

Wake County Fire Tax District

Wakette & Alert Fire District Fire Protection



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Agenda Items

Wakette Fire District Contract – Town of Wake Forest

Alert Fire District Contract – Town of Knightdale

Wake Forest Fire – Town of Wake Forest

Town of Wake Forest hired Envirosafe in February 2019 to provide a feasibility study concerning the options to incorporate the Wake Forest Fire Department, a cost-share, non-profit department, as a unit of their government

Fall of 2019 - Based on the findings of the feasibility study, the Wake Forest Fire Department Board of Directors voted to cease operation as a “not for profit” fire response organization on June 30, 2020, and “merge” into a Municipal Department under the Town of Wake Forest

On December 9 of 2019, Wake County Fire Services was asked to meet with Town of Wake Forest and the Wake Forest Fire Department to go over the results of the feasibility study, and determine the County’s interest in contracting with the Town for the Wakette District

Wake Forest Fire – Town of Wake Forest

The county is responsible for fire service in the Wakette Fire District. With Wake Forest Fire Dept operations ceasing, the County intends to enter into a Fire Protection Agreement with the Town of Wake Forest for fire protection of said district.

Wake County proposes using the same Cost Share percentage as the non-profit for the first year of the Town's agreement.

At this time, there are no savings anticipated from the merger

Benefits of the Contract with the Town of Wake Forest

- Employees receive the benefits from Municipal Government such as access to a Human Resources Department, Expanded Health Care Coverage and Local Government Retirement System
- More in depth relationship with other town departments as part of working groups and committees
- Longevity as a department. As the town continues to annex, the county response area is decreasing, increasing the need for a town governed fire protection agency.
- Town of Wake Forest is providing 100% of the funding for a new Ladder Truck, and 100% funding of the personnel to staff this unit. This increases Effective Response Force for the Town, Wakette District and the mutual aid agencies

Eastern Wake Fire Rescue – Town of Knightdale

Town of Knightdale hired Brooks Innovative Solutions in November of 2017 to conduct a 4 Component Study and to provide recommendations for enhancing fire service in the Town of Knightdale. The report was released in Fall of 2018 and included a recommendation to merge with Eastern Wake Fire Rescue

The Town of Knightdale and members of this EWFD Board formed an exploratory committee in February 2019 to evaluate options for the Town of Knightdale serving the Alert District.

Beginning in March 2019 the Committee met regularly to discuss positives, negatives, challenges, and benefits for both departments, as well as, the citizens of the entire Knightdale/Alert Community.

In June 2019 this committee invited Wake County to join the committee for technical assistance given the County is responsible for the fire service in the Alert District and would need to understand the impact of an merger .

Committee meetings continued from July 2019 through January 2020. Timelines were discussed on a possible “merger” date and transition of service to the Town of Knightdale.

Merger Discussion Timeline

January 2020: Membership of EWFD on voted 15-4 to continue discussions with Town of Knightdale and seek a “merger” date of July 1, 2020.

February 13, 2020: Public Meeting held by the EWFD Board of Directors and the Town of Knightdale at the Bethlehem Baptist Church to receive community feedback. Meeting was properly noticed.

March 3, 2020: Chief Guffey and Board President Price were asked to attend a meeting with the Keenage Club at Bethlehem Church concerning the merger. They attended, provided a presentation and answered questions from about 75 people who were in attendance.

March 2020: EWFD Board of Directors voted to cease operating as a non-profit fire response agency effective July 1, 2020, with the employees to be hired by the Town of Knightdale, pending an affirmation vote by the EWFD membership.

May 11 - 15, 2020: EWFD membership conducted a written vote. There are 36 members eligible to vote. 35 of those exercised the right to vote. The final vote count was 30 for, and 5 against. This vote affirms the Board of Directors vote to cease operations as a non-profit fire response agency June 30, 2020.

June 2020: With EWFD operations ceasing, the County intends to enter into a Fire Protection Agreement with the Town of Knightdale for fire protection of the Alert District. EWFD will revert county assets to the County as per the fire protection agreement. The County will assign asset to the Town of Knightdale by way of use agreements

Benefits of Contract with Town of Knightdale

- Total Projected Savings of \$129K to the Fire Tax District in FY21
- Employees receive the benefits from Municipal Government such as access to a Human Resources Department, Expanded Health Care Coverage and Local Government Retirement System
- Career Ladder Opportunities within a larger department
- Reduction in duplicate responses, as each individual Department currently has ISO required rules for responding in their own district even if they are not the closest available unit. For these two departments, it cost in the neighborhood of \$600 per response.
- Cost Share opportunities on Station maintenance, PPE, Apparatus, etc

Benefits of Contract with Town of Knightdale

- Opportunity to align apparatus at each station to the County Model (engine, tanker, brush truck if needed) This would reduce at least one pumper from the existing replacement schedule
- Town of Knightdale has signed a contract for purchase of a new Ladder Truck with no expectation of county cost share. This unit would respond into the County
- Town of Knightdale has budgeted for full-time staffing for the new Ladder Truck with no expectation of county cost share on these new positions. This increases the Effective Response Force for this department as well as the surrounding departments that they would provide automatic aid for.

