



# Marbletown Fire and EMS Operations

## An Evaluation of Existing Conditions and Opportunities for the Future

September, 2021

**Prepared for:**

The Town of Marbletown, the Marbletown First Aid Unit and the Fire Districts of Cottekill, High Falls, Marbletown, Lomontville, Stone Ridge and Vly-Atwood

**Prepared by:**

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Project Director



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# Summary

The Town of Marbletown is served by seven fire districts and an independent ambulance service. The Town Board, the ambulance service leadership and the leadership of six of the fire districts commissioned a study to evaluate the existing operations of the fire districts and EMS service and identify options for improved service. The project has been overseen by a steering committee from the Town, the ambulance and the six participating districts – Cottekill, High Falls, Lomontville, Marbletown, Stone Ridge and Vly-Atwood.

## Key Observations on the Marbletown First Aid Unit

- Currently, MFAU is handling BLS responses and transports effectively. The agency is properly equipped, certified and trained to meet the needs of the community. The primary response areas authorized by the state are all of Marbletown, the sections of Rosendale in the High Falls and Cottekill Fire Districts, and the Accord Fire District in Rochester.
- Long-term trend is 1.5 EMS calls per day and about 10 calls per year per 100 residents in the Town of Marbletown. Recently there is very high coverage rates for first calls in the Town, approaching 98%, and over 90% for all calls in the Town.
- In 2019, MFAU began to pay staff because volunteers alone were not meeting the community's needs. MFAU plans to use a mix of 25% volunteers, 75% paid to meet the demand in 2021. They have had to use an 85% mix of paid staff through the first 4 months of the year.
- Operating budget for 2020 was about \$350k and had \$313k in revenue. In 2020, \$194k in revenue was from billing for transports, the remainder from the towns, and fundraising. Budget for 2021 did go up because of need for additional paid staff, but revenue is not likely going to keep pace.
- MFAU is budgeted to receive \$2,500 from Rosendale, \$5,000 from Rochester and \$40,000 from Marbletown in 2021. MFAU has cash reserves that have been set aside for vehicle and other capital purchases that are being spent to provide staff. Those reserves will be drained by the end of 2022 at the current rate.
- MFAU is not likely to develop revenue except from local governments to cover the gap in funding. Without support from the local governments, MFAU is not a viable operation much beyond 2022.

## Opportunities for Action and Implementation for MFAU

The study identified several options for the Town Board to consider: Status Quo, create a contract for service with MFAU, support the organization from the general

fund, form an ambulance district, take over the EMS service, regionalize EMS or contract with an outside service.

The Town Board has started down the pathway of creating an ambulance district to support the MFAU. The process involves developing a plan, map and report for the creation of an ambulance district. The process, if successful, will result in the creation of an ambulance district with an appointed board of commissioners that will aid in the management of MFAU and the provision of EMS service in the Town. The district will also result in a secure funding stream that will serve to support the continued provision of EMS in the Town.

### Key Observations on the Town of Marbletown Fire Service

- The active volunteer firefighters and administrative leaders in the Town are dedicated individuals that give substantial contributions of their time and energy to serve their community and provide an essential service.
- The general opinion is that most residents of Marbletown believe that they are getting good service from the volunteer fire districts. However, it is unclear if residents understand that the service is provided exclusively by volunteers or that there are multiple departments in the Town.
- Long-term trend is about 2 calls per day and about 13 calls per year per 100 residents in the Town of Marbletown. About half of these calls are for medical emergencies. About one in eight is for a report of a fire.
- The utilization of seven fire districts may have been appropriate decades ago when it was created, but this model no longer serves the best interests of the community. This fact is recognized by most leaders in the fire service and there is a willingness to change. The fire districts in the town provide a patchwork of services with a disparate level of service. The amount of coordination and cooperation varies greatly with some relationships being very strong and others exhibiting outright animosity.
- The departments each report challenges related to mustering adequate trained staff in a timely manner. For some districts, the challenges are only during normal business hours (Stone-Ridge and High Falls). For the other districts, it is a perpetual challenge. During the project, the Vly-Atwood Fire Department stopped operations due to lack of volunteers.
- The character of the Town is shifting with more properties being second homes or new residents to the community who have not shown an interest in volunteering. There are few employers in the Town that allow their employees to leave work to respond to an emergency. The Town and New York State Department of

Transportation (DOT) allow their employees to leave (in most cases, time is made up or taken as PTO), which provides crucial manpower during daytime hours.

- With the exception of Stone Ridge, the fire districts each have fire stations that are in need of repair, modernization or replacement. Several of the stations locations are close to one another and might not be needed in a consolidated operation.
- The combined fire districts have 10 front-line fire engines; four of them are 15 years old or older. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) recommends evaluating apparatus older than 15 years for potential replacement. Each of the fire districts has a tanker and two of them are more than 20 years old. Several of the older apparatus might not be needed in a consolidated operation
- The tax rates for fire districts in the town have a wide variability from \$0.37 per thousand to \$1.82 per thousand with no correlation to size of department or calls for service. The tax rates have been steady for the last five years with no substantial increase in rates or in levy.
- The fire districts, with one exception, have no substantial debt and most have a reserve for the future purchase of apparatus. Stone Ridge, the sole exception, has 10 more years of debt service on its new station.
- As a whole, in the most recent available year, the participating fire districts plan to generate \$1.2 million in revenue and spend \$1.1 million. By far, the largest source of revenue is \$1.1 million in property tax. The largest expense category relates to fire supply related contracts followed by equipment and apparatus. Debt services is the third largest expense category in the town.

## Opportunities for Action for the Fire Service

These initial options were shared with representatives of each of the participating fire districts and the Town Board at a workshop. While each option was discussed, there was a clear thought among the attendees that there needs to be some substantial changes in the fire service in the near future. The options presented were:

- Keep Status Quo,
- Merge Fire Districts into One or Two,
- Expand Sharing and Coordination to improve service in the short term,
- Develop Plan for Volunteer Recruitment and Retention, and
- Consider a Trigger for Hiring Paid Staff.

The report provides an overview of the steps for implementation of a multiple district merger, expansion of sharing and coordination between districts, developing a plan for recruitment and retention and consideration for when it might be appropriate to hire paid staff.

## Next Steps

The potential actions presented in this report are provided to the ambulance, fire districts and Town in an effort to enable changes to improve the EMS and fire service in the community. In every situation, there are intangible factors such as traditions and personal relationships that can serve to either facilitate or hinder changes. Clear communication, establishing common ground and using outside facilitators have all been shown to aid in bringing about change.

## Acknowledgements

The members of the steering committee were:

- Brad Fiore, Cottekill Fire District
- Stephanie Turner, High Falls Fire District
- Lou Cardinale, Lomontville Fire District
- Jim Economos, Marbletown Fire District
- Paul Bogart, Stone Ridge Fire District
- John Cirone, Vly-Atwood Fire District
- Joe Vitti, Marbletown First Aid Unit
- Rich Parete, Town Supervisor for Marbletown

We are grateful for the numerous additional members of the districts and departments that participated in interviews and provided information to inform the report.

## Staff Team

Katherine Bell assisted with data analysis and mapping. Kieran Bezila assisted with report development and budget analysis. David Riley assisted with writing and editing the report. James Harrington provided expert opinion related to the fire service and aided in developing the report.

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# Introduction

The Town of Marbletown is served by seven fire districts and an independent ambulance service. The Town Board, the ambulance service leadership and the leadership of six of the fire districts commissioned a study to evaluate the existing operations of the fire districts and EMS service and identify options for improved service.

This project began in December 2020 with an anticipated six month timeframe. The start of the project and some key activities were delayed because of the COVID pandemic. The project has been overseen by a steering committee from the Town, the ambulance and the six participating districts – Cottekill, High Falls, Lomontville, Marbletown, Stone Ridge and Vly-Atwood. Both Cottekill and High Falls also cover a part of the Town of Rosendale.

This project relies on publicly available data from New York State (which in many cases included all of the fire districts), the organization's responses to data requests and interviews with members of the organizations. The report is structured with the Key Findings and Opportunities for Action as the first two sections. The third section is the Pathways for Implementation, which has been developed based on feedback from the steering committee about the Opportunities for Action that are most viable in the current environment. The Supporting Information, which documents the existing conditions for the fire and EMS operations, is the final section. The contents address the Marbletown First Aid Unit (MFAU) first, followed by the fire districts. During the project, the sections related to the MFAU were completed early at the request of all parties to support the Town in addressing an urgent situation.

## Section I: Key Findings

### Key Observations on the Marbletown First Aid Unit

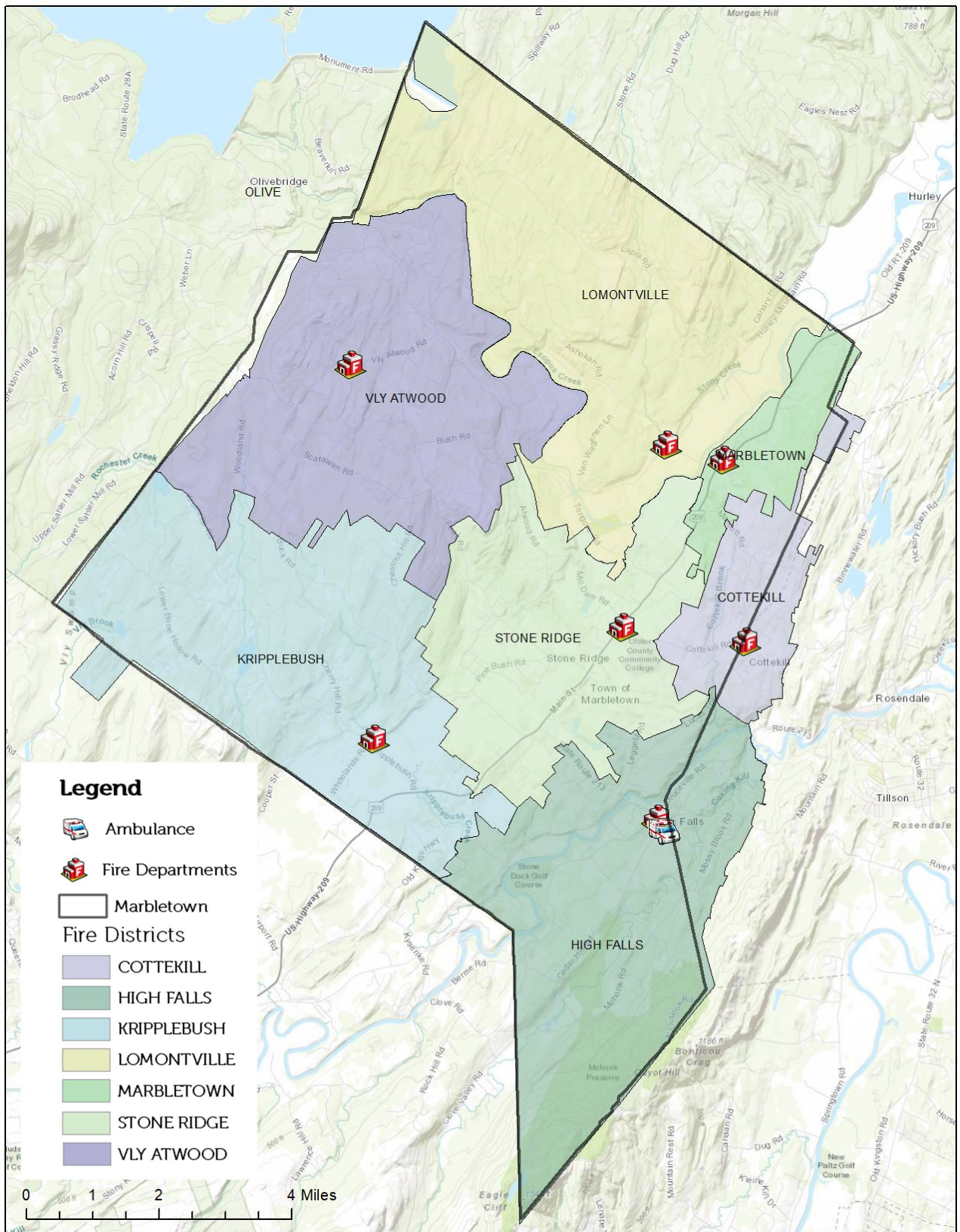
- Currently, MFAU is handling BLS responses and transports effectively. The agency is properly equipped, certified and trained to meet the needs of the community.
- The primary response areas authorized by the state are all of Marbletown, the sections of Rosendale in the High Falls and Cottekill Fire Districts, and the Accord Fire District in Rochester.
- Long-term trend is 1.5 calls per day and about 10 calls per year per 100 residents in the Town of Marbletown.
- Recent very high coverage rates for first calls in the Town, approaching 98%, and over 90% for all calls in the Town.



- Residents and leaders from the fire service are happy with the current service provided.
- In 2019, MFAU began to pay staff because volunteers alone were not meeting the community's needs.
- MFAU plans to use a mix of 25% volunteers, 75% paid to meet the demand in 2021. Have had to use an 85% mix of paid staff through the first 4 months of the year.
- Operating budget for 2020 was about \$350k and had \$313k in revenue. In 2020, \$194k in revenue was from billing for transports, the remainders from the towns, and fundraising.
- Budget for 2021 is likely to go up because of need for additional paid staff, but revenue is not likely going to keep pace.
- MFAU is budgeted to receive \$2,500 from Rosendale, \$5,000 from Rochester and \$40,000 from Marbletown in 2021.
- MFAU has cash reserves that have been set aside for vehicle and other capital purchases that are being spent to provide staff. Those reserves will be drained by the end of 2022 at the current rate.
- MFAU is not likely to develop revenue except from local governments to cover the gap in funding. Without support from the local governments, MFAU is not a viable operation much beyond 2022.

## Key Observations on the Town of Marbletown Fire Service

- The active volunteer firefighters and administrative leaders in the Town are dedicated individuals that give substantial contributions of their time and energy to serve their community and provide an essential service.
- The general opinion is that most residents of Marbletown believe that they are getting good service from the volunteer fire districts. However, it is unclear if residents understand that the service is provided exclusively by volunteers or that there are multiple departments in the Town.
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- The utilization of seven fire districts may have been appropriate decades ago when it was created, but this model no longer serves the best interests of the community. This fact is recognized by most leaders in the fire service and there is a willingness to change.



- The fire districts in the town provide a patchwork of services with a disparate level of service. The amount of coordination and cooperation varies greatly with some relationships being very strong and others exhibiting outright animosity.
- The departments each report challenges related to mustering adequate trained staff in a timely manner. For some districts, the challenges are only during normal business hours (Stone-Ridge and High Falls). For the other districts, it is a perpetual challenge. During the project, the Vly-Atwood Fire Department stopped operations due to lack of volunteers.
- The character of the Town is shifting with more properties being second homes or new residents to the community who have not shown an interest in volunteering.
- There are few employers in the Town that allow their employees to leave work to respond to an emergency. The Town and New York State Department of Transportation (DOT) do allow their employees to leave, which provides crucial manpower during daytime hours( in most cases, time is made up or taken as PTO).
- With the exception of Stone Ridge, the fire districts each have fire stations that are in need of repair, modernization or replacement. Several of the stations locations are close to one another and might not be needed in a consolidated operation.
- The combined fire districts have 10 front-line fire engines; four of them are 15 years old or older. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) recommends evaluating apparatus older than 15 years for potential replacement. Each of the fire districts has a tanker and two of them are more than 20 years old. Several of the older apparatus might not be needed in a consolidated operation.

Department	Type	Designation	Year	Mfr.
Cottekill	Engine/Tanker	2311	2007	Ford E-One
Cottekill	Engine	2312	2020	Rosenbauer
High Falls	Engine/Rescue	30-10	2019	Rosenbauer
High Falls	Engine	30-11	2011	KME
High Falls	Engine/Tanker	30-12	2003	HME/Ferrara
High Falls	Rescue	30-14	2006	Ford/Ferrara
High Falls	Command	Car 30	2004	Chevrolet
Lomontville	Tanker	35-12	1992	GMC
Lomontville	Engine	35-13	2003	KME
Lomontville	Engine	35-14	2013	Rosenbauer

<b>Marbletown</b>	Engine	37-10	2004	Ferrara
<b>Marbletown</b>	Tanker	37-20	2011	Sutphen
<b>Marbletown</b>	Rescue	37-30	1992	Ford E-One
<b>Stone Ridge</b>	Tanker	E-58-10	2013	Rosenbauer
<b>Stone Ridge</b>	Engine	E-58-12	2019	Rosenbauer
<b>Stone Ridge</b>	Rescue/Engine	E-58-14	2010	E-One
<b>Stone Ridge</b>	Rescue	R-58-15	1999	
<b>Vly-Atwood</b>	Engine	62-10		
<b>Vly-Atwood</b>	Tanker	62-11	2015	
<b>Vly-Atwood</b>	Mini-rescue	62-15		

- Completion of administrative tasks, including essential ones, is inconsistent among the fire districts. Several districts have apparently not filed mandated information related to calls for service and finances with New York State for multiple recent years.
- Interoperability between departments is a mixed bag. There are three different sizes of supply hose (3", 4" and 5" are all in use), three different SCBA models and a variety of other equipment manufacturers in use. However, the departments are all dispatched from a common source, multiple departments train together regularly, and most departments will utilize their neighbors for mutual aid on a preplanned basis.
- The tax rates for fire districts in the town have a wide variability from \$0.37 per thousand to \$1.82 per thousand with no correlation to size of department or calls for service. The tax rates have been steady for the last five years with no substantial increase in rates or in levy.
- The fire districts, with one exception, have no substantial debt and most have a reserve for the future purchase of apparatus. Stone Ridge, the sole exception, has 10 more years of debt service on its new station.
- The table below summarizes the revenues and expenditures for each of six participating fire districts. As a whole, in the most recent available year, the



participating fire districts plan to generate \$1.2 million in revenue and spend \$1.1 million. By far, the largest source of revenue is \$1.1 million in property tax. The largest expense category relates to fire supply related contracts followed by equipment and apparatus. Debt services is the third largest in the town.

	Cottekill	High Falls	Lomont-ville	Marble-town	Stone Ridge	Vly-Atwood	Six District Totals
	2021 Budget	2020 Actual	2020 Actual.	2020 Actual	2021 Budget	2020 Actual.	Most Recent Year
<b>Income</b>							
Misc. Income	\$3,800	<b>\$600</b>	\$750	\$1,115	\$50,400	<b>\$18</b>	\$56,683
Interest Income	\$2,075	<b>\$737</b>	\$1,520	\$62	\$200	<b>\$105</b>	\$4,699
Proceeds of Debt		<b>\$86,793</b>				-	\$86,793
Sale of Assets	\$0		\$100				\$100
Tax Levy	\$135,378	<b>\$307,251</b>	\$125,471	\$75,128	\$372,668	<b>\$57,155</b>	\$1,073,051
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$141,253</b>	<b>\$395,381</b>	<b>\$127,841</b>	<b>\$76,305</b>	<b>\$423,268</b>	<b>\$57,278</b>	<b>\$1,221,326</b>
<b>Expenses</b>							
Benefits/Workers Comp	\$5,312	\$13,969	\$12,385	\$11,286	\$23,000	<b>\$10,830</b>	\$76,782
Retirement	\$18,000	<b>\$78,435</b>					\$96,435
Insurance	\$14,900	<b>\$11,086</b>		\$9,431	\$31,000		\$66,417
Equipment / Apparatus	\$27,000	<b>\$104,928</b>	\$4,143	\$21,607	\$30,000	\$2,813	\$190,491
Facilities	\$13,400						\$13,400
Administrative	\$8,300	\$6,250	\$8,247	\$70		\$1,605	\$24,472
Training	\$2,000						\$2,000
FF / Fire Related	\$200	<b>\$109,009</b>	\$37,800	\$13,268	\$113,081	\$27,411	\$300,769
Supplies	\$7,141						\$7,141
Debt	\$0	<b>\$12,830</b>			\$166,188		\$179,018
Additions to Reserves	\$45,000				\$60,000		\$105,000
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$141,253</b>	<b>\$336,507</b>	<b>\$62,575</b>	<b>\$55,662</b>	<b>\$423,268</b>	<b>\$42,659</b>	<b>\$1,061,924</b>

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## Section II: Opportunities for Action

### Options for Consideration on MFAU

These are initial options for consideration by the Town Board. They were presented to the Board in May 2021 in response to an immediate need in the community.

- Status Quo
  - This entails the current minimal municipal support for MFAU.
  - Revenue on 350 to 400 transports per year isn't sufficient to sustain the paid staff and other operational costs necessary to answer the calls.
  - There is substantial risk that MFAU will be unable to remain in business beyond 2022.
- Further Town Support of MFAU
  - Contractual Agreement
    - Regardless of funding mechanism, Marbletown should enter into a contractual arrangement with MFAU to establish minimum performance standards and allow the Town to ensure that it is getting value for its tax dollars.
    - The presented draft document is an excellent start. Some areas for improvement are related to operational performance, reporting, designated liaisons and cost escalations.
  - General Fund
    - Marbletown could begin to provide funding to MFAU immediately through their General Fund. Since every resident and property in the Town benefits from this service, it is appropriate for the General Fund.
  - Ambulance District
    - An Ambulance Improvement District is created under Article 12-A of Town Law in a similar manner to a lighting district or water district. The Town Board acts as the commission for an ambulance district unless it chooses to empanel a separate commission. (Ambulance district commissions are very rare in New York.) The funds raised under an ambulance district can only be used to support the ambulance service. The funds can be used directly by the Town for purchases or used to contract with an agency like MFAU. Some towns use funds from the district to buy vehicles that are then operated by

an ambulance company, or the Town deducts the cost of fuel used by the ambulance from the funds given from the district. A benefit of the ambulance district is the clear line from funding to the agency.

- The table below illustrates the potential costs for an ambulance district at three funding levels compared to the existing costs for Town taxes and the seven fire districts. The estimated cost is based on the Census-reported median property value of \$275,000.

