

An adjourned meeting of the Board of Supervisors of Albemarle County, Virginia, was held on October 22, 2008, for purposes of a joint meeting with the Albemarle County Fire and Rescue Advisory Board (ACFRAB), at 7:00 p.m., Lane Auditorium, County Office Building, McIntire Road, Charlottesville, Virginia. This meeting was adjourned from October 8, 2008.

PRESENT: Mr. Kenneth C. Boyd, Mr. Lindsay G. Dorrier, Jr., Ms. Ann H. Mallek, Mr. Dennis S. Rooker, and Ms. Sally H. Thomas.

ABSENT: None.

OFFICERS PRESENT: County Executive, Robert W. Tucker, Jr., County Attorney, Larry W. Davis, and Clerk, Ella W. Jordan.

Agenda Item No. 1. The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m., by the Chairman, Mr. Boyd.

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Agenda Item No. 2. Introductions and Purpose.

Mr. Boyd thanked everyone for joining the Board's work session on the organizational structure of a fire and rescue system. He expressed appreciation for the attendance of all fire chiefs that were present. Mr. Boyd said that during the first two meetings of the ACFRAB strategic planning process it became increasingly clear that the Board of Supervisors and all fire/rescue stakeholders could benefit from a better understanding of how other peer Virginia localities have formally structured their organizations for a combination of fire and rescue systems. He stated that inviting representatives to provide an overview of their system and structure, and their evolution as a combination system including establishment and ordinances of their respective governing bodies would be beneficial and informative for everyone.

Mr. Boyd commented that several emails suggest that what is in play is an attempt to replace the volunteer system with a paid staff, and the entire Board agrees that nothing could be further from the truth. He emphasized that they greatly value volunteer stations and are striving to come up with a system that is not only inclusive of volunteers but thrives because they are a part of it. Mr. Boyd added that the Board is ultimately responsible for public safety of its citizens and has employed a director to be held accountable for the Board's vision for provision of those services. Albemarle County is committed to, and places a very high value, on the use of a combined system using both public and volunteer resources to deliver the critical services and to provide the maximum cost-effective performance, promote the County-wide public interest, be accountable for the service levels and resources like other programs provided to our citizens, fairly communicate and consider all views regarding these services, and consider past and present for projected growth and development of the County and its public safety requirements.

He noted that the system has undergone some significant changes in the past several years and is poised to further change in the future – including the hiring of paid personnel, the creation of blended paid and volunteer stations, and the commitment of increased County funding for volunteer operational and CIP needs – which have created a need to examine the organizational structure and ensure it is keeping pace with the needs of the evolving system in our community. Mr. Boyd said he believes their strategic planning process has been thwarted because of a lack of clear and formalized direction from the Board of Supervisors regarding governance of our system. He added that the system has operated under a loosely-defined organizational structure with no policy directives in place and it is time to reassess this in light of the current and future needs of the community. Mr. Boyd said that roles and responsibilities need clear definition and should be reflected in adopted policy and County Code to ensure that all involved understand the structure and can respond and interact appropriately.

Mr. Boyd said clarity about the organizational structure is critical to ensuring that every emergency fire and rescue call in Albemarle County receives a consistent, predictable, high quality of response that reflects the emphasis on citizens' safety and quality of life. He added that collaboration among units and the community as well as regional, state, and federal partners is paramount to emergency situations. He emphasized that it is important to utilize limited County resources as efficiently as possible toward the achievement of the strategic plan and the Comprehensive Plan goals. It is also important to respect and value the unique contributions of the components of this system towards achieving these inherent goals. Mr. Boyd added that he hoped tonight would provide some examples of how this organizational structure has been addressed in similar communities. He then welcomed Albemarle County fire and rescue officials and personnel to provide input as well.

Mr. Boyd said several representatives from like-size jurisdictions have been invited to make presentations and inform Board members about their fire and rescue systems and corresponding organizational structures. At the conclusion of their remarks, the Board has set aside a time for a question and answer period from the Board and from ACFRAB. The Board's intent is to conclude with guidance from the Board regarding how to move forward on this issue so that all parties have a clear and formalized direction regarding governance of the County's system.

Mr. Boyd then recognized Chief Rob Brown of Stafford County Fire and Rescue, Chief Fred Crosby of Hanover County Fire and Rescue, and Richard Johnson – retired County Administrator of Hanover County.

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Agenda Item No. 3. Presentation: Stafford Fire Rescue.

Chief Rob Brown addressed the Board, stating that they adopted the motto of “one department, one mission, and many partners” as their Board’s intent is not to eliminate volunteer companies but form a partnership and in the future grow together to provide the best services possible for Stafford County. He reported that that County’s Fire and Rescue Department is comprised of 15 stations – some of which are combination fire and rescue stations, some are rescue only, and some are fire only. Chief Brown said that they have 640 fire and rescue professionals, with 550 of those being volunteers and the remainder being career staff. He stated that the system currently answers about 22,700 emergency calls and provides ambulance transportation, which they bill for. He reported that the Stafford County Fire and Rescue Department was formally formed in September 20, 2005 and that is when the ordinance that created it, and the position of County Fire Chief, was passed. Chief Brown said that at that time they decided to go with a system where one person had total authority over the department. He added that so far, they have been able to work together to build the system rather than have one strong authoritative figure that dictates what will be done. Chief Brown said that they have brought about consensus before decisions have been made, even unpopular ones.

