Academy's course "Command and Control of Fire Department Major Operations" as soon as possible. ALL officers should be mandated to attend a certified company officer program. This should be done as soon as possible and would probably work best if the class was offered in Northampton

9. All officers should be encouraged to attend the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland. All costs, with the exception of a meal ticket, are provided by the federal government. Specific courses should include Executive Fire Officer for senior managers, Interpersonal Dynamics in Fire Service Organizations, Fire Service Instructional Methodology, Fire Inspection Principles and Fire Service Communications.

10. Personnel attending the National Fire Academy or other Department sponsored management training should be allowed to attend "on duty," and not be required to take vacation time.

11. Regular meetings between the Fire and Police Chiefs to work out coordination issues should occur. In many progressive communities these sessions are informal, over lunch or breakfast where the less formal surroundings are conducive to relaxed communication. This is a critical operational issue.

12. When the central dispatch center is being designed, a separate City department should be created to operate this function. We strongly recommend that the new dispatch center should not fall under the control of any emergency services department in the City.

This type of organizational structure will eliminate the typical problems that develop when one City department is placed in charge of dispatching for another.

13. When the central dispatch center is opened, the fire department personnel used as dispatchers should be reassigned to full fire fighting duty. The fire department needs additional personnel, not fewer.

14. All companies should be required to meet well defined performance criteria for advancing hose lines, deploying ladders and setting up and operating elevated hose streams. This means an emphasis on the basics, and repetitive training on the equipment until its use under various conditions is second nature.

15. The city should provide professional training to all Department employees in team building and conflict resolution. Personnel need the tools to deal with the problems currently facing the Department. These tools will also be an enormous help when the new fire chief begins the process of change.

16. The Department should invest in large diameter hose, either 4 or 5 inch with the appropriate appliances. All personnel should be trained in the proper use before the hose is placed into service.

17. The city should immediately establish a labor/management committee to discuss all pertinent labor issues. This committee should be comprised of the fire chief, union representatives and the city personnel director. This should assist in the resolution of issues and enable the department and city to avoid the negative publicity of the past. The new fire chief should also meet with the Executive Board of the union on a regular basis to discuss union/management issues or areas of joint interest and support. This is a critical operational issue.

18. All personnel should be trained at the hazardous materials operations level as soon as practical. Additional personnel should be encouraged to participate in the regional haz mat team and become certified as haz mat technicians.

19. A master planning process must be initiated as soon as the new fire chief arrives to allow the department to develop a "road map" of where they are going for review and concurrency by policy makers.

20. The training budget for next years budget should be increased to \$20,000. This will allow the new fire chief to institute the training programs necessary in the department.

21. A formal plan for mutual aid, providing and/or receiving, must be developed. This would coincide with the run card system recommended in #5 above.

22. The City should consider the adoption of additional "automatic" mutual aid in certain sections of the city. This could include additional tankers to reported building fires in the Leeds section of the city, or an additional ladder truck to reported fires downtown. All the help in the world is useless if not called and utilized.

23. All radios, portables, mobiles and base stations, must have the capacity to communicate with all frequencies, including the mutual aid frequency. It is imperative that the incident commander and the dispatcher have the ability to communicate with all apparatus and departments responding into the city.

24. Reference material must be available for hazardous materials incidents.

25. The City must make an adequate investment in information technology for the fire department. A computer system, with all the necessary components, must be provided to allow the department to use the technology presently available. The department personnel must also be trained in the use of this technology.

Leadership and the New Fire Chief

To move successfully into the future, the Fire Department needs a leader capable of developing and managing the fire department in dramatically changing environments. To compete successfully, the fire chief must be a smart, tough, nice and modern manager. He/she must demonstrate that they can operate successfully in competitive, changing, and non-traditional environments and dealt successfully with the issues to be faced. He/she must have vision, the ability to predict and possess effective human relation skills.

The new fire chief will need the support of the elected officials, citizens, business leaders and the members of the fire department, especially the deputy chiefs and the union. The fire chief will need strategies to overcome the autocratic, power-focused, and controlling environments of the past. Significant value shifts in management philosophy must take place. Among the challenges the new chief must successfully face are firefighter safety, human resource management, effective customer service, labor/management relations, diversity of the community and the work force, and financial realities.

The new fire chief must be a team builder, able to reach all groups and areas of interest within the Fire Department. He/she must also be a team player, who is capable in playing a major role in the Mayor's senior management team. The fire chief must move forward to remove barriers and take the needed steps to interact with the community 365 days a year. The use of non-traditional factors, such as those used in business and industry need to be adopted. The fire chief and the Fire Department must be visible in the community, promote fire safety and injury prevention messages continuously, both personally and electronically, and use natural resources for education and training to a much larger degree that is done presently.

The chief must support a positive, progressive, official labor/management process to address issues as they arise. This process develops and nurtures trust between employee organizations (the union) and the fire administrators. The labor/management process provides the glue necessary for the union and fire management to work together for the betterment for the fire department as a whole. In this case, everyone wins.

Specifically, the fire chief must be an experienced fire chief, meaning he/she presently holds the position of fire chief in another community. The City of Northampton needs a person who already has the knowledge and experience to come into the department and "hit the street running." There is no time for someone to "learn the job." Necessary skills include labor relations, budget preparation and management, a vast knowledge of the technology presently available to the fire service today, master planning, the ability to communicate with personnel at all levels of the organization, team building, knowledge of state and federal laws that impact emergency services, and empathy for his fellow firefighters.

The new fire chief must also have a vision of where the fire service in Northampton is going, and be able to communicate that to all personnel. To achieve success, the chief must receive "buy in" of this vision from the firefighters. The chief must also be a proponent of change, because significant, radical change is necessary, some of which must take place immediately upon his/her arrival. A proposed job description is available in Appendix 2.

The existing Northampton Fire Department organizational culture is not consistent with that of a 21st century department. The City Administration, under the direction of Mayor Ford, has set out clear direction for the modernization of government. Significant financial challenges such as state aid cutbacks, education reform, and proposition 2 & ½ have been addressed through contemporary leadership and management practices, re-invention and re-engineering. The Fire Department has not participated in or supported current management philosophy and it shows in terms of everything they do.