District scenarios and comparisons	Rate per \$1,000	Estimated annual cost to median home
Town of Marbletown	\$3.73	\$1,025.48
Ambulance District for \$100,000	\$0.09	\$26.01
Ambulance District for \$150,000	\$0.14	\$39.02
Ambulance District for \$200,000	\$0.19	\$52.02
Cottekill FD	\$1.66	\$456.92
High Falls FD	\$1.44	\$395.89
Kripplebush FD	\$0.74	\$203.67
Lomontville FD	\$0.73	\$199.55
Marbletown FD	\$1.82	\$500.35
Stone Ridge FD	\$1.57	\$431.26
Vly-Attwood FD	\$0.37	\$103.04

- Town Takes Over EMS Service
  - Another option would be for the Town to take over the ambulance service. This involves several steps including seeking state authorization to operate, acquiring the capital equipment, and hiring the employees. This option would be substantially more expensive than supporting MFAU.
- Regionalization of EMS
  - All the towns in the area are facing similar challenges with the dearth of volunteer EMS providers, leading to hiring paid staff. It might be more cost effective to develop a regional approach to providing this service. This is not a short-term solution, but may be the best long-term solution. This could build on the existing agencies and personnel.
- Contract with Outside Agency

- The Town could consider contracting with an outside agency such as Mobile Life Support (which already has an operating certificate for the Town) or another EMS agency (that would need to obtain an operating certificate or use one obtained by the Town) to provide the service under contract. The Town would likely need to subsidize the cost of the service as there are not enough transports in the Town to cover the costs through ambulance billing alone.
- Long-term Operational Concerns for EMS in the Town
  - Supply of staff for MFAU
  - Location of ambulance station
  - Provision of advanced life support in the community
  - Succession planning for leadership at MFAU

## Initial Options for Consideration for the Fire Service

These initial options were shared with representatives of each of the participating fire districts and the Town Board at a workshop. While each option was discussed, there was a clear thought among the attendees that there needs to be some substantial changes in the fire service in the near future.

- Status Quo
  - The status quo of seven fire districts in the Town is not a viable option into the future. The demand for volunteer firefighters and leadership to operate each department dilutes the available resource pool. The duplication of effort to plan for training, maintain records, establish budgets, manage finances and operate seven different organizations does not seem to provide a better service than could be achieved through consolidation. There is not a compelling reason to keep seven fire districts in the town.
- Merge Fire Districts
  - Under state law, the fire district commissioners can develop a consolidation plan that would merge two or more of the fire districts. The requirements of the plan and the potential combinations are outlined in the implementation section. The initial consolidation process would seek to retain all of the volunteer firefighters, the most up to date apparatus and all of the fire stations in some capacity. A long term plan for capital needs would be developed by the new commission with input from all of the fire service. For illustrative purposes, the report will discuss steps for creating One District and for creating Two Districts with likely candidates for the consolidation.



- Expand Sharing and Coordination to improve service in short term
  - The steps for consolidation may take a long period of time to implement and the fire departments in the town can improve services in the short term with actions designed to improve efficiency. Some examples include agreeing on a standard size for supply hose, moving toward a common SCBA vendor and enabling personnel sharing, particularly for interior firefighters and those with EMS training. Additionally, establishing further automatic aid agreements for high risk events and time periods is appropriate.
- Develop Plan for Volunteer Recruitment and Retention
  - All of the departments in Marbletown indicate that they are concerned about the long term viability of volunteers. The departments, Town, and local employers should develop a task force to identify likely sources of volunteers. Also, programs to retain existing volunteers should be considered such as LOSAP, benefits from local vendors, and low cost housing.
- Consider trigger for hiring paid staff
  - The Town has been very fortunate to be able to rely on an effective volunteer cadre for many years. The volunteers have been supported by certain employers, including the Town, releasing volunteers to respond to calls during work hours. However, if current trends continue, it is likely that the volunteers may need to be supplemented with a paid staff. The Town and fire districts should consider what performance criteria would be met to trigger the hiring of paid staff.

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## Section III: Pathways for Implementation

### Implementation of Ambulance District for MFAU

The Town Board has started down the pathway of creating of an ambulance district to support the MFAU. The process involves developing a plan, map and report for the creation of an ambulance district. The process, if successful, will result in the creation of an ambulance district with an appointed board of commissioners that will aid in the management of MFAU and the provision of EMS service in the Town. The district will also result in a secure funding stream that will serve to support the continued provision of EMS in the Town.

### Implementation for the Fire Service Changes

Several changes were presented to the Project Steering Committee for consideration. While the Status Quo is an option, the follow section will focus on the ways to implement several of the substantial changes that are laid out as options. The changes considered are: merging fire districts resulting with a single one or multiple; expanding shared services; enhancing recruitment and retention; and considering a trigger for career staff.

#### Option 1: Merge Fire Districts

A merger of two or more fire districts encompassing their current boundaries could be accomplished through the use of Article 17A of General Municipal Law looking at consolidations. The options include the possibility of a single district for the whole town or several smaller districts encompassing two or more existing districts. Regardless of the combination, the process requires the affirmative vote of each of the involved district commissions in support of a consolidation but not a referendum of the electors of the districts. There are a variety of factors that must be considered as part of a consolidation agreement including to continuation of employment, forecast cost and savings, the list of assets, the liabilities and the effective date. There must be public hearings on any proposed consolidation. The consolidation plan, which would be adopted by each of the involved commissions, would include the following items:

- Name of each district involved;
- Name of the new district;
- The boundaries of the new district;
- The new organizational structure including elected officials and number of employees, if any, as well as a transitional plan to move to that new structure;

- The estimate of the cost of and savings of which may be realized from consolidation;
- The assets of each district including the real and personal property and their fair market value;
- The liabilities and indebtedness, bonded and otherwise, and the fair market value;
- The plan and terms for disposition of existing assets, liabilities and indebtedness of each district, either jointly, separately or in certain proportions;
- The effective date of the proposed consolidation; and
- The time and places for the public hearing or hearings.

The consolidation plans are typically developed over a period of months and can be modified after presentation to the public before final adoption by the commissions. It would be possible to complete a merger in six months or less. There are several permutations of merging districts, we outline two potential scenarios below.

### Action 1A: Create a Single Fire District

A single fire district is likely to serve the residents of Marbletown better into the future. Benefits of a single fire district include better coordination of responses, improved planning for capital purchases, a larger pool of volunteers for fire response and leadership, distribution of administrative responsibilities and the potential reduction of costs for operations, insurance and capital needs. There are some challenges that are likely to arise including the loss of some volunteers, expenses related to standardization of equipment, and the creation of unified operating guidelines. For some properties in the town, the property taxes will increase and for others, there will be a decrease. A discussion of the financial impact is later in the document.

### Operational Changes

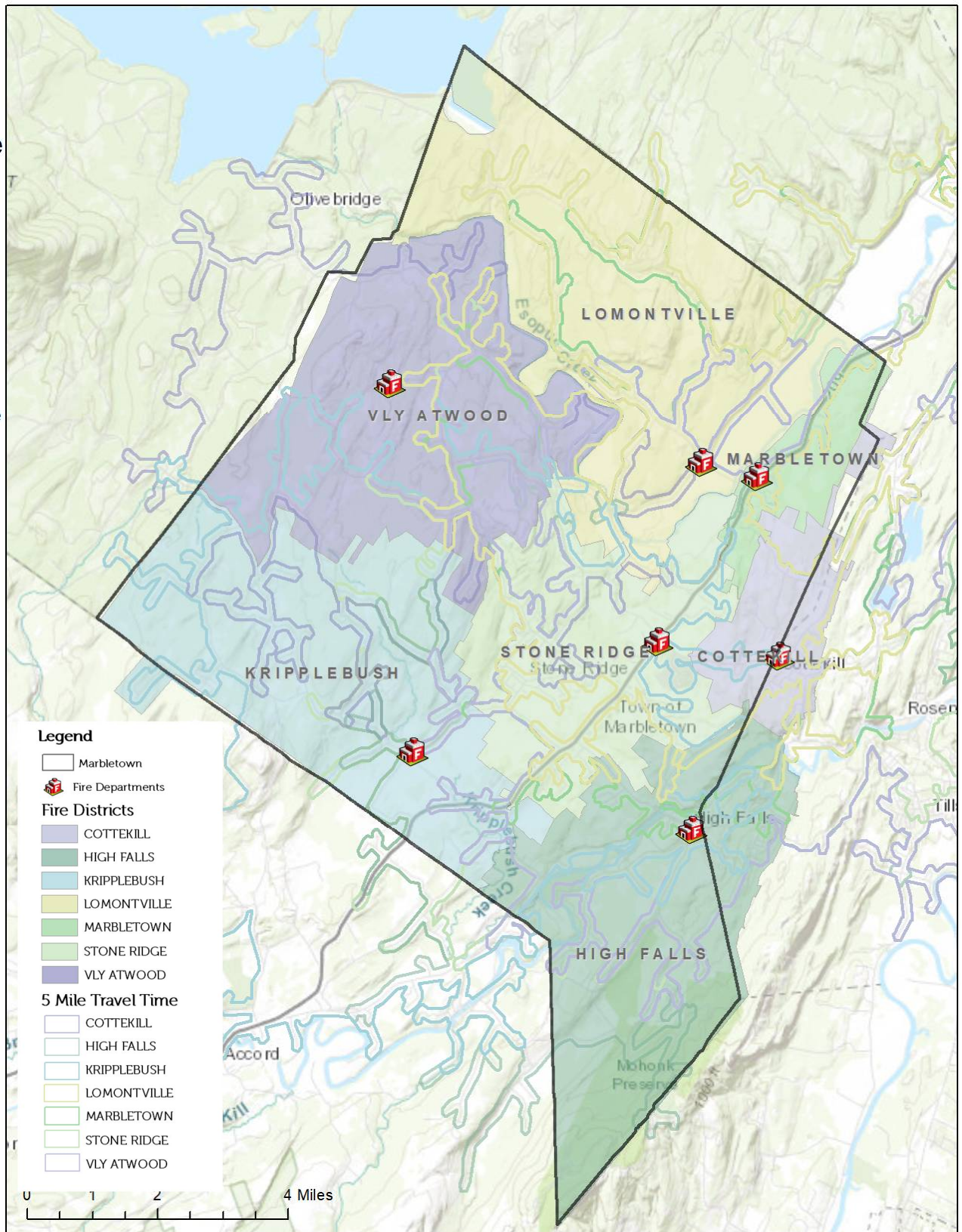
For the line firefighter and the public they respond to, there will be limited changes in the operations of the department. It is likely that the chain of command will be slightly different under a consolidated district. One possible solution would be to create a single chief that oversees the whole district and then have a deputy chief at each of the current districts. A similar structure could be done for other leadership roles such as training officer and EMS officer. Under a consolidated district, there would be a single set of records for training, calls for service, vehicle maintenance, and equipment inventory. During project interviews, there was a high degree of variability about the cooperation between the various departments, including one district that chose not to participate in the study.

There is an excess of fire apparatus in the town that would be made more pronounced through a consolidation. There are several older apparatus that are not needed to

meet the needs of the fire service in the Town. After a consolidation, the consolidated district should plan to operate the seven most modern and capable engines, one out of each station. The district should also keep a single reserve engine which would be the next most capable. The two most modern and capable tankers should also be kept in service. The intent is to ensure that 7000 gallons of water can be brought to the scene as a part of first alarm response. Three of the utility vehicles should also be kept to support the role of service and rescue companies. The grid below lays out a plan to be considered among the apparatus in the district (excluding K. With a consolidated district, it would be possible to eliminate about 30% of the apparatus fleet and still meet the standards suggested by the ISO and NFPA for apparatus and water supply for a structure fire. With the reduction of frontline apparatus, there is a decrease in the cost of annual maintenance for pumps, ladders, hose, SCBAs and other equipment.

Department	Vehicle #	Year	Pump	Tank	Type	Proposed Usage
Cotterkill	2311	2007	1250	1250	Engine	In-service Engine Co
Cotterkill	2312	2020	1500	1000	Engine	In-service Engine Co
High Falls	30-10	2019	1250	500	Engine	In-service Engine Co
High Falls	30-11	2011	1250	1000	Engine	In-service Engine Co
High Falls	30-12	2003	1250	1800	Engine	Reserve Engine Co
High Falls	30-14	2006	N/A	N/A	Rescue	Service/Rescue Co
Lomontville	35-12	1992	500	1800	Engine	Surplus/Sell
Lomontville	35-13	2003	1250	1000	Engine	In-service Engine Co
Lomontville	35-14	2013	1000	300	Engine	Service/Rescue Co
Marbletown	37-10	2004	1250	1000	Engine	Surplus/Sell
Marbletown	37-20	2011	750	2000	Tanker	Tanker Taskforce
Marbletown	37-30	1992	350	300	Mini Engine	Surplus/Sell
Stone Ridge	58-10	2013	1500	3000	Engine	Engine/Tanker Taskforce
Stone Ridge	58-12	2019	1500	1000	Engine	In-service Engine Co
Stone Ridge	58-14	2010	1200	530	Engine	Surplus/Sell
Stone Ridge	58-15	1999	N/A	N/A	Rescue	Service/Rescue Co
Vly-Atwood	62-10	????	????			Surplus/Sell
Vly-Atwood	62-11	2015	1000	2000	Engine	Tanker Taskforce
Vly-Atwood	62-15	????	????			Surplus/Sell





Additionally, it might be possible to deactivate two of the existing fire stations that have an overlapping service area. The preceding map shows the five road mile travel areas from each of the stations. The Cottekill station and the Marbletown station should both be considered for potential deactivation because of extensive overlap. There are few areas in those two districts that would be outside a five mile drive from Stone Ridge, High Falls or Lomontville. This might lead to the reduction of an additional engine.

## **Budget**

The six districts spend about \$1.2 million combined. The largest revenue comes from property tax. Stone Ridge also has recurring revenue from the lease of a cell phone tower on its property. The largest expenses are related to the firefighting equipment, insurance (worker's compensation and hazard/vehicle insurance), debt service and adding to reserves. Cottekill and High Falls both support a LOSAP program. Most of the departments have expenses related to bookkeeping, audits and legal assistance.

Several districts didn't provide enough budget detail for a line by line comparison of expense which limits the ability to forecast future expenditures. In a merged district, there are a few areas for a reduction of expenses. If the apparatus fleet is reduced, the expense of maintaining, fueling, insuring and replacing apparatus will be lowered. We estimate that there will be a reduction of about 10% in those areas of the budget. Also, if there was a consolidation into a single district, there will be a decrease in expenses related to bookkeeping and auditing.

Currently, only two districts (Cottekill and High Falls) support a LOSAP. The benefit levels are substantially different resulting in very different funding amounts. With a consolidation, the two plans would need to be terminated and the earned, vested benefits would be paid out, likely as a lump sum or in annuity. The consolidated district could consider creating a new LOSAP plan at its creation, which would require a permissive referendum, or at a later date. Because the majority of districts and firefighters are not in a LOSAP, we do not carry this expense forward in our projected budget.

Stone Ridge is the only district with substantial debt. They had about \$890,000 remaining at the end of 2019 and it will be retired in 2029 at the current rate of payment. While it is possible to isolate the debt to just the district that initially incurred it, in this case it would be logical for the entire district to share in retiring the debt as the station is the location of the company that provides the majority of the personnel to the fire service in the town. It might also be possible to retire the debt sooner with the sale of sum of the surplus equipment by a consolidated district.

As group, five fire districts report to the Comptroller (all except Marbletown which did not report) that they have fund balances of \$1.7 million at the end of 2020. Two-thirds

of the total is designated as capital or other reserves. The remaining third is unassigned. Several districts have the practice of designating a specific amount annually for reserves, while others place unexpended funds in those accounts. Those funds should be used after consolidation for the purpose they were created such as acquiring a new engine for a specific area of the community. The unassigned balance might be utilized to assist in paying one-time expenses related to the consolidation. The practice of setting aside funds each year for future capital needs should be continued by a consolidated district and is included in the projected budget.

The full budget presented below is an estimated 12% (\$126,000) reduction from the existing costs of operating the six fire districts. Much of this reduction comes from stopping the LOSAP program rather than expanding it to the full firefighting force. In the long term, it would likely be beneficial to reinstate the program. There are also likely to be other cost savings beyond the broad assumptions presented in this project.

	Current Total	Projected	Change
<b>Benefits/Workers Comp</b>	\$76,782	\$76,782	Level
<b>Retirement</b>	\$96,435	\$0	Eliminate
<b>Insurance</b>	\$66,417	\$59,775	Reduce 10 %
<b>Equipment / Apparatus</b>	\$190,491	\$171,442	Reduce 10 %
<b>Facilities</b>	\$13,400	\$12,060	Reduce 10 %
<b>Administrative</b>	\$24,472	\$22,025	Reduce 10 %
<b>FF / Fire Related</b>	\$302,769	\$302,769	Level
<b>Supplies</b>	\$7,141	\$7,141	Level
<b>Debt</b>	\$179,018	\$179,018	Level
<b>Additions to Reserves</b>	\$105,000	\$105,000	Level
<b>Total Expenses</b>	\$1,061,924	\$936,011	12 % Reduction

The table below compares the current property tax rates for the fire districts and a projected consolidated district. The cost for the median home is based on a property value of \$275,000. In a consolidated district, a median home in the majority of districts (Cotterkill, High Falls, Marbletown and Stone Ridge) would see a recurring savings of between \$125 and \$225 a year. In Vly-Atwood and Lomontville, properties would see an increase from their current taxes of \$72 and \$168 respectively.

	2021 Rate	Bill for Median Home	Change for Median Home
<b>Cotterkill Fire</b>	\$1.662	\$457	-\$186
<b>High Falls Fire</b>	\$1.440	\$396	-\$125
<b>Lomontville Fire</b>	\$0.726	\$200	\$72



	2021 Rate	Bill for Median Home	Change for Median Home
Marbletown Fire	\$1.819	\$500	-\$229
Stone Ridge Fire	\$1.568	\$431	-\$160
Vly Atwood Fire	\$0.375	\$103	\$168
Projected District	\$0.986	\$271	

## Cost Benefit Analysis

There would be cost savings on operations with a consolidated district, although the precise amount would require additional line by line analysis to identify duplication of costs and opportunities for efficiencies. In our projection, we estimate a 12% savings using very conservative savings estimates and including the cessation of the LOSAP program. Most properties would see a savings on their tax bills with a consolidation. The consolidated district would also likely lead to lower property fire insurance premiums, especially for commercial properties based on a revised ISO rating. The consolidated district would likely lead to improved services and response time with firefighters being able to respond to any station. It is also likely that some current firefighters may choose to stop volunteering for personal reasons, but leaders interviewed in the course of this project do not believe it will be many.

## Next Steps

The Commissions should consider a motion to create a committee to develop a plan to merge. The requirements for public meetings are such that it would be possible to complete a consolidation to take effect for 2023 if action begins in the fall of 2021. The committee would need to create a consolidation plan as outlined above and then hold public meetings. The committee should consider the items outlined above from General Municipal Law 17-A, operational changes for the district including training needs, chain of command, and the status of all equipment; short and long term capital needs; the future of a LOSAP; and the formation of a new commission. After public meetings, the plan could be revised before taking effect. The publication *The New N.Y. Government Reorganization and Citizen Empowerment Act: A Summary of the Process for Consolidation and Dissolution*<sup>1</sup> provides guidance for the districts and town to follow.

<sup>1</sup> The New N.Y. Government Reorganization and Citizen Empowerment Act: A Summary of the Process for Consolidation and Dissolution (<https://dos.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2019/11/consolidation-and-dissolution-procedures-summary.pdf>)



## Action 1B: Create Multiple Districts

The process for creating multiple districts is the same as for creating a single district. Because of the multiple permutations involved, it is not possible to forecast the potential costs and benefits for all of them. Having more than one district after consolidation would not bring the same benefits related to cost savings and improved efficiency. Rather than creating multiple combined districts, a preferred alternative to an overall merger would be to have all the districts interested in a consolidation to start that process of joining together and then invite any others to join once they have created the consolidated district. For example, Cottekill, Lomontville, Marbletown, Stone Ridge and Vly-Atwood could all move to form a single district. A next step toward this action would be the creation of a task force with representatives from the interested districts to explore the impacts and begin to develop a plan as outlined above.

## Action 2: Expand Sharing and Coordination

The steps for consolidation may take a long period of time to implement and the fire departments in the town can improve services in the short term with actions designed to improve efficiency. Some examples include agreeing on a standard size for supply hose, moving toward a common SCBA vendor and enabling personnel sharing, particularly for interior firefighters and those with EMS training. Additionally, establishing further automatic aid agreements for high risk events and time periods is appropriate. These actions can be taken by the several commissions using both formal inter-municipal agreements and less formal arrangements. The implementation of these suggestions should be led by a work group of representatives from each department with the authority to develop a plan to improve interoperability. While there will be short term expenses to adopt some of these changes, they should be balanced out by long term savings through better efficiency.

- The two primary supply hose diameters are 4 inch and 5 inch. High Falls and Cottekill use the smaller while Stone Ridge and Lomontville use the larger. Marbletown is alone in using 3 inch. The districts should commit to moving to a common standard of either 4 or 5 inch based on the amount and quality of existing stock, as well as that used by their frequent mutual aid partners.
- There are at least three different manufacturers of SCBA in use in the town: MSA (10 units), Scott (15 units) and Survivair (22 units). This creates a problem with interoperability as well an inefficiency related to maintenance and testing. Most of the inventory is relatively new and would bring a high value on trade in. The districts should commit to a single manufacturer and develop a plan to move all their frontline units to that device. Further, it might be possible to reduce the inventory as it seems unlikely that the town needs 47 SCBAs plus the spare tanks.