He indicated that they have stayed focused on their mission – getting to citizens in eight minutes or less, 90% of the time, county-wide – the “bronze standard.” He explained that their standards for urban and suburban areas are higher, and every time they make a change in the system it relates to how to achieve those goals. Chief Brown said he works for the County Administrator and receives his policy direction from the Board of Supervisors, but when he makes decisions the first people he thinks about are the citizens and the people in the community. The department and personnel come second to that. He also said that they have many partners – all volunteer fire and rescue companies and the Stafford County Professional Firefighters (career personnel represented by the International Association of Firefighters). Chief Brown stated that the opportunities for them in implementing their plan were enhanced levels of service, enhanced safety, economies of scale, accountability, and helping with ISO issues. He further explained that they were able to integrate their system where the emotions of career versus volunteer were able to be set aside so that a scientific approach could be taken to providing the best levels of service. Chief Brown reported that there is an association that acts as an advisory board to him, and the ordinance specifically states they are advisory only. He said that the department has four assistant chiefs, three of whom are career and one of whom is a volunteer. Chief Brown stated that the volunteer now oversees the entire operations division and reports directly to him – and they are evaluated by the personnel system. He explained that their tactics have enhanced their level of service, and by consolidating into the Northern Virginia policies they have regional inter-operational capability.

Chief Brown said that they have minimum staffing standards, and they have standardized both training and apparatus – and an operations group works to decide what is going to be carried on County apparatus. He explained that prior to his arrival, Stafford County had decided that they would purchase and own all of the apparatus and equipment. Chief Brown mentioned a photograph of one of their new stations that will be operated by a volunteer rescue company that will vacate their building and a volunteer fire company that will vacate their building. These companies will come together in one building and operate fire and rescue out of the station. He emphasized that accountability has been important to his board and to him, and that rests with him – the County Fire Chief. Chief Brown said that they have a county-wide class nine rating, which is established by blending the rate of all resources.

Chief Brown said the challenges have been authority, individuality and understanding the ordinance. Chief Brown reiterated that the authority needs to be vested in one person where the buck stops. There has to be someone who is ultimately accountable for the system. The ordinance allows the County Fire Chief a lot of opportunity to be a dictator in some areas, but that is not the way it is used. The ordinance is only there for that critical time that decisions have to be made that cannot be made. Other than that, it is about building relationships. Individuality has been an interesting choice. The Board made the decision that any apparatus purchased by the taxpayers of the County will be painted and marked as Stafford County vehicles. If volunteer funds purchase it then there is no say over that as long as it meets basic County specifications. Chief Brown said that they operate 26 ambulances that are all the same. Lastly, Chief Brown said he is always encouraging his staff to stick to the facts and stay away from rumors. Most of his time is spent trying to dissuade personnel from listening to rumors.

Chief Brown said they have had a lot of success in their system. He stated that in 2005, 41 percent of all calls were in less than eight minutes; today they are at 69 percent and more progress is being made every day.

Mr. Rooker asked how many volunteers were in the system when they made the change in September 2005. Chief Brown replied that they had about 350 volunteers and 25 career people. They now have 550 volunteers and 98 career people. He noted that every volunteer has to go through an FBI background check, just like a career person, and some of those volunteers might have already been in the system. Chief Brown confirmed that the volunteer corps has not diminished at all since the system was implemented.

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Presentation: Hanover Fire and EMS.

Chief Fred Crosby, Chief of Fire and EMS for Hanover County, addressed the Board. He said that they have been a combination system since 1990. In 1897 a group of volunteers banded in the town of Ashland to start their own fire company. In 2008, they celebrated their 101 year anniversary and they are still all volunteers. Chief Crosby said that tonight their retired County Administrator is here because years ago he helped steer Hanover to improve the system, which is similar to what Albemarle is facing

right now. Chief Crosby noted that Hanover is a lot like Albemarle – it is 512 square miles with the Town of Ashland being 40 square miles – with a population of 110,000 and a mix of suburban and rural.

He said that in the 1960's, the volunteer fire companies came together and created a federation; it changed over the years as the fire chiefs' roles changed. The latest ordinance happened in 2000 when it became time to change the organizational model. Chief Crosby stated that originally there were 12 fire stations – all independent companies – and four independent rescue squads. In 2000, he said, they decided to merge all that and that yielded the current system. His main message is that "it works"; a structure works and it does not cut the volunteers. He said that Hanover has 162 employees and over 1,000 volunteers; the fire department board made volunteering a priority to help engage the community. Chief Crosby explained that he helped write the ordinance for Hanover, and he has ultimate responsibility more so than ultimate authority. They have a grievance process for their volunteers if they feel the fire chief is out of line. He emphasized the importance of having checks and balances in the organizational structure, adding that volunteers and personnel all play on an equal playing field.

