

Town of Corning
Special Meeting
October 10,2018
6:30PM

Supervisor Feehan called the meeting to order.

Roll call of members present.

Present	Absent
Village Mayor James Thomas	Councilman Stuart Sammis
Village Trustee Mike Morse	Councilwoman Jen Mullen
Supervisor Kim Feehan	Village Trustee Dias
Councilman Mike Brenning	Village Trustee Chester Tuttle
South Corning Fire Chief Adam Nerring	Village Trustee Connie Bennett
So. Corning Assist, Chief Brad Jacobus	
Attorney Terry Hannigan	

Others Present:

Various members of South and North Corning Fire Departments & South Corning Residents.

A printed version of the power point can be found at the end of these minutes.

South Corning Fire Chief Adam Nerring presented his power point to those in attendance. He explained the reason for this meeting is to discuss the reasons the consolidation study of the fire districts/departments within the Town stalled and went nowhere. He believes that there is much redundancy among the departments and would like to see all working together. By consolidating training sessions, more members could be brought up to the state required standards, it could also save tax dollars by purchasing apparatus in bulk and could eliminate the taxing disparity among the districts/departments as well as many other issues. He is proposing the South Corning Fire Department consider becoming a fire district. This will eliminate negotiating contracts, differing tax amounts paid by those within the same coverage area and taking the budgeting responsibility from the chiefs and giving it to the commissioners. This could entice those departments on the North side of the river to consider combining resources and man power and becoming one district. He also pointed out the many concerns of proceeding as well. There is a of fear losing those fire fighters who do not agree with the new ideas, also the fact that not all members are trained on all equipment, and some tax payers will see an increase in their fire tax to name a few.

Mr. Hannigan complimented Mr. Nerring on his presentation and then explained some of the legalities associated with proceeding. He advised the Town that the Village should make a firm commitment to continue before they agree by doing a Resolution stating they are on board. He recommends that before this could proceed, both parties should discuss their fiscal obligations. Then two meetings should be scheduled, the first for a combined Town/Village meeting to discuss the financial findings, and a second for a Public Hearing for the residents to hear the proposal. He explained that the most important discussion with the South Corning affected residents should be that their fire coverage will

not change at all, just the governing of the department. The assets (trucks etc.) would have to be transferred from the village to the district. He also recommends appointing 5 commissioners, as more than that make for a lengthy decision process. The first year the commissioners will be appointed by a board made up of Town, Village and Fire Chief. After the first year the commissioners should be elected, and serve five-year terms, making one elected every year, however, they could continue to be appointed.

Councilman Shafer is supportive but also concerned about the impact the tax changes will have on the residents, and the effect on the remaining departments on the North side of the river.

Brad Jacobus asked about the grant that was received for the study done by Ron Graner. Supervisor Feehan explained that no more could be expended from that grant as no map plan and report were ever submitted by the committee.

The South Corning Department feels that since the original plan stalled, this proposal may spur the other departments to move ahead. A smaller step made by one department changing rather than all four departments and then finding it doesn't work could be an easier adjustment. Training has become expensive and time consuming so many fire fighters have dropped out. This has made for fewer numbers in each department, with some not having enough to respond. South Corning is hoping that this new plan may urge new members to join and give a new perspective to those already on board. In any event, a small step taken is better than remaining stagnant and not trying to improve.

Supervisor Feehan will get the data she needs from Assessor Gabriel and then the Town and Village will know who will be affected and the numbers associated. The next step is a Resolution from the Village stating they are willing to participate.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 PM on a motion made by Councilman Shafer and seconded by Councilman Brenning. All in favor, motion carried.

These minutes respectfully submitted by:

Susan A. Edwards
Town Clerk

1 Welcome

2 Introduction

- Adam Nehring- South Corning Fire Department Chief
- Brad Jacobus- South Corning Fire Department Assistant Chief
- Town of Corning Board
- Village of South Corning Board
- Attorney(s)

3 Review

- In 2017, an efficiency study was conducted concentrating on the fire protection in the Town of Corning
- The study pointed out many things that all departments are already well aware of where we fall short
 - Recruitment and retention of volunteers
 - Station/space issues
 - Apparatus replacement plans
 - Response time/levels
 - Training
 - SOPs/SOGs

4 Study Results

- The initial planning committee was formed, numerous meetings were held, but nothing got "off the ground" due to many reasons
- No Operations Committee was formed per the studies recommendations
- One department wishes for one town wide district, one department wishes for status quo, one district wishes for smaller steps and one department wishes to not engage in any conversation with anyone
- A single district idea has been talked heavily about- but there has been no business or operation plan presented

5 Study Results

- Once a single town wide district is created, it will be nearly impossible to dissolve the district back into two districts (or more) if it does not work
- By creating a Southside Joint District, it can be used as a stepping stone and road map for further districts to be created in the future.

