



LITTLE COMPTON TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION

● ● NEWSLETTER ● ●

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* * Special Edition * *

Little Compton Volunteer Fire Department

LCVFD, OUR TREASURE: Little Compton has both a paid and a volunteer fire department. They are separately managed and operated except when there's a fire during which the Fire Chief is in command of both departments at the fire scene. Little Compton is fortunate to have very few fires in the course of a year. Under normal conditions, the daily operations of the paid fire department are managed by the Fire Chief (Harry Hallgring), and the operations of the volunteer department are managed by its elected president of the organization (Jack Crook).

At the fire scene, however, the volunteers essentially perform a support role for the paid firefighters under the direction of Chief Hallgring. Their individual activities are a function of the level of training that they have undergone. Whatever the level may be, their support is extremely valuable to the paid professional staff. The volunteers perform a noble service to the town out of a sense of civic duty as well as a level of self satisfaction in helping others.

The volunteers perform these functions and supply various pieces of equipment through their fundraising efforts at **NO COST** to the taxpayers... and that is why the Taxpayers Association has taken a strong interest in the well being of the Little Compton Volunteer Fire Department (LCVFD). Most townspeople do not know the value of the contributions made by the LCVFD. The remainder of this special edition newsletter addresses this and puts forth several ideas on how to preserve this valuable treasure.

WHY DO THEY VOLUNTEER? According to the U.S. Fire Administration, the following are the primary reasons citizens volunteer to be fire fighters:

- The experience is rewarding and worth their time.
- The training requirements are not excessive.

- The time demands are adaptable and manageable.
- They are rewarded with a personal sense of value.
- There is good leadership minimizing conflict.
- There is ample support for the organization.

According to the National Volunteer Fire Council, 73% of firefighters in the United States are members of VFDs. Volunteerism is an American institution and is the fabric of what makes this country great. Little Compton is very fortunate to have volunteers of its own.

LCVFD CONTRIBUTIONS: Have any of you ever had the unfortunate need to be transported to a hospital or emergency room in one of Little Compton's ambulances? The full-time fire fighters are all EMTs and do a marvelous



job of saving lives; but, the ambulance, all its medical supplies, and even the fuel to run the vehicle are all compliments of the LCVFD. There is an excellent synergy between the two organizations in this area. Has the Fire Department ever come to your home that has a fire somewhere in the walls and used a hand-held thermal sensing "camera" to find it before the fire became a serious threat? That "camera" was obtained by the LCVFD. Have you

ever been rescued by Little Compton's boat? The boat and trailer were provided by the LCVFD.

These are examples of the items that the volunteers supply to the town without charge in addition to their time. This begs the question, "What would it cost the taxpayers if the Little Compton Volunteer Fire Department ceased to exist?" We fear that the LCVFD's existence is closer to extinction than ever before. It needs to be recognized for its tradition and value added to the Town in order to be maintained and revived. Not too long ago, Little Compton functioned well with an all-volunteer fire department. In fact, there was a waiting list to become a member. Clearly,

things have changed. The diminishing number of volunteers is what led to having a paid department. History has shown that when you mix a paid department with a volunteer department, the volunteer department often time ceases to exist. We want to head that off!

EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES: The following is a summary of the equipment, supplies, and operations costs that the LCVFD provides to the town through private donations and through health insurance billings for ambulance services. Note: If a health insurer does not reimburse the LCVFD for all costs, it stops there. Those using the services are not billed for the difference.

The most prevalent item that the LCVFD has purchased is the pair of rescue trucks that serve as ambulances for those that need medical attention and/or transportation to a hospital. Each truck costs about \$125,000 before being outfitted with medical equipment, medical supplies, oxygen systems, heart defibrillators, radios, etc. Fully equipped, each truck costs approximately \$200,000 and lasts for eight years. Combined, that's a \$400,000 expense that the taxpayers did not have to pay.

For rescue operations in the winter time and in ice water, the LCVFD has purchased ice water suits, ice sleds, a rubber Zodiac power boat, and a specially equipped trailer to carry all the equipment. The value is \$15,000.

The boat, its trailer, and its outboard engine were purchased by the LCVFD and valued at \$30,000.

In addition to the rescue trucks, the LCVFD has purchased various items for fighting fires including jaws of life, turn-out gear (i.e., protective clothing), helmets, air compressors, radios, tools, generators, and more. The value of this is \$120,000.

The total value of the inventory list here is \$565,000 and none of this was paid for with taxpayer dollars. One can now begin to appreciate more the contributions made by the volunteers.

In addition to \$565,000 inventory, the LCVFD has annual recurring expenses for such items as medical supplies, vehicle maintenance, repairs, training, fuel, oxygen, drugs, cell phones, defibrillator batteries, etc. The annual recurring costs are estimated at \$60,000 including funds set aside for a new rescue truck every four years. This is a significant savings for the taxpayers.