Chief Crosby said that they are a mission-centric organization, with everybody on board wanting to do a good job. He said that four years ago they set goals of having the same service across the district, and they met them in September of this year. Chief Crosby stated that they have no 24-hour stations with career people, but staff when the volunteers are least able to staff them; four stations work a 16/24 hour with two platoons; four stations work a 40-hour week; one station – Ashland – has no career coverage at all and that is the busiest company. By doing that, he said, they are able to leverage what the groups can do for each other into a good system. Currently they are redistricting boundary lines for response stations. Growth has changed some things for them. With that they are giving each rescue squad a fire district. Chief Crosby emphasized that not one volunteer has called a Board member as they feel they have a voice in the process. His issues today are with the paid people, with 80 percent of administrative time being spent on human resources. They do not face those same challenges with volunteers.

Chief Crosby said they run about 20,000 calls per year. They run volunteer crew and mixed career crews; they run all career crews; they run all volunteer crews. They make no differentiation on whether the individual is paid or volunteer. He informed the Board that recently he made every employee's job performance involve measures to improve volunteerism at their station. It worked and they met all of their goals. Chief Crosby said that they have a "values-based leadership" and a very open "bottom-up" process that encourages "tactical equality." Chief Crosby said they defined standards of acceptable performance. They started with the mission, and then defined what it takes to be a lieutenant, captain, etc. The volunteers helped to define that process. They grandfathered time. The classes and training needed were offered and everyone came into compliance. He explained that they use a merit-based system that rewards performance, but volunteers fear being replaced, as they are hugely invested in what they do.

Chief Crosby said the transition can be difficult for leadership and elected officials. It requires a certain amount of focus and drive. He reiterated that it is a change process. Chief Crosby said they found that communication was the key.

Mr. Johnson addressed the Board, stating that he supervised the Fire & EMS Department in Hanover from 1988 to 2004, when he retired, and before that he was Finance Director. He reported that during that time there were difficulties but the important thing is that it worked. There were no wholesale closings of volunteer departments and no catastrophes. From his perspective, it reduced the tensions that had just been around for years by finally making a decision, getting this department on the road, giving it direction; those tensions went away in very little time. He added that their long term financial and strategic planning process opened up in a way that was not able to be done before. It opened options that they were able to address more directly such as putting a fire truck in a rescue squad building. He believes the volunteer system is stronger now than when the ordinance was adopted. Mr. Johnson said that they have a "seamless system county-wide," and that has greatly improved consistency in the levels of service for all parts of the county.

Mr. Dorrier asked what incentives they offer to get people to volunteer.

Chief Crosby responded that Hanover realized they had to invest in volunteers and there is a full-time recruiter who handles about 180 applications per year. They actively and aggressively recruit. He said that the volunteers get free tags, a reduction on personal property taxes, free uniforms, turnout gear, and all the tools they would give a career person. Chief Crosby noted that they tried a retirement program where the department would match contributions, but that went nowhere. They found that the volunteers are not doing it for the incentive but they sure like to be told they are appreciated.

Mr. Boyd asked if the details and policies came after adoption of the ordinance.

Chief Crosby said the ordinance set in place that structure and the ground rules. It made them one department instead of 16 departments. The ordinance set the stage for all the work that has to be done. They also have volunteer chiefs at the individual companies. He cannot implement any policy in Hanover County without the advice of the chief staff. The chief staff does have the ability, if they disagree with him, to make a report to the Board of Supervisors on what they believe. He meets monthly with the chiefs. The only time he can put anything in effect without discussion with the chiefs, by law, is if it is an extreme emergency. Chief Crosby reiterated that their ordinance sets the structure and sets in place processes, and guarantees for the volunteers and the career staff. He added that it has to be a collaborative process if it is going to work.

Chief Brown said Stafford's ordinance is much the same as Hanover's. When their Board embarked on this process, they visited numerous communities over Northern Virginia, including Hanover, and Richmond communities. Their County Administrator had the Board tell him what they wanted out of a fire chief, fire department, etc. He then went out to find the best of those ordinances and then created their own ordinance. Their ordinance looks a lot like Hanover's and has a lot of Fairfax in it. The ordinance is essentially a shell establishing the department. It delineates the authorities and it sets out by ordinance the grievance procedure. He mentioned that all volunteers become de-facto county employees and are thus bound by HR regulations with the same rights and responsibilities as other employees.

Mr. Dorrier asked if the volunteers receive retirement benefits. Chief Brown said that they have a retirement program called LOSAP. They anticipate about 550 people enrolling in the retirement program that includes some pay after retirement, larger life insurance policies, and some "buy back" of time put in. They also offer most of the same benefits as Hanover. He mentioned that all budgets in Stafford are covered by County government, but fire stations can fundraise for special projects and equipment if they so choose.

