



TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

Adopted February 2015

Background and Overview:

Elected and appointed officials of the Town of Grand Rapids, along with fire department officers, conducted a Strategic Planning meeting in September 2014 to determine what issues were of particular importance in mapping the future direction of our fire department. The initial strategic planning meeting was facilitated by the Public Safety Committee, and later led by an ad hoc implementation committee.

The starting point was to facilitate a SWOT analysis, identifying the strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities (O), and threats (T) of the department. From there the group determined a vision and mission or purpose statement, and identified the needs of all of the stakeholders in our community to create a general view of what we believe our values are and should continue to be.

Fire department officers then began to develop goals and strategies which would guide future activities of the department. It is important to note that the planning process attempted to identify goals and strategies which would go beyond the routine carrying out of fire department activities on a daily, weekly and annual basis by elected officials and fire department members. Goals and strategies were limited in number and scope in order to be able to measure progress and remain manageable.

Summary of SWOT analysis:

STRENGTHS

- Extremely well trained individuals
- Competent fire department officers
- Good equipment
- Experienced members
- Location
- Longevity
- Diverse workgroup
- Cross-trained (EMT/First Responders/Fire)
- Fire prevention education program
- Wood County boat safety program
- Effective mentoring program

OPPORTUNITIES

- Substantial tax base
- MSTC classes
- Ability to expand services (by program and by service area)
- Recognized as a progressive department
- Respected by law enforcement (acknowledged for high professionalism and skillful/trained members)

WEAKNESSES

- Decreased number of responders to daytime or weekend calls
- No system of knowing who is available
- Apparatus in need of repair
- No replacement schedule for apparatus
- Funding of department – are we utilizing the money like we should

THREATS

- Negative public opinion towards contractual services (why do we have to charge so much)
- Budgetary constraints
- Misunderstanding by residents about paying for fire department services
- Perception of volunteer fire departments (“social” club)
- Water source if drought
- The perception there is a lack of support from full Town Board

Message from Don Bohn, Fire Chief

In 1959, the Grand Rapids Town Board voted to organize a volunteer fire department; twenty-five men were the first to join. In 1963, the first associate member was added. Striving to maintain a fully staffed and competent group of volunteers, it was decided to train personnel to replace members should that need occur. In 2003, the Fire Department and the Town Board recognized the need for professional leadership at the department. The full-time position of Fire Chief was created to ensure legal requirements of the department were met. This position is in place so that the members of the department are not overloaded with duties that will cause burnout of the member and potential loss of their service to the Town. In 2008 the department incorporated a first responder/EMS program into their operations. Now fifty-five years after its origination, membership has grown to include 40 firefighters, 15 associates, and 5 EMS members. With eight trucks in the station, the department is well qualified and prepared to respond to emergencies. However, maintaining that staffing level and meeting the needs of the department is challenging due to the change in society's willingness to commit to public service.

It is with excitement that we release our new strategic plan, which will guide our work in effectively carrying out our roles and responsibilities aimed at the protection, preservation, and well-being of the health, safety, and property of all persons residing, working, or otherwise within the Town of Grand Rapids or contracted fire service areas, and with any fire service organization we interact with. We will continue to provide high quality services to our customers while seeking out new funding sources and operate as efficiently as possible.

Our members continue to meet the increased demands placed upon them by myself, and the community. They do so because they are dedicated to the mission of the Grand Rapids Fire Department. The development of this plan has reinforced our belief in both the strengths each member brings to the fire department and the critical role of partnerships and collaboration with elected officials, neighboring municipalities, and other fire service organizations.

The strategic plan provides a dynamic road map that will lead us into the future. It provides a balanced framework of what each of us needs to do to reach our collective vision and fulfill our mission. Our success rests with the dedicated individuals throughout our department and the elected officials serving on our Town Board who recognize the significance of public safety and who strive to keep Grand Rapids a safe community every day.