Recommendations:

- 1. Initiate the Fire Chief search on a national level. Recruitment ads should be published in the IAFC "On-Scene" newsletter and in "Fire Chief" and "Fire Engineering" magazines as well as the usual local and regional newspapers. This is a critical operational and management issue**
- 2. The new fire chief should have experience as a fire chief in a unionized fire department in New England, preferably in Massachusetts. This does not mean that we think an chief from outside the region would not be successful, but in any case, experience is essential. This is a critical issue.**

3. The new fire chief should possess a minimum of a bachelor of science degree, **and** be a graduate of the Executive Fire Officers program at the National Fire Academy. A masters in public administration should be preferred.
4. The new fire chief should have a minimum of 10 years experience in a full time, unionized fire department, having come up through the ranks. This means the person selected as fire chief was once a firefighter. This helps build the bond with the entire Department.
5. Preferred qualifications of the new fire chief include certified fire fighter, Nationally Registered Emergency Medical Technician, Certified Hazardous Materials Technician and certified company officer.
6. **The new fire chief should be offered a minimum of a five year contract. We realize that this would require changing the city charter, but we feel this is absolutely necessary. This will give the chief a sense of stability, without worrying about his/her annual renewal of a one year appointment. This is an accepted practice in cities across America today. This is a critical management issue.**

Emergency Medical Services

Northampton is in an enviable strategic position for emergency medical service because that the runs to Cooley Dickenson Hospital are short and quick.

As a result of this feature and the stationing of two ambulances in the City, medical response times for an ambulance staffed with paramedics are much better than the industry norm which is set at service being provided (at the 90th percentile), in 8 minutes and 59 seconds. However, this time parameter assumes that basic life support will be administered in less than four minutes through some other means to stabilize the patient while paramedics are under way. This also assumes that a percentage of calls will take longer because of a multiple call situation or some other factor.

Time is of the essence. If someone suffers a cardiac arrest, their heart and breathing stops. After four minutes, irreversible brain damage probably occurs, and the chances of survival diminishes rapidly. The victim whose heart and breathing have been interrupted for less than four minutes has an excellent chance for full recovery if CPR is administered immediately and followed by advanced cardiac life support (ACLS) including defibrillation within the next four minutes.

Presently, all personnel in the Fire Department are CPR and first responder trained. There are also a handful of personnel trained as emergency medical technicians. The fire department is equipped with basic medical kits and oxygen equipment and is capable of providing basic life support as is the Police Department. Now the Police Department will send a police officer to the scene for stabilization of the patient. This places undue

requirements on the officer who must perform a patient assessment and then begin care for the injured/sick person, while also maintaining scene safety, crowd control, traffic control and security of the area. Ideally the job of patient care should be handled by the fire department, with the police department assisting as needed in the medical situation and controlling the situation in general.

With few exceptions, the Fire Department would arrive before the private ambulance, and would be able to begin treatment of the injured/ill person including defibrillation if necessary. The advantage here is a quicker response time for immediate assistance, possibly making the difference between life and death.

There is presently no mass casualty incident (MCI) plan in place for the City of Northampton. A mass casualty incident plan is a written management plan to address large numbers of injured or ill people, usually at the result of one incident. The plan would allow for the expeditious treatment of all affected, identifying all necessary resources before the incident occurs, and providing for the rapid transportation to the hospital. The MCI would also coordinate operations with the local hospital or hospitals. This is a critical issue because the potential for such an incident in the city is great. State law gives the responsibility and authority for such an incident to the fire department, so it would be prudent for a community to be prepared with a plan.

The City presently contracts out emergency ambulance service to a private, for profit provider. In nearby Amherst and Easthampton, the emergency ambulance service is provided by the fire department. Here, the fire fighters are cross trained to provide ambulance service and serve as fire fighters. The community receives the benefit of one person doing two jobs, while also collecting the ambulance revenue, a substantial portion of the operating budget of these departments. The use of ambulance revenue, most of which is received through third party billings, has allowed many fire departments to increase or at least maintain present staffing, utilizing ambulance revenue to pay a portion of the salaries. This helps maintain a reasonable operating budget and staffing level without impacting the taxpayer. This type of operation is presently used successfully throughout Massachusetts.

Recommendations:

1. Effective as soon as possible, the fire department should be dispatched to the following emergency calls, as soon as the call for assistance is received by the police dispatcher. There must be no delay in the notification of the fire department. This is a critical issue.

- all medical emergencies in the city
- all motor vehicle accidents where personal injury is reported, where people are reported trapped, or where fluids are leaking
- all accidents on I-91

- all industrial accidents
- any incident involving a train, including accidents, injuries, leaks or spills
- any accident on the river

The typical response should be Rescue 1 with two personnel to a downtown call, with an engine if needed for accidents, and the Florence engine to calls in that area of the city. This will insure a rapid response of emergency personnel and allow the delivery of basic life support to begin as soon as possible.

2. The city should provide immediate funding to allow the purchase of two automated external defibrillators (AED) for the Fire Department. One should be placed on the rescue truck in the central station and one on the first due engine in Florence. This will allow for the rapid defibrillation of anyone in cardiac arrest. This is a critical issue.

a. A training program should be established to train ALL personnel in the use of the defibrillators.

b. Automated external defibrillators requires no heart rhythm recognition, is simpler to operate than other defibrillators, and requires less training.

3. Effective immediately, the City should require all new fire department personnel to be Nationally Registered Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT), Emergency Medical Technicians-Intermediate (EMT-I) or Nationality Registered Paramedics (EMT-P) and be required to maintain that level of training as a condition of employment.

a. The Fire Department should develop a training program (internal or external) to allow EMT trained personnel to receive continuing education towards their required re-certification.

b. EMT training should also be offered to all other Department personnel on a voluntary basis. A financial incentive for this training should be negotiated in the next labor contract to promote participation.

4. The fire department, in conjunction with the hospital and private ambulance provider, must develop a mass casualty incident plan as soon as possible.

5. A special study committee should be established to review the possibility of the Fire Department bidding for the operation of emergency ambulance service for the City when the existing contract expires in 2002. This means the Fire Department would respond to the 9-1-1 calls for medical assistance, while the private, for profit provider provides the non emergency transfer service which is also needed in the community. This opportunity has several distinct benefits which include collection of ambulance revenue to offset the Fire Department budget, control over emergency medical service operations in

the City, quality control for ambulance delivery, cross trained firefighters performing two jobs for the city and an integrated emergency response plan, where the fire chief directs the related emergency response functions in the city including fire, medical, rescue and hazardous materials.

Health and Safety

The Department appears to be devoid of routinely accepted safety practices. They simply do not exist. This is not acceptable in a modern fire service organization. The most precious resource of any organization is it's people, and both the City and the Department must do everything in its capacity to protect the emergency responders. The protectors must be protected, too.

Many firefighters expressed concern for their own safety because of the way the Department had been run and the poor condition of the equipment. Several stated that it would take the death of a firefighter before change was instituted. This must never happen. Firefighting is a dangerous job to begin with, but to feel that the Department and City is not taking appropriate action to protect one's welfare can have devastating effect morale and the desire to take the necessary risks associated with the job.

A second major problem concerns radio communications, specifically portable radios. We have received reports of radios that do not work, personnel not being issued a radio by the deputy, dead batteries, inability to reach the dispatcher, no maintenance, and old, two channel radios. Portable radios are the lifeline to the outside world for fire crews attacking a fire in a building.