Our rescue vehicles are the envy of many other fire companies in Tiverton, Fall River, Westport, and the surrounding area. The LCVFD takes pride in taking that one extra step for the Town's citizens. Often times, other rescue units visit our team at the emergency rooms in the Fall River hospitals just to see what the best looks like.



Inside One Of The Rescue Vehicles

The boat paid for by the LCVFD has come to the rescue on more than one occasion.



The Rescue Boat



Medical Supplies At The Station

CURRENT STATUS: Recent unfortunate events, some of which have been reported in local newspapers, have been rather discouraging to the Volunteers leading to their serious consideration to dissolve the organization and sell all its assets. It cannot be expressed enough how disastrous that would be for the citizens of Little Compton. It would mean that the taxpayers would have to buy the equivalent of \$565,000 worth of equipment and supplies, and be prepared to spend \$60,000 per year to maintain those items. Also, without the support of the volunteers, the existing full-time paid force would have to be expanded by an unspecified number of paid firefighters at a cost of approximately \$85,000 each counting pension and benefits. Things could get mighty expensive for the taxpayers.

Looking back to Page 1 where we listed the reasons why people volunteer their time as firefighters, we note two of the items that we believe are not representative of Little Compton. They are:

- There is good leadership minimizing conflict.
- There is ample support for the organization.

As an example, denying the LCVFD the opportunity to carry its own flag in the Memorial Day Parade was unwarranted and disrespectful to that organization. It is indicative of the negative atmosphere present at the fire barn. There is an apparent lack of leadership for the LCVFD outside of its own organization. We believe that those officials responsible for the public safety of our citizens need to take a more active role if the LCVFD is to continue to be a viable organization.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? We cannot afford to allow the Volunteer Fire Department to simply fade away like the proverbial “Old Soldiers.” If our Volunteers decide to close shop and liquidate assets, where does that leave the Town from a total fire protection viewpoint? From a purely financial point of view, it would be a disaster for the taxpayers of Little Compton as explained above. The shortfall of financial support now provided by the LCVFD would have to be replaced to continue to operate the Fire Department, especially Emergency Medical Services.

From an operational point of view, the demise of the LCVFD would no doubt lead to a call for more full-time paid firefighters to replace the volunteers. Under the present staffing structure of the full-time fire department, there are ten members including the Fire Chief. Typically there are two or possibly three personnel on duty at any given time. Obviously two or three firefighters are insufficient to combat even a moderate sized structure fire. This is where the Volunteers are vital.

When there is an alarm for a fire, the on-duty people are augmented by the volunteers and possibly off-duty personnel. Additionally, there is a mutual aid response agreement with nearby communities like Tiverton and

Portsmouth. However, the first few minutes of a structure fire are critical, and if you do not have sufficient firefighters on hand to quickly get the fire under control, the results are not good in terms of fire loss and the safety of occupants and first responders.

We suggest that there needs to be reconciliation between the full-time and volunteer firefighters. The sophomoric squabbling that has been evident in recent news reports is clearly not productive. The community needs to rise up and breathe new life into the LCVFD. And the LCVFD needs to take a hard look at its recruiting efforts and entrance requirements. There has got to be a better way. The LCVFD needs to open its doors and its arms to welcome every willing and able citizen of Little Compton to sign up.

Short of taking steps to reconcile and improve the present situation that exists between the full-time and volunteer fire departments, we can look forward to future Financial Town Meetings with the budget for fire protection that could easily double. As it stands right now, we are spending more per capita for fire protection than any other town in Rhode Island.

Clearly, good leadership is an essential element in resolving these problems. The leaders here are the Town Council, the Fire Chief, and the LCVFD President. We have talked to all of them and know they are aware of the problems. We strongly urge them to work this out together.

IN SUMMARY: The motto of all firefighters is “That Others May Live.” It is our goal in telling you about our Volunteer Fire Department that the organization will survive and continue to serve our community as it has for decades, and that our full time and volunteer firefighters will come to fully appreciate the vital roles they both play in the overall safety and well being of all the people of Little Compton.

We wish all of our firefighters God speed, and that they stay well. We hope that our citizens will continue their moral and financial support and that even more of our men and women will come forward and become members of the Volunteer fire Department. By now, you should have received your annual appeal letter from the Volunteers, please be as generous as possible. Think of it as an investment in your future well being during hard times.

Their mailing address is:
Little Compton Volunteer
Fire Department, P.O. Box
552, Little Compton, RI
02837

Consider becoming a
member of this most worthy
organization.



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LITTLE COMPTON TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP FORM (Vol. VV, No. 2)

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(For couples, please provide both first names)

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Local Home Address → Check if year-round address

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CITY/TOWN _____ STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____

HOME PHONE _____

Second Home Address → From _____ To _____ (Month/Day)

ADDRESS _____

CITY/TOWN _____ STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____

HOME PHONE _____

SUGGESTED CONTRIBUTION: \$10 (Single) \$15 (Family) \$ _____ (Other)

Mail this form and your contribution to: Little Compton Taxpayers Association
PO Box 455
Adamsville, RI 02801