- The existing plans for automatic aid and mutual assistance have developed over decades based on a combination of factors that range from appropriate to arbitrary. The residents deserve a thorough review to ensure that a prompt, effective response of resources will arrive to all emergencies. A cooperative analysis, involving the Ulster County Fire Coordinator's Office, of automatic aid for each area of the town should be undertaken and implemented. The resulting document should consider risk profile, time of day, day of week, command structure, department capabilities and qualifications of responders.
- The districts in Marbletown should expand their interdepartmental training programs. A joint calendar with common topics would help in two primary ways. First, the burden of planning and delivering the training could be shared among the departments. Second, if the topic was offered on multiple days, then it might be more likely for a volunteer to attend. Finally, joint training leads to improved cooperation and interoperability on events.

### **Action 3: Develop Plan for Volunteer Recruitment and Retention**

All of the departments in Marbletown indicate that they are concerned about the long term viability of volunteers. The departments, Town, and local employers should develop a task force to identify likely sources of volunteers.

There has been some recent success at recruiting new volunteers through high school sports. It should be investigated if a formal relationship with the Rondout Valley School District and fire districts in Marbletown (and neighboring towns) could build on the success to develop a pipeline for volunteers. This would include a central contact for information, a peer support group, junior membership categories, a training regimen and integration into the departments. It appears that the recent influx of young volunteers choose to volunteer with each other regardless of where they live for the social interactions.

Length of Service Awards Programs are effectively pensions paid to volunteers in recognition of their years of service. Plans are set up individually by districts or municipalities to encourage volunteer activity. These plans are subject to a permissive referendum by the voters in a district. Both Cottekill and High Falls have existing plans that have in place for more than a decade. The two districts feel that they have helped drive volunteerism for the district. In a consolidated district, there should be a strong consideration for creating a LOSAP. The costs of the plan will depend on the level of benefit. There is some evidence that this type of program does help retain existing volunteers, but the evidence on this as an incentive for recruitment is weak.

The Town and districts should work with the local chamber of commerce to encourage employers to support volunteerism. The alternative, which may come to pass regardless, is a paid fire department with higher property taxes. Businesses can be

encouraged to allow certain employees to respond to high priority calls during work hours and be flexible with work reporting requirements to allow for emergency response. The Town and districts can create and maintain an “honor roll” of businesses that are supportive of the volunteer service. Additionally, businesses can be encouraged to offer benefits to active volunteers such as discounts on services.

One of the challenges identified during the study is limited housing options for young people. Some districts in New York have had success owning apartments to rent to volunteers at a discounted rate in return for continued service. Other departments have specific programs that provides housing and scholarships to enrolled college students in return for their active volunteering. Both of these programs could be started by any of the districts, although they would likely have more traction if done as a unified district.

#### Action 4: Consider trigger for hiring paid staff

The general consensus is that the volunteer workforce is able to provide an adequate response to most emergencies, particularly through the use of mutual aid. However, there is also a concern that there might be the need to add a paid staff to supplement the volunteers in the near future. The fire districts and Town should establish objective measures that would prompt the hiring of career staff, preferably by a consolidated district.

The National Fire Protection Association Standard 1720 suggests that the fire service in Marbletown should have a response of 10 trained staff on scene in 10 minutes in the densely populated portions of the town and 6 trained staff on scene in 14 minutes in the more rural portions of the town. Based on available data, the fire departments are currently able to meet those goals overall. However, there is concern that they might not be met on all events or times of day.

The prompt for needing to add career staff will be when the performance of the existing exclusively volunteer workforce doesn’t meet the community and fire service expectations. The departments already track the necessary data through the NFIRS reports. Consideration regarding performance should be given to the response time (from time of alarm to on scene), the number of personnel responding, the utilization of automatic and mutual aid, and the variation by time of day and day of week. A potential goal would be to have a response of 10 firefighters (8 interior) on scene in 14 minutes on 80% of reports of structure fires. Another goal would be to have an EMS trained firefighter on the scene of medical emergencies in 8 minutes or less 80% of the time. This should be evaluated by each department on a quarterly basis. Additionally, the lead department should conduct an after action review on significant events to ensure that an effective response and mitigation was performed.

## Next Steps

The potential actions presented in this report are provided to the ambulance, fire districts and Town in an effort to enable changes to improve the EMS and fire service in the community. Where possible, costs and benefits are identified to help identify a course of action. In every situation, there are intangible factors such as traditions and personal relationships that can serve to either facilitate or hinder changes. Clear communication, establishing common ground and using outside facilitators have all been shown to aid in bringing about change.

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## Section IV: Supporting Information

### Emergency Medical Services Overview

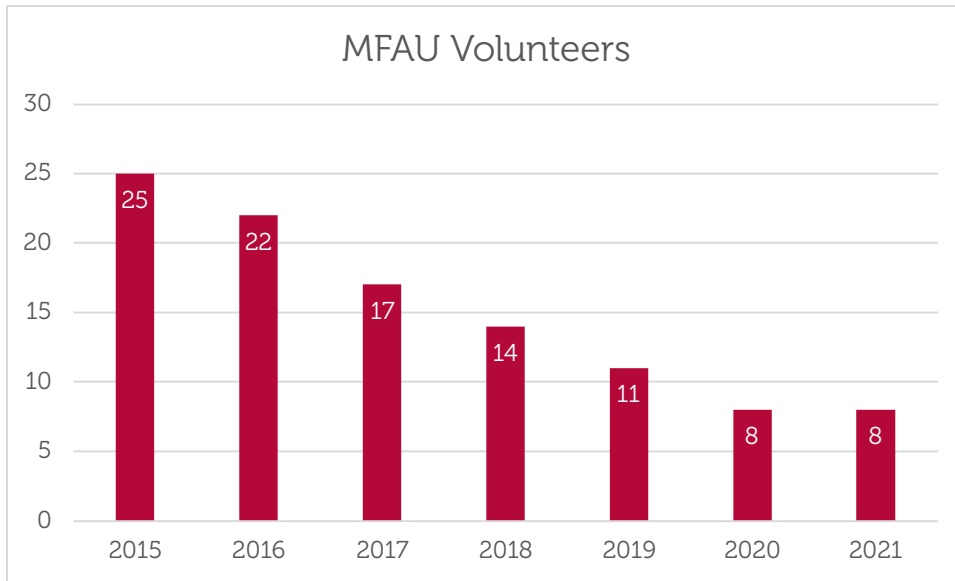
There is only one ambulance service that responds to calls in the Town of Marbletown on a primary basis. The non-profit Marbletown Ambulance and First Aid Unit (MFAU) hold an ambulance operating certificate from the New York State Department of Health (NYS DOH) to provide Basic Life Support Ambulance (BLS) Service to the entire Town of Marbletown. They also provide service to some neighboring areas. The commercial ambulance service, Mobile Life Support, also has an operating certificate for the Town and the rest of Ulster County. They provide advanced life support (ALS) when requested to assist MFAU in the care and treatment of their patients. There are also neighboring ambulance agencies that will provide support as needed on a mutual aid basis.

#### Marbletown First Aid Unit

MFAU was established in 1961 as the Rondout Valley Rescue Squad and has been in continuous operation since then. MFAU is certified by the state to provide basic life support emergency ambulance service. In addition to the entire Town of Marbletown, they also respond to about 400 houses in Rosendale and 100 houses in Rochester as a primary response area.

For much of its history, it survived with volunteer staffing and charitable donations. However, beginning in 2016, MFAU began to charge patients for transport to the hospital. This improved the financial picture as noted below. Until 2019, it was a fully volunteer operation. However, the organization noted that it was unable to consistently meet the needs of the community with exclusive volunteer staffing and it began to pay for EMTs. Beginning in September of 2019, MFAU hired staff for the ambulance to ensure that one ambulance is available at all times.

MFAU made the paid staffing decision due to a decline in its volunteers from 25 in 2015 to 11 in 2019. The number of volunteers stands at 8 in 2021.



The model of paying staff has dramatically improved the call coverage from the low to mid-60s to more than 95% of calls. However, because of the cost of this model and the mediocre reimbursement revenue, MFAU operated at a loss in 2020 and will likely do so again in 2021. There is a fund balance to support operations, but this is not a sustainable practice. MFAU has been lobbying the Town for the creation of an ambulance district to help pay for the difference between its revenue and costs.

MFAU reports that it has had strong retention among both volunteers and the career staff during the time it has been operating with a combined staffing model. It is difficult to recruit volunteers to fill the role of EMT because of the responsibilities and the fact that each call takes 2 to 3 hours from initial responses to returning to the station.

MFAU does charge for transports, but the revenue from transports is only sufficient to cover about 70% of operating expenses. It has been able to sustain the operation for the last 18 months with some financial support from the towns it serves and by using funds that had initially been set aside for future capital purchases.

MFAU will not be able to sustain the current operating model beyond the middle of 2022 without significant subsidies from Marbletown, Rochester and Rosendale. If MFAU ceases operation, the Town would need to develop an alternative model such as a commercial provider or a contract with an ambulance from a neighboring community.

## Personnel

MFAU uses a mix of paid staff and volunteers to ensure that one ambulance is always staffed. The goal, and basis for the budget, is for 75% of shift hours to be covered by paid staff and 25% to be covered by volunteers. For this model to work, volunteers

combine to spend 84 hours on shift and the career staff 252 hours. In recent months, the paid staff have been needed for close to 280 hours a week. MFAU reports that in the first quarter of 2021, it has needed to use paid staff for about 85% of its hours.

MFAU has a paid staff of 11 EMTs and 6 paid drivers. The paid EMTs are all authorized to drive the vehicles as well. The drivers have CPR and First Aid training. There are 8 active volunteers with the agency. Four of the volunteers are EMTs. Five people are both paid and volunteer. When they volunteer, they only fill the role of driver, and when they are paid, they only serve as the EMT (crew chief) in a good faith effort to comply with labor law. EMTs are paid \$16 an hour and drivers \$14. They are both capped at 36 hours per week on the schedule. They receive no benefits such as paid time off, healthcare or retirement.

In addition to the road personnel, there are four volunteers and three community members that serve on the board of directors. The leadership roles in the organization are the Chairman of the Board, Vice Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. The line operations officers are: Chief, First Lieutenant and Second Lieutenant.

## Training

MFAU personnel, like EMS professionals everywhere in New York, are mandated to undertake regular training. All personnel maintain CPR (including AED) training at least every two years. There are annual trainings related to safety, HIPAA, and the workplace. Certified EMS providers must maintain their credential by recertifying every three years. This process is usually done through a series of continuing education offerings that cover core material as well as relevant new items.

MFAU was the training location utilized by the Ulster County Ambulance Association for providing certified first responder and emergency medical technician. This training is currently on pause during COVID and with an absence of a qualified instructor. Members of MFAU do undertake training for the local fire departments for First Aid and CPR.

## Ambulances

MFAU owns and operates two Type 3 modular ambulances. The ambulance 611 is a 2014 on Chevy chassis with the transport module made by Osage. It has 43,935 miles on it and travels about 5,200 miles per year. The ambulance 612 is a 2015 on a Chevy chassis with the transport module made by Medix. It has 33,720 miles on it and travels about 5,200 miles per year. The vehicles are rotated from prime duty to back-up every month.

These ambulances have are equipped based on NYS DOH Part 800 standards for medical equipment. Under these regulations the ambulances carry standard equipment such as defibrillators, oxygen, bandaging supplies, splints, patient carrying



devices, and suction units. In addition to standard equipment, they each have Stryker automatic lifting gurneys, epinephrine for allergic reactions, continuous positive airway pressure devices (CPAP), and nebulizers for asthma attacks.

## Station

The ambulance station is located at 30 School Hill Road. The building is owned by the High Falls Fire District but leased in perpetuity to MFAU for operation as an ambulance station. The building is about 4,000 square feet. The station was an old school house that has had an addition added to it to park the ambulances and for some offices. The vehicles are housed in two back-in bays that are appropriately sized for the type of vehicle. But the garage does not have an exhaust capture system.

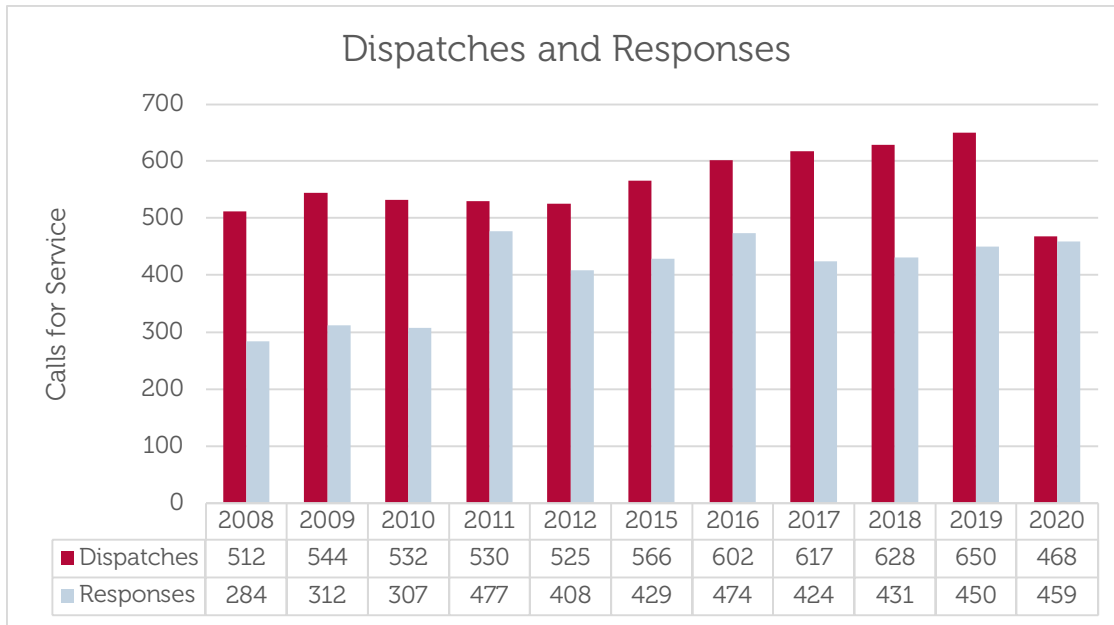
The building has had close \$300,000 in renovations in the last 4 years to improve its operating space, add sleeping quarters, create a modern space for training, provide a space for crews to complete their paperwork off duty and to have a space to cook and eat meals. The renovations are not yet completed but are anticipated to be finished in 2021.

## Calls for Service

Over the last decade, the call volume for MFAU has increased steadily, except in 2020, when there was a drop that most EMS agencies saw related to COVID. When MFAU was staffed fully by volunteers, the share of calls covered fluctuated between 55% and 90% with an average of 72%. MFAU had a substantial improvement in the percentage of calls covered to 98% of first calls in the district in 2020 and over 90% of all calls in the district.

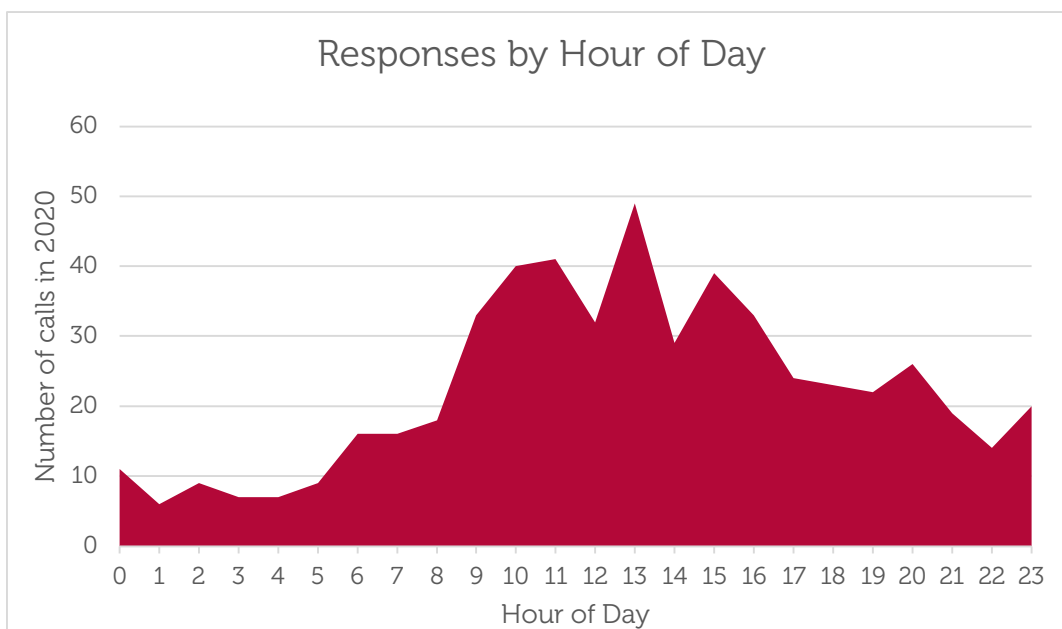
During the last decade, the call volume has averaged about 1.5 calls per day. The table below indicates the dispatches and responses for MFAU in its own service area. In addition, MFAU responded to calls on a mutual aid basis for its neighbors. In 2020, there were 68 calls in neighboring communities. During the first four months of 2021, the call volume has remained consistent with about 200 calls in the first 120 days, for a call volume of 1.67 calls per day. Many EMS agencies in the country saw a drop in call volume during 2020 as people chose to avoid the hospitals.



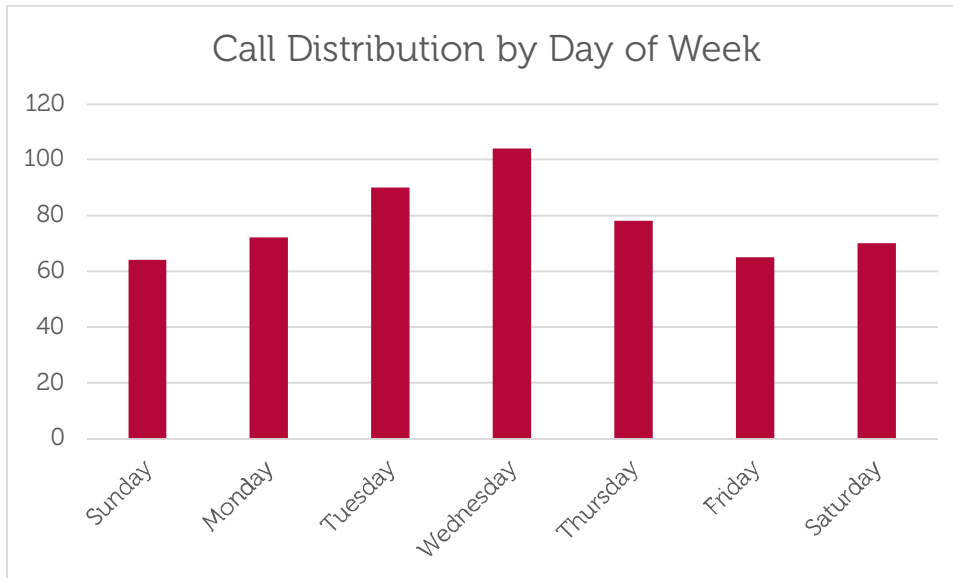


The following graphs are based on the 543 total responses and/or patient contracts made by MFAU during 2020. These include the 459 responses in their primary service area and 68 in neighboring communities. There were also about 20 times when more than one patient was transported.

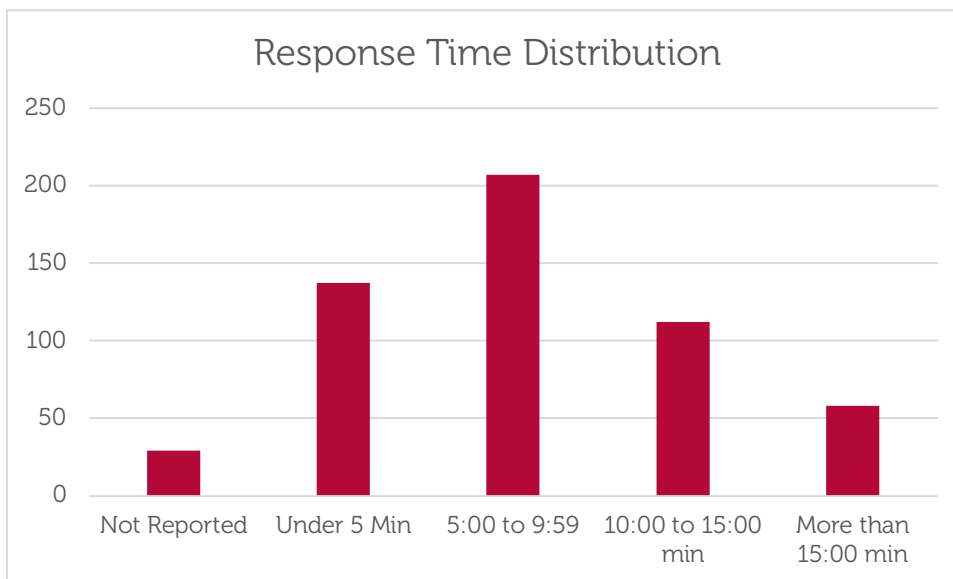
Requests for service vary both by time of day and day of week. The busiest times are from 9 am to 5 pm and the slowest times are between midnight and 5 am.