As a minimum, all crews operating inside a building should have a portable radio capable of at least reaching the personnel outside the building. Portable radios should also be able to reach the dispatcher from outside the building. Radios should have multiple channels to provide dispatch frequencies, tactical frequencies, and the ability to communicate with other city departments and mutual aid companies. All the mutual aid in the world is useless if you can not talk to them.

Although the need for incident command was discussed earlier in the report, we will revisit it here because it is also a major safety issue. Presently, there is no formal control at the scene of an emergency. The deputy chief may be "in charge" by virtue of being the senior ranking officer on the scene, but there is no formal structure. The deputy rides in the apparatus, and then often goes inside the building, leaving the pump operator outside to make decisions on what should be done, and where additional companies should go.

This situation promotes freelancing, where everyone arriving on the scene does what they think is best often without knowledge of the overall dimensions of the problem. Someone needs to be in charge outside the building. An emergency incident can not be effectively managed from inside the building. Someone needs to be looking at the "big picture,"

developing an action plan, communicating with interior crews and additional companies as they arrive. Someone needs to be coordinating the resources the city sends to an emergency. To do less is a design for disaster. When emergencies involving the fire crews occur at the scene of an emergency call, and they do, some one must be able to manage the situation.

Other components needed but not used during significant emergency operations include safety officers, rapid intervention teams, and the rehabilitation of crews. The duty of the safety officer at the scene of an emergency is to look out for the personnel as they perform their job. This includes identification of hazards, proper use of personal protective equipment, collapse zones, accountability of crews, and identification of unsafe practices or tactics. The rapid intervention crew is a crew assembled outside the building and placed in the stand-by mode. Their function is to rescue a firefighter or entire crew if they become trapped or lost in the building. To wait to assemble the crew after something happened will probably result in the team reaching the trapped or injured firefighter too late to make a difference. This crew is often formed by call back personnel and mutual aid companies.

The rehabilitation of emergency crews is essential. Firefighters typically will not take a break until the job is done, regardless of their physical condition. This leads to death and injury of firefighters. An established program needs to be created to insure personnel are rotated and those crews leaving the building receive a chance to rest, have their medical condition monitored, and be allowed to replace the fluids they lost.

Other safety violations were numerous involving the fire stations, apparatus, equipment, procedures, or lack there of, city sponsored programs, attitudes and almost every other aspect of the fire department. This does not mean personnel do not want to be safe because they do. Many personnel expressed grave concerns on the state of safety in the fire Department.

Personnel reported the following safety problems to us: ground ladders placed into service when they were known to be damaged, Opticom emergency traffic control system not being maintained or expanded in the city, requiring responding apparatus to swing out into on coming traffic, delayed ventilation at building fires, fire crews taking the elevator to the fire floor, storm water running through the station, emergency generators not working, lack of decontamination equipment, lack of seat belt use, personnel riding in open cabs with no fall protection, lack of rehabilitation at the scene of emergencies and many, many more. All these are dangerous and unacceptable practices and should be corrected immediately. To do less is pure negligence.

Personnel are allowed to operate apparatus and respond to emergency calls with little or no training. Some personnel, with a few weeks on the job, find themselves driving to emergencies. Personnel must receive appropriate training on any apparatus they are

required to operate. All apparatus operators should be required to obtain a Commercial Drivers License (CDL).

The apparatus is outdated and lacking of accepted safety equipment. Present apparatus technology includes sufficient emergency lights, ABS, enclosed cabs, automatic chains, three point safety belts, and ground lighting. The Department does not have a seat belt policy and open cabs do not have safety gates for the jump seats.

The Department does not have a wellness program, physical fitness program, annual physical examinations, infection control program, firefighter decontamination program, health and safety committee, annual physical ability testing, mandatory fire retrained station wear, provisions to wash turnout gear, and a safety officer. All are critical components of safety in the fire service. Many of the programs identified do not cost an enormous amount of money to initiate. They simply need management attention.

Smoking is prohibited in all fire stations. However, all firefighters should be encouraged to "kick the habit." This action will improve their health. The primary reason for encouraging all personnel to quit is the presumptive nature of death and illness from cancer, respiratory and heart disease being exacerbated by the inherent dangers and exposures of fire fighting.

Recommendations:

1. **Safety needs to become the number one priority of the fire department. This is a critical operational and management issue.**
2. **Installation of Opticom traffic control devices at all significant intersections and immediate repair of intersections presently equipped but not working. This is a critical issue.** We have been told that the Public Works Department was never notified of the intersections not working.
3. **The radio situation must be improved. Funding must be provided to allow sufficient reliable portable radios for crews working at emergency scenes. Spare batteries and a battery analyzer/conditioner must also be available. This is a critical operational issue.**
4. **As already mentioned elsewhere in the report, an incident command system must be implemented immediately. This is a critical operational issue.**
5. **The use of safety officers, rapid intervention teams and rehabilitation of crews are all components of a safe emergency operation. They should be implemented as soon as possible. This is a critical issue.**

6. New, state of the art apparatus is needed. Older apparatus lacks the technology of today that makes these vehicles safer.

7. A physical fitness program should be developed for all full time personnel in the department. This program should include an annual physical ability test, individualized workout programs for all employees, a full fitness evaluation from a certified exercise provider, and time for workouts while the employees are on duty.

a. An annual physical ability test should be conducted while the employee is wearing full protective clothing. The employee proceeds through a course of job related tasks including a ladder raise, hose pull, ladder carry, dummy drag, low clearance crawl and equipment carry.

b. Individualized workout programs should be provided for each employee. Because every employee has a different level of fitness, different age, and different overall fitness, all need a separate program with quarterly goals to reach. The employee then works out using the program designed for them.

c. A full fitness evaluation should be completed for all employees. Once the employee receives their annual physical examination, a fitness specialist should determine their level of fitness through a series of exercises and evaluations, including body fat composition. They should then be counseled on nutrition and given a fitness program tailored to their specific condition and needs.

d. All fitness programs components should comply with Massachusetts Workers Compensation requirements for fire department physical fitness programs.

8. Annual certification in the use of self contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) should be initiated immediately. This certification should include proper use, emergency procedures, and an obstacle course, where the face piece is blacked out. Fit testing of face pieces for all personnel should be conducted. This is a critical operational issue.

9. SCBA should be updated to include units with light weight bottles, integrated PASS alarms and complete, written program should be developed before any new SCBA units are allowed to be placed into service. The program should include training for all personnel in the department, both didactic and hands-on, along with procedures for cleaning, maintenance and storage.