6 Southside Fire District

- We are here to bring forth a business plan and operation plan
- Create a Fire District on the south side of the Town of Corning, including the Village of South Corning, including the Chemung River.
- The district will alleviate the Town of Corning's liability as Authority Holding Jurisdiction
- The district will alleviate the Village of South Corning's financial strain and responsibility to the fire department
- No more contract negotiations
- The district will secure and stabilize fire department funding

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7 **Southside Fire District**

- The Joint district will create a Board of Fire Commissioners who will have sole responsibility to the fire department and the tax payers
- Taxpayers will have annual opportunity at public hearing to voice opinions on tax levy
- The district may assume debt for capital purchases- where that debt is being held on the tax payers- not the town or village
- The Joint district will have no operational impact on the taxpayers that are currently protected by SCFD
- The Joint district will pave the way for a Northside Fire District- and possibly a Town wide district in the future

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8 **Southside Fire District**

- SCFD currently holds no debt. However this will need to change in the near future to create safer working conditions for firefighters
- 49% of the Town of Corning is covered by two engines, one tanker, one brush unit and other specialized smaller pieces specific to water rescue operations
- The district will create more transparency in its funding and how monies are spent. Annual audits are now required by the State of New York Comptrollers office- again no responsibility to the Town or Village for this

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9 **At What Expense?**

- We recognize that there are issues with the fire service in the town. Duplication of apparatus, non-aligned SOPs/SOGs, recruitment/retention problems, station duplication, inadequate stations.
- Duplication is occurring on the northside of the district
- You cannot expect any savings to the taxpayers, or firefighters, by keeping the same amount of buildings and apparatus in service
- Although it is unpredictable, but it is probable that there will be social issues at the beginning of a major change in the fire service resulting in the loss of volunteers

10 **Rumored Town wide district benefits**

- Training- aligned training can be created, conducted and enforced.
 - This was tried already with joint monthly training sessions. Over time, departments began to mingle back to their own corner
 - Departments would disregard what was taught and "their way" was retaught after the training- essentially wasting everyones time
 - This can be revamped, QUALIFIED training officers appointed by each department meet and create yearly training calendars
 - Training officers all use the same skill sheets (mirroring state standards)
 - Train twice a month together

11 **Rumored Town wide district benefits**

- Discounted apparatus purchasing

- Some stations cannot accommodate larger sized fire apparatus.
- Each area has its own unique needs- based on demographics, structure types and occupancies in those areas
- Who gets the "new truck" this time? More social related issues created
- There cannot be "discounts" on vehicle purchasing- especially on custom built apparatus
- Apparatus maintenance should be completed already per NFPA recommendations- only possible difference is the change in vendors

12 **Rumored Town wide district benefits**

- Equipment Purchases
 - This can be done now, and should have been done for years
 - Group purchases on turnout gear, hose and other large dollar purchases can produce savings if common ground can be found between all departments.
 - Equipment maintenance, such as hose testing, ladder testing and extrication equipment should be completed now per NFPA recommendations- only change would be possible vendor changes

13 **Rumored Town wide district benefits**

- More boots on the ground
 - All fire departments have acknowledged the shortage of firefighters on 1st alarm assignments
 - All fire departments have altered 1st alarm assignments adding more departments on the 1st alarm assignment addressing this issue
 - This has been done without the creation of a town wide district, and was identified as a priority concern in the efficiency study

14 **Rumored Town wide district benefits**

- Alignment of SOPs/SOGs
 - During the efficiency study, departments were asked to provide and share their SOPs/SOGs.
 - Departments asked to adopt other departments SOPs/SOGs. Departments agreed.
 - This is being completed without the creation of a town wide district

15 **Rumored Town wide district benefits**

- Interdepartmental response
 - The truth is not all firefighters are familiar with their own equipment, yet we are opening up the possibility to "allow" them to operate others' equipment
 - Turnout gear being brought home to families
 - Accountability
 - Duplicated costs
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16 **Social consequences**

17 **Timeline of Events**

- Create the Southside Joint Fire District
- Appointed/Elected Fire commissioners take their training the 1st year prior to the operation

begins

- The Board of Fire Commissioners create a budget, which creates a tax levy. Residents will have an opportunity to voice opinion about at annual public hearing
- The Joint Fire District is operational
- A 3-5 year "stopwatch" is created. In this time, the northside could follow suit and create its own fire district mirroring the coverage and operation on the southside
- During this time, extensive review of operations could dictate the district to expand/consolidate with the northside or to remain as two separate districts

18 **Facilities**

- The Village currently houses all of the fire equipment
 - The Village may rent to the district to store the equipment until a new facility is constructed
 - The Village may allow equipment to stay in its current facility, but pay for all used utilities until a new facility is constructed
 - The Village may evict the fire department from the facility

19 **Operations**

- The Village obtains ownership of most equipment at SCFD
- The Village may sell all assets to the district for \$1
- The Village may sell all assets to the district for fair market value
- The Village may not sell any assets to the district

20 **Protection Area**

21 **Operations**

- The new Board of Commissioners should set forth a series of standards that will dictate the qualifications needed to hold the rank of Chief, Assistant Chief, Company Officer, interior firefighter, exterior firefighter, EMS and apparatus operator.

22 **District Budget**

- The commission will determine what the budget for the fire district should be, taking into consideration all of the capital expenses that must be invested
- Town and Village residents will be paying the same amount of taxes
- The newborn district will appeal to grant committees

23 **Operations**

- The new Board of Commissioners will determine (in conjunction and under recommendation by the Chief) what the chain of command will be- and adhere to the standards set forth

24 **Review**

- No current plan presented by any parties other than this
- 49% of the town and 100% of the village is covered under one firehouse
- Social consequences
- Eliminate Town and Village responsibility from AHJ
- Use as a stepping stone for future districts/consolidations
- Fail safe

- 25 **Thank you**
- Questions
- Discussion