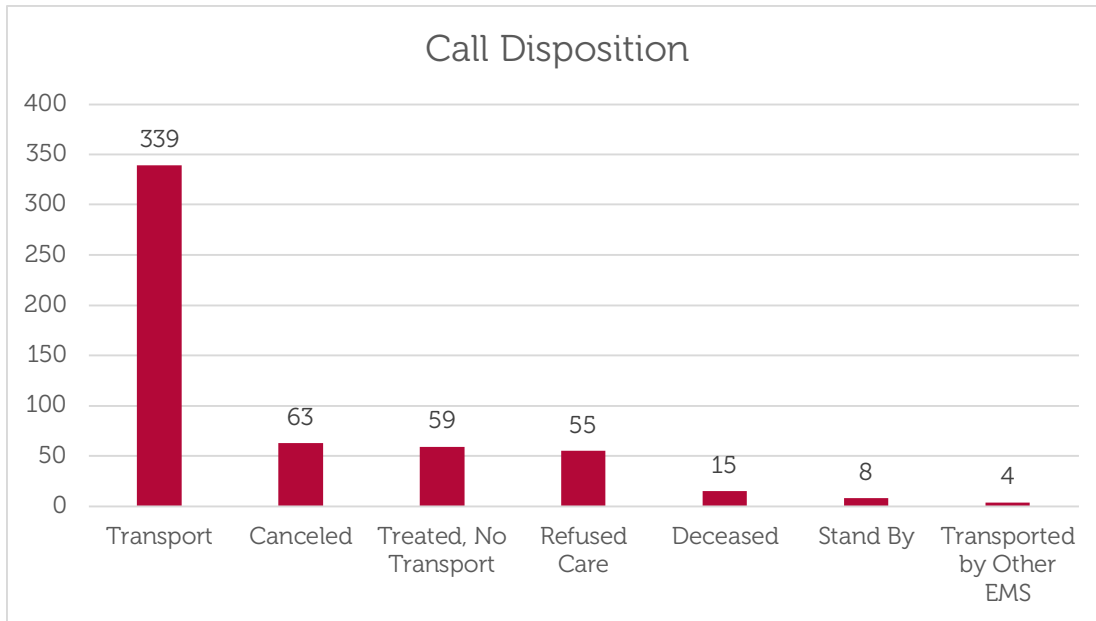
Wednesday is the busiest day of the week with 19% of the calls. Friday and Sunday are the slowest with 12%. An even distribution would put each day at 14%.



Response time is a common measurement of EMS performance. By their nature, it is difficult to respond quickly in rural areas. MFAU did respond to more than 90% of their calls in less than 15 minutes from when they went en route and to more than half their calls in less than 10 minutes.



Of the 543 responses, MFAU transported 339, or 63% of calls. This ratio of transports to responses is comparable to other rural communities. Of the 339 transports, about 20% had advanced life support, usually from Mobile Life Support.



The most common transport destination was the Health Alliance Hospital on Broadway in Kingston with about 75% of the transports.

Hospital	Transports	Percent
HealthAlliance - Broadway	253	74.9%
HealthAlliance - Mary's Ave	1	0.3%
Ellenville Regional	19	5.6%
Mid-Hudson Valley	8	2.4%
Northern Dutchess	33	9.8%
Vassar Brothers	21	6.2%
Westchester Medical Center	1	0.3%
Other Location (Home, Nursing Home)	3	0.9%

The calls for service are not evenly distributed across the age groups in the Town. Using just Marbletown's population for the service area, the rate of EMS utilization is about 9.9 calls per 100 residents every year. However, certain age groups use EMS at a higher rate. For example, all those over 70 use EMS at a rate double the average while under 50 typically use it at half the average. The 20 to 29 group is anomalous in using EMS at the average rate, but this is likely driven by the presence of the community

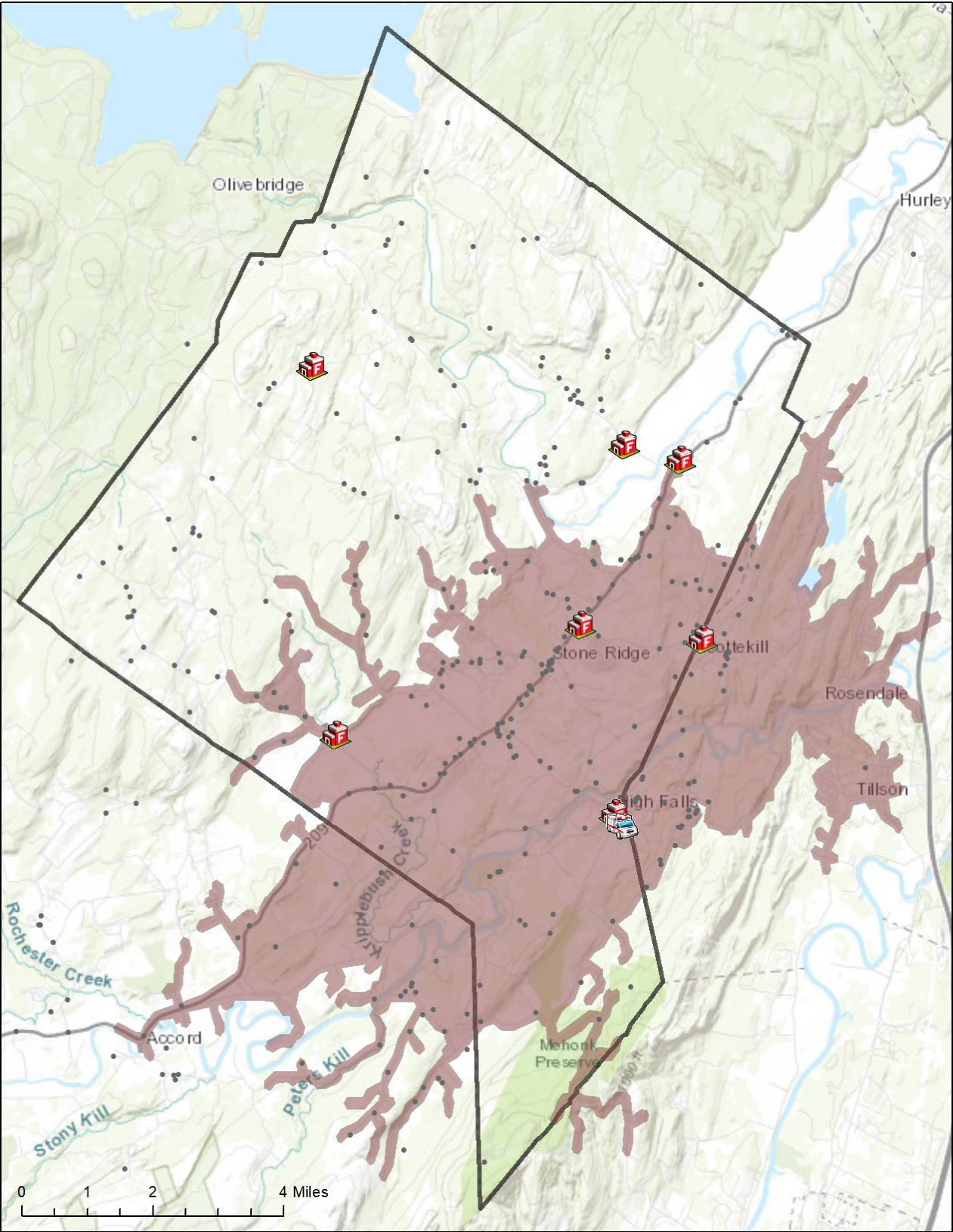
college, which increases the presence of people in that age group, but not the recorded population of that age group.

Patient Age	Call in age group	Call per 100 Residents	Estimated Residents (2015-19 ACS)
<1	2	4.0	50
1 to 9	8	1.7	466
10 to 19	25	4.3	579
20 to 29	36	10.9	331
30 to 39	29	4.9	594
40 to 49	42	5.0	836
50 to 59	67	7.3	914
60 to 69	78	9.4	833
70 to 79	99	19.6	504
80 and up	88	22.6	390
<b>Total</b>	<b>543</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>5,497</b>

## Call Locations

MFAU's base is located in the southeastern corner of the Town of Marbletown. The location was picked when the agency also served the entire Town of Rosendale. It now only serves a portion of Rosendale covered by the High Falls and Cottekill Fire Districts. The table below indicates the location of the calls based on mailing address, which does not correlate fully with the municipal boundaries.

Location	No. of calls	% of calls in 2020
Stone Ridge	152	28%
High Falls	92	17%
Accord	65	12%
Cottekill	57	10%
Kripplebush	41	8%
Kingston	38	7%
Lomontville	30	6%
Kerhonkson	20	4%
Other Locations	18	3%
The Vly	17	3%
Rosendale	8	1%
Atwood	5	1%



The map (above) shows the locations of calls based on the street address and associated latitude and longitude. The icons indicate the various EMS and fire stations in the Town. The brown shading indicates the estimated 10-minute driving area from the MFAU station.

## Finances

MFAU is an independent, nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation. It is governed by a board of directors. Historically, the organization's revenue was primarily from fund drives, grants, and minimal support from the towns. The expenses were related to operating the ambulance station, purchasing and maintaining ambulances, training and medical supplies. The costs of providing EMS had increased even before the institution of a career staff. MFAU began to bill for transports in 2018. The revenue helped fund the operations of the organization and establish a stream to allow for the hiring of paid staff in 2019. 2020 was the first full year under the new operating model. The agency received \$194,344 in billing revenue. This is equal to about \$575 in revenue per transport. MFAU uses an outside firm to handle its billing; the firm charges a fixed amount per call billed.

The table below has unaudited reported figures for 2019 and 2020 that have been summarized for analysis. In 2019, the agency had a small net income of nearly \$11,000. In 2020, the first full year with the career staff, the agency ran a deficit of \$55,500 or about 15% of its budget. It was able to cover those costs through the use of reserve funds that had been accumulated for the future purchase of an ambulance.

We also present the estimated costs for operating in 2021 for a full-time career staff and a career staff that covers about 75% of the hours. In both cases, the deficits are substantially higher than in 2020. MFAU has no reasonable method to increase its income through operations. The billing income is equal to about 310 transports in a year. This is a slightly conservative estimate, but within reason. A more optimistic estimate of 350 transports would put the income at about \$200,000, but still with a substantial deficit of nearly a third of the operating budget.

	2019	2020	2021 Full Paid Projection	2021 75/25 Projection
<b>Income</b>				
3rd Party Billing Income	\$ 159,654	\$ 194,344	\$ 180,000	\$ 180,000
Township Contributions	\$ 22,500	\$ 22,500	\$ 22,500	\$ 22,500
Misc. Revenue	\$ 5,484	\$ 10,683	\$ 47,500	\$ 47,500
Rental, Education & Other Income	\$ 1,750	\$ 998	\$ -	\$ -
Fund Drive & Donations	\$ 36,177	\$ 84,745	\$ 30,000	\$ 30,000
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 225,565</b>	<b>\$ 313,270</b>	<b>\$ 280,000</b>	<b>\$ 280,000</b>
<b>Expense</b>				
Payroll	\$ 20,889	\$ 160,223	\$ 289,474	\$ 250,910



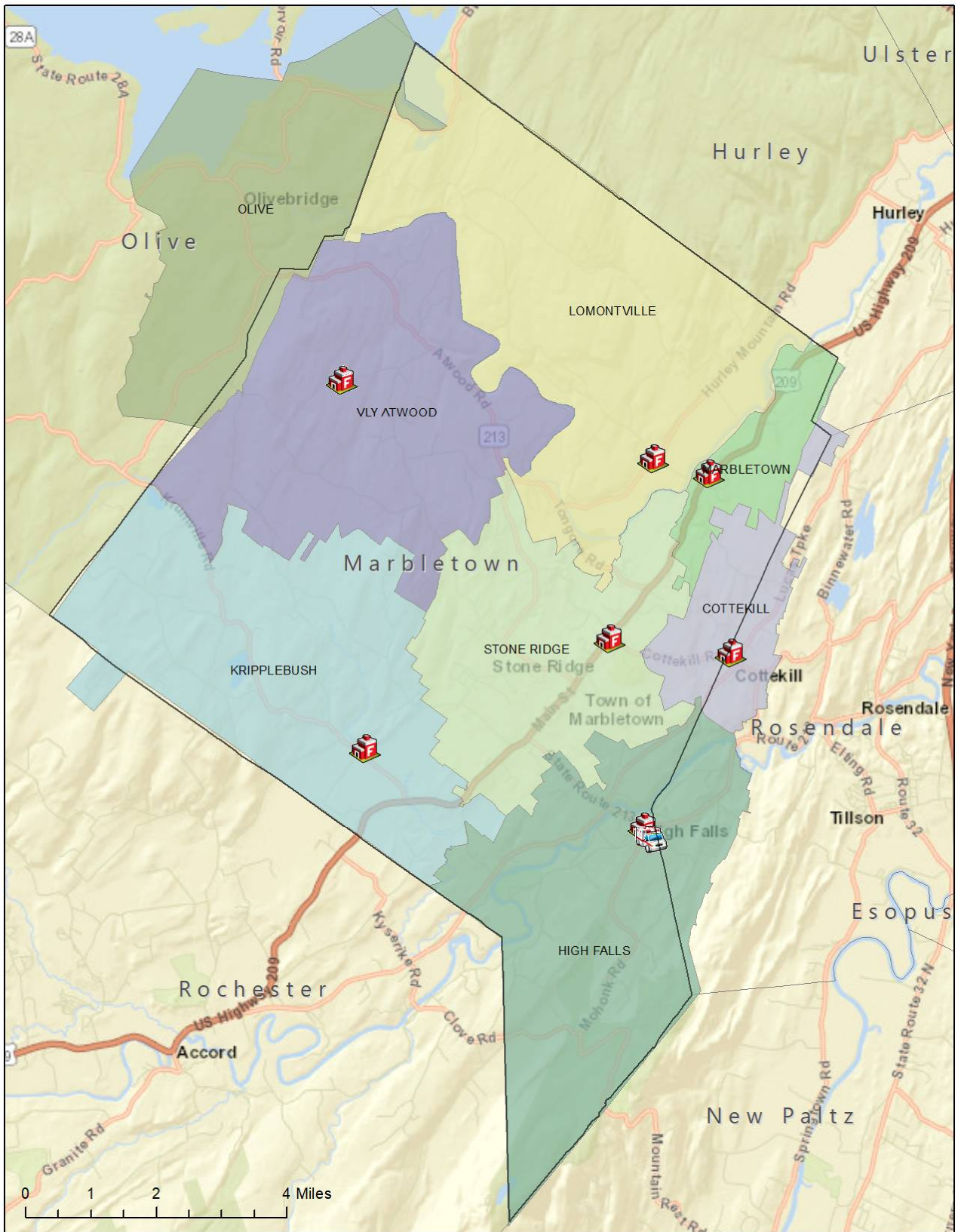
	2019	2020	2021 Full Paid Projection	2021 75/25 Projection
Ambulance & ALS Expense	\$ 34,746	\$ 43,286	\$ 46,500	\$ 46,500
Building Maintenance	\$ 14,597	\$ 10,400	\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000
Equipment & Kitchen	\$ 15,380	\$ 23,848	\$ 22,500	\$ 22,500
Insurance	\$ 19,013	\$ 29,064	\$ 36,882	\$ 33,132
Professional Fees	\$ 18,333	\$ 22,797	\$ 23,600	\$ 23,600
Utilities	\$ 13,016	\$ 12,519	\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000
3rd Party Billing Expenses	\$ 3,324	\$ 13,874	\$ 12,600	\$ 12,600
Misc. Expenses	\$ 22,883	\$ 32,481	\$ 24,375	\$ 24,375
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 162,181</b>	<b>\$ 348,492</b>	<b>\$ 479,931</b>	<b>\$ 437,617</b>
<b>Net Other Income</b>	<b>\$ (52,485)</b>	<b>\$ (20,252)</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>\$ 10,899</b>	<b>\$ -55,474</b>	<b>\$ -199,931</b>	<b>\$ -157,617</b>

## Fire Service Overview

There are seven fire districts that primarily serve the Town of Marbletown. The districts were all created in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century to serve the multiple population centers that existed in the town. The districts all have dependent fire departments that serve to organize the volunteer firefighters to provide fire protection in that district. Some of the departments are more robust than others with volunteer firefighter personnel numbers ranging from the single digits to more than 40. Over the course of the study, one of the departments, Vly-Atwood, ceased operations due to a lack of trained volunteers. There are varying levels of cooperation between departments. Some work with all their neighbors, others choose only to respond with one and Kripplebush chose not to participate in the study at all.

When taken as a whole, the town has an adequate inventory of up-to-date firefighting apparatus. However, there are several pieces that are approaching or past the point of functional obsolescence. Additionally, there is no standard among the departments for key firefighting equipment such as diameter of water supply hose or manufacturer of self-contained breathing apparatus. The districts are all dispatched by the Ulster County Division of Emergency Communications and they operate on a common radio frequency. Only portion of the town has fire hydrants, although there is a plan to add more. There is a consensus among fire leaders in the town that the existing system of numerous small districts should change to better serve the town in the future, but there is some disagreement as to the next best steps.

## Maps of Fire Districts





## Summary Table

The table below shows a high level summary of each of the districts and departments.

	Cottekill	High Falls	Kripplebush*	Lomontville	Marbletown	Stone Ridge	Vly-Atwood **	Total	Average
Total Active Volunteer Personnel	12	17	unknown	9	5	41	NA	84	14
Engines	1	2	2	2	1	2	1	11	2
Tankers	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	6	1
Annual Calls For Service	91	96	122	51	26	246	81	713	102
ISO Rating	8B	04/4y	unknown	8B	9	8B	NA		
Budget (1,000s)	\$135	\$337	\$154	\$130	\$78	\$373	\$59	\$1,266	\$181
Parcels Served	390	890	802	610	176	861	598	4,327	618
Tax Rate (per \$1,000)	1.66	1.44	0.74	0.73	1.82	1.57	0.37	N/A	1.19
Estimated Population	400***	1,350***	1,100	1,100	220	1,000	975	5,500	
* Kripplebush chose not to participate. All data is from public sources. ** Vly-Atwood stopped operations on June 30, 2021. *** Estimated population for Cottekill and High Falls includes Rosendale. Total in table is for Marbletown. An estimated additional 825 residents live in Rosendale.									

## Cottekill Volunteer Fire Company and Fire District

The Cottekill Volunteer Fire Company's small, but committed group of volunteers is seen as a strength. The Fire District's financial position is relatively strong – it has no debt and typically makes equipment purchases out of a reserve fund. The firehouse is aging, but is generally seen as sufficient to meet the company's basic needs for the immediate future. The fire company has limited specialized equipment, but its gear and tools are well-maintained and replaced regularly. Interviewees noted the district recently purchased a new pumper tanker and a number of air packs.

Members of the company and district also described strong relationships with the High Falls and Stone Ridge districts. Cottekill has mutual aid agreements with both districts and regularly trains with them. Interviewees describe the relationship with High Falls as particularly strong.

Like many other districts, Cottekill's major challenges and concerns include recruiting and retaining volunteers, burnout among the handful of volunteers who most regularly respond to calls, and responding to calls on weekdays during regular work hours. Rising costs and mandates, coupled with the constraints of New York State's tax cap, have made the district's finances tighter in recent years. There are some concerns about the fire company's low-band radios, as transmission can be spotty in hilly terrain. The floor in the firehouse's meeting room likely needs to be replaced or repaired, and there is discussion about whether to purchase a specialized washing machine, as Cottekill currently relies on another district to wash its gear.

There is some willingness to explore a merger, depending on whether it improves response times, manpower, or distribution of apparatus, or otherwise enhances service to the public. No particular configuration is favored, but Cottekill's strong relationship with High Falls may be an opportunity to build on. That said, there may be some resistance among Cottekill volunteers to be seen as "High Falls Station #2" under a merger. Short of consolidation, interviewees in Cottekill were interested in opportunities for shared purchasing and developing a set of common standards for apparatus and equipment, along with regular cross-training, to allow districts to more easily share and operate each other's tools and technology. There also was some interest in developing town-wide mutual aid standards.

## Personnel

Cottekill Volunteer Fire Company reports that 12 volunteer firefighters are active in the department. Seven are interior-qualified. Roughly the same number (8) are qualified to drive the large apparatus. One staff member is certified as an EMT. There is one volunteer lieutenant, two volunteer captains, one assistant chief and a volunteer chief.

Staff	Number
Total Volunteer Personnel	12
Interior Qualified Firefighters	7
NYS Certified First Responders	0
NYS Certified EMTs (or higher)	1
Apparatus Drivers (Engine and/or Ladder/Quint)	8
Lieutenants	1
Captains	2
Battalion/Deputy/Assistant Chiefs	1
Chief	1

Of the 14 active volunteers at the time, 11 were recorded as responding to calls in 2020. The level of activity ranged from responding to 83% of calls to only 5% of calls. On average, members responded to 25% of the calls in the district. It is not unusual to only have 2 or 3 members respond to some calls.

## Training

Physical exams and fitness tests are required annually for all personnel.

Volunteer interior firefighters are required to have New York State Firefighter 1 (Basic Exterior Firefighting Operations/Interior Firefighting Operations) training, annual Job Performance Requirement (JPR) reviews, annual mayday and bailout training and quarterly SCBA training.

Lieutenants are required to have BEFO/IFO training, 2 years interior experience, meet all junior officer JPR requirements and be a certified driver of all apparatus.

Captains must have 2 year of lieutenant experience, meet all junior officer knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) and JPR requirements, and have completed NYS Fire Office 1 or possess equivalent experience.

Assistant Chiefs must have 2 years of captain experience, meet all chief officer knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) and JPR requirements, and have completed NYS Fire Office 1 or equivalent experience, plus IS-200 Basic Incident Command.

Chief must have 2 years of assistant chief experience, meet all chief officer knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) and JPR requirements, and have completed NYS Fire Office 1 or equivalent experience, plus IS-200 Basic Incident Command.

Apparatus operators must have pump operator training and Emergency Vehicle Operator Course (EVOC) training.

The company does three drills an month, and firefighters are exposed to live fire – both structural and vehicle – in training at least annually.