10. Guidelines should be established to insure proper monitoring and rehabilitation of emergency personnel is provided for at the scene of major

emergencies, or any emergency scene where extreme temperatures or exertion is present. The rehabilitation should include medical evaluation and treatment, food and fluid replenishment, and relief and rest as necessary. This is a critical operational issue.

11. Install Full Body safety gates on all open cab apparatus immediately. Require mandatory seat belt usage. The potential for firefighter death, while responding is very real. A jump seat firefighter can easily slip or fall and be run over by the engine. Do it now. This is a critical operational issue.

12. A Health and Safety Committee needs to be appointed immediately. The committee should be comprised of representatives from every shift, the union, and administration. Their purpose is to review/develop safety procedures and make recommendations to the fire chief. They must take a proactive approach to safety. The committee should be involved in the following areas:

- review of existing safety guidelines
- review of existing safety equipment, including PPE
- review all accidents and injuries in the department
- promote and conduct safety training
- promote a safe attitude among all employees
- develop new safety guidelines for review by chief
- investigate new and safer equipment, methods and procedures
- keep department members informed of safety-related issues and problems

13. The Health and Safety Committee should complete a survey of all Department operations and programs to determine compliance with NFPA 1500. We recommend the goal of the department to be complete compliance with the standard as soon as possible. A report should be prepared for the fire chief to outline the areas in compliance, those areas still needing to be addressed, and a proposed time line for the completion of these issues.

14. The Department should also develop programs for infection control (a federal requirement), firefighter decontamination, washing of turnout gear and mandatory use of fire retardant station wear.

15. All apparatus operators in the fire department should be required to obtain a Commercial Drivers License (CDL).

Staffing

Staffing of a contemporary fire department is based upon the level of risk a community is willing to accept as well as the willingness and ability to pay for stated levels of protection.

Community risk should be assessed in terms of incident frequency and severity and hazard potential. In interviews with community leaders, the basic level of service desired included the ability to extend search and rescue services to entrapped occupants and to confine fire to a building of origin. The ability to respond to and manage two incidents simultaneously was also mentioned as a desired service.

The level of fire protection service offered by communities varies tremendously. Staffing is a critical component of a comprehensive fire protection system, but not the only component. Building construction, size, access, time of day, built in fire detection and alarm systems, topography, travel distances, water supply, weather conditions, training, equipment, personnel fitness, strategy and tactics all play a role on the outcome of a fire incident. Staffing alone does not ensure that the stated levels of protection will be afforded, that the system design objectives will be met. Fires are dynamic and firefighting is very labor intensive. But simply adding more help is not the answer.

In our discussions with community leaders, we came away with an understanding that the department should be capable of performing offensive fire fighting operations in buildings of approximately 2,000 square feet. NFPA 1200 is a proposed standard on staffing. As proposed, the standard called for the assembly of 12 persons on the fire ground, within 10 minutes of alarm, to initiate offensive strategy. Although this goal is simply that, a goal, it is a measure which is discussed. If the community desires aggressive offensive firefighting capability for 2000 square foot structures, staffing at the above stated levels need to be provided on the fire ground as outlined below:

	<u>One and Two Story</u>	<u>Three and Four Story</u>
Command	1	2
Search & Rescue	2	2
Attack Line	2	3
Back-up Line	2	3
Ventilation	2	2
Water Supply	1	2
Support	1	2
Rapid Entry Team	2	3
Total	13	19

It is neither cost effective nor the recommendation of this report that the city routinely staff enough handle "the big one" with on duty personnel. We do, however, endorse a plan to provide for an adequate on duty force along with a rapid call back and an effective and operational mutual aid system that will insure adequate personnel are available when a large magnitude but low frequency incident occurs.

Assembly of staffing on the fire ground in much larger communities is typically provided by on duty personnel. Several communities, similar in size to Northampton, employ a combination of on duty and on call personnel. This approach is particularly cost effective in light of reduced fire frequency, yet addresses community concerns over fire severity.

This report is NOT advocating the establishment of a separate, part-time on call division in the fire department. With the Community's long standing tradition of utilizing career personnel, the cultural adaptation to a combination paid/on call system would pose huge obstacles to an effective system.

Rather, this report is suggesting that career management and staff level personnel, in addition to their normal office hours, be utilized in an on-call capacity on a rotating basis. Command functions (Command, Operations, Planning, Logistics, Finance) and command staff functions (Safety, Liaison, Public Information), with appropriate systems and management in place. And they work at a fraction of the cost of staffing these functions with on-duty personnel.

On duty staffing also needs to be enhanced by a system that recalls off duty firefighters, one that is efficient, one that works. The current recall system relies on telephone solicitation. In our conversations with fire personnel, the system doesn't work very well, nor are firefighters inclined to respond to the recall. The recall system should be governed by written standard operating procedures. Most departments utilize radio voice alert and paging systems. Recalls include single companies, single groups, and multiple groups, depending upon incident demand, personnel and staffing needs, specialized needs, and tactical reserves for subsequent or multiple incidents.

Recommendations:

1. The city should provide funding to allow a total on duty shift strength of 13 personnel, including officers and firefighters. This means present staffing levels may need to be increased on each shift. This staffing will allow the necessary personnel to safely handle a typical incident in the city. We do not recommend the addition of any personnel until the new fire chief is hired, the mission clearly established and the Department is reorganized This is a critical management issue.

2. A shift strength of 13, will allow the safe and successful offensive operation in a 2,000 square foot buildings, while also being able to provide a response to two or more lessor simultaneous incidents.

This staffing scenario of **13** on-duty personnel, allows staffing four fire companies, supplemented with on-call chief officers and firefighters. Each on duty group would be lead by a Captain working out of Central, assigned to a company. The companies would be lead by a lieutenant or a senior firefighter. Each Engine company at Central would be

staffed with a minimum of three personnel, the ladder with three and the Florence Company staffed with a minimum of four personnel because of the multiple vehicles located there.

If additional resources are required for subsequent alarms, Reserve Apparatus (Engine 1 & 2) would be staffed by off-duty recall personnel or these recall personnel would be assigned as guides for third, fourth and fifth alarms staffed by mutual aid companies.

Three companies operating out of central can be justified by the very dense downtown area fire loading. The majority of these buildings are four stories in height with commercial occupancies on the first floor and residential occupancies on upper floors. These non-sprinklered buildings contain common cocklofts. Fire and party walls are in poor repair and suffer breaches. A fire in one of these buildings requires aggressive offensive or defensive/offensive operations. Failure to control such an incident in the early stages could very well lead to a conflagration, the loss of a major portion of the downtown district. The residential occupancies in these buildings require aggressive tactics, including entry, search and rescue, ventilation, attack line advancement up multiple stairwells to the fire floor and the floor above the fire. The three person ladder crew can provide entry/search & rescue and ventilation, the first due engine company advances a line to the fire flow, the second due engine advances lines to the floor above the fire. Arrival of the fourth company from Florence would provide for a back-up line and rapid entry crew. The type of incident described here will also require activation of off-duty personnel to staff second alarm companies, and mutual aid for station coverage and third and greater alarms.

