

Village of Harrisville

Dissolution Study

Existing Conditions: Fire and Ambulance Services
4-18-17



Visit the website: www.danc.org/operations/engineering/village-harrisville-dissolution-study

Section 1

General Overview of Fire Services in NY



How is Fire Protection Provided in NY?

- Fire Protection in NYS is complex and can be provided in many ways
 - Directly by a municipality
 - Arranged under contract with a municipality
 - Independently governed by a fire district
- Fire Departments may have:
 - All paid members, all volunteers, or a combination of paid and volunteer employees
- Firefighters may work for a municipal fire department, be appointed as fire department members by fire district commissioners, or be members of a not-for-profit corporation

Fire Protection in NY

- Cities are required to provide fire protection
 - typically provided through a municipal fire department
- Villages are required to provide fire protection. A Village may:
 - a) have its own fire department
 - b) contract with the fire department of another municipality
 - c) contract with a fire district, fire protection district, or independent fire company
 - d) form a joint fire district with a town and other villages
- Towns - state law does not allow towns to provide their residents with fire protection as a municipal function. Instead, fire protection must be provided either by a **fire district** or through creation of a **fire protection district**.

What is a Fire District?

- A Fire District is a separate unit of government established to provide fire protection & emergency response
- A Fire District does not have to have its own firefighters or equipment; it can contract with a neighboring municipality or district.
- Fire Districts don't have to be coterminous with Town boundaries and can span multiple towns or portions of towns
- Fire Districts are overseen by an elected board of commissioners composed of 5 members serving 5 year terms
 - Commissioners are elected by residents of the district
 - Commissioners appoint the members of the fire company

What is a Fire Protection District?

- A Fire Protection District is a geographic service area within a town established for the purpose of fire protection.
- Towns contract for fire protection services within the Fire Protection District at the expense of the property owners in that district.
- Contracts may be with a city or village fire department, a fire district, or an independent fire company.
- Town boards can create, consolidate, or dissolve fire protection districts on its own motion or by petition

What is an Independent Fire Company?

- An Independent Fire Company is a special not-for-profit corporation formed to provide fire protection to a fire district, a fire protection district, or village under contract.
- The contract is between the Independent Fire Company and the governing body - a board of commissioners, town board, or village board of trustees.

How are Fire Services paid for?

- **Cities and Villages:** general municipal tax levies support fire protection.
 - There is not a separate tax rate applied to property tax bill
- **Fire Protection Districts:** the Town levies property tax in the areas of the Town served by the Fire Protection District.
- **Fire Districts:** the Fire District is a separate unit of local government that has the power to incur debt and to levy taxes against the taxable properties within the district.
 - Fire District taxes are independent taxes. They are collected with the Town and County taxes and distributed to the fire district by the Town.
 - Funds can be used to purchase buildings, equipment, and insurance, and pay for firefighter training.
 - Fire Districts get over 90% of their revenue from property taxes.
- Additional funds may come from donations to a fire department, charitable fund-raising, facility rentals, and taxes on certain fire insurance policies written by out-of-state insurance companies.

Volunteer Firefighter Benefits Law

All New York State volunteer firefighters are entitled to benefits under the law if they are active volunteer members of a fire company of a county, city, town, village or fire district and are injured in the line of duty.

“In the line of duty” covers volunteer firefighters in various emergency situations and many activities compensable under the law, when authorized by the proper authority. Some of these include:

- participation at a fire, hazardous material incident, alarm of fire or other emergency, including assisting other fire departments/companies;
- travel to, from and during fires or other calls to which the company responds;
- inspection for fire hazards or other dangerous conditions;
- attendance at fire instructions or fire school, instructing at fire training, attendance/travel to meetings;
- participation in authorized drills, parades, funerals, inspections or reviews, tournaments, contests or public exhibitions conducted for firefighters, and authorized fundraising activities;
- testing fire apparatus and equipment, fire alarm systems, water supply systems and fire cisterns;
- construction, repair, maintenance and inspection of the firehouse;
- pumping water or other substance from a basement or building.

The county, city, town, village, or fire district covers the insurance for the volunteer firefighters located in their jurisdiction.