Mr. Boyd suggested that the group take a brief break, then come back and have Albemarle's Fire Chief staff address the Board and the guest fire chiefs.

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**(At 7:59 p.m. the Board recessed and then reconvened at 8:10 p.m.)**

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Agenda Item No. 4. Questions/Comments.

Chief George Stephens, Chairman of the Fire and Rescue Advisory Board and the Chief at North Garden Fire Company, addressed the Board. He thanked the visiting chiefs and the representatives from Hanover and Stafford. Chief Stephens then asked the Board what they hoped to accomplish from this meeting. What was their goal? Is this an informational session? When does the Board anticipate making a decision?

Mr. Boyd responded that the Board is concerned that the fire and rescue strategic planning does not seem to be moving forward. It is the Board's responsibility to provide emergency services to the County. Once we get through listening to everybody's input then the Board will discuss it and decide on what they want to take as the next step. He added that establishing an ordinance is a process unto itself, but that initiative is a step that could be taken tonight.

Ms. Thomas commented that the point of tonight is not so much to make decisions on definitive items, but to establish what the next steps are.

Chief Stephens said the concern of the Advisory Board is the next steps. There should be some additional meetings and some other areas, departments, and jurisdictions looked at. Having some volunteers from those areas would have been beneficial rather than just looking at two systems. He added that he has not had the opportunity to do that kind of research.

Ms. Mallek said that there is a commission in Spotsylvania and an association in Prince William that have also been successful in collaboration and working on good systems.

Chief Stephens indicated that he would like other chiefs to ask a few questions.

Mr. Slutzky stated that while they are here, he'd like to hear from the volunteers about their apprehensions, priorities, and general direct feedback.

In response to Mr. Slutzky, Chief Stephens said some of his volunteer members laid the brick for the North Garden Fire Station and that is a great value. Community members donated the property and their time to doing "more things than fighting fire," and the company has been in service since 1970. They have about 35 members and over 500 combined years of service. He then asked the average years of service of the Hanover and Stafford volunteers. That is a huge value in Albemarle; volunteers who have made a lifelong career of being a volunteer. They were volunteers before incentives were given.

Chief Brown said that their Board is buying back years of service for their retirement program, as their average volunteer has about 15 years of service in Stafford County. His Assistant Chief has over 35 years of service in Stafford. He added that they have people who are very proud of their stations and the County has done as much as possible to help support them. It is all about partnerships, and it is about building that trust.

Chief Crosby reported that national average for volunteers is five to seven years; Hanover's average is 12 years and he has six firefighters with 50 years of service. They lost some of their older members through generational changes, not through these changes.

Mr. Boyd asked why they chose these models for running their fire stations.

Chief Crosby said one of the problems when talking about combination systems, which is a legitimate fear for volunteers, is that a lot of people use them as an excuse for a transition period between volunteer and all career. They wanted a model that included volunteers forever. He added that he created his own problem by changing the ordinance and not giving enough time for volunteers to be a part

of that. He thinks it is hugely important that the volunteers are part of the process of writing that ordinance.

Mr. Dorrier asked if the volunteers have input in the type of equipment they receive. Chief Crosby said that they have a committee that routinely reviews decisions, with fire companies given some latitude to make additions/minor modifications. They do have a standard fire truck purchased by the County. They also transfer trucks between companies. They encourage pride in their companies and that kind of thing.

Mr. Boyd said he heard mention of a commission model and asked if that was looked at. Chief Crosby said they did look at commissions, but they decided that some stand alone commissions are authorities within government. He explained commission sometimes creates another layer that goes in a different direction than the county. They decided to funnel this process like other County departments where it ultimately answered to the Board of Supervisors. Their Board wanted to retain that control that they would be the final arbiters of what fire and EMS was in Hanover.

Chief Brown reported that Stafford had a fire commission but the Board decided that was not what they wanted so they went with an ordinance that appointed a fire chief and an association – made up of two members from each volunteer company, two members from the career service that are appointed by the fire chief; he appoints the union president and the operations chief. He said that the night the ordinance was presented no one spoke in opposition to it because the work had been done with the volunteers.

Chief Stephens said that if they go down a path without being regional and including the City, they are putting at risk a great deal of additional cost to the taxpayers because at different times they need different resources. He also added that in Albemarle there are urban areas and rural areas, and it becomes quite expensive to keep the response times down in the urban ring. There are opportunities for both jurisdictions to be able to take advantage of.

Chief Scott Goss, Chief of East Rivanna Fire, addressed the Board, stating that he has over 30 years of service. Chief Goss commented that the Fourth Floor has staff working on ideas and developing a concept, which fire and rescue “gets bits and pieces of.” He encouraged them to share those ideas to help inform the County chiefs and departments. He does not know if they necessarily understand what the Fourth Floor is doing. It makes sense for the Fourth Floor to share their goals and long range ideas more frequently with the volunteers to see if they coincide with the things they are thinking about. Often times, the volunteers wonder where County staff gets its information. At that point the communication lines may greatly improve.