The fire potential throughout this community is significant. There is high density in the downtown area and portions of Florence. Water supply problems and considerable wildland/urban interface problems are evident in the Florence and Leeds areas. These factors justify the four person minimum at the Florence station, although the Florence capability should be utilized more in the recommended run card system. Offensive attack fire flows can be increased to 250 gallons per minute with a four person company or allow a 2 person, 150 g.p.m. fire flow, a third individual to perform horizontal ventilation and the fourth person to operate the pump and establish the tanker water supply. OSHA and NFPA standards are easily interpreted to require a minimum of four personnel on scene to initiate offensive operations. Priority should be given to maintaining a minimum four person company at Florence and providing new equipment (multiple units) for forest/wildland fire protection.

3. Establish an effective call back system for off duty personnel. The use of personal pagers is the most effective means to reach off duty personnel any where in the city. Personnel should be immediately called back when a report of a working building fire is received. This should be an integral element of incident command. This will insure adequate back up crews are available on the scene, or to handle other alarms in the City. This is a critical operational issue.

Note: Systems and equipment are required including pager encoders and decoders, command staff vehicles, and associated communications equipment (Portable radios, Cellular phones, Reference materials).

5. On call staff officers must have the full personal use of Department supplied vehicles. Response time in such a system is critical. The community needs to embrace the concept, be educated on the reasons for their use of such a vehicle.

6. In addition to a more coordinated and proactive approach to prevention, we recommend the consideration of a full time fire inspector/public fire education officer. This individual should be responsible for processing and follow-up on company inspection activities as well as intensive community outreach. Early detection and warning, and built in fire suppression (sprinklers) are critical to life safety and a very effective means of controlling manual fire suppression capability cost. The need for an aggressive, proactive community fire defense strategy (prevention) closely coordinated with the office of the Building Commissioner is recognized in our line staffing recommendations and repeated here.

Apparatus

All apparatus, with the exception of the rescue truck and tanker appears to be in poor shape. This includes the 1972 Maxim aerial ladder truck, which was refurbished in 1997. The newest pumpers are 1987 Macks, making these units ten years old. There is no routine preventive maintenance and no long range replacement plan. In 1983, the Department replaced three pumpers after two failed at the scene of a condominium fire. The maintenance program is strictly reactive, with inadequate funding. The mechanic does a good job with the resources he has, but needs to be supported by a maintenance plan which allows policy makers to make informed decisions.

The firefighter mechanic position should be retained. With the exception of funding and the process for securing parts and outside assistance, the incumbent has done an exceptional job of keeping the fleet running. Pump testing, ladder testing, hose testing and equipment have been very well maintained. As pointed out above, administrative procedures and support need improvement.

A department should never have to make large simultaneous purchase because it allows all equipment to age at the same time, necessitating the purchase of several replacement vehicles at the same time when they wear out. The City of Northampton is again looking at the need to replace several vehicles simultaneously.

While we do not usually agree with the need to make large purchases of apparatus, we do agree with Acting Chief Passa's position in the budget submittal on the need to replace an engine and the ladder immediately through lease purchase. We agree with the need to

replace these vehicles, as long as a long term capital replacement program is developed and put in place. But, the City should never be in the position to be forced into another large purchase again. There are many reasons for this position.

In any event, the city should explore the purchase of a "quint". Quint refers to a specialized, five-function vehicle that can carry hose, water in a booster tank, and ground ladders; can pump water, and is equipped with a 75- or 100- foot aerial ladder. Because it is multi-functional, one Quint will perform the same services that now require both a pumper and an aerial ladder truck. This means one vehicle and crew can do the jobs of two vehicles and crews. Unfortunately, many communities are scared away from this type of vehicle because of the price, some exceeding \$600,000. But the cost of one aerial ladder and one pumper can easily exceed \$750,000, and a full staffed quint is a more effective attack apparatus than an inadequately staffed pumper and ladder would be.

The Acting Chief presently operates a used vehicle. New vehicles will be necessary. The fire chief should be provided with a new fully marked and equipped, large sedan or 4-wheel drive type vehicle that can carry all the necessary equipment a modern chief will need at his/her disposal at the scene of an emergency. The equipment should include all warning devices including siren and light bar and a scanning, multiple channel two way radio. Other equipment should include protective equipment, portable radios, incident command supplies including vests, reference material for hazardous materials incidents, run cards, alarm assignments, mutual aid listings, street maps, hydrant flows, floor plans of target hazards, pre plan information, hand lights, fire extinguisher, first aid kit, fire line tape, and call back lists. The on call assistant/deputy chief must also have access to a similar vehicle fully equipped.

Recommendations:

1. The city should develop a fleet master plan, determining the condition and remaining useful life of all apparatus. A long term plan for replacement should then be developed.
2. **The city should begin the process to purchase in the fastest way possible, two pumpers and a ladder truck or a pumper and a quint. The newest pumpers are Engine 3 and 5, 1987 Mack's, making the newest engine in the fleet 10 years old. The newest engine should never be more than five years old. The 1972 ladder was reconditioned in 1997 but lacks several important features. The 1972 ladder should be retained as a reserve. This is a critical management issue.**
3. **The fire department vehicle maintenance program must plan for, justify and receive adequate funding to keep the emergency fleet in operating condition. This is a critical operational issue.**

4. All vehicles being replaced (with the exception of the ladder) should be traded-in as part of the apparatus purchase deal. The apparatus that are the oldest and in the worst shape should be traded-in. This will insure outdated vehicles are not retained by the department. An exception would be a pumper being downgraded to a reserve unit or reassignment to another station. All these decisions should be based on information contained in the apparatus master plan.

5. The Department, under the direction of the new fire chief, should create an apparatus committee to allow Department personnel to be actively involved in all apparatus purchases. They could be an asset to the chief in the preparation of specifications and the development of Fleet Master Plan.

6. All purchases and refurbishing be based on the Fleet Master Plan and the work outlined in a written specification. The written specification should then be sent out to bid to appropriate fire apparatus manufacturers and appropriate fire apparatus body shops.

7. When specifications for a new pumper are prepared, we recommend a commercial chassis with a completely enclosed, four door cab, with seating for at least four personnel, including the driver. The enclosed cab allows all emergency responded to ride inside, seated with a safety belt in place. The vehicle should have a minimum of a 1,000 gallon polypropylene water tank and at least a 1250 GPM pump. The pumper should be powered with an appropriate diesel engine and an automatic transmission. A foam proportioning system with at least a 25 gallon foam tank should also be considered along with a pre-piped deck gun. This will provide a cost effective vehicle capable of serving the city for many years.