## Apparatus

Type	Designation	Year	Mfr.	Features
Engine/Tanker	2311	2007	E-One	1250 GPM pump, 1250 gal tank, 400 ft & 1000 ft. 3" & 4", 500 ft. 1 3/4" & 2", 2 CO detectors, 10', 14' & 24' ladders, AED, 2 SCBAs, 2 spare air tanks, deck gun, strainers, generator
Engine	2312	2020	Rosenbauer	1500 GPM pump, 1000 gal tank, 400 ft & 1000 ft. 3" & 4"; 200', 700', 100', 600', 400' - 1", 1.5", 1.75", 2", 2.5"; 7.5 gal. Class A & B foam, thermal imaging, multi-gas and 2

				CO meters, multiple ladders, 4 SCBAs, 4 air tanks, deck gun, vent saw, brush fire tools, generator, smoke ejector
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## Other Equipment

Most firefighters are issued two sets of turnout gear. 21% of the first set and 100% of the second set is greater than 10 years old. The department utilizes Lion-brand turnout gear and Cairns helmets and MSA-brand SCBAs.

## Equipment testing

The pump in apparatus 2312 was tested in May 2020. Hoses and aerial/ground ladders are tested annually in October. SCBA equipment is subject to weekly and monthly checks and annual service/inspection.

## Station

The Cottekill Fire District Station is located at 240 Cottekill Road. It was built in 1932 and has about 2,700 square feet. The station has an apparatus bay large enough for its two apparatus to park, but very limited space around them for truck checks or cleaning. There is limited overhead clearance as well. The station has a small office and conference room, a bathroom and storage for extra supplies. It has a 14Kw propane generator. A second block addition in the 1950's, created a double deep engine bay and furnace room. Renovations in the mid 1990's converted the double deep bay into the conference room and office. Renovations in the early 2000's reduced the kitchen size and provided more room behind the trucks for gear racks and spare equipment.

## Insurance Services Organization Report

The Cottekill Fire District was given a rating of 8B in its most recent ISO report. This poor rating likely results from limited staff in the department and no fire hydrants. The district does have adequate apparatus, equipment and communication which led to an improved score from a 9.

## Calls for Service

In 2020, Unit 2311 responded to 36 calls and Unit 2312 responded to 25 calls. The remainder of the calls were managed by personal vehicles. A more complete analysis of calls for service follows in the report. Another department, typically High Falls, is jointly dispatched to all of Cottekill's calls and they also frequently respond jointly to High Falls.

Calls by Type	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Avg
Fire	9	10	3	4	3	3	6	6	6
Overpressure Rupture, Explosion, Overheat	NA	NA	1	1	1	NA	NA	NA	1
Rescue & Emergency Medical Service Incident	32	26	30	31	55	54	49	38	39
Hazardous Condition	3	3	1	5	10	15	10	6	7
Service Call	14	21	33	31	26	19	20	20	23
Good Intent Call	6	3	8	6	6	3	11	19	8
False Alarm & False Call	3	7	6	7	16	9	5	2	7
Severe Weather & Natural Disaster	NA	NA	NA	1	NA	1	NA	NA	1
Unknown	1	3	6	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>91</b>

## Finances

### Revenues & Expenditures

Cottekill's revenues decreased 18% from 2016 to 2020. This is principally due to a \$42,000 refund received in 2016 that increased that year. Otherwise, from 2017 to 2020, revenues increased by 6%. The tax levy funds most fire company operations.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Revenue</b>					
Grants	-	1,500	-	1,500	-
Misc. Income	42,000	822	-	3,845	750
Interest Income	204	235	286	4,445	2,386
Sale of Assets	-	-	-	-	-
Tax Levy	123,940	125,238	127,079	129,859	132,517
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>166,144</b>	<b>127,795</b>	<b>127,365</b>	<b>139,649</b>	<b>135,653</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>					
Payroll Expenses	-	-	-	-	-
Worker's Comp	6,757	7,082	6,058	6,601	6,452
Retirement/LOSAP	16,500	16,500	16,500	16,500	17,568
Insurance	-	-	-	-	-
Equip & Capital Outlay	9,227	12,726	9,430	12,898	365,712
Contractual Expend	24,084	31,740	41,881	37,134	38,019
Personal Services	2,650	3,200	2,610	3,255	3,605

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Debt	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	59,218	71,248	76,479	76,388	431,356
<b>Additions to Reserves</b>	106,926	56,547	50,886	63,261	(295,703)

The large increased expenditure in 2020, for Engine 2312, has been covered by reserve funds set aside during previous years.

## Debt

Cottekill has not reported any debt to OpenBookNY for the past three years.

## Length of Service Awards Program

The Cottekill Fire District has a Length of Service Awards Program (LOSAP) that was instituted in 2005 to award active members of the department for their service. The plan was authorized by a referendum of the voters in the district.

For each year of active service, members will receive \$20 per month upon the entitlement age of 62. The maximum monthly benefit is \$400. An active year requires that members accumulate points for activities including responding to calls, completing training, participating in drills, participating on standby duty, serving in leadership positions and responding to at least 10% of the emergency calls. In 2019, eight members were deemed active for the year. Two were receiving benefits and three others were vested and not earning points. The LOSAP program was deemed to be 93% funded based on actuarial accrued liability compared to the actuarial value of assets. The actual plan assets were \$217,341.98 on February 28, 2021. The program is administered by the Volunteer Fire Insurance Service (VFIS).

## Tax Rate

The 2021 tax rate for those in the Cottekill Fire District is \$1.66 per thousand dollars of assessed value. A more detailed analysis of property taxes is made later in the report. This rate has been level in recent years.

## High Falls Volunteer Fire Company and Fire District

While the overall number of volunteers is a concern for the High Falls Volunteer Fire Company, the company has had a handful of younger recruits in recent years – a positive development. High Falls is one of few districts in the area with a longstanding LOSAP intended to help retain volunteers over time. The district also pays for training,



and maintains a rigorous training schedule. Cooperation within the district and with other districts in the area also are seen as strengths. The district works most closely with Cottekill and Stone Ridge, and has mutual aid agreements with both districts. Pre-planning the department's responses to various types of calls also is a focus area.

The district's finances were described as a strength, and firefighters are well-equipped. High Falls has 5- to 20-year plans to upgrade or replace most vehicles and equipment, and is committed to regular maintenance and equipment checks.

As in the other districts, manpower during the work day is a concern. While the district is proud of adding a handful of new recruits, it is rare to find new volunteers. A handful of members work locally, however, and are sometimes available to respond during the weekday. Spotty radio reception is a concern in High Falls as well; the district has been setting aside funds to purchase new radios in anticipation that Ulster County will upgrade the entire radio system to high-band radios.

Interviewees see some form of fire district merger in Marbletown as inevitable, but most view High Falls as a relatively healthy district, and some believe it should remain intact in a merger scenario. Some stakeholders also question if substantial savings are feasible from merging. The district protects a major asset that several interviewees see as an important reason to retain a firehouse in High Falls: the Mohonk Mountain House, a multi-story resort hotel with upward of 250 rooms. Unlike other districts in the town, High Falls adjoins the Rondout Creek, where the occasional water rescue is needed, one interviewee noted.

Stakeholders also were concerned about losing volunteers under a merger and want to learn how best to reconcile leadership positions and competing personalities among the districts. Some saw potential benefits to some consolidation, such as more efficient distribution of apparatus and manpower across the community. Short of a merger or mergers, interviewees also suggested revising pre-plans in coordination with other districts and coordination on purchasing (e.g., air packs) to ensure firefighters are certified to use other districts' equipment if needed.

## Personnel

High Falls Volunteer Fire Company reports that 17 volunteer firefighters are active in the department, along with two fire police. Nine are interior-qualified. Fourteen are qualified to drive the large apparatus. One is certified as an EMT. There are four lieutenants, one captain two assistant chiefs and a volunteer chief.

Staff	Number
Total Volunteer Personnel	17
Interior Qualified Firefighters	9
BLS- AED / O2 / First Aid	13
NYS Certified EMTs (or higher)	1

Apparatus Drivers (Engine and/or Ladder/Quint)	14
Lieutenants	4
Captains	1
Battalion/Deputy/Assistant Chiefs	2
Chief	1

## Training

Physical exams and fitness tests are required annually for all personnel.

Annual in-service annual Job Performance Requirement (JPR) and knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) training is based on NFPA 1001.

Volunteer interior firefighters are required to have Firefighter 1 or legacy equivalent. Officers are required to have Fire Office 1 or legacy equivalent and encouraged to have Instructor 1 and Officer 2.

Apparatus operators are given in-house training based on NFPA 1002 JPRs and Emergency Vehicle Operator Course (EVOC) training.

The company averages 900 hours of training across all department members, annually and firefighters are exposed to two-to-three live fire training events per year, with the exception of 2020, due to COVID.

## Apparatus

Type	Designation	Year	Mfr.	Features
Engine/Rescue	30-10	2019	Rosenbauer	1250 GPM pump, 500 gal tank, 500 ft. 4" supply hose, 400 ft. 1 3/4" suppression hose, 300 ft. 2 1/2" suppression hose, 400 ft. 1" suppression hose, 10 gal foam capacity, hydraulic extrication tools, gas meter, 1 24' ladder, 1 14' ladder, 1 10' ladder, 1 AED, 2 SCBAs, 3 spare tanks, other tools and equip
Engine	30-11	2011	KME	1250 GPM pump, 1000 gal tank, 1800 ft. 4" supply hose, 500 ft. 3" supply hose, 700 ft. 1 3/4" suppression hose, 300 ft. 2 1/2" suppression hose, 10 gal foam capacity, thermal imaging cam, gas meter, 1 24' ladder, 1 14' ladder, 1 10' ladder, AED, 5 SCBAs, 5 spare tanks, deck gun, scene lighting, other tools and equipment
Engine/Tanker	30-12	2003	HME/Ferrara	1250 GPM pump, 1800 gal tank, 900 ft. 4" supply hose, 500 ft. 3" supply hose, 450 ft. 1 3/4" suppression hose, 250 ft. 2 1/2"

Type	Designation	Year	Mfr.	Features
				suppression hose, hydraulic extrication tools, thermal imaging cam, gas meter, 1 24' ladder, 1 14' ladder, 1 10' ladder, 5 SCBAs, 4 spare tanks, gas powered generator, vent fan and other tools and equip
Rescue	30-14	2006	Ford/Ferrara	Trash pump 325 gpm, gas meter, AED, 2 SCBAs, 2 spare tanks, mobile cascade system, water rescue and rope rescue equipment

## Other Equipment

Interior firefighters receive two sets of PPE; exterior firefighters receive one set. All receive one set of brush gear and rain gear. None of the gear is greater than 10 years old. The department utilizes Lion-brand turnout gear and Cairns helmets and Survivair-brand SCBAs.

## Equipment testing

Pumps have not been tested since apparatus were delivered new. The company plans to initiate annual testing in 2021. Annual hose and ladder testing is performed by an outside vendor. Annual SCBA maintenance and testing by an outside vendor is coupled with bi-weekly in-house inspection and maintenance.

## Station

High Falls Volunteer Fire Company operates out of a single fire station at 7-11 Fire House Road. The 6,000 square foot station was built in phases over the years, with original bays dating to 1932, the hall and kitchen to 1950 and new bays to 1991. It contains four bays and one office, but no space for firefighters to sleep. There is a gear wash, a breathing air cascade system and an exhaust capture. It has a security system and a propane generator.

## ISO Report

High Falls was last evaluated by the Insurance Services Organization in 2017. ISO uses a 1-10 Public Protection Classification (PPC) scale, with 1 being the best. High Falls received an overall 4/4Y rating. On individual components of the PPC scale, High Falls received 60.48 out of 105.5 available points. Notable areas with where more points could be achieved include water supply, personnel and training. The department has little control over water supply and numbers of personnel.

ISO Ratings	Available Credit	2017
Communications	10	7.1

ISO Ratings	Available Credit	2017
Engine Cos.	6	4.84
Reserve Pumpers	0.5	0
Pump Capacity	3	3
Ladder Service	4	2.52
Reserve Ladder	0.5	0
Deployment Analysis	10	7.36
Company Personnel	15	4.7
Training	9	1.45
Operational Considerations	2	2
Water Supply	40	26.95
Divergences		-3.13
Risk Reduction	5.5	3.69
<b>Total Credit</b>	<b>105.5</b>	<b>60.48</b>

## Calls for Service

Over the last eight years, High Falls has averaged 100 calls per year. The highest frequency call types are typically Rescue and EMS (21%) or False Alarm calls (20%). Looking back at the last three years, the department averages 6.5 personnel to respond to calls.

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Avg
1-Fire	10	11	5	22	16	9	8	20	13
3-Rescue & Emergency Medical Service Incident	13	16	20	20	33	25	19	19	21
4-Hazardous Condition	4	5	2	24	30	35	24	19	18
5-Service Call	20	34	31	14	5	9	9	5	16
6-Good Intent Call	3	2	10	9	22	13	7	10	10
7-False Alarm & False Call	10	18	20	19	28	22	24	15	20
8-Severe Weather & Natural Disaster	NA	NA	NA	1	NA	NA	NA	NA	1
Unknown	NA	NA	NA	1	NA	NA	NA	NA	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100</b>

During 2020, 15 firefighters responded to an average of 37 calls, which is 41% of the total. Three responded to more than 70% of the calls. In 2019, 15 firefighters responded to an average of 34 calls or 37%. Two firefighters responded to more than 75% of calls.

## Finances

High Falls' revenues increased 42% from 2016 to 2020. As the tax levy only increased 10% in this period, most of this increase is due to proceeds of debt obligations in 2019 and 2020.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Revenue</b>					
Grants	-	-	-	-	-
Misc. Income	-	-	-	1,800	600
Interest Income	310	325	325	1,589	737
Proceeds of Debt	-	-	-	105,000	86,793
Sale of Assets	-	412	-	22,000	-
Tax Levy	278,983	280,373	282,343	297,420	307,251
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>279,293</b>	<b>281,110</b>	<b>282,668</b>	<b>427,809</b>	<b>395,381</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>					
Payroll Expenses	-	-	-	-	-
Worker's Comp	17,301	18,272	16,767	16,018	13,969
Retirement/LOSAP	46,992	47,192	49,548	75,289	78,435
Insurance	5,340	5,807	5,354	5,692	11,086
Equip & Capital Outlay	14,534	23,723	214,808	238,879	104,928
Contractual Expend	140,398	120,298	150,917	135,352	109,009
Personal Services	8,388	5,757	5,891	6,068	6,250
Debt	12,370	12,370	12,370	12,829	12,830
Additions to Reserves					
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>245,323</b>	<b>233,419</b>	<b>455,655</b>	<b>490,127</b>	<b>336,507</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>33,970</b>	<b>47,691</b>	<b>(172,987)</b>	<b>(62,318)</b>	<b>58,874</b>

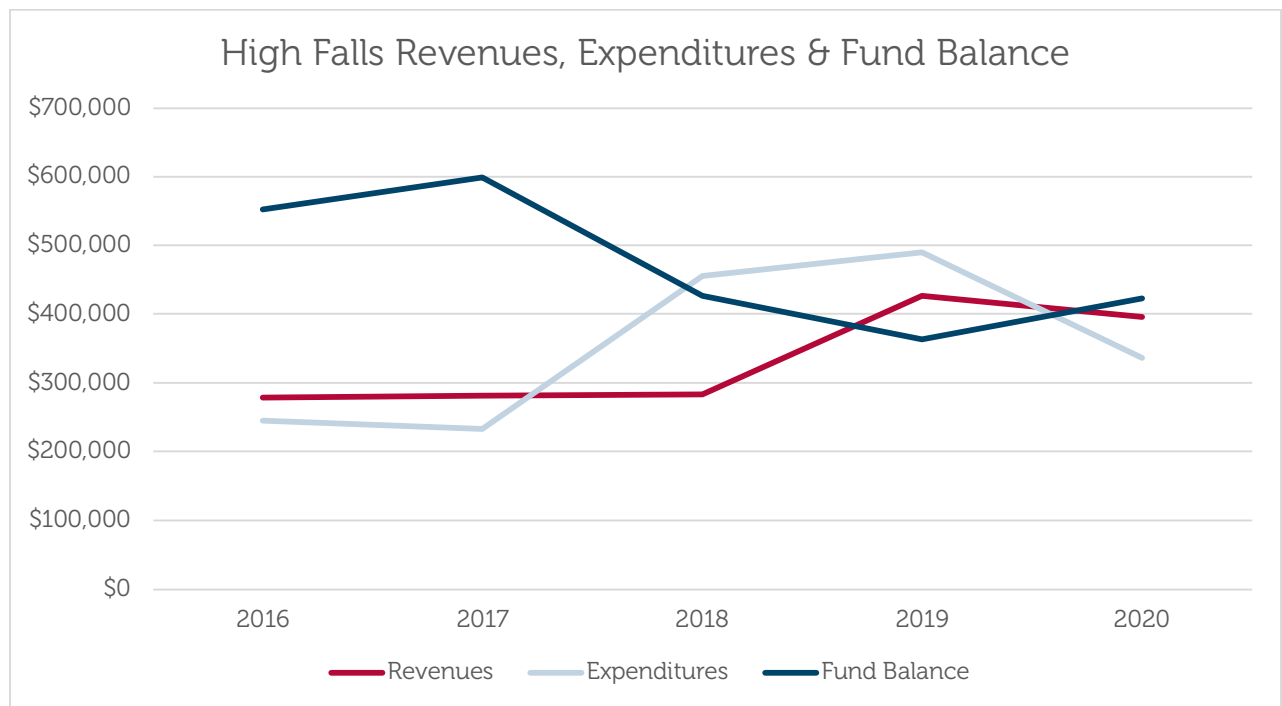
## LOSAP

The High Falls Fire District has a Length of Service Awards Program (LOSAP) that was instituted in 2005 to award active members of the department for their service. The plan was authorized by a referendum of the voters in the district.

For each year of active service, members will receive \$30 per month upon the entitlement age of 65. The maximum monthly benefit is \$900. Members can accrue service years until a maximum of 30 years. An active year requires that members accumulate points for activities including responding to calls, completing training, participating in drills, participating on standby duty, serving in leadership positions and responding to at least 10% of the emergency calls. In 2020, 11 members were deemed active for the year. Five were receiving benefits and eight others were vested and not earning points. The LOSAP program was deemed to be have a funded ratio of 65% based on the Plan Assets divided by the Present Value of Accrued Benefits. The actual plan assets were \$311,023.18 on February 28, 2021. The program is administered by the Volunteer Fire Insurance Service (VFIS).

## Debt

In 2019, High Falls issued debt for an installment purchase contract worth \$105,000 and paid \$9,102 against this balance, resulting in a \$95,898 end of year debt balance. In 2020, High Falls paid a further \$9,102 against this balance, resulting in an \$86,793 debt balance.



## Tax Rate

The 2021 tax rate for those in the High Falls Fire District is \$1.44 per thousand dollars of assessed value. The tax rate has been level for several years.



# Kripplebush-Lyonsville Fire Company and Fire District

The Kripplebush Fire District (KFD) and Kripplebush- Lyonsville Fire Company were invited to participate in the project but chose to remain on the sidelines. This brief profile has been developed from publicly available records. The fire district has the second largest territory at 11 square miles and covers the southwest portion of the town.

Social networking photos show about a dozen members. There are two engines and a utility support vehicle that are shown in public photos.

## Apparatus

Kripplebush operates two engines. No information on them was provided for this project.

## Station

The company operates from a single fire station at 519 Pine Bush Road.

## Calls for Service

The calls for service information was provided by the NYS Office of Fire Prevention and Control. The data for 2017 appears incomplete. Looking at the other years, they respond to about 120 calls for service each year.

Calls by Type	2014	2015	2017	2018	2019	2020	Avg
Fire	15	12	3	8	14	6	10
Overpressure Rupture, Explosion, Overheat	NA	NA	NA	NA	1	NA	1
Rescue & Emergency Medical Service Incident	61	88	2	71	67	58	58
Hazardous Condition	14	12	1	24	8	10	12
Service Call	3	8	1	12	10	4	6
Good Intent Call	4	5	NA	8	2	2	4
False Alarm & False Call	10	22	NA	8	8	5	11
Severe Weather & Natural Disaster	NA	NA	1	NA	8	2	4
Special/Other	NA	1	NA	1	2	3	2
Unknown	NA	NA	4	8	3	3	4

Total	107	148	12	140	123	93	112
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## Finances

### Revenues & Expenditures

Kripplebush has not reported any revenue and expenditure data to OpenBookNY since 2010.

### Debt

Kripplebush has not reported any debt to OpenBookNY for the past three years, which were the only years searched.

### Tax Rate

The 2021 tax rate for those in the Kripplebush Fire District is \$0.74 per thousand dollars of assessed value. This raised \$154,000.

## Lomontville Fire Department and Fire District

Firefighters in the Lomontville Fire Department indicate they have a small crew that works well together, as well as dedicated leaders. Core members train together weekly. Equipment is generally well maintained and kept in good condition. The firehouse is in fair condition, but it is older, and the department has to be conscious of height when purchasing new apparatus. The floor is deteriorating in a meeting area and will likely need replacement soon.

The size and age of the volunteer base are major concerns. Membership fluctuates, but it is difficult to attract and retain younger volunteers in particular. Training requirements are seen as an impediment to keeping volunteers. The district already relies to some extent on mutual aid agreements on weekdays. It works with Stone Ridge, Hurley and Olive to provide coverage, among other districts.

Interviewees were generally receptive to a merger and saw it as a beneficial step toward deploying limited volunteers and equipment more effectively and efficiently, and better serving district residents. Options discussed included partial and full town-wide mergers. Concerns included how to reconcile personalities across districts, and how a consolidated district's debts would be allocated post-merger.

## Personnel

Lomontville Fire Department reports that nine volunteer firefighters are active in the department in firefighting roles and six others have support roles. Five are interior-

qualified and seven are qualified to drive the large apparatus. No staff are certified as EMTs, but one member is a certified first responder. There is one captain and a chief.