Wake County's Plan for Town of Wake Forest

- County of Wake will draft use agreements with Town of Wake Forest for the 4 pieces of apparatus that are titled to the County of Wake.
- County of Wake will enter into a one year Fire Protection Agreement with the Town of Wake Forest.
- County of Wake and Town of Wake Forest will cost share at the same percentage as previously determined for the Wake Forest Fire Department “Not for Profit “
- County of Wake does not own any of the Real Estate

Wake County's Plan for Town of Knightdale

- County of Wake will draft use agreements with Town of Knightdale for all County purchased equipment that are a part of the County Capital Replacement Schedule (SCBA, Defib's, PPE, TIC's), as well as large Capital Purchases such as Breathing Air System. The funds received from surplus on this equipment at the end of life, as identified by County Replacement Schedules, will be returned to the Tax District General Fund. Any new approved purchases after July 1 will be cost shared.
- County of Wake will draft use agreements for all Apparatus purchased by Wake County. Apparatus will remain titled to the Wake County. At the end of their life, as determined by County Replacement Schedule, proceeds received from surplus will be returned to the Tax District General Fund. Any new approved apparatus purchases after July 1 will be cost shared
- All Real Estate Properties (Station 1 and Station 2) will be conveyed to County of Wake. A Facility Use agreement will be drafted between Wake County and Town of Knightdale. Repairs, utilities and maintenance will be cost shared
- County of Wake will enter into a one year Fire Protection Agreement with the Town of Knightdale for Fire Protection of the Alert Fire District. A cost share percentage of 50.3% was calculated utilizing the approved data elements.

Questions



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Wake County Fire Tax District

Appendix – Historical Information



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Tax District Studies

- Copy of a slide from a 2009 Wake County Board of Commissioners Work Session produced by Ray Echevarria. This slide was part of the 2003 Study Provided by Tri Data

The slide is titled "Brief history - fire station locations" and features the Wake County logo in the top left corner. The content is organized into a bulleted list with a star icon for the main heading and square icons for sub-points. The slide has a light blue background with a subtle wave pattern at the bottom.

★ 2003 Fire/EMS Capital Facility and Equipment Study

- Recommended County evaluate fire station locations for service replacement
 - “The County should negotiate arrangements for municipalities to cover unincorporated areas near them when in the interests of the majority of citizens in the area.”
- Led to Fire Commission’s Long Range Business Plan

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Historical Mergers

- Fuquay Rural – Town of Fuquay-Varina in 1999
- Zebulon Rural – Town of Zebulon in 2000
- Apex Rural – Town of Apex 2002
- Falls Fire – Wake Forest Fire 2012
- Bayleaf/Stony Hill – Northern Wake 2017

None of these “mergers” with the exception of Northern Wake were part of a Regular Agenda Item for the Fire Commission. Most were shown as part of the Informational Items within the Directors Report

Bay Leaf/Stony Hill Merger – Northern Wake

- These Departments chose to include Wake County in the process (slide obtained from Northern Wake as part of their membership meetings)

TRANSPARENCY

- **Advisory Committee Meetings Have Been Open To All Members**
- **Board Meetings Have Been Open To All Members**
- **Joint Board Meetings Have Been Open To All Members**
- **Monthly Updates Have Been Provided at Business Meetings**
- **Included Wake County in Conversations**

Bay Leaf/Stony Hill Merger – Northern Wake

Slide taken from the actual Fire Commission presentation

Benefits of Consolidation

- Single fire services delivery system versus two
- Consolidation provides the opportunity to reduce costs and improve service delivery
- Consistent hiring practices, standard operating procedures, purchasing, etc. across two organizations
- Improvement in volunteer recruitment and retention
- Consolidation of two fire insurance districts



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Bay Leaf/Stony Hill Merger – Northern Wake

- This merger was listed as an agenda item on May 4, 2017
- This merger resulted in a year one additional cost of \$150K
- Capital Savings due to apparatus reduction over a 20 year span

This merger was supported by the Fire Commission. Chairman Billy Myrick made the motion and it carried unanimously