Milton Fire - Rescue

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Town of Milton
Water Supply and 2018 Pumper/Tanker Proposal

There has been recent discussion and concern raised about available water for fighting fires in the Town of Milton. When a home or building catches fire there are many variables that determine how quickly and intensely a fire may spread. Some examples include building construction, building contents, air flow from open doors or windows, and timely notification of the fire department. At a recent fire in Pineland Park the fire department was notified when the fire had already taken control of the mobile home. The first arriving Engine was on scene in 4 minutes, 2 minutes below the national standard for response times. Pre-arrival photos indicated the heat from the fire had caused several windows to break allowing airflow to push the fire quickly through the home. The lightweight construction of the decades old mobile home burned far to quickly for any amount of water or firefighters to extinguish quickly. Firefighters ran out of water prior to mutual aid tankers arriving on scene. There was concerned raised that the department did not utilize the fire hydrants on St. James Ave, this would not have been a practical use of the limited manpower on scene and had no effect on the out come of the fire. At another incident in November of 2017 Milton firefighters were dispatched to a reported structure fire on Depot Pond Road. Engine 6 again arrived with in 4 minutes of the dispatch notification. Upon arrival the firefighters had smoke showing from the second floor, the crew took a 2.5 gallon water extinguisher to the second floor and found a closed bedroom door, made entry into the room and applied the fire extinguisher to the flames quickly extinguishing the fire. The difference between the two examples is simple; at the Depot Pond Road incident the occupant was home and heard a noise in the bedroom, he immediately investigated, located the fire in the second floor bed room, closed the bedroom door and called 911. The closed door controlled the airflow; the traditional construction of the home was not conducive to rapid fire spread and early notification to the department made all the difference in the outcome. At a third incident on Jug Hill Road in Milton Mills in August of 2017 Milton firefighters were dispatched to a reported fire in an attic. The engine from central and the engine from Milton Mills arrived on scene in 13 minutes with fire and smoke showing from the roof. The crew stretched a 1.75-inch attack line and entered the attic from a scuttle in a bedroom quickly extinguishing the fire using only a few hundred gallons of water. In this case the occupant was home and notified 911 when the fire was discovered. The fire was confined to the attic again controlling air flow, once the fire took hold of the structure it burned through the roof allowing the heat to escape and not build up and spread through the attic. Damage to the home was limited to a section of the roof, parts of the ceiling and water and smoke damage throughout the living area. A final example takes us back to September of 2013. Milton firefighters were dispatched to a reported fire on

Willey Road in Milton Mills. The Engine from Station 2 in Milton Mills arrived on scene in 8 minutes to find a barn fully involved quickly spreading to the attached home. The fire eventually went to 4 alarms and the attached home was left standing. At this fire the department ran out of water several time waiting for mutual aid tankers to arrive and to establish a sustainable water supply. The eventual water supply became an elaborate combination using many types of tactics for providing water to fires in rural areas. The second arriving engine laid their 4" supply line from the intersection of Willey Road and Main Street. A portable pond was set up at this location for tankers to dump their water in, from there another engine pumped the water from the portable pond through the 1000' of supply hose to the fire. The portable pond was filled using several mutual aid tankers who established a route around the village filling up at the dry hydrant behind the post office and dumping their tanks into the portable pond and repeating the route several times. It is operations described in this last example that the Town of Milton lacks the needed equipment to effectively extinguish fires and save property. Thankfully the home on Willey Road was a vacant home and no personal property was lost. However, this type of fire requires the most significant amount of water and has the most potential to save personal property. It is this type of fire that the Milton Fire Department will be in far superior condition by owning and operating the proposed pumper tanker on the 2018 town ballot.