Staff	Number
Total Volunteer Personnel	9
Interior Qualified Firefighters	5
NYS Certified First Responders	1
NYS Certified EMTs (or higher)	0
Apparatus Drivers (Engine and/or Ladder/Quint)	7
Lieutenants	0
Captains	1
Battalion/Deputy/Assistant Chiefs	0
Chief	1

## Training

Physical exams and fitness tests are required annually for all personnel. Volunteer interior firefighters are required to have New York State Firefighter 1 (Basic Exterior Firefighting Operations/Interior Firefighting Operations (BEFO/IFO) training. Officers are required to have BEFO/IFO training and Incident Command System (ICS) 100, 200 & 300 training. Apparatus operators must take the NYS Apparatus Operator course.

The department does quarterly training and firefighters are exposed to live fire in training at least once in the past three years, via NYS courses.

## Apparatus

Type	Designation	Year	Mrf.	Features
Tanker	35-12	1992	GMC	500 GMP pump, 1800 gal tank, 300 ft. 3" supply hose, 200 ft. 1 3/4" suppression hose, 1800 gal drop tank
Engine	35-13	2003	KME	1250 GMP pump, 1000 gal tank, 2000 ft. 5" supply hose, 500 ft. 1 3/4" suppression hose, thermal imaging cam, gas meter, 1 12' & 1 24' ladder, 4 SCBAs, 4 spare tanks
Engine	35-14	2013	Rosenbauer	1000 GMP pump, 300 gal tank, 200 ft. 5" supply hose, 400 ft. 1 3/4" suppression hose, Gas meter, AED, 4 SCBAs, 4 spare air tanks, EMS equip

## Other Equipment

Firefighters are issued one set of turnout gear. None of the turnout gear is greater than 10 years old. The department utilizes Quaker- and Bullard-brand gear and Survivair-brand SCBAs.

## Equipment testing

Pumps are tested every two years and were last tested in 2018. Hoses and aerial/ground ladders are tested annually. SCBA equipment is subject to annual manufacturer service/inspection.

## Station

The Lomontville Fire Station is located at 2394 Hurley Mountain Road. The original portion was built in the 1940s. It was expended in the 1960s. The total footprint is about 3,500 square feet. The station has two separate apparatus bays large enough for its four apparatus to park. The newer larger bay can hold modern fire apparatus, with adequate space around them for truck checks or cleaning. The older smaller bay works well for the two apparatus parked there. The station has a small office and a large meeting room, an outdated commercial kitchen, a bathrooms and storage for extra supplies. The station is in need of a renovation and repairs, but no plan has been developed yet.

## ISO Report

The Lomontville Fire District was a rated an 8B/10 in its most recent ISO report. This poor rating likely results from limited staff in the department and no fire hydrants. The district does have adequate apparatus, equipment and communication for an improved score.

## Calls for Service

Over the last eight years, Lomontville has averaged 54 calls per year. The highest frequency call types are typically Rescue and EMS (43%) or Hazardous Condition (20%). In 2020, the tanker (35-12) responded to 7 events, the smaller engine (35-13) to 14 and the larger engine (35-14) to 27. In 2020, 11 firefighters responded to an average of 14 calls or about 25% of calls. 3 firefighters responded to 40% or more of the calls.

Calls by Type	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Avg
Fire	6	5	5	4	2	6	3	1	4
Rescue & Emergency Medical Service Incident	25	19	20	26	27	32	12	22	23
Hazardous Condition	6	8	6	13	9	13	12	18	11
Service Call	1	3	7	1	3	2	NA	NA	3

Calls by Type	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Avg
Good Intent Call	1	2	4	5	3	NA	4	7	4
False Alarm & False Call	3	7	11	5	7	8	10	10	8
Severe Weather & Natural Disaster	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1	1
Total	42	44	53	54	51	61	41	59	54

Lomontville provided no mutual aid in 2020 and received two mutual aid assists from Stone Ridge. It is typically not asked to respond on mutual aid because it has difficulty mustering adequately trained personnel.

## Finances

### Revenues & Expenditures

Lomontville's revenues grew by 10% from 2016 to 2020, increasing by about \$11,600 over the four years, from around \$116,000 in 2016 to nearly \$128,000 in 2020.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Revenue</b>					
Grants	1,575	-	-	-	-
Misc. Income	150	269		5,505	750
Interest Income	81	109	147	2,025	1,520
Sale of Assets	3,627	325	100	600	100
Tax Levy	110,875	111,991	115,223	121,733	125,471
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>116,308</b>	<b>112,694</b>	<b>115,470</b>	<b>129,863</b>	<b>127,841</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>					
Payroll Expenses	-	-	-	-	-
Worker's Comp	19,184	17,614	20,552	15,132	12,385
Retirement/LOSAP	-	-	-	-	-
Insurance	-	-	-	-	-
Equip & Capital Outlay	1,719	450	4,969	1,874	4,143
Contractual Expend	45,362	57,118	49,162	59,331	37,800
Personal Services	11,024	9,093	9,069	8,749	8,247
Debt	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>77,289</b>	<b>84,275</b>	<b>83,752</b>	<b>85,086</b>	<b>62,575</b>
<b>Net Surplus</b>	<b>39,019</b>	<b>28,419</b>	<b>31,718</b>	<b>44,777</b>	<b>65,266</b>

The surplus has been added to reserve fund for future capital needs. At the end of 2020, there was \$167,450 in a capital reserve fund and \$189,984 in an unassigned fund.

## Debt

Lomontville has not reported any debt to OpenBookNY for the past three years.

## Tax Rate

The 2021 tax rate for Lomontville is \$0.73 per thousand dollars of assessed value. This is an increase of 19% since 2016, although it is still one of the lowest rates in the Town.

# Marbletown Fire Company and Fire District

The Marbletown Fire Department has a very small group of volunteers who take pride in their ability to provide service despite the department's size. Department apparatus and equipment are well-maintained and reportedly in good shape. The firehouse is getting older and requires maintenance, but it is seen as serviceable in the short term. The Fire Department has a particularly strong relationship with the Hurley Fire Department, whose firehouse is about four miles north of the Marbletown station on Route 209. Marbletown holds regular training and sometimes cooperates with Hurley on training exercises. The Hurley Fire department responds to all calls in the fire district.

Most districts involved in this study face challenges attracting and retaining volunteers, but the issue is especially acute in Marbletown, which listed five firefighters as of earlier this year; four are qualified as interior firefighters. Several of the interior firefighters are grandfathered into the qualification. The department has sent mailers and made other efforts to attract volunteers, with limited success; there is interest in strategies to improve recruitment and to educate newer residents about the need to support volunteer fire companies. There is some concern within the district about its ability to continue providing basic service.

There are mixed views within the department and district on a merger. Some stakeholders in the district see consolidation as an eventual necessity and a fiscally responsible path, given the department's limited membership. Others feel mutual aid ensures coverage of the district, and see limited benefit to consolidation. There is some frustration with years of discussion about potentially merging Marbletown with other districts. The relationship between Marbletown's leadership and that of Stone Ridge is particularly strained, and there is some opposition to a merger that consolidates the two districts or results in Stone Ridge leadership at the head of a larger or town-wide district. Some interviewees described openness, however, to a merger involving Hurley and / or fresh leadership. A majority of current commissioners have indicated support for a merger with districts in Marbletown as well.



## Personnel

Marbletown Fire Company reports that five volunteer firefighters are active in the department. Four are interior-qualified. Four are qualified to drive the engine. One staff member is currently certified as an EMT, with certifications pending for two other members. There is one captain, one assistant chief and a chief.

Staff	Number
Total Volunteer Personnel	5
Interior Qualified Firefighters	4
NYS Certified First Responders	0
NYS Certified EMTs (or higher)	1
Apparatus Drivers (Engine and/or Ladder/Quint)	4
Lieutenants	0
Captains	1
Battalion/Deputy/Assistant Chiefs	1
Chief	1

## Training

Physical exams and fitness tests are required annually for all personnel.

Volunteer interior firefighters are required to have New York State Firefighter 1 (Basic Exterior Firefighting Operations/Interior Firefighting Operations) training (or grandfathered Firefighter Essentials), along with pump operation, initial attach, SCBA, scene safety.

Officers and apparatus operators are required to have New York State Firefighter 1 & 2 (or grandfathered Firefighter Essentials), Fire Police, Prepare for Command, Pump Operator and Engine Apparatus Operator training.

The company does monthly trainings, and firefighters have not been exposed to live fire in training in the last year.

## Apparatus

Type	Designation	Year	Mfr.	Features
Engine	37-10	2004	Ferrara	1250 GPM pump, 1000 gal tank, 1200 ft. 3" supply hose, 500 ft. 1 3/4" suppression hose, 1 multi gas meter, 1 24' ladder, AED, top-mount pump, on-board generation, 4 SCBAs, 4 spare air tanks
Tanker	37-20	2011	Sutphen	750 GPM, 2000 gal tank, 450 ft. 3" supply hose, 200 ft. 1 3/4" suppression hose, AED.
Rescue	37-30	1992	E-One	350 GPM, 300 gal, 300 ft. 3" supply hose, 300 ft. 1 3/4" suppression hose, 1 gas meter, 1 16' ladder, AED,

Type	Designation	Year	Mfr.	Features
				1000 ft. forest hose, brush fire fighting supplies/gear, Prosser pump on board.

## Other Equipment

Firefighters are issued one set of turnout gear. None of the gear is greater than 10 years old. The department utilizes Lion-brand turnout gear and Cairns helmets and MSA-brand SCBAs.

## Equipment testing

The pumps are tested yearly and were last tested in July, 2020. Hoses are tested every two years. The line firefighters are advocating commissioners for yearly testing. Aerial/ground ladders are tested annually. SCBA equipment is subject to annual service/inspection.

## Station

The Marbletown Fire Station is located at 535 North Marbletown Road. The total footprint is about 2,500 square feet. The station has two separate apparatus bays large enough for its three apparatus to park. The newer larger bay can hold modern fire apparatus, with adequate space around them for truck checks or cleaning. The older smaller bay works well for the rescue parked there. The station has a small office and a small meeting room, an outdated commercial kitchen, a bathroom and storage for extra supplies. The station is in need of a renovation and repairs, but no plan has been developed yet.

## ISO Report

Marbletown ISO Fire District was rated as a 9 in its most recent ISO report. This poor rating likely results from limited staff in the department, no fire hydrants and minimal apparatus. The district is unlikely to improve its score on its own and would need to join another.

## Calls for Service

Over the last four years, Marbletown has averaged 29 calls per year. The highest frequency call types are typically Rescue and EMS (52%). The others are all about even in distribution at or below 10%. In 2020, the engine (37-10) responded to 11 events, the tanker (37-20) to 1 and the rescue (37-30) to 18. In 2020, six firefighters responded to an average of 13 calls or about 49% of calls. Three firefighters responded to 65% or more of the calls. One firefighter, who is also the chief, responded to every call.

Calls by Type	2017	2018	2019	2020	Avg
Fire	2	4	4	NA	3
Rescue & Emergency Medical Service Incident	13	15	16	15	15
Hazardous Condition	1	1	3	5	2
Service Call	1	1	1	1	1
Good Intent Call	2	1	2	1	2
False Alarm & False Call	2	NA	1	NA	2
Severe Weather & Natural Disaster	4	NA	NA	1	2
Unknown	2	2	3	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>29</b>

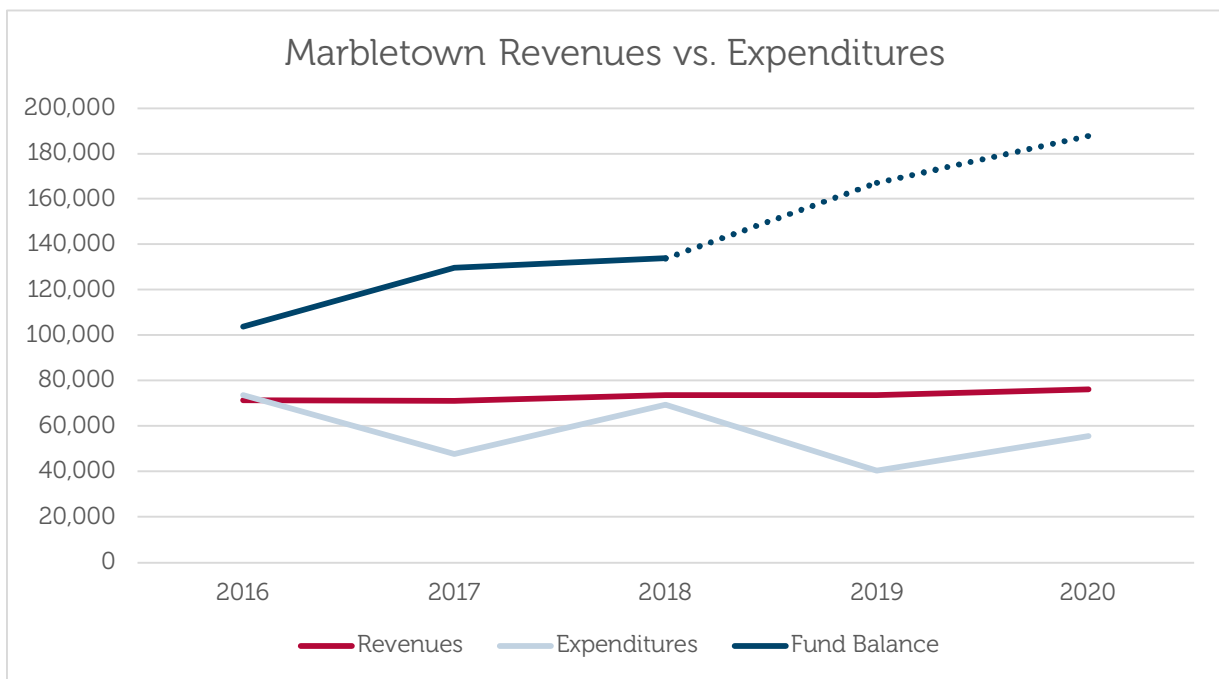
## Finances

### Revenues & Expenditures

Marbletown's revenue, expenditure and fund balance data was only available for 2016 and 2017 from OpenBookNY. The other three years were taken from district documents. The revenues have been relatively stable during that time. The district has very few expenses, as would be expected based on the low call volume. The largest is related to insurance with between \$15,000 and \$20,000 being spent each year on either workers compensation or the combined policy for the department. The district has been developing a fund balance for the future purchase of an engine by adding \$20,000, on average, to reserve each of the last four years.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Revenue</b>					
Grants	1,500				
Misc. Income			1,032.	950	1,115
Interest Income	1	1.31	58.	236	62
Sale of Assets					
Tax Levy	69,796	71,192	72,502	72,502	75,128
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>71,297</b>	<b>71,193</b>	<b>73,593</b>	<b>73,689</b>	<b>76,305</b>

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Expenditures</b>					
Payroll Expenses					
Worker's Comp	9,055	7,495	13,347		11,286
Retirement/LOSAP					
Insurance	6,795	7,200	12,865	8,854	9,431
Equip & Capital Outlay	40,695	16,965	13,726	21,203	21,607
Contractual Expend	15,282	14,558	28,524	15,888	13,268
Personal Services/Travel	1,917	1,334	1,032		70
Debt					
Other Expenses		0.00		-5,574	
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>73,744</b>	<b>47,551</b>	<b>69,494</b>	<b>40,371</b>	<b>55,662</b>
<b>Net Surplus</b>	<b>-2,447</b>	<b>23,642</b>	<b>4,099</b>	<b>33,317</b>	<b>20,643</b>



The dotted line is estimated based on the presumption that surpluses have been added to the fund balance each year.

## Debt

Marbletown has not reported any information related to debt or fund balance to the New York State Comptroller in the past three years, which were the only years queried.

## Tax Rate

The 2021 tax rate for those in the Marbletown Fire District is \$1.82 per thousand dollars of assessed value. This is the highest tax rate in the Town. It has dropped about 12% in the last five years.

# Stone Ridge Fire District and Volunteer Fire Company

The Stone Ridge Volunteer Fire Company has by far the largest base of volunteers among the districts serving Marbletown, and interviewees see this as a major strength. This includes a number of younger recruits, which stakeholders attribute in part to recruitment through a member who is a youth sports coach. The base of younger firefighters tends to draw to other younger volunteers with interest in the fire service from throughout the area. Stakeholders in other districts indicated younger people who live in their districts sometimes end up joining Stone Ridge instead. The district also has a reputation for being busier with calls, which is appealing to younger recruits interested in responding to many types of calls. The fire company serves as a rapid intervention team for several neighboring departments because of the large number of trained firefighters.

The firehouse is relatively new and has a meeting room that also serves as a communal space for members to socialize, including a television and games. Firefighting equipment, gear and apparatus are generally current and in good shape – the district recently purchased a new engine, and its tanker is relatively new as well. Members described strong good relationships with the High Falls and Cottekill districts, as well as Lomontville. The district also trains with firefighters in Accord.

Even with its relatively large volunteer base, Stone Ridge also faces challenges with daytime response on weekdays, and has mutual aid agreements with High Falls and Cottekill. Relations with the Marbletown district were described as strained, as noted above.

Stakeholders in Stone Ridge were generally positive about a merger scenario and see potential to improve the distribution of volunteers and equipment throughout the Town and enhance call response. Options discussed included a town-wide model with multiple firehouses, similar to neighboring Accord, or a partial merger, with some

of the smaller districts consolidated into their larger neighbors. Perceived barriers include working out leadership roles in a consolidated organization

## Personnel

Stone Ridge Volunteer Fire Company reports that 41 volunteer firefighters are active in the company. Twenty-five are interior-qualified. Eighteen are qualified to drive the engine. Six staff members are currently certified as EMTs. There are four captains, two assistant chiefs and a chief.

Staff	Number
Total Volunteer Personnel	41
Interior Qualified Firefighters	25
NYS Certified First Responders	0
NYS Certified EMTs (or higher)	6
Apparatus Drivers (Engine and/or Ladder/Quint)	18
Lieutenants	0
Captains	4
Battalion/Deputy/Assistant Chiefs	2
Chief	1

## Training

The company has mandatory drill nights on the first and third Wednesday of the month. Firefighters have not been exposed to live fire in training in the last three years due to lack of a functional burn tower. They were expected to train at the county's new tower in April 2021.

Volunteer interior firefighters are required, at minimum, to wear an SCBA quarterly. Officers are required to have Fire Officer 1 training and apparatus operators receive in-house driver training.

Physical exams and fitness tests are required annually for all personnel.

## Apparatus

Type	Designation	Year	Mfr.	Features
Tanker	E-58-10	2013	Rosenbauer	1500 GPM, 3000 gal tank, 1000 ft. 5", 650 ft. 1 3/4", thermal imaging cam, 4 SCBAs, 8 spare tanks
Engine	E-58-12	2019	Rosenbauer	1500 GPM, 1000 gal tank, 1,200 ft. 5" supply hose, 850 ft. 1 3/4" suppression hose, thermal imaging cameras, gas meter, 1 24' ladder, AED, 5 SCBAs, 8 spare tanks, deck gun, command light tower, hydraulic generator



Type	Designation	Year	Mfr.	Features
Rescue/Engine	E-58-14	2010	E-One	1200 GPM, 530 gal tank, 600 ft. 5" supply hose, 550 ft. 1 3/4" suppression hose, hydraulic extrication tools, thermal imaging cam, AED, 6 SCBAs, 7 spare tanks, command light tower, hydraulic generator
Rescue	R-58-15	1999		Hydraulic extrication tools, AED, medical supplies, gas generator

## Other Equipment

Firefighters are issued one set of Globe-brand turnout gear. Approximately 5% of gear is greater than 10 years old. The department utilizes Scott 4.5 SCBAs.

## Equipment testing

Hoses and ladders are tested yearly, last on 6/12/2020. SCBA equipment is subject to monthly testing by the captains, annual flow testing by MES and hydro testing every five years.

## Station

Stone Ridge Volunteer Fire Company operates out of a single fire station at 525 Cottekill Rd. The 7,250 square foot station was built in 2005. It contains four double length bays and two offices. The station has ample space for the crews including a lounge used by volunteers, a meeting room, and a commercial grade kitchen. There is a gear wash, a breathing air cascade system and an exhaust capture system, along with a propane generator. The station does not have a security system and there is no space for firefighters to sleep.

## ISO Report

The Stone Ridge Fire District was a rated an 8B/10 in its most recent ISO report. This poor rating likely results from limited staff in the department and no fire hydrants. The district does have adequate apparatus, equipment and communication for an improved score.

## Calls for Service

Over the last six years, Stone Ridge has been the busiest department in the town at average of 246 calls for service. More than half of those are Rescue & EMS. False Alarms (53%) followed by False Alarms at 17% and Fires at 10%. In 2020, 35 firefighters responded to calls. The most active responded to 74% of calls. Three others responded more than 50% of calls. In total, 13 responded to more than 25% of calls. Ten responded to less than 10% of calls.

Calls by Type	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Avg
Fire	26	33	37	26	26	38	31
Overpressure Rupture, Explosion, Overheat	NA	2	NA	3	NA	1	2
Rescue & Emergency Medical Service Incident	93	135	138	157	151	108	130
Hazardous Condition	16	19	28	32	28	29	25
Service Call	2	8	10	10	7	4	7
Good Intent Call	7	5	12	12	8	6	8
False Alarm & False Call	28	44	46	47	50	44	43
Total	172	246	271	287	270	230	246

In 2020, Stone Ridge responded to 87 calls for mutual aid outside the district including 36 calls in Vly-Atwood, 11 to Cottekill and 9 times each to Kripplebush and Kerhonkson.

## Finances

### Revenues & Expenditures

Stone Ridge's revenue and expenditure data was not available from OpenBookNY. The following information was provided by the District from their budget preparation documents and their annual audited financial statements. The largest annual expenses are related to the debt service for the new fire station and a new engine, about 40% of the annual budget, and firefighting related expenses, 23%. Insurance is another very large expense, accounting for 13% of the budget in 2021.