I, as the Fire Chief, hold the members of the Grand Rapids Fire Department in highest regard. They are the men and women next door who wake in the middle of the night to respond to calls; leave their families during dinner; excuse themselves from work when the second page is heard. Their performance, attitude, and commitment are what make this department what it is. For them it is not a choice, it's a responsibility and a privilege. They are the true reason why we have such an outstanding department. What they accomplish on a daily basis does not, and should not go unnoticed by the Town Board or the public. We as an organization must inform the community of the resources necessary to achieve our mission. We must have the courage to publicly defend the needs of the department in a positive manner. This plan is the first step along that path.

Respectfully submitted,

Don Bohn
Fire Chief

Our Vision Statement:

“The Grand Rapids Volunteer Fire Department shall strive for excellence in the performance of our duty and in the services we provide.”

Our Mission Statement:

“The Grand Rapids Volunteer Fire Department will be a premier fire department with a foundation of financial sustainability providing a proactive approach to acquire the necessary equipment, skills, and abilities to safely handle the challenges of emergency incidents now and in the future. We shall be a dynamic organization that adjusts to the changing needs of the community.”

Our Ethics and Value Statement:

“The Grand Rapids Volunteer Fire Department members shall uphold the highest ethical ideals and highest standards of conduct in both their public and private lives. We shall take an active role in maintaining a professional image of the Fire Service through promptness, efficiency, and dedication to duty.”

This strategic plan consists of various goals and strategies. Essentially, goals are the events which, if achieved, will take us to our *ideal state*. Goals are expected to be achieved over an indeterminate time period, say from three to five years, with steady movement toward them being a primary measurement tool. Strategies are the steps we need to take, as a community, to accomplish these goals. Strategies answer the question, *What will it take to get this done?*

Goal #1

Consistently secure sufficient resources to assure growth and sustainability.

Strategies

- During the annual budgeting process, commit a portion of operating levy greater than contracted fire service area revenue to adequately fund operations and needed capital improvements.
- Do what is necessary to maintain current fire service contracts, and to expand when possible.
- Seek grant funding opportunities and apply when feasible.

Goal #2

Create a formal system to provide adequate staffing of members.

Strategies

- Continue to examine developing and future trends that will affect membership volume.
- Implement a paid on-call program to ensure command staff availability and response to calls.
- Develop strategies to maintain staff levels of firefighter and emergency medical first responder positions.
- Utilize computer-based program(s) to create awareness of response to calls.

Goal #3

Develop replacement schedule for equipment and apparatus.

Strategies

- Inventory and evaluate apparatus needs based on current and future fire department operation.
- Identify equipment depreciation/replacement schedules based upon NFPA standards.
- Develop strategies to replace according to depreciation/replacement schedules, or to repair as equipment becomes inoperable prior to depreciation/replacement schedule.

Goal #4

Maintain current ISO rating of 6.

Strategies

- Educate and inform the public about the significance of an ISO rating of 6.
- Proactively take the steps necessary to maintain an ISO rating of 6.



Key Performance Indicators

By tracking Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), we will know how our department is performing and can adjust as needed.

		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<i>GOAL 1: Consistently secure sufficient resources to assure growth and sustainability.</i>						
Operating Goal		\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Levy committed to VFD	Budgeted	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
	Actual	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Fire Service Contracts	Contracted Service Areas					
	Contracted Revenue	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Grant Funding Opportunities						
<i>GOAL 2: Create a formal system to provide adequate staffing of members.</i>						
Membership trends						
On-call program						
Membership levels						
Response to calls						
<i>GOAL 3: Develop replacement schedule for equipment and apparatus.</i>						
Inventory and evaluation of apparatus needs						
Equipment depreciation/replacement schedules						
Depreciation/replacement strategies						
<i>GOAL 4: Maintain current ISO rating of 6.</i>						
Educate/Inform the public						
ISO rating						