8. All new vehicles should be equipped with automatic tire chains and scotch light striping.

9. All apparatus should comply with NFPA 1901, Standard for Automotive Fire Apparatus.

10. The cab and body of all apparatus should be specified with a corrosion resistant material, including stainless steel and/or aluminum. Along with this, we recommend the specifications include a specific warranty against body defects and corrosion. All water tanks and foam reservoirs should also be specified with corrosion resistant materials including polypropylene and stainless steel.

11. The city must keep the brush truck in service This is a specialized unit much smaller than a standard pumper, that has all-wheel drive and can handle off-road terrain. This vehicle has a smaller water tank and pump, and is designed with "pump and roll" capabilities. These features eliminate the need to bring large, more expensive apparatus off the road and into the woods. This small, versatile vehicle also eliminates the need to haul hose lines through the woods, which is very labor intensive.

12. When specifications are prepared for the purchase of a new ladder truck, we recommend the department consider a quint, or ladder truck equipped with a pump and water tank. This will allow more versatility for this vehicle. A quint ladder truck will help address the concerns of the shortage of available personnel at the scene of an emergency, and give the city a pumper and /or ladder depending what type of emergency they have to face.

13. The ladder truck or quint should be specified with a heavy duty ladder with a minimum tip load of 500 pounds, be at least 100', have short jacking capabilities, and a pre-piped water way to the tip. Others features recommended for the ladder truck include a diesel generator of at least 7KW, a four bottle cascade to fill air bottles on the scene, and roll up compartment doors.

14. New staff vehicles should be purchased and equipped for the new fire chief and the on call assistant/deputy chief.

Fire Stations

The City operates two fire stations, Headquarters on Masonic Street, which was built in 1873; and Station 2 in Florence, built in 1972. The city closed a fire station in Leeds in 1972. The headquarters building has been condemned more than once. It is in deplorable condition, lacks even basic conveniences and should be closed as soon as possible. Questions of bearing wall stability, exposed wiring, poor ventilation, narrow and restricted ceiling heights in apparatus bays, no handicapped access, lack of adequate parking, storage, apparatus space, office space, decontamination facilities, and meeting and training rooms. The building has several serious life safety code violations including no fire alarms, lack of a second means of egress, unenclosed stairs, proper exits and many more. The City presently has plans to build a replacement building on King Street

The worst short term problem noted at the Masonic Street station was related to health. When it rains, the storm drain in the rear parking lot backs up, forcing the storm water to run through the station apparatus floor. This presents a hazard and the potential for someone to be electrocuted. This is unacceptable.

It is difficult to instill pride, morale, and enthusiasm when employees are exposed to living conditions rarely seen this century. The building is dysfunctional and depressing. While many problems exist within the Department, this is without question the most serious problem and the City is to be commended in its efforts to rectify this situation.

Station 2, located in Florence, was built in 1972. This building more readily resembles a contemporary fire station, but it is not without its own problems. The emergency generator has been out of service for several months, the lights do not come on automatically when an alarm rings in, and the building does not have an intercom

connected to the central fire station. The building recently had a diesel exhaust removal system installed, which is a very positive move. Station 2 is also equipped with a training facility in the rear parking lot but personnel report use is very limited because of neighborhood complaints. This is unfortunate because the facility appears to be well designed and offered the ability for several different scenarios and types of training.

Municipal Fire Alarm system

The municipal fire alarm system is in a state of disrepair because of the age of the system and the need to replace extensive portions of the wiring system. The system connects all master and street fire alarm boxes with the central fire station, and is maintained by the Public Works Department. One circuit which contains several major buildings, has been out of service for several months

Considered old technology by some, a municipal fire alarm system is one of the simplest and most reliable emergency notification systems available. All components of the system should be returned to serviceable condition and the entire system should be maintained. If the system is not in service, there could be a significant delay in the notification.

The City should explore ways to adopt users fees to help defray the cost of maintaining the system. In some communities, user fees pay for the salary and all expenses of personnel assigned to maintain the fire alarm system.

Recommendations:

1. **The Central Fire Station should be replaced as soon as possible. This is a critical operational and management issue.**
2. **Repair the drain line to the street to allow the storm drain at the rear of the Central Fire Station to function properly. This is a critical issue.**
3. **Repair the emergency generator in the Florence Station. This is a critical operational issue. A fire station is one of only a few essential facilities in a Community, offering assistance to the citizens but also serving as a safe haven of needed during times of natural or Man-made disasters.**
4. **The City should support the Public Works Department in an effort to immediately complete all repairs to serve at least the master box system and charge appropriate maintenance fees for the service. Adequate funding should then be provided to provide for the maintenance of this critical system. This is a critical management issue.**
5. **Provide adequate planning, justification and funding to insure routine building and grounds maintenance can be performed when necessary.**

CONCLUSION

The road to recovery was started when the Mayor initiated this report. We commend her for taking this initial step. We also commend all Department members for their honesty and willingness to participate in the process to formally identify the problems and talk about the solutions. While there are many issues, none appears to be insurmountable. As we have previously stated, the strength of the fire department lies within the dedicated personnel who serve Northampton through good and bad times. It is these people who are the keys to success. We feel the majority of the Fire Department personnel have a positive attitude and are simply waiting for a new chief to lead them into the next century.

Many people have mentioned excellent ideas and proposals that could contribute to the success of the department. These people need to be heard, but the dark days of the past must remain in the past. Everyone needs to look to a positive future and be willing to actively contribute to the rebirth of the fire department. Those who can not see the future in a positive way should consider employment elsewhere, because there will be no room for malcontents in the new organization. We feel confident that the new chief, operating in a new organizational structure, will be able to identify unwilling personnel, as few as they may be, and assist them in making a very important decision to participate and help the process, or leave.

We offer this report as a complete package. This means all recommendations need to be considered in order for complete success. The report is not designed to allow either elected officials or fire department personnel to "pick and choose" those recommendations that are desirable, less controversial or inexpensive. We have made 86 recommendations including a recommendation for a complete reorganization of the Department and others which will result in a significant modernization of many aspects of Department and its operations. Many are listed as critical and should be addressed immediately. Several recommendations require additional funding and we realize that these may have to wait until the next budget year or until the selection of a new Chief.

This report is a plan for the both the present and the future. It can not and will not be completed overnight, but all interests must commit to a program of active and constructive communications both outside and within the Department.

It has been our pleasure to serve the citizens of Northampton. The road to recovery will continue as the hiring process for a new fire chief begins. The end result will be a modern, well equipped and staffed fire department that serves the citizens proudly. We have met many fine people in Northampton and are glad we did. Northampton is fortunate to have dedicated leaders and employees who care enough to try and dare to make a difference.