	2019	2020	2021
<b>Income</b>			
Grants			
Misc. Income	50,400	50,400	50,400
Interest Income	200	200	200
Sale of Assets			
Tax Levy	372,668	372,668	372,668
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 423,268</b>	<b>\$ 423,268</b>	<b>\$ 423,268</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
<b>Contractual Services</b>			
Contractual Services	15,200	15,200	15,200
Benefits			
Retirement			

	2019	2020	2021
Insurance	44,000	44,000	54,000
Equipment / Apparatus	30,000	30,000	30,000
Facilities			
Administrative			
Training			
FF / Fire Related	105,230	105,230	97,881
Supplies			
Debt	167,138	167,138	166,188
Additions to Reserves	62,700	62,700	60,000
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 424,268</b>	<b>\$ 424,268</b>	<b>\$ 423,268</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>\$ (1,000)</b>	<b>\$ (1,000)</b>	<b>\$ -</b>

## Debt

Stone Ridge has not reported any debt to OpenBookNY for the past three years, the years that were queried. The audits indicate that at the end of 2019, the district had \$890,000 remaining on its bonds and they would be paid off at the end of 2029. The scheduled payment is \$65,000 annually.

## Tax Rate

The 2021 tax rate for those in the Stone Ridge Fire District is \$1.57 per thousand dollars of assessed value. This rate remained level for most of the last five years, then dropped 10% from 2020 to 2021.

# Vly-Atwood Volunteer Fire Company and Fire District

The Vly-Atwood Fire District is located in a relatively sparsely populated portion of the town with hilly terrain. The area was served by its own volunteer fire company until June 30, 2021, when it ceased operations. The department chose to stop operations because of an inadequate number of trained volunteers. The fire district has made arrangements for Stone Ridge to respond to all calls in the district on a temporary basis while a permanent solution is sorted out. The district and company still exist, although the situation is dynamic.

There are several long-term members who are dedicated to the community and are dedicated to ensuring that appropriate service is retained, including the possibility of another fire company using the fire station to provide service to the area.

## Apparatus

The fire district owns the following apparatus. Details were not provided at the time of the report.

	Year	Mfr.	Features
Engine	62-10		
Tanker	62-11	2015	1000 GPM, 2000 gal tank
Mini-rescue	62-15		

## Station

The Vly-Atwood Fire Station is located at 172 Vly-Atwood Road. It has space for four apparatus, although one of the bays is used for storage of equipment. The station is not large enough for a modern fire engine's height and requires some customization of the apparatus. There is minimal space around the apparatus to move, train or conduct truck checks. In addition to the bays, there is a room for training and meetings as well as a small kitchen area.

## Calls for Service

There were no calls reported for 2015 to 2017 or 2020. Over half of the calls are for emergency medical services. This area of town is the furthest from MFAU and would have the longest response time for EMS. The department receives mutual aid on all serious calls such as fires. They were not requested for mutual aid because they could not provide an adequate number of trained firefighters.

Calls by Type	2018	2019	Avg
Fire	1	3	2
Overpressure Rupture, Explosion, Overheat	NA	1	1
Rescue & Emergency Medical Service Incident	43	39	41
Hazardous Condition	18	15	17
Service Call	4	2	3
Good Intent Call	1	8	5
False Alarm & False Call	7	13	10
Special/Other	NA	1	1
Unknown	4		4
Total	78	82	80

## Finances

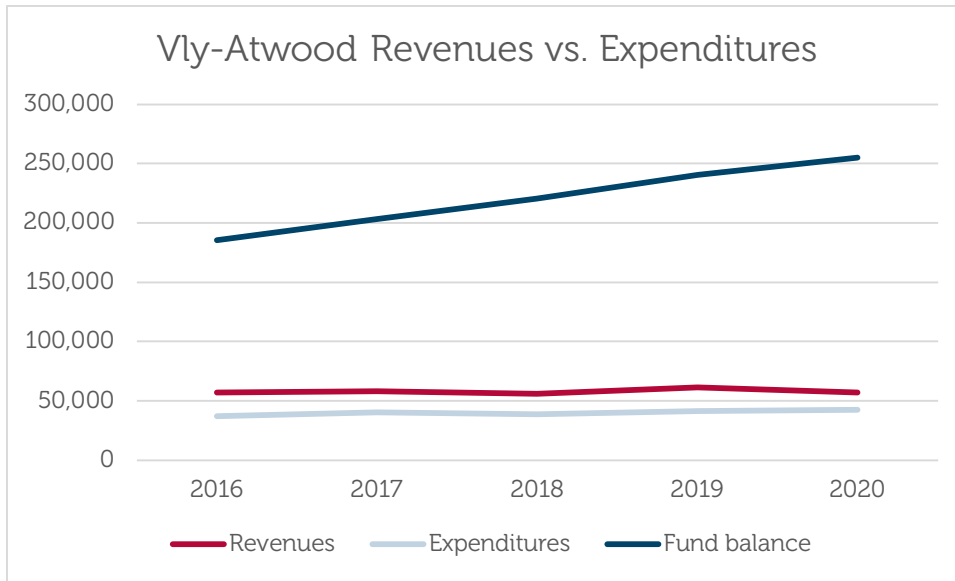
### Revenues & Expenditures

Vly-Atwood's revenues grew by 1% between 2016 and 2020. Over the same period, expenditures increased by about 15%. However, the difference still produces a yearly net surplus.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Revenue</b>					
Grants	-	-	-	-	-
Misc. Income	-	1,453	-	4,122	18
Interest Income	17	15	78	277	105
Sale of Assets	-	-	-	-	-
Tax Levy	56,975	56,475	55,991	57,055	57,155
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>56,992</b>	<b>57,943</b>	<b>56,069</b>	<b>61,454</b>	<b>57,278</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>					
Payroll Expenses	-	-	-	-	-
Worker's Comp	10,035	10,057	10,390	10,862	10,830
Retirement/LOSAP	-	-	-	-	-
Insurance	-	-	-	-	-
Equip & Capital Outlay	3,054	2,472	3,595	7,701	2,813
Contractual Expend	22,381	26,230	22,758	20,682	27,411
Personal Services	1,750	1,750	2,050	2,075	1,605
Debt	-	-	-	-	-
Additions to Reserves	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>37,220</b>	<b>40,509</b>	<b>38,793</b>	<b>41,320</b>	<b>42,659</b>
<b>Net Surplus</b>	<b>19,772</b>	<b>17,434</b>	<b>17,276</b>	<b>20,134</b>	<b>14,619</b>

### Debt & Fund Balance

Vly-Atwood has not reported any debt to OpenBookNY for the past three years. At the end of 2020, the fire district reported a fund balance of \$255,187; \$109,149 of that amount was designated for capital expenses.



## Tax Rate

The 2021 tax rate for those in the Vly-Atwood Fire District is \$0.37 per thousand dollars of assessed value.

## Calls for Service Data

Data for the calls for service was drawn from the New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control. After every fire call, the responding department creates a record with standard information which is used by the department and shared with county, state and federal officials. While completing a record is mandatory, several departments in Marbletown have not kept up on submitting the information to the county, which then forwards it to the state. Also, if an incident involves mutual aid assistance, both departments create a run report.

Only 2018 and 2019 appear to have complete records for each department. In those years, there were about 2 calls per day in the town. The busiest district is Stone Ridge with an annual average of 246 calls reported and the slowest is Marbletown with 26.3 calls reported. There were an average of 773 calls reported annually in the town in the two years with a full data set. For 2018, the only year with a full set of analyzable data, there were 128 events (15% of calls) with more than one department responding.



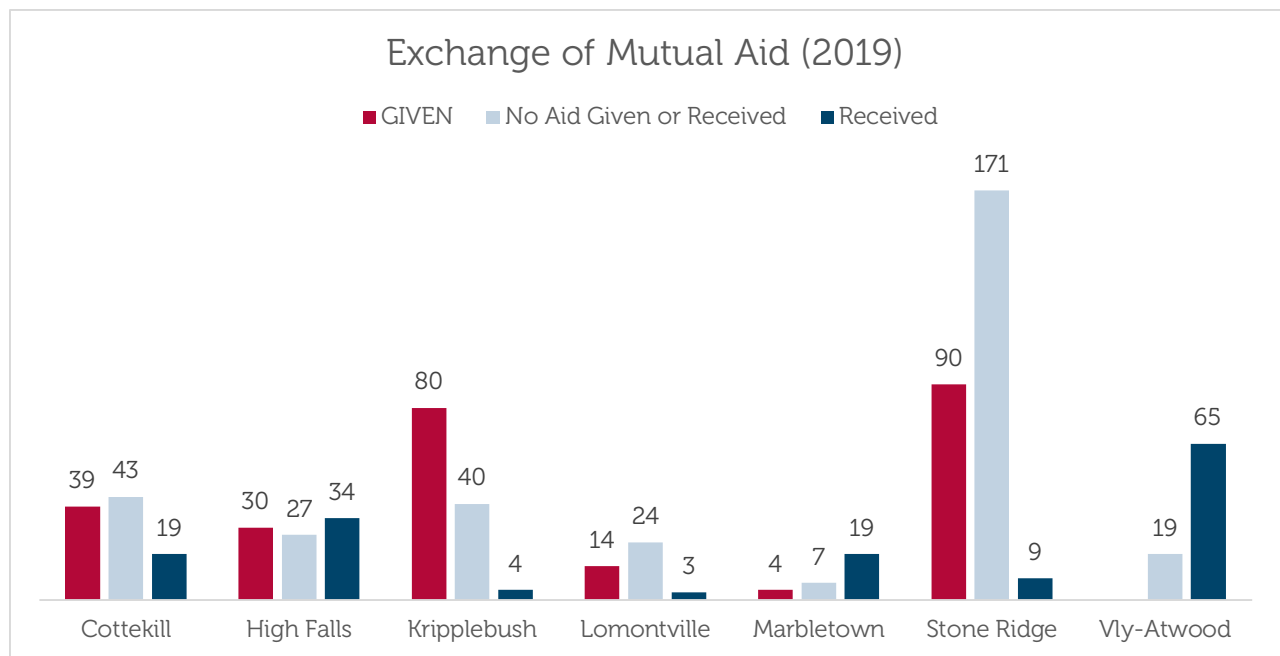
Agency	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Avg
Cottekill	88	86	117	104	101	91	91.0
High Falls	88	110	134	113	91	88	96.3
Kripplebush	148	NA	12	140	123	93	103.8
Lomontville	53	54	51	61	41	59	50.6
Marbletown	NA	NA	27	24	30	24	26.3
Stone Ridge	172	246	271	287	270	230	246.0
Vly-Atwood	NA	NA	NA	78	84	NA	81.0
Total	549	496	612	807	740	585	695.0

Response time is one measure of a fire department's performance. In a rural community, the National Fire Protection Administration has established a goal of arriving on scene in 14 minutes or less, 90 percent of the time. All of the departments still in operation except High Falls meet that standard. High Falls only missed it by 2 minutes. The response time includes all calls including mutual aid responses. Cottekill, High Falls, Kripplebush, and Stone Ridge all have significant mutual aid responses which will have longer response times.

Agency	Avg	50th Percentile	90th Percentile
Cottekill	91.0	7 mins	13 mins
High Falls	96.3	9 mins	16 mins
Kripplebush	103.8	5 mins	13 mins
Lomontville	50.6	5 mins	11 mins
Marbletown	26.3	5 mins	8 mins
Stone Ridge	246.0	6 mins	12 mins
Vly-Atwood	81.0	11 mins	17 mins

## Mutual Aid

Fire departments the size of those in and around Marbletown regularly use mutual aid to assist in responding to calls. NFIRS records indicate for every call if aid was given to another department, received from one or more departments, or if a call was handled alone. Looking at 2019, it's clear that each department has a unique relationship with its neighbors. Kripplebush provides aid to neighboring departments almost twice as often as it responds to calls in its own district. Over a third of Stone Ridge's calls are mutual aid to a neighboring district. Both Vly-Atwood and Marbletown receive mutual aid more often than they handle calls alone.

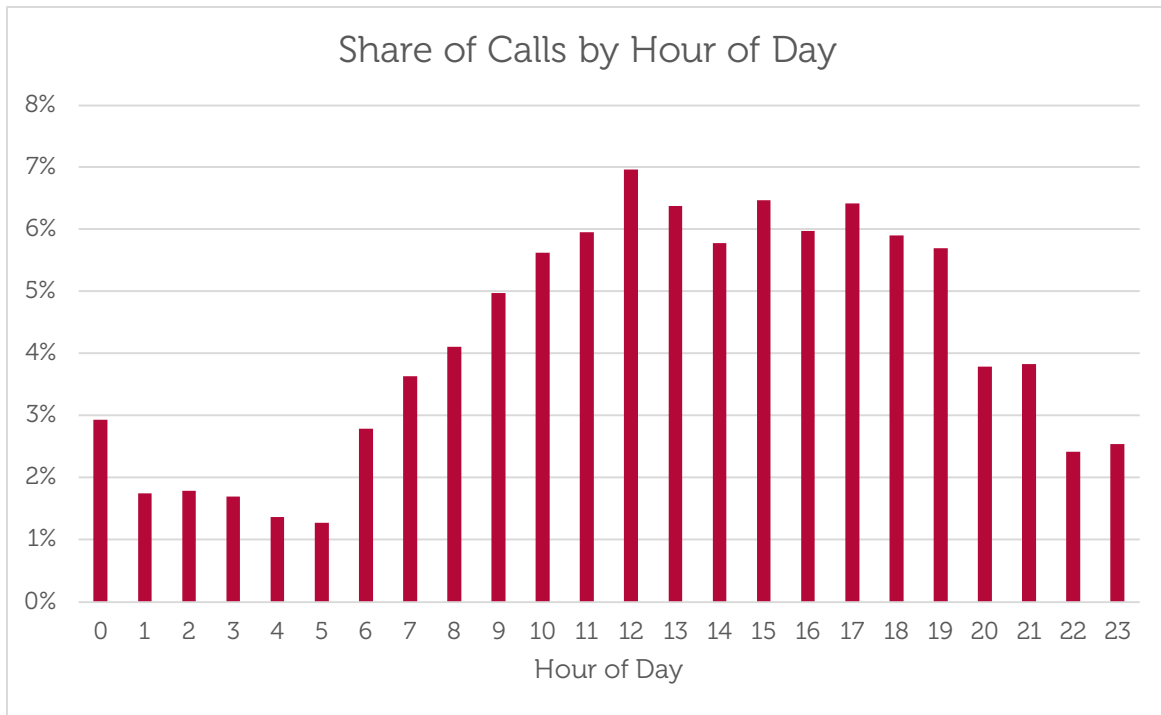


## Calls for Service by Hour of Day

The slowest time of day for the fire departments is between midnight and 6:00 am. The busiest time is in the afternoon (noon to 6:00 pm). This is consistent across the departments, although there is some variation in the volume. (An even distribution by time period would be 25%.)

	Cottekill	High Falls	Kripplebush	Lomontville	Marbletown	Stone Ridge	Vly-Atwood	Whole Town
Overnight	11%	7%	12%	12%	20%	11%	8%	11%
Morning	33%	27%	24%	24%	19%	27%	23%	27%
Afternoon	31%	40%	38%	37%	41%	39%	44%	38%
Evening	24%	25%	25%	27%	21%	23%	25%	24%

The chart below plots all the calls in the town with the hour call recorded in the last seven years. The busiest times of the day are during the hours of 10:00 am to 7:00 pm. Those hours include normal business hours where all of the departments report that it can be difficult to muster enough firefighters to respond to calls with an adequate response. (An even distribution by hour of the day would be 4.2%.)



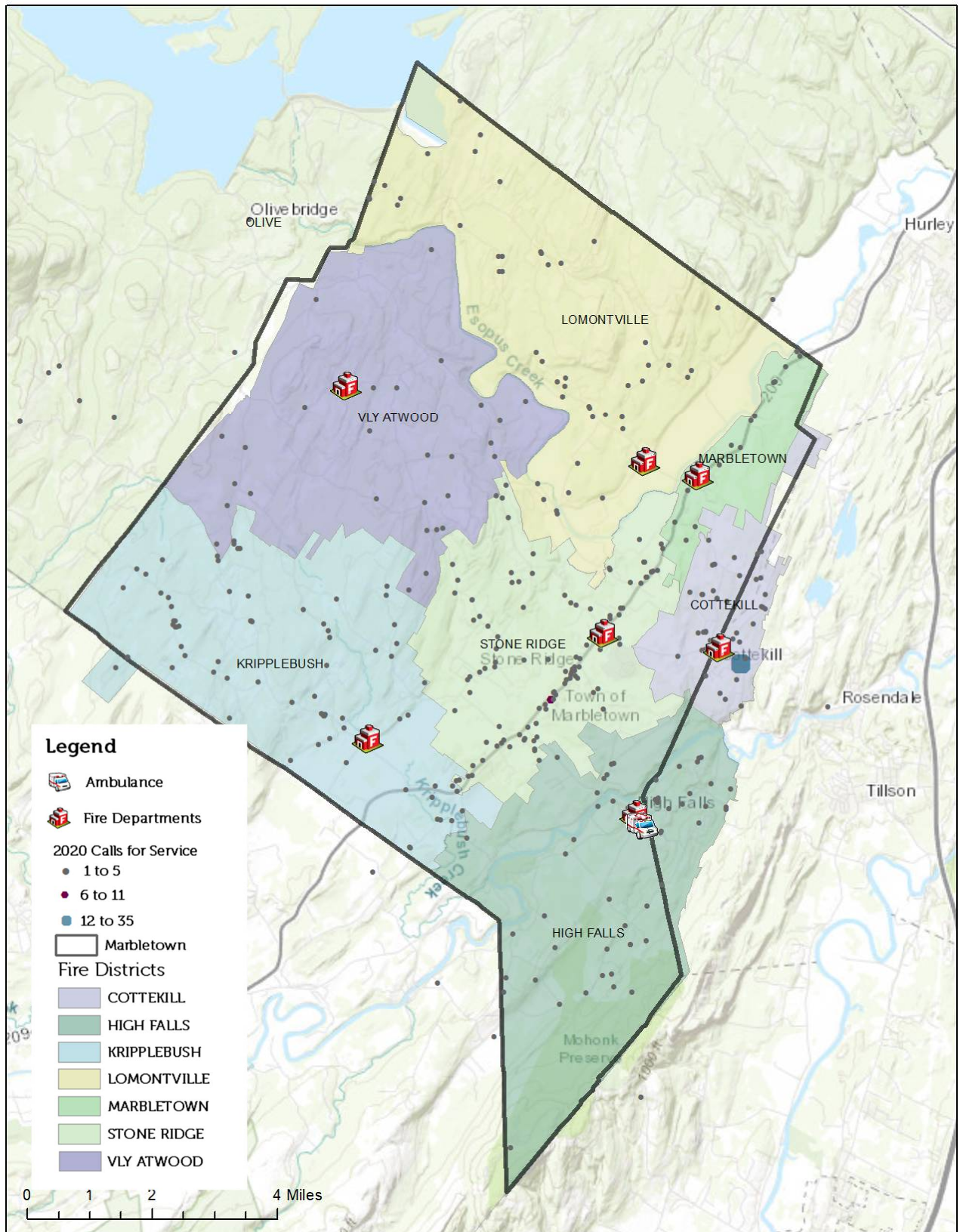
## Types of Calls

The largest category of calls for most departments in the town is Rescue and EMS calls. The exception to this is High Falls, which only goes on the most serious of EMS calls or when the ambulance is not available and mutual aid is responding. The other departments respond to calls based on different criteria, but typically calls where a patient may benefit from a more rapid response such as trouble breathing or possible cardiac problems. Aside from Rescue & EMS calls, the most common types of calls are hazardous conditions (such as wires down) or false alarms. Fires tend to be some of the less frequent calls. For High Falls, Stone Ridge and Kripplebush, a significant share of fire calls are responses to other districts on mutual aid.

	Cottekill	High Falls	Kripplebush	Lomontville	Marbletown	Stone Ridge	Vly-Atwood
1-Fire	6%	13%	9%	8%	16%	13%	4%
2-Overpressure Rupture, Explosion, Overheat	1%	NA	1%	NA	NA	1%	2%
3-Rescue & Emergency Medical Service Incident	43%	21%	56%	45%	70%	53%	74%
4-Hazardous Condition	7%	19%	11%	21%	12%	10%	21%
5-Service Call	25%	16%	6%	6%	5%	3%	5%
6-Good Intent Call	9%	10%	4%	7%	7%	3%	8%
7-False Alarm & False Call	8%	20%	10%	15%	7%	18%	18%
8-Severe Weather & Natural Disaster	1%	1%	4%	2%	12%	NA	NA
9- Special Other	NA	NA	2%	NA	NA	NA	2%
Unknown	4%	1%	4%	NA	8%	NA	5%

## Distribution of Calls

The following map shows the location of calls reported by the fire departments in 2020, which had accurate location data from all of the districts. Calls are concentrated along Route 209 and then in the hamlets of the town. Dots outside the town borders are mutual aid calls.