Mr. Rooker noted that the departments that presented today each have boards comprised, in part, of fire chiefs, and asked Chief Goss if he felt this type of structure would be beneficial. Chief Goss said he was talking specifically about what they currently are involved. He thinks that the chiefs understand what they are doing but not necessarily what the Fourth Floor is doing. He thinks open communication would enhance all the things they want and the things they are doing.

Mr. Slutzky agreed that communication is a critical component of any success in an organizational structure. He commented that it is important for Albemarle’s firefighters to share what they have talked about in their own meetings as well. He is hoping to get out of tonight as much feedback and input as possible. He is also hoping for opportunities to share with Board members, the firefighters’ apprehensions, if any, about going into a system like what they are doing in Hanover and Stafford. Are there things in these systems that Albemarle firefighters would value?

Chief Goss emphasized the need for open lines of communication. If that communication breaks down they have lost the essence of what they are trying to achieve.

Mr. Boyd reiterated that the Board wants the best quality, most efficient emergency system possible in this county, and want it measured by response times but are open to considering other ways of measurement. The Board had hoped that the strategic planning process was going to provide it with some of that feedback and he is afraid they are not getting it. He added that the Board felt that perhaps some additional structure, such as the ordinances other localities have, might help to that end. He wants to move this process forward whether it means studies of other systems or use the information that has been provided. He does not think the Board can let this go on much longer. The Board really has got to get a direction and start heading in that direction. He is hoping to get direction from this meeting in establishing an ordinance. He believes that goal needs to be established.

Ms. Thomas asked Chief Goss to comment on what he had heard thus far tonight.

Chief Goss responded that the people in his company are “immensely independent and fiercely defensive of their territory.” He said that all chief officers, regardless of whether they think a type of system is appropriate or not, agree that it is imperative to serve the public with adequate response times. They have an obligation to maintain a high level of service to the public.

Chief Stephens said that Albemarle is using some of the same incentives as other localities – tax breaks, issuance of the county tags, turnout gear, training, access to parks. He added that they have come up with some standards for the engines, the brush units, the tankers, etc., and the County has agreed to make payment for those although they are not exactly alike between companies. Chief Stephens said he took issue with the trucks all being the same color, and operationally the system does a

very good job; citizen surveys confirm this. They don't want to fix the portion that is not broke. He also said that they started strategic planning but there were some issues there.

Mr. Dorrier asked if they were embarking on separate plans, or integrating them with the County's strategic plan.

Chief Stephens responded that they cannot work independent from the Board, but recognized that there were some issues at hand when they began their own planning processes. They cannot lose sight of the fact that they are still doing a very good job of providing service to the citizens. Each department is independently operated and run within the organization. He added that there is some sense of rivalry between departments and that is a good thing. Chief Stephens also mentioned that the apparatus is designated with both the local company and the County information. He added that they want to be well-educated as they go through this change process.

Mr. Boyd asked Chief Stephens if he thinks the County needs to strive for a centralized fire and rescue system.

Chief Stephens responded that when the volunteer chiefs take a position on an issue that is in opposition to County staff's position, it is problematic. When they are together on an issue, you do not know they have a problem.

Mr. Slutzky asked what he felt the most effective way to deal with issues would be.

Chief Stephens replied that when there is a disagreement, the membership of his company has ultimate authority. He explained that on fire calls, the ranking officer on the scene has authority. Chief Stephens emphasized that his membership votes on items whether it is budgeted or not, including administrative and operational, but they always keep the taxpayer in mind. He added that he has a very conservative membership that scrutinizes all expenditures.

Mr. Dorrier asked if he felt Albemarle is getting good bang for the buck on fire and rescue expenditures.

Chief Stephens responded that it definitely is. He also said that a study done two years ago on merging County and City resources showed the difference between what those localities spend and Albemarle is doing well in that regard.

Chief Tim Cersley, Fire Chief of Scottsville Volunteer Fire Department, addressed the Board. Chief Cersley said that the unique situation with his station is that they respond to three different counties, so if they move into one system the other counties might suffer. He asked if they are still going to answer calls that they have mutual agreements with and with those chiefs that will respond into those areas when they call for, on an automatic basis. That is something that is a big concern to his department and they need to know the answer. He also stated that everyone needs to be on the same page, and the lack of that is what causes problems when they do sit down to talk. He reiterated previous comments that one of the main issues is communication.

Mr. Boyd again said the Board has not established the structure for how it wants to build the fire and rescue system. The Board expects to have tremendous input from the fire stations. He stated that there is no reason to change agreements in how the department runs calls to Buckingham County or Fluvanna County. That is not something this Board wants to get involved in. The Board does have to determine how the system will work countywide and the kind of organizational structure. This Board also has differences of opinions. Unless it comes up with an ordinance that is brought forward through the proper channels and is voted on, there is not going to be any system-wide structure.

