

Fire Commission

Proposal to the Board of Selectmen

October 8, 2020

Revised Nov. 9, 2020

See additions in red type

TG comments in orange

DRAFT

PROPOSAL

The Town of Bethel intends to create a Board of Fire Commissioners, which would be a new organ within town government. The Commission would be established as an ordinance of Town Code by the Board of Selectmen, following a public hearing as specified in Town Charter. Members of said Commission would be appointed by the Board of Selectmen to serve multi-year terms in a manner to be determined. **(This should be incorporated within the current EMS Commission to reduce redundancy of two Commissions of similar advisory intent) The Powers and Duties in that Ordinance is very clear on what that Commission is supposed to do and require from the FD in terms of EMS.**

***Recognition of the FD's as Town Agencies: Need to include statements that the two volunteer FDs are the definitive agencies to provide fire, rescue, hazardous material, and EMS services and are an agency of the Town of Bethel and shall abide by the rules/regulations and policies as are established from time to time. Such as Equal Employment, discrimination, harassment policies, etc... This was an issue during a lawsuit concerning the LOSAP that argued the Stony Hill FD was not a Town agency therefore may not be represented by town counsel- although the LOSAP was completely funded by TOB monies**

SAMPLE WORDING: “”The Bethel Volunteer Fire Department Inc and the Stony Hill Volunteer Fire Company Inc are herby established as the two authoritative Fire Departments to provide fire, rescue, hazardous material, and EMS services in the Town of Bethel.

The existing volunteer fire companies shall continue as operating entities and shall function as constituent units of the Town.

The Human Resources policies and procedures of the Town of Bethel shall be followed by the Departments...””

***Statement that the Fire Chiefs shall report to the Commission and/or First Selectman**

PURPOSE

The Fire Commission (“Commission”) will serve as an advisory board to the Board of Selectmen. The Commission will be responsible for reviewing and making recommendations on purchases and operational funding for the Town of Bethel’s volunteer fire companies. The duties and responsibilities of the Commission will be as follows:

- Long-term capital budget planning, with a future horizon of at least ten years, including, but not limited to building maintenance planning, future apparatus acquisitions and other capital equipment needs, such as communication equipment, turn-out gear, SCBA gear, hoses and any other equipment that meets the criteria to qualify as a capital purchase.
- **Annual operational budget planning; presentation to boards of Selectmen and Finance.**
- **The Commission chairperson shall have the responsibility of presenting the comprehensive operating and capital budgets to the joint meeting of the boards of Selectmen and Finance. (Budgets currently are two separate ones for each FD, would they be combined into one? If so how would this be handled with two different orgs/Chiefs?)**
- Ensuring vehicle maintenance and repair records are retained according to law.
- Ensuring assets of the Town of Bethel are cataloged and reported accurately to the town finance department.
- Review of annual operational and capital budget requests and recommendations on same to Board of Selectmen. **The commission shall have responsibility of presenting annual budget requests to the boards of Selectmen and Finance.**

COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP

The Commission shall be comprised of five members, as follows:

- One member of the Board of Selectmen.
- Members at large to be appointed by the Board of Selectmen (4)
- **Appointments to the Commission are subject to the provisions of the Minority Party Representation laws, consistent with state law and town charter.**

NOTE: Current members of the volunteer fire companies are not precluded from serving on the Commission, subject appointment by the Board of Selectmen. (Need a definitive policy- what if a member of one FD is on the board and not one from the other? Should it be policy that a member of each FD always be on the Board or not at all)

The Fire Chief of each Department or designee shall attend the Commission meetings to give a report on operations and provide info to the Commission as requested. Similar to how the Police Commission gets a Chiefs report each meeting.

ELIGIBILITY FOR FUNDING FOR VOLUNTEER FIRE AND AMBULANCE COMPANIES

The Town of Bethel and its volunteer fire and ambulance companies mutually recognize and agree that close coordination, mutual long-term planning, sound operational and financial management and full transparency are essential components to ensuring public safety. All parties recognize that the safety operations of the Town, the fire companies, the police department and the fire and ambulance dispatching system require teamwork, transparency and coordination between all parties. While recognizing that they are incorporated as independent agencies for operational purposes, the volunteer fire and ambulance companies shall be considered to be an integral function of town government.

Therefore, to be eligible to receive public funding, the volunteer fire and ambulance/EMT companies shall agree to the following conditions: **(monthly vs quarterly vs bi monthly- due to time/management as volunteers??)**

- Submit fire and ambulance/EMS call reports to the town finance department monthly, with simultaneous copies to the Fire Commission.

- Submit expense reports to finance department monthly.
- Submit status reports of vehicle maintenance and repairs to finance department quarterly, **with simultaneous copies to the Fire Commission.**
- Submit all financial records as required by the finance department related to the Town's Comprehensive Annual Finance Report, including all records for **fire, emergency services, paramedic and ambulance operations.**
- **Submit an annual report to the Commission to include call volumes/types summary, budget expenses overview, membership summary, future goals etc..**

TIMELINE FOR ADOPTION OF ORDINANCE

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| • Initial presentation to Board of Selectmen | Oct 20, 2020 |
| • Consideration by BOS; adjustments, deliberations | Nov 4 (Special Meeting) |
| • Consideration, vote by BOS | Nov 17 |
| • Drafting of ordinance | Month of December |
| • Public Hearing | Jan 5, 2021 |
| • Adjustments to ordinance, if needed | Jan 11 (Special Meeting) |
| • Adoption by BOS | Jan 19 |