## Recent Tax Trend

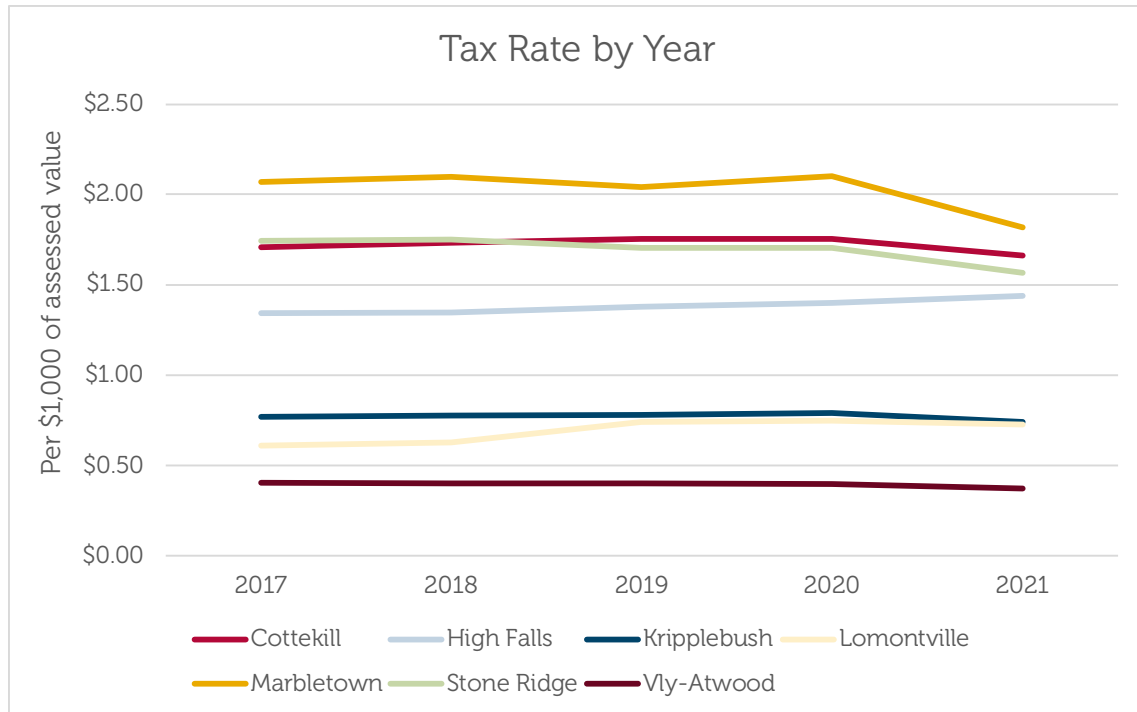
Tax rates are a function of the overall fire district levy to be collected. They rise and fall with changes in department budgets and the total taxable value of properties within the districts.

2021 Fire District Assessed Taxable Value	2021 total	2021 by town	Amount by town	% split
Cottekill	\$81,478,313	Marbletown	\$47,548,920	58.4%
		Rosendale	\$33,929,393	41.6%
High Falls	\$233,948,192	Marbletown	\$183,632,401	78.5%
		Rosendale	\$50,315,791	21.5%
Kripplebush	\$208,086,967			
Lomontville	\$178,803,452			
Marbletown	\$43,076,001			
Stone Ridge	\$237,638,053			
Vly-Attwood	\$158,410,215			

As the following table and chart show, tax rates for most districts have modestly declined over a five-year period.

Tax rate per \$1k assessed value	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	5 year % increase
Cottekill	1.706363	1.730927	1.755325	1.753501	1.661522	-3%
High Falls	1.342642	1.347013	1.376459	1.401031	1.439601	7%
Kripplebush	0.769224	0.777184	0.780673	0.792604	0.740604	-4%
Lomontville	0.61095	0.627412	0.739155	0.750804	0.725646	19%
Marbletown	2.067702	2.096091	2.041701	2.101221	1.819459	-12%
Stone Ridge	1.741188	1.752391	1.704941	1.705177	1.568217	-10%
Vly-Attwood	0.406328	0.39883	0.399125	0.396038	0.374692	-8%





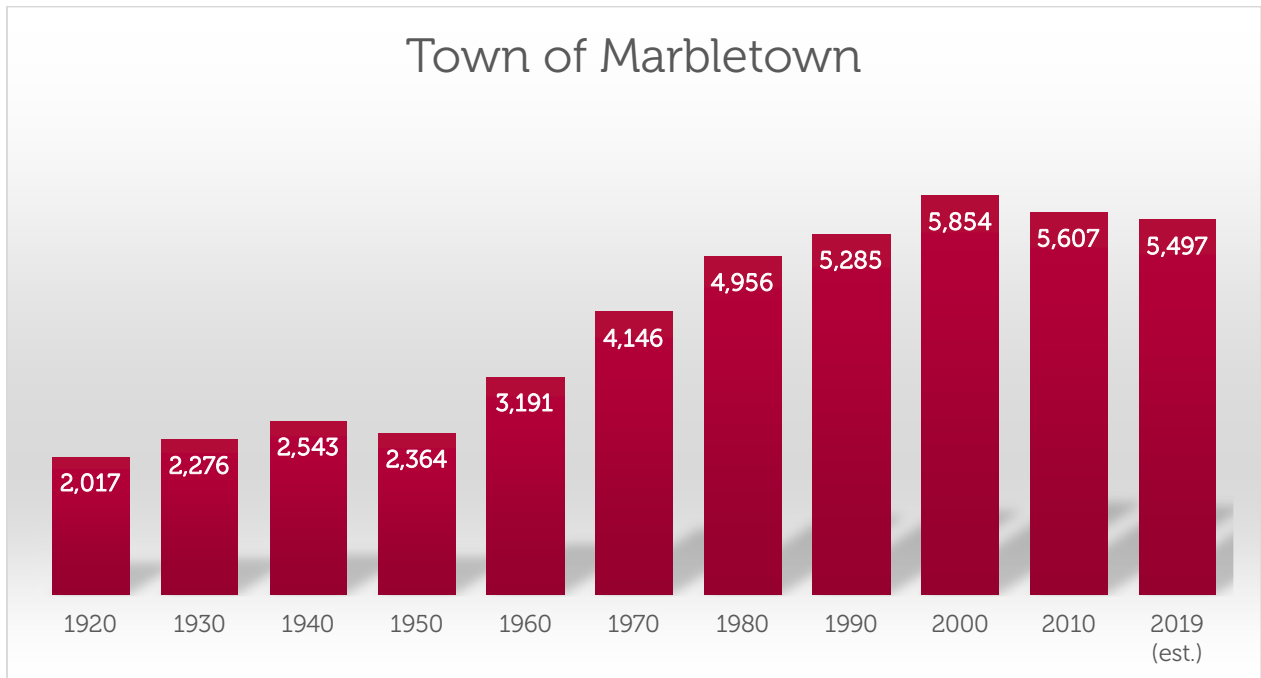
At the same time, the total amount levied in each fire district has grown steadily over the past five years. This suggests that the amount of taxable property value in each district has been increasing faster than the increase in levies, allowing for tax rates to be lowered. High Falls and Lomontville are exceptions to this general trend, with total levies growing more than other districts and net positive total increases in tax rate over the last five years.

Fire District Levies	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	5-year % increase
<b>Cottekill Total</b>	\$125,188.00	\$127,079.00	\$129,859.00	\$132,517.00	\$135,378.00	8%
Marbletown portion	\$72,516.40	\$73,553.55	\$75,658.29	\$76,165.90	\$79,003.57	9%
Rosendale portion	\$52,671.60	\$53,525.45	\$54,200.71	\$56,351.10	\$56,374.43	7%
<b>High Falls Total</b>	\$280,373.00	\$282,343.00	\$297,420.00	\$307,251.00	\$336,792.00	20%
Marbletown portion	\$222,883.95	\$224,496.66	\$235,404.94	\$241,552.55	\$264,357.35	19%
Rosendale portion	\$57,489.05	\$57,846.34	\$62,015.06	\$65,698.45	\$72,434.65	26%
<b>Kripplebush</b>	\$143,650.00	\$145,285.00	\$148,185.00	\$151,135.00	\$154,110.00	7%
<b>Lomontville</b>	\$111,991.00	\$115,223.00	\$121,733.00	\$125,471.00	\$129,748.00	16%
<b>Marbletown</b>	\$71,191.57	\$72,502.00	\$72,502.00	\$75,128.00	\$78,375.00	10%
<b>Stone Ridge</b>	\$365,683.00	\$372,673.00	\$372,668.00	\$372,668.00	\$372,668.00	2%
<b>Vly-Atwood</b>	\$56,475.00	\$55,975.00	\$57,055.00	\$57,155.00	\$59,355.00	5%

## Appendix:

### Town of Marbletown Demographics Overview

The Town of Marbletown has about 5,500 residents. The population peaked around the year 2000 at 5,854 and has declined slightly in the ensuing decades. The Town has about 3% of the population of Ulster County.



The median age in the town is 48.8 years, which is about 10 percent higher than the entirety of Ulster County. 1 in 4 residents is over the age of 65 and 1 in 10 is over 75.

2015-19	Town of Marbletown	Ulster County
Total population	5,497	178,665
Under 5 years	167	7,856
Under 18 years	984	31,925
18 years and over	4,513	146,740
65 years and over	1,363	34,254
75 years and over	590	13,898
Male	2,720	88,488
Female	2,777	90,177
Median age (years)	48.8	44
Housing Units	3,093	85,608

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2015-19	Town of Marbletown	Ulster County
Owner-Occupied	87%	87%
Median Household Income	\$74,357	\$64,304
% in Poverty	11.70%	12.00%
% White	84%	87%

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# Glossary

**Emergency Medical Service** – Emergency medical service is the provision of care outside the hospital by trained personnel. EMS includes first responders, emergency medical technicians, paramedics and ambulances. It is generally regulated by the Department of Health.

**Advanced Life Support (ALS)** - The use of specialized equipment such as cardiac monitors, defibrillators, intravenous fluids, drug infusion, and endotracheal intubation to stabilize a patient's condition.<sup>2</sup>

**Automatic Aid** – is aid from one or more neighboring departments at the time of dispatch based on a preset criteria. An example is multiple fire departments being dispatched at the time of call for a reported structure fire.

**Automated External Defibrillator (AED)** - Portable battery-powered devices that recognize life-threatening cardiac arrhythmias (irregular heartbeats) and delivers an electric shock to re-establish a regular heartbeat.

**Basic Life Support (BLS)** - A level of medical care which is used for victims of life-threatening illnesses or injuries until they can be given full medical care at a hospital. It can be provided by trained medical personnel, including emergency medical technicians, paramedics, and by qualified bystanders.

**Emergency Medical Services (EMS)**: A group of governmental and private agencies that provide emergency care, usually to persons outside of healthcare facilities; EMS personnel generally include paramedics, EMTs first responders and other ambulance crew.

**Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)** - A person who is trained and certified to provide basic life support and certain other noninvasive prehospital medical procedures EMTs have greater than 150 hours of initial training.

**Engine** – A firefighting apparatus that can perform three major functions of fire apparatus: carry hose, pump water, and transport personnel. They carry a multitude of tools to assist in the suppression of a fire and mitigate other emergencies. They also carry ground ladders,

**Exterior Firefighter** – A firefighter who has been trained and equipped to assist on a fire scene performing tasks such as laying hoses, operating pumps and vehicle rescues, but is not trained and authorized to work in life threatening environments such as burning structures.

Fire Company – An organization of personnel to respond to fires and other emergency situations based on a public dispatch. They are typically incorporated as a non-profit organization and are affiliated with a fire district or serve a municipality.

Flycar – A non-transporting vehicle dispatched by EMS to quickly assess situations or respond to non-serious injuries. Treatment is usually on the scene and if the patient needs transport to a hospital an ambulance will be called. The use of Flycars was developed to more efficiently allocate resources based on first-responder certification levels and reduce the costly dependence on using ambulances for every call.

Insurance Service Organization Rating – The Insurance Service Organization is a private organization that assesses the capabilities of fire departments to respond to and extinguish fires. The rating looks at the function of the departments, the capability of the communications system and the availability of water. A full description of the program is available at: <https://www.isomitigation.com/ppc/>

Interior Firefighter is a firefighter that has completed the minimum of a basic firefighter course, is trained to use a SCBA, is physically capable and is authorized to enter and properly equipped to enter a life threatening environment.

Mutual Aid is the exchange of aid between departments based on the request of an agency commander at the time of the incident. This can include the request of special resources such as rapid intervention teams, aerial devices or water supply.

Paramedic - Persons trained and certified to provide advanced life support. Paramedics have greater than 1000 hours of initial training.<sup>3</sup>

Quint - A firefighting apparatus that can perform five major functions of fire apparatus: carry hose, carry water, pump water, and perform aerial ladder and/or water tower operations.<sup>4</sup>

Rescue Truck – An apparatus that transports specialty equipment and tools for technical rescue situations such as vehicle extrications and/or haz-mat responses due to traffic accidents, confined space rescues or building collapses. Common equipment includes “Jaws of Life”, cutting torches, saws, wooden cribbing and rescue ropes.

Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) - A complete unit for delivery of air to a rescuer who enters a contaminated area; contains a mask, regulator, and air supply

Tanker – A tanker is a fire apparatus that has the primary purpose of transporting water to a fire scene. They typically have more than 1500 gallons of water, portable ponds, suction hoses and pumps.

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<sup>3 2 4 10</sup> <http://emr.emszone.com/glossary.aspx> last accessed 7/2016

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# Excerpt from NYS Local Government Handbook

(<https://dos.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2019/05/pub.pdf> Accessed August, 2021)

## 9.2 Organizing for Fire Protection

Fire protection services in New York have long been viewed as an essential governmental function in densely populated areas. Early on, cities as well as many villages made provisions for fire departments and the organization of fire companies using both career and volunteer services. This did not happen in towns, however, here sparse development made fire, while no less catastrophic to the individuals involved, a more personal than a communal threat.

Traditional fire protection in rural areas consisted of close neighbors forming bucket brigades. The era of the bucket brigade was followed by the formation of loosely-knit groups which accumulated rudimentary firefighting equipment. Such groups were the precursors to the modern-day volunteer fire companies, which have developed a high degree of organization and capability.

For many years volunteer fire companies supplied reasonably effective fire protection to rural areas without government assistance or support. Gradually, however, greater demands for fire protection service, the high cost of modern and specialized equipment, and the need for giving volunteers economic security in the event of duty-connected death or injury, forced the independent fire services to request assistance from the government.

In towns, the answer came through the establishment of special districts on an area-by-area basis. These districts took two basic forms: fire districts, which were true district corporations and enjoyed autonomy from town government; and other types of districts, including fire protection districts, fire alarm districts and certain water supply districts, which were little more than assessment areas that received fire protection.

### 9.2.1 Fire Districts

A fire district is a public corporation established for the purpose of providing fire protection and responding to certain other emergencies. The New York State Constitution (Article X) recognizes that fire districts have certain characteristics of general purpose municipal corporations, such as powers to incur indebtedness and to require the levy of taxes. Generally, fire district taxes are levied by the county and collected by the town or towns where the district exists. A fire district is almost a completely autonomous political entity; it has its own elected governing body, its own administrative officers, and it must observe its own expenditure limitations. However, it is dependent upon the parent town or towns for its initial creation and extension

pursuant to Article 11 of the Town Law; to consolidate or dissolve, a fire district must follow the procedures in Article 17-A of New York State General Municipal Law.

As of December 31, 2010, New York had 864 fire districts. They are of varying sizes, including smaller districts with annual budgets of several thousand dollars and large districts, some of which feature departments that have both career and volunteer firefighters and annual budgets of several million dollars.

#### 9.2.1.1 Establishment

A fire district is created to provide fire protection to areas of towns outside villages. Villages usually provide fire protection on their own. Towns and villages may establish joint town-village fire districts. A town board may establish a fire district on its own motion or upon receipt of a petition from owners of at least 50 percent of the resident-owned taxable assessed valuation in the proposed district. Whichever method is used, the town board must hold a public hearing and determine that: all properties in the proposed district will benefit, all properties which benefit have been included and that the creation of the district is in the public interest.

If the town board decides to establish a district and proposes to finance an expenditure for the district by the issuance of obligations, it must request approval from the State Comptroller, who must first determine that the public interest will be served by the creation of the district and that the cost of the district will not be an undue burden on property in the district. If such approval is not required, a certified copy of the notice of hearing must be filed with the State Comptroller.

After a fire district has been established, the town board appoints the first temporary board of five fire commissioners and the first fire district treasurer. At the first election, five commissioners are elected for staggered terms of one to five years so that one term expires each year. At each subsequent election one commissioner is elected for a full term of five years. The fire district treasurer is elected for three years, although the office may subsequently be made appointive for a one-year term. A fire district secretary is appointed by the board of fire commissioners for a one-year period.

#### 9.2.1.2 Operational Organization

After establishment and initial appointments by the town board, the fire district becomes virtually autonomous from the town in its day-to-day operations. A fire district has only those powers that are expressly granted by statute, or which are necessarily implied by the statute. Unlike towns, villages, cities and counties, a fire district does not possess home rule powers. The powers granted to a fire district board are extremely specific and narrowly limited. A listing of some of the more important and general powers granted to the board of fire commissioners in



Town Law serves as a quick synopsis of many of the important areas of operation for fire districts:

- They shall have the powers to make any and all contracts for statutory purposes within the appropriations approved by the taxpayers or within statutory limitations;
- They may organize, operate, maintain, and equip fire companies, and provide for the removal of members for cause;
- They may adopt rules and regulations governing all fire companies and departments in the district, prescribe the duties of the members, and enforce discipline;
- They may purchase apparatus and equipment for the extinguishing and prevention of fires, for the purpose of the emergency rescue and first aid squads and the fire police squads;
- They may acquire real property and construct buildings for preservation of equipment and for social and recreational use by firefighters and residents of the district;
- They may construct and maintain fire alarm systems;
- They may purchase, develop, or contract for a supply of water for firefighting purposes; and
- They may contract to provide firefighting or emergency services outside the fire district where such services can be supplied without undue hazard to the fire district.

#### 9.2.1.3 Financing

Fire districts are not governed by the constitutional tax or debt limits that restrict most municipal corporations.

However, statutory limitations are imposed on their spending and financing authority. Under section 176(18) of the Town Law, every fire district has a minimum basic spending limitation of \$2,000, plus an additional amount related to full valuation of district taxable real property in excess of one million dollars. Several important expenditures are exempt from this spending limitation, such as certain insurance costs, salaries of career firefighters, most debt service and contracts for fire protection or water supplies. The basic spending limitation may be exceeded only if a proposition for the increase is approved by the voters of the district. Further, many capital expenditures proposed for a fire district, which would exceed the spending limitation, also require voter approval. Certain expenditures which are not chargeable to the spending limitation may also be subject to voter approval under other provisions of law (e.g., General Municipal Law §6-g, relative to capital reserve funds).

A fire district may incur debt by issuing obligations pursuant to provisions of the New York State Local Finance Law. Fire districts are subject to a statutory debt limit

(generally three percent of the full valuation of taxable real property in the fire district) and mandatory referendum requirements.

Within the statutory constraints, the district has general autonomy in developing its budget. When completed, the budget is filed with the town budget officer of each of the towns where the district is located. The town board can make no changes in a fire district budget and must submit it with the town budget to the county for levy and spreading on the town tax roll. When the taxes are collected, the town supervisor must turn over to the district treasurer all taxes levied and collected for the fire district.

In 1956, the Volunteer Firefighters' Benefit Law was enacted to provide benefits similar to those provided by Work-

ers' Compensation for volunteer firefighters injured, or die from injuries incurred, in line of duty. Cities, towns, villages and fire districts finance these benefits through their annual budgets.

#### 9.2.1.4 Fire Department Organization

The board of fire commissioners exercises general policy control over its fire department, while the chief of the department exercises full on-line authority at emergency scenes. The fire department of a fire district encompasses all fire companies organized within the district, together with career employees who may be appointed by the board of fire commissioners. Fire companies usually are, but need not be, volunteer fire companies incorporated under the provisions of the Not-for-Profit Corporation Law. They can be formed within the fire district only with the consent of the board of fire commissioners and, thereafter, new members can only be admitted with board consent. All officers of the fire department must be members of the department, residents of the state and, if required by the board of fire commissioners, residents of the fire district. Officers are nominated by ballot at fire department meetings, and appointments by the board can be made only from such nominated candidates.

#### 9.2.1.5 Joint Fire Districts in Towns and Villages

Article 11-A of the Town Law and Article 22-A of the Village Law allow for the establishment of joint fire districts in one or more towns and one or more villages. Under the provisions of the Town Law, if it appears to be in the public interest, the town board(s) and village board(s) shall hold a joint meeting for the purpose of jointly proposing the establishment of a joint fire district. If, at the joint meeting, it is decided by majority vote of each board to propose a joint district, the boards must hold, upon public notice, a joint public hearing at a location within the proposed district. If, after the public hearing, the town board(s) and village board(s) determine that the establishment of the joint fire district is in the public interest, each board may adopt a separate resolution, subject to a permissive referendum, establishing the joint fire district.

The new joint fire district established pursuant to Article 11-A of the Town Law is governed by the provisions of Article 11 of the Town Law unless there is an inconsistency between the two articles. In such case, Article 11-A would provide the prevailing language. Management of the affairs of joint fire districts is under a board of fire commissioners composed of between three and seven members, who are either appointed by the participating town boards and/or village boards of trustees in joint session, or elected as provided in Article 11.

Upon the establishment of a joint district, the town board or village board of trustees of each participating municipality shall by local law dissolve any existing fire, fire alarm or fire protection districts contained within the joint fire district. The board of trustees of a village or the board of commissioners of a fire district, all of the territory of which is embraced within the boundaries of a joint fire district, may by resolution authorize the sale or transfer of any village-owned or district-owned fire house, fire apparatus, and fire equipment to the joint district. Such transfer may occur with or without consideration, and subject to the terms and conditions deemed fitting and proper by the board of trustees or board of commissioners.

#### 9.2.2 Fire Protection and Fire Alarm Districts

Fire protection districts and fire alarm districts are not public corporations. Both types of districts may be described as assessment areas within which a town can provide limited services and assess the cost back against the taxable properties within the district.

Fire protection districts are established for the sole purpose of providing fire protection by contract. After establishing a fire protection district, a town board may contract with any city, village, fire district or incorporated fire company maintaining suitable apparatus and appliances to provide fire protection to the district for a period not exceeding five years. A town may also acquire apparatus and equipment for use in the district and may contract with any city, village, fire district or incorporated fire company for operation, maintenance and repair of the apparatus and equipment and for the furnishing of fire protection in the district. The cost of the contracted services, together with certain other expenses incurred by reason of the establishment of the district, is then levied against the properties of the district on the annual tax roll.

Fire alarm districts are formed primarily to finance the installation and maintenance of a fire alarm system. However, a town board can contract for fire protection for these districts in a manner that is similar to the way it provides protection for fire protection district.