Chief Cersley said that is the same direction they are trying to work, but they are not on that page. He does not know how everyone will get to that page and he does not think the Board will get that answer tonight.

Chief Fred Huckstep, Chief of Earlysville Volunteer Fire Company, addressed the Board. He asked the visiting fire representatives if their ordinances came from problems or from the volunteer base.

Chief Brown answered that the Board initiated the process, in response to concerns from citizens over long response times, and financial issues that became very public in some of the volunteer companies. He said that a lot of that involved purchase of equipment without using the County's purchasing policies, and they ended up with about \$2 million in debt that had not been approved by the Board. The situation ended up leading to litigation that had the County returning the trucks to the seller. The companies then sued the County for the price of trucks and the Courts upheld the County.

Chief Crosby addressed the Board, stating that Hanover had no crisis. He talked to people who were there in the 1960's who said that the volunteers were the catalyst because they felt a united voice would bring them the ability to deal more effectively with the County. He said that Hanover wanted to be proactive so they did not end up like Henrico and Chesterfield where the volunteers "kind of go away."

Mr. Rooker asked Chief Crosby if he has heard anything tonight that is different than when they went through the process.

Chief Crosby said he has not heard anything unique. He thinks the concerns are totally legitimate. Chief Crosby stated that they built a strong relationship and trust with the volunteers and eventually no

one cared about the color of the fire trucks, which were eventually changed because he won a poker game.

Chief Huckstep commented that there is a strong fire and rescue service in Albemarle, largely supported by volunteers. He thinks the crux of the problem is that several years ago an Advisory Board was formed; it states in their bylaws that they are an advisory board to the Board of Supervisors and they went along thinking that was reality. They are slowly finding out that that is not really how the Advisory Board is working with the Board and it has caused a lot of friction and problems administratively. The concept of the Advisory Board has eroded to a point where it does not do what it was set up to do.

Mr. Boyd commented that that was also one of his concerns.

Chief Doug Smythers, Chief of Seminole Trail Volunteer Fire Department, addressed the Board. He said that without trust a lot of this stuff cannot happen. Chief Smythers said he appreciates hearing about these systems, but he wants to know more. He also wants to hear from some of the volunteers. He also wants to hear about some of the negatives. He does not think the Advisory Board felt the sense of urgency that is being expressed tonight. He would like to look at other models as well as those presented tonight. There was discussion tonight about service level standards. He does not think any of the chiefs are opposed to establishing those standards.

Mr. Boyd asked what he thinks the next steps should be.

Chief Smythers responded that some of the suggestions presented tonight sound very good but some sound very scary. Most of the members of the Advisory Board realize some things are going to change. He reiterated that they were not aware of the urgency until tonight. They need an opportunity to step back, collect data and hopefully identify the problems they want to overcome.

Mr. Dorrier asked if the chiefs set up the strategic plan for the Advisory Board.

Chief Smythers said they have not done strategic planning which was identified a couple of months ago. They knew that they needed direction from the County and they then would work towards doing strategic planning for the upcoming years. He added that there was some dysfunctionality in their collective group that they needed to work through before the strategic planning process.

Mr. Rooker asked how that can be done without having a recognized structure in place.

Chief Smythers agreed that is what has been necessary in other counties. Until tonight the Advisory Board was not aware the Board of Supervisors felt the urgency they did in fixing this problem. That had not been communicated to them.

Mr. Bob Larsen, President of Monticello Fire Rescue Volunteers, said he was speaking for himself. He said they have already lost some good people and there is the chance they may lose some more with changes in the system, but the Board cannot go without making a decision fairly soon. He said that he also wants to make sure the community can afford these changes.

Chief Kostas Alibertis, Chief of the Western Albemarle Rescue Squad asked if the individuals present have separate functioning fire departments inside their County, similar to the City of Charlottesville.

Chief Crosby said they do not. They do have an incorporated town within their county. They have some mutual aid agreements similar to the ones previously mentioned.

Chief Brown said they do not. They are a countywide system that has no municipalities inside the borders of Stafford. They do run automatic aid with the City of Fredericksburg all day. Since they are part of Northern Virginia Fire Chiefs Alliance they participate in an agreement where they all operate off of the same SOPs.

Chief Alibertis said they cannot disregard the fact that they have a fully functioning fire department and ALS response service in the City of Charlottesville that does provide service to the County. He mentioned an email that Dayton Haugh sent out regarding the closest response vs. the closest County response which is greatly different and what is affordable. It is going to be difficult if they allow a line between the City and County to prevent someone from getting service. That needs to be taken into consideration when looking at responses and how decisions are going to be made. He believes it would be a failure to the citizens not to have the City of Charlottesville be a part of these discussions. The City provides a valuable and cost-effective service to the citizens of the County. He commented that the chiefs did not have time to prep for this meeting today as they did not know it was going to be this type forum. In fairness, this is a great first meeting. He added that there are different models that function well. Both of these models seem to be the same and to make a decision you cannot just listen to one side. He said that trust and communication within the entire County system have been broken, and they cannot really do what the Board expects without those things. Chief Alibertis stated that he would applaud the adoption of some metrics, because if the standard was known the departments could try to achieve it. Chief Alibertis added that it is a difference when folks are doing something because they care as opposed to doing something because it is their job. The Board needs to remember that none of the volunteers have to be there and that should not be taken for granted.

