

Pantops Public Safety Station

Coordinating Work Group

Recommendations – September 2016

A Message to the Board

As per its stated mission, the Coordinating Work Group (CWG) has focused on the various methods of equipment and staffing to provide the most appropriate level of support for the Pantops community in the context of the ACFR system countywide. In doing so, we have kept an eye to a strong volunteer component while minimizing volunteer recruitment impact on existing stations. The CWG would like to convey the following high-level remarks:

- The Pantops Coordinating Work Group believes that a realistic expectation for volunteer acquisition and therefore staffing is for a single “seated” position. This means one volunteer as a Firefighter or EMT/Driver to help staff the in-service unit(s). Based on three years of experience with volunteers at the Hollymead, Ivy and Monticello station, this means approximately 25 volunteers.
- Although the group understands the desire and need to maintain a Rescue Squad focus at this time, it should be recognized that offering opportunities to volunteer at both the fire and EMS levels will help increase the attractiveness of the station to volunteers. We suggest that over time, based on both human resources and demand, consideration should be given to this station filling fire and EMS roles.
- The Pantops Coordinating Work Group feels that part of the role of the legacy volunteer stations includes community engagement in areas that would become part of the new “first due” of the Pantops Station. These areas currently provide fundraising, recruitment and community activities that help with retention to those legacy stations. To ensure that East Rivanna and Stony Point Volunteer Fire Companies still retain positive access to those communities, a Memorandum of Understanding should be created to outline these non-emergent functions and how they will still be engaged in these community events.

The purpose of this report is to provide input to both the Stakeholder Work Group and the Board of Supervisors, as both parties determine the necessary actions to move this station forward. We recognize that all system partners will play some role in working with this new station, but as the neighboring stations to this community, we hope this report will provide a realistic operational understanding for use by others.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Pantops Public Safety Station will inherently utilize volunteer and career staff to achieve the utmost efficiency in human resource utilization. Every station within our county Fire and Rescue System utilizes volunteers. In long standing communities, the existence of volunteer emergency responders and leadership remains strong. In the newer development areas communities, our newer organizations continue to develop emergency volunteer providers and leaders.

When the Board of Supervisors approved the creation of the Stakeholders Workgroup, it also formed the Coordinating Work Group to review operation and staffing models that would ensure the consideration of service delivery both in the near term and into the future. This staffing model was to ensure the greatest utilization of volunteers possible in relationship to service. As the Pantops Development Area continues to grow, so does demand for public safety services.

2 PANTOPS PUBLIC SAFETY STATION COORDINATING WORK GROUP

The Coordinating Work Group (CWG) was made up of three volunteer chiefs from neighboring stations most impacted by the demands in the Pantops area. The CWG looked at current staffing models, as well as likely future operational needs while considering their work. This group was staffed by Tom LaBelle, Division Chief with the Volunteer Services Division. Consideration was also given to likely impacts on the countywide Fire Rescue System, as well as the Pantops Community.

2.1 WORK GROUP CHARGE:

This work group is comprised of volunteer chiefs whose agencies respond to the Pantops area and are familiar with stations with a combination of volunteer and career staffing. Working with staff, this work group has kept the Stakeholders Work Group informed of appropriate staffing and operations strategy for the new station.

2.2 WORK GROUP MEMBERSHIP & OPERATION OF THE WORK GROUP:

The Work Group is made up of three volunteer chiefs from stations surrounding the Pantops community

Work Group Members	Affiliations
Calvin Butler	East Rivanna Volunteer Fire
Michael Reid	Stony Point Volunteer Fire
Danial Tawney	Seminole Trail Volunteer Fire

Appointments were made by the Chief of Albemarle County Fire Rescue with input from the Board of Supervisors.

Other departments provided support and information to the Work Group as needed.

3 RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

The Coordinating Work Group believes these general strategies will result in appropriate levels of service and associated staffing for the Pantops station.

3.1 VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The CWG believes that a realistic expectation for volunteer acquisition and therefore staffing is for a single “seated” position. This means one volunteer as a Firefighter or EMT/Driver to help staff the in service unit(s). Based on three years of experience with volunteers at the Hollymead, Ivy and Monticello station, this means approximately 25 volunteers.

The Group feels that any goal of recruiting volunteers to fully staff this station may have an overall negative impact on the other existing volunteer stations and will hasten the need for career staffing nights and weekends at stations that currently provide volunteers in those time frames. This potential loss of volunteers/coverage in legacy stations could ultimately consume any savings of full volunteer staffing at Pantops.

The group highly encourages the utilization the resources of the Pantops Stakeholder Group to better understand the demographic makeup of the overall Pantops community through surveys to area employees and residents. With this data, along with research available through the Virginia Workforce Solutions program, a better understanding of the individuals available in the neighborhood will be understood and from which a strong marketing campaign can be developed. Working with the Stakeholders Work Group and ACFR staff, a recruitment plan would be executed. Examples are included in the Stakeholders Work Group report to the Board of Supervisors. These efforts would be above and beyond recruitment efforts currently executed countywide, including media buys, community and school engagement efforts and public events.

3.2 LONG TERM OPERATIONAL VISION THAT SUPPORTS VOLUNTEERISM

Although the group understands the desire and need to maintain a Rescue Squad focus at this time, it should be recognized that offering opportunities to volunteer at both the fire and EMS levels will help increase the attractiveness of the station to volunteers. We suggest that over time, based on both human resources and demand, consideration should be given to this station filling fire and EMS roles.

Additionally the current staffing of the medic unit in Pantops provides personnel that are capable of both EMS and fire suppression. This staffing level allows for the greatest use of this human resource, be it career or volunteer staffing. If members are allowed (but not required), to be dual-trained, they will be able to provide a much higher level of immediate support within the Pantops community. Even when the first arriving engine to a fire call is coming from outside the Pantops station, having three additional staffed and equipped firefighters allows for a higher level of immediate operations and dramatically increases the safety level for civilians and first responders.

Finally, as focused development continues in this area, the presence of volunteers already trained in fire operations will ensure the continuation of volunteer staffing of fire apparatus if/or when it is placed within this station. As stated earlier, the development of staff (career or volunteer) for both

operations and leadership is a lengthy process, the community is best served if it begins the development as soon as possible.

3.3 SUPPORT LEGACY STATIONS

The CWG feels that part of the role of the legacy volunteer stations includes community engagement in areas that would become part of the new “first due” of the Pantops Station. These areas currently provide fundraising, recruitment and community activities that help with retention to those legacy stations.

To ensure that East Rivanna and Stony Point Volunteer Fire Companies still retain positive access to those communities, a Memorandum of Understanding should be created to outline these non-emergent functions and how they will still be engaged in these community events.

Without protecting the volunteer recruitment activities for the stations around the Pantops area, any gain in volunteer staffing in Pantops could have a dramatically negative impact for these existing stations. Such an impact will simply shift the demand for career staffing from one station to another, negating any gain in volunteerism.

4 METHODOLOGY

The Pantops Public Safety Station Coordinating Work Group held four meetings between February and July to review and discuss strategies to adequately staff and operate the Pantops Public Safety Station. Additionally, representatives of the Work Group sat in on meetings of the Stakeholders Workgroup to provide information on our activities.