This report is a road map for the future. We wish you well on your journey.

APPENDIX 1

We offer the following mission and philosophy statement to the Mayor, City Council and Department Members as a starting point.

Proposed Mission Statement

The mission of the Northampton Fire Department is to provide the citizens of our great city with fast, clean, friendly, professional fire suppression, fire prevention, and rescue services; that protects and preserves life, property and the environment; that is provided at a reasonable cost by dedicated, trained professionals who serve with pride 24 hours a day.

Consider adding and supporting

- Pre-hospital EMT basic life support emergency medical intervention services
- Disaster management services (all hazards, including hazardous materials)
- Home based well being checks
- Pre-hospital EMT-P advanced life support services
- Basic and Advanced life support ambulance transportation services
- Home based Advanced life support medical intervention services
- Building, plumbing, health, electrical and fire code enforcement program management
- Community development, planning and community ambassador service responsibilities
- Accident prevention programs including bicycle helmets, drowning prevention.
- Citizen CPR classes.
- City employee CPR classes.
- City employee blood borne pathogen training.

- Company inspections.
- fire extinguisher training for industry.
- rescue training for confined space entry in industry.
- blood borne pathogen training for industry.
- fire safety and general safety for the elderly.
- fall prevention for the elderly.

Proposed Philosophy (Values-Traits-Beliefs) Statement

Philosophy statements are a lot like oregano. You need to mix them up with a lot of other things for it to taste good. The other things in this case are leadership, follower ship, staffing, training, equipment, standard operating procedures and an attitude that supports core values such as courage, trust, honesty, and respect. Each and every member of the organization has to hear, see and abide/obey organizational values. We only value what we fear we're gonna lose. Any set of organizational value statements must be subscribed to. Discipline, in cases where it is absent should follow the "Hot Stove Theory".

The departments current "values" statement is a good starting place. That, coupled with the following draft recommendation offers a tool box of ideas that the City and the Department can use to publish the statement, train everyone on its contents, and hold people accountable to it. Our recommended statement follows:

Proposed Draft Philosophy Statement

In order to effectively carry out our mission, it is essential that a philosophy statement, outlining our shared values, traits and beliefs be defined. More importantly, We recognize that membership in this organization denotes understanding, acceptance and support of this philosophy.

The philosophy of the Northampton Fire Department is as follows:

- 1) We respect and support each other.
- 2) We are collectively, Northampton's Number One Public Service Agency.

- 3) We go out of our way to ensure total customer satisfaction.
- 4) We maintain foremost in our minds an attitude that projects our mission : Fast - Clean - Friendly - Professional Fire Suppression, Fire Prevention and Rescue Services at a Reasonable Cost.
- 5) We recognize that all of our decisions ultimately impact our customers. As such, we use our mission to guide us in all decision making and subsequent action.
- 6) We will subject all of our professional actions to front page newspaper publication.
- 7) We recognize, accept, encourage and facilitate all governmental service delivery to our citizens and visitors. We are a vital component of City Government. We contribute to the quality of life in the City of Northampton. We protect our citizens, our firefighters, our local economy and our future.
- 8) We continually strive to offer all of our services on a fair and equitable basis, city wide to the best of our ability.
- 9) We accept the fact that fire/rescue service delivery can at times be eminently hazardous to our own personal welfare. We acknowledge that as individual members and as part of an aggressive, highly trained, fire/rescue team, we
 - A. Take significant risks to save and protect life
 - B. Take measured risks to save and protect property
 - C. Take no risk on non-savable life and/or property
 - D. are committed to making family sacrifices in times of city/community need
- 10) We continually support the County, State, National and International Fire/Rescue Community by providing an objective leadership role on issues and matters which may impact our delivery of services and/or the image of our fire/rescue services.
- 11) We encourage our members to be highly visible and easily accessible to our customers.
- 12) We continually promote the professionalism and credibility of our department and our city.

13) We recognize that each member of our department brings talent, skills and dedication to his/her duties and responsibilities. We acknowledge our obligation to provide each member opportunities to share those talents and skills and to grow professionally, socially, emotionally and intellectually. We recognize that our families will have to manage without our presence during significant emergency events. We acknowledge our obligation to the city and our obligation to loved ones, to plan ahead and make provisions for our absences.

14) We take personal care of our city provided facilities, apparatus and equipment.

15) We agree to disagree, but only in a positive, constructive manner, realizing everyone has an opinion and is entitled to express it. Once the decision is made, we all agree to support it for the good of the department and the city.

--END--

APPENDIX 2

Proposed Fire Chief's Job Description

Class Title: Fire Chief
Department: Fire
Division:
Date:

Job Code Number:
Grade Number:

GENERAL PURPOSE

Performs a variety of technical, administrative, and supervisory work in planning, organizing, directing and implementing fire prevention, suppression, emergency medical and disaster management services to prevent or minimize the loss of life and property by fire, natural and man made disasters and emergency medical conditions.

SUPERVISION RECEIVED:

Works under the General Guidance and Direction of the Mayor

SUPERVISION EXERCISED

Supervises the Assistant Fire Chief , and Secretarial staff directly, and other department staff, officers and firefighters through subordinate officers.

ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Plans, coordinates, supervises and evaluates Fire, Emergency Management and EMS operations.

Establishes policies and procedures for the department in order to implement directives from the Mayor or City Council.

Plans and implements Fire and EMS programs for the City in order to better carry out the policies and goals including those set forth in the City's Affirmative Action Plan; reviews Departmental performance and effectiveness; formulates programs or policies to alleviate deficiencies.

Supervises and coordinates the preparation and presentation of an annual budget; directs the implementation of the Departments' budgets; plans for and reviews specifications for new or replaced equipment.

Responds to alarms and may direct activities at the scene of major emergencies, as required.

Supervises the inspection of buildings and other properties for fire hazards and enforces fire prevention ordinances.

Directs the operation of departmental in-service training activities.

Controls the expenditure of departmental appropriations.

Handles grievances, maintains Departmental discipline and the conduct and general behavior of assigned personnel.

Prepares and submits reports to the Mayor regarding the Departments' activities and prepares a variety of other reports as appropriate including the annual report of activities.

Plans departmental operation with respect to equipment, apparatus, and personnel; supervises the implementation of such plans.

Assigns personnel and equipment to such duties and uses as the service requires; evaluates the need for and recommends the purchase of new equipment and supplies.

Meets with elected or appointed officials, other Fire/EMS officials, community and business representatives and the public on all aspects of the Departments' activities.

PERIPHERAL DUTIES

Attends conferences and meetings to keep abreast of current trends in the field; represents the City in a variety of local, county, state and other meetings.

Performs the duties of command personnel as needed and fulfills obligations during duty days or duty weeks.