Mr. Larry Claytor, President of the Charlottesville Albemarle Rescue Squad, addressed the Board, stating that he does feel they are a countywide system of professionals. He offered some suggestions on

where to go from here, stating that he feels they need to get together and work towards communication and work towards rebuilding the trust. Mr. Claytor commented that there is a huge need to bring everybody back together at the same table, noting that there has been a disconnect at meetings. He also said that in a focus group about six to eight months ago, many problems were brought to light but nothing happened.

Mr. Dorrier asked if he thought a strategic planning session was needed.

Mr. Claytor replied that he thinks there is a need to set some rules and guidelines.

Mr. Rooker said that in any collection of operating units, there has to be a structure in place within which the communication can take place. It has to be a structure that everybody recognizes and everybody abides by. It is apparent that that structure is not currently in place.

Mr. Claytor responded that they just went through a system in the City where they have to justify response times. They have a standard, they meet it and they exceed it. He thinks that there may be a need to set up some kind of response time strategy in the County.

Chief Jack Mellott, Assistant Chief at Stony Point Volunteer Fire Department, addressed the Board. He said that operationally, the entire fire department is very strong. The service the customer receives is excellent. Chief Mellott commented that the friction seems to occur at the administrative level, and the only way to evaluate the future is by looking at the past. Trust has been broken and that has to be fixed before they can do anything else. He added that right now when a volunteer agency has an administrative issue, there is no mechanism to address it. They should not have two budgets that get recommended. If they are really a unified combination system, they should have one budget. The system they have is not being used properly.

Ms. Camille Miller addressed the Board, stating that she has been facilitating the ACFRAB retreats that have led to this point. She commented that ACFRAB is a phenomenal group of folks, both volunteer and paid, and agreed that operationally the service is absolutely seamless. She added that the current system is designed for the results that they are getting. Ms. Miller reiterated that the point that their needs to be complete and full trust, complete and full communication, straight and open talk with respect, consensus and collaboration, and active solicitation and input from all individual members. She mentioned her surprise that the County organizational chart shows all of the volunteer stations as entities of the County that report directly to the Albemarle Fire and Rescue Chief. She does not believe that any of the volunteers agreed to be put in that lineup. It makes perfect sense to her the disconnect and surprise she is seeing. Ms. Miller said this is critical but she urged the Board to not put a sense of urgency that it appears to have. There needs to be more exploration and input. She emphasized that everyone here is here with the best interest of the citizens in mind.

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#### Agenda Item No. 5. Next Steps.

Ms. Mallek noted her appreciation for everyone weighing in tonight. As a liaison to the Advisory Board she has found it difficult to convey to other Board members what she is seeing and hearing. She expressed her confidence in the strategic planning process and that it needs to continue moving forward.

Mr. Boyd said that he is not giving up on the strategic planning process, but there needs to be some structure put in place to work towards a central system. He commented that setting up an ordinance is the first step in that effort. The Board needs to invite members of ACFRAB, paid staff, County staff and the County Attorney to help develop the ordinance. He agrees that everyone needs to be involved in the process; it cannot be done in a vacuum.

Mr. Slutzky stated that there is a lot of pride among the volunteers, and they would not have the incredibly good fire and public safety protections that it does without the dependence on the volunteers. He added that the career staff additions are also important, and as the County continues to urbanize the collaboration between volunteer and career is imperative. Mr. Slutzky said the conversation continues to get hung up on trust and there seems to be some confusion on where the decisions are made, the chain of command and who has the ultimate decision-making ability. It was helpful to him to bring in the individuals from Hanover and Stafford. This was his opportunity to listen to folks who had been through the transition. He does not think anyone on this Board is interested in losing the volunteer system. He thinks the Board has to take leadership prerogative and make a decision. To him it sounds like a lot of the distrust is ambiguity. This Board has not given a clear signal as to what kind of structure for governance it wants. The Board does perhaps communicate more directly with staff on its payroll as opposed to the volunteers. Mr. Slutzky said that staff should be directed to develop a proposed ordinance in collaboration with the Advisory Board and input from the volunteers as quickly as possible and bring it back to this Board. He reiterated that he is not interested in undermining the volunteer system, but there needs to be clarity in an attempt to get beyond some of the uncertainty and confusion.

Mr. Dorrier commented that the County has come a long way in developing a program where they support the departments administratively, but there is still a problem with trust and communication. He said that Prince William should also be consulted, and more homework needs to be done internally before the ordinance is developed.

Mr. Boyd said that the Board needs to establish that they are going to craft an ordinance, not decide what is going to be in that ordinance or how it will be done.