Water Supply in the Town of Milton

The town of Milton is a rural town and sufficient water supply for the fire department to extinguish fires is one of our greatest challenges. In Milton about 5% of the town is covered by pressurized fire hydrants. The pressurized hydrants extend from Elm Street and the areas around the school through town north to the area around the new fire station. With that being said the hydrants are not reliable and many, particularly in the area of the new fire station lack the volume and pressure to be effective when they are needed. To effectively operate a single fire hose a minimum of 200 gallons per minute is needed. None of the fire hydrants north of the railroad tracks on White Mountain Highway are capable of providing that amount of water. So how do we extinguish fires with out fire hydrants? The water is typically brought in using a combination of pumpers and tankers shuttling water from known or established water supplies. Water is often drafted from the lakes, streams, ponds or cisterns around town and then trucked to the scene using the tankers. In West Milton water must be drafted from a pond on Thurston Road and moved to the scene of the fire. In Milton Mills the water is typically drafted from the Salmon Falls River and moved to the scene. In the village of Milton, pressurized hydrants are utilized but may need to be supplemented with a tanker shuttle or a drafting operation from the area of the Milton Damn. Despite the abundance of water in the area around the Three Ponds there is a unique challenge of accessing that water. For these reasons the fire department is proposing to purchase a 2000 gallon combination pumper/tanker to better prepare the department for larger fires that have the potential to cause the most damage to property.

The Proposed Pumper/Tanker

The department is proposing to purchase a 2000-gallon pumper/tanker with a 1,500 gallon per minute pump. The vehicle will be equipped with all the same tools and equipment as traditional pumper and will be utilized in this capacity on routine and daily calls. The vehicle will be unique in comparison to the department's other pumpers, as it will be designed to assist in rural


A front mounted suction utilized to draft from a portable pond.

water supply. First the truck will have 2,000 gallons of water compared to a traditional pumper that only carries 1000 gallons. Second it will be equipped with a portable tank, something we currently do not have. This will allow us to set up the portable tank in anticipation of our neighboring departments arrival to fill with their tankers. Third the vehicle will be equipped with dump valves to allow us to quickly dump the tanks capacity with out having to engage the pump, and pump off the tanks capacity, this is a crucial part to a tanker shuttle operation. Fourth, the vehicle will be equipped with a front bumper mounted suction inlet. This will allow for the vehicle to draft from the portable pond with out blocking an entire roadway. Additionally, the front mounted suction can be utilized to drive into areas and access water supply that may not other wise be accessible from a side mounted suction. Examples of this include driveways or private boat ramps around the lake. Some have inquired why we do not simply purchase a less expensive tanker or a larger capacity pumper/tanker. Milton is unique in that we still have many old camp roads or rural roads that a larger 3,000-gallon pumper/tanker may struggle to fit down. This truck has been designed to be versatile; a larger truck would be less efficient for the routine calls we experience on a daily basis. If we purchase a standalone tanker with limited crew capacity and compartment space the vehicle again would not be as veritable. Milton does not have the luxury of having individual vehicles to serve each fire department function. For example our rescue equipment is on our pumper rather than a separate rescue truck. By having each vehicle serve multiple purposes it allows us to operate more efficiently.

Why Should the Purchase be this Year?

In 2012 Milton voters authorized the town to enter into a 7-year lease agreement to purchase Engine 6, a 2012 rescue/pumper. The first payment of approximately $41,000 was made in 2012 and the final payment will be made in 2018. The proposed pumper/tanker if approved will be ordered in 2018 but not constructed and delivered to Milton until 2019. The first payment will be due midway through 2019. By ordering the vehicle in 2018 we have an advantage of purchasing the vehicle at today's price with no expense to the town until next year. This will represent a saving of 3%-5% or fifteen to twenty five thousand dollars. The payment for the new pumper/tanker will be no more than $61,000/year for the next 10 years. This represents an increase of $20,000 or 5 cents on the tax rate over the existing payment for Engine 6. By approving the purchase in 2018 the increase will be incremental and allow for a level transition between the 2012 approved pumper and the 2018 proposed pumper/tanker.

In summary, the town of Milton currently operates a 29-year-old pumper. National standards recommend apparatus be replaced after 25 years. Milton currently lacks enough water on wheels to effectively handle certain emergencies. The current lease payment for Engine 6 will end in 2018 with the new payment beginning the following year, allowing for an incremental increase in the payment. For these reasons it is logical that the town of Milton enter into a lease to purchase agreement for a new pumper/tanker. Further questions can be addressed to the Fire Chief at nickmarique@miltonfirerescue.com or 652-4201 ext. 301