Serves as a member of various employee committees.

DESIRED MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

Education and Experience:

- Graduation from a college or university with a bachelor's degree in fire science, public administration or a closely related field.
- Ten (10) years of experience in fire or emergency medical service work.
- Completion of the National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Program.
- Experience as a fire chief in a unionized fire department.

Necessary Knowledge, Skills and Abilities:

- Thorough knowledge of modern fire suppression, prevention, emergency management and emergency medical services principles, procedures, techniques, and equipment; Considerable knowledge of applicable laws, ordinances, departmental standard operating procedures and regulations;
- Ability to train and supervise subordinate personnel; Ability to perform work requiring good physical condition; Ability to communicate effectively orally and in writing; Ability to exercise sound judgment in evaluating situations and in making decisions; Ability to effectively give and receive verbal and written instructions; Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with other employees, supervisors and the public; and Ability to meet the special requirements listed below.
- Extensive knowledge of labor relations and collective bargaining
- Highly defined computer skills, including Word, Excel, and Power Point.
- Skill in the operation of the listed tools and equipment.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

- Must be twenty-one (21) years of age or older at time of hire.
- Must possess, or be able to obtain by time of hire, a valid State Driver's License without record of suspension or revocation in any state;
- No felony convictions or disqualifying criminal histories within the past seven years.
- Ability to read and write the English language.
- Ability to meet Departmental physical standards.

PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS

- Master's degree in public or business administration or closely related field.
- Certified Firefighter
- Certified Hazardous Materials Technician
- Nationally Registered Emergency Medical Technician
- Certified Company Officer
- Certified Fire Instructor

TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT USED

Radio, pager, personal computer, phone, Self Contained Breathing Apparatus.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS

The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

While performing the duties of this job, the employee is frequently required to sit; talk or hear; stand; walk; use hands to finger, handle, or operate objects, tools, or controls; and reach with hands and arms. The employee is occasionally required to climb or balance; stoop, kneel, crouch, or crawl; and taste or smell.

The employee must frequently lift and/or move up to 10 pounds and occasionally lift and/or move up to 100 pounds. Specific vision abilities required by this job include close vision, distance vision, color vision, peripheral vision, depth perception, and the ability to adjust focus.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

The work environment characteristics described here are representative of those an employee encounters while performing the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

Work is performed primarily in office, vehicles, and outdoor settings, in all weather conditions, including temperature extremes, during day and night shifts. Work is often performed in emergency and stressful situations. Individual is exposed to hearing alarms and hazards associated with fighting fires and rendering emergency medical assistance, including smoke, noxious odors, fumes, chemicals, liquid chemicals, solvents and oils.

The employee occasionally works near moving mechanical parts and in high, precarious places and is occasionally exposed to wet and/or humid conditions, fumes or airborne particles, toxic or caustic chemicals, risk of electrical shock, and vibration.

The noise level in the work environment is usually quiet in office settings, and loud at an emergency scene.

SELECTION GUIDELINES

Formal application; review of education and experience; appropriate testing and interviews; oral interview; background check; physical ability; drug screening; final selection and pre-employment medical examination. NOTE: Appointees will be subject to completion of a standard probationary period.

The examples of duties are intended only as illustrations of the various types of work performed. The omission of specific statements of duties does not exclude them from the position if the work is similar, related or a logical assignment to the position.

The job description does not constitute an employment agreement between the employer and the employee and is subject to change by the employer as the needs of the employer and requirements of the job change.

Approval: _____
Supervisor

Approval: _____
Appointing Authority

Effective Date:

Revision History:

APPENDIX III

LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED

A. ELECTED OFFICIALS

Mayor Mary L. Ford
Patrick Goggins, City Council President
Clare Higgins, City Councilor--Fire Committee
Linda Desmond, City Councilor " "

Ed Scagel, City Councilor " "

B. ADMINISTRATION SENIOR STAFF

Mike Vito, Executive Assistant
John Musante, Finance Director
Don Teres, Personnel Director;
Janet Sheppard, City Solicitor;
Special thanks to Corinne Philippides, Executive Secretary who can find anything and everything at a moment's notice.

C. INVOLVED CITIZENS

Kay Sheehan, Chair of the Fire Station Site and Building Committee
David Beaudin, member, " " " " " "

D. DEPARTMENT HEADS

Russell Sienkiewicz, Chief of Police
Tony Patillo, Building Commissioner,
Sam Brindis, Director, Department of Public Works
George Symborski, Emergency Management Director

E. FIRE DEPARTMENT

Edward Passa, Acting Fire Chief
Dana Cheverette, Deputy Chief
David Favaro, " "
Michael Driscoll, " "
Daniel Benedisuk; " "
Stanley Jasinski, Union President, Local 108, IAFF
Stephen Corbett, Vice President; " " "
Members of A, B, C, and D Groups, including the Florence station crews.

APPENDIX III (continued)

F COOLEY DICKINSON HOSPITAL

Dr. Ray Conway, Director of Emergency Services

G. NEARBY COMMUNITIES

Chief Alan Morrisette, Easthampton

Chief Victor Jumbrowski, Amherst

APPENDIX IV REPORT PREPARERS

A. Wallace E. Stickney Project Director

Mr. Stickney, Chairman and principal of MRI has over 30 years of government service at the local, regional, state and federal levels. He has been with MRI since 1993 when he returned to New Hampshire after three and a half years of service as National Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

As FEMA Director, he was responsible for the National Fire Administration and the National Fire Academy and as Director helped the Fire Administration regain the stature it deserved. He also worked closely with small and large departments in situations like the Chicago Flood, Oakland/Berkley Hills fires and numerous disasters of all kinds.

Positions held during his career include Commissioner of the New Hampshire DOT, Staff Assistant for Environmental Affairs to Governor Sununu of NH, Office Director with the USEPA, Town Engineer, College Instructor, and Professor.

He has earned a Masters Degree in Engineering from Northeastern University, a Masters in Public Administration from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and a Bachelor in Engineering from New England College. He is a Registered Professional Engineer and a member of the National Fire Protection Association and the American Public Management Association as well as numerous other professional organizations.

B. Chief William H. Pepler, Jr.

Chief Pepler is an affiliate expert with MRI in the areas of fire and emergency services operations and organization. He is an experienced Fire Chief with extensive theoretical and practical knowledge of all phases of fire department operations including labor relations, budgeting, personnel administration and innovative management techniques.

He now serves as Chief of the Keene, New Hampshire Fire Department. Keene is a college town community of 23,000 people. The Department has a staff of 40 full time unionized personnel and 45 part time personnel. The Department also serves as the dispatch center for scores of small towns in the area. Chief Pepler has also served as Chief of the Exeter, NH Department and in many other responsible fire service and security positions.

*New Hampshire
603-357-9861*