Mr. Rooker emphasized that every successful organization must have a defined chain of command, and within that you need to provide for a flow of information up and down and it needs to be formalized. A lot of what he is hearing today is because of a lack of having that system in place. He added when the Board hired the Fire Chief for the County the intent was to make him the Board's representative in dealing with the fire system. Mr. Rooker said that a system needs to be put in place that enables the best possible service for the County. The current system does not provide for productive communication because no one understands what their role is.

Ms. Mallek commented that the system has not been enforced the way it is written. The bylaws state that ACFRAB advises the Board of Supervisors. Ms. Mallek said there is some protection for the volunteers that she sees as an outcome of this discussion. She thinks the strategic planning session could serve to carry the ordinance forward, but should also involve resolution of issues that have been brought up at prior sessions.

Ms. Thomas said that the Board really values the volunteer system and she does not want to send a lack of trust message out by stating that after the meeting tonight an ordinance will be in the works. She agreed that moving towards an ordinance is a positive step, and perhaps setting a time frame of six months, by April 2009, to have one brought forward would be a better initial approach. She agrees there needs to be a better structure.

Mr. Boyd said he thinks there has to be a mechanism set up for drafting the ordinance. He does not think it should just be developed by ACFRAB. An ordinance needs to be developed by a committee set up by Mr. Tucker or the Board with representatives from ACFRAB, County staff, the County Attorney, etc.

Mr. Slutzky said that perhaps Chief Eggleston should set up the timeline as to when an ordinance could be crafted, with him bringing forward something that has support.

Mr. Rooker commented that Albemarle should look at various structures from around the state, and should move forward with a timeframe. He thinks it would be helpful to set a time schedule by which it has a goal to achieve. He is not opposed to setting April 2009 as that date to accomplish the goal. He said they are not reinventing the wheel here; there are not a thousand options to look at. Mr. Rooker stated that it is important to develop inter-operability, recognized chain of command, and consistency in training of volunteers and employees, and the ordinance should lead to that. He added that sometimes the longer you put things off the worse they get, and not every decision is going to be popular with everybody. He suggested that staff define three or four structures that could be worked with, and recommend those to the chiefs, the Advisory Board and the Board.

Mr. Slutzky suggested asking staff to report back to the Board in two months.

Ms. Thomas said that no one has seen the Hanover and Stafford County codes.

Ms. Mallek reiterated that having this on the agenda of next month's ACFRAB meeting is the best way to start because the chiefs have indicated they have resources from other areas.

Mr. Boyd stated that he is not ready to leave tonight without a vote that there is a commitment to establishing an ordinance for a fire and rescue structure. He thinks the details of the ordinance should be a collaborative effort, but if the Board does not establish the fact that it will do this, then it will languish around and not get done.

Mr. Rooker said it is a question of the best way to go about the process. He thinks there needs to be some potential structures laid out to discuss when the meeting takes place. He does not think it should be a free forum discussion without structure.

Mr. Boyd reiterated that he wants everyone to understand that this Board is going to move forward with establishing an ordinance which establishes a structure for fire and rescue, and the Board wants the departments to be part of that process. The Board wants their input, knowledge and experience to make it the best to serve this community.

Mr. Slutzky added that there will be a clear chain of command and it will be understood how the continued operation of the volunteers will relate to the Fire Chief and to the Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Rooker pointed out that there is no one on this Board that has fire and rescue expertise, and there must be some reliance on the professionals that are on staff. The Board has to have a reasonable structure for it to get feedback. The Board has to have a reasonable structure through which decisions are made.

Mr. Tucker clarified that several Board members mentioned a six-month timeframe, but it would be helpful for the committee understand that there an existing timeframe in which they are working.

Mr. Slutzky and Mr. Boyd agreed that two months would be a reasonable timeframe for an initial draft report.

Ms. Thomas also suggested a six-month timeframe for a draft ordinance. Mr. Rooker agreed.

Mr. Davis said he could pull together some sample ordinances.

Ms. Thomas thanked the attendees.

Mr. Tucker clarified that an update would be provided in two month along with information from other localities.

Chief Stephens commented that the fire departments want to be extremely involved in how this is designed and developed.

Chief Dan Eggleston said this has been a very useful conversation tonight. To clarify, he heard that Mr. Davis will provide them with several different models that he will engage with the Advisory Board to get their input. This is not a continuation of their strategic planning process but a subgroup with staff working with the Advisory Board to look at the various models.

Mr. Boyd said that is basically what they want done.

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Agenda Item No. 6. Adjourn. At 10:08 p.m., with no further business to come before the Board, **motion** was offered by Ms. Thomas, **seconded** by Mr. Dorrier, to adjourn to October 24, 2008 at 9:00 a.m. at the Department of Forestry. Roll was called and the motion carried by the following recorded vote:

AYES: Mr. Rooker, Mr. Slutzky, Ms. Thomas, Mr. Boyd, Mr. Dorrier and Ms. Mallek.  
NAYS: None.

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Chairman

Approved by Board
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Date: 12/03/2008
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Initials: EWJ
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