Section 2

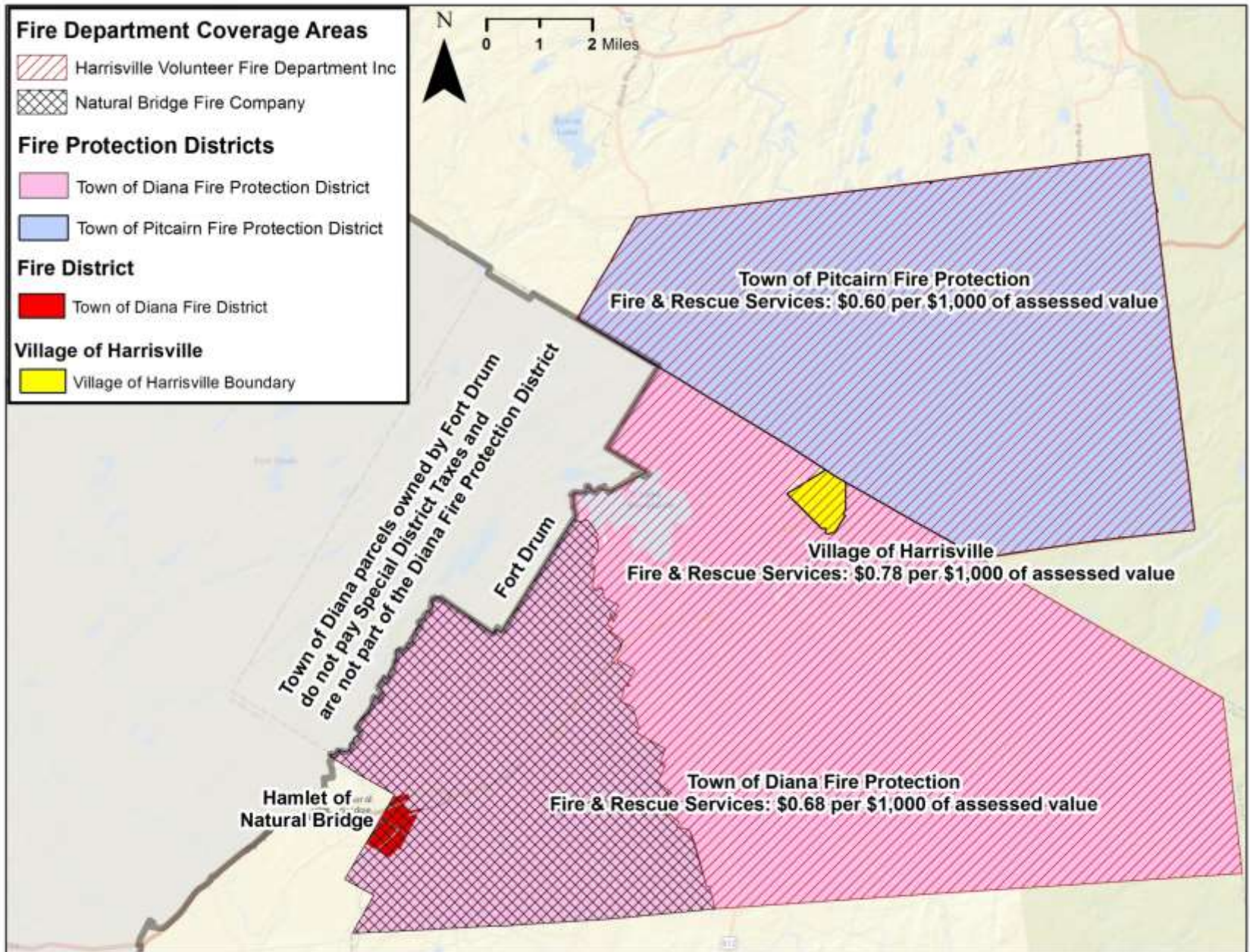
Fire and Ambulance Services in Harrisville, Diana, and Pitcairn:

Who provides these services and how?

What is the cost of these services?



Fire Services Coverage Map



Fire and Ambulance Services Cost Breakdown

The cost for fire and rescue services can be calculated to compare how much properties are being taxed for the services per \$1,000 of assessed value, based on the municipality/service area they are in. The table below calculates the total costs of services for Fire and Rescue, divided by the Taxable Assessed Value for the Village or the Town Special District, and multiplied by \$1,000, to compute the rate for services.

2017 Contracts	V/Harrisville	T/Diana Fire Protection District	T/Pitcairn Fire Protection District	Totals
Rescue/Ambulance Service Fees	\$4,000	\$29,700	\$12,753	\$46,453
Village Fire Dept. Fees	\$10,272	\$62,753	\$27,024	\$100,049
Natural Bridge Fire Dept. Fees	\$0	\$12,000	\$0	-
Total Cost of Services	\$14,272	\$104,453	\$39,777	\$158,502
Taxable Assessed Value for 2017 taxes	\$18,311,037	\$152,514,795	\$65,893,373	\$236,719,205
Computed Cost Per \$1,000 for Rescue/Ambulance Fees	\$0.22	\$0.19	\$0.19	\$0.20
Computed Cost Per \$1,000 for Fire Dept. Fees	\$0.56	\$0.49	\$0.41	\$0.42
Total Computed Cost Per \$1,000 for Rescue and Fire Services	\$0.78	\$0.68	\$0.60	\$0.62
Total Cost Per \$1,000 actually collected in 2017	Residents pay for these services as part of Village tax	\$0.684871	\$0.607294	

Harrisville Fire Department

The Harrisville Fire Department is currently considered a department of the Village.

- Village Board of Trustees act as the board of fire commissioners
 - Approve Fire Chief and two Assistant Chiefs
 - Approve new volunteer fire members
 - Contracts with Towns of Diana and Pitcairn for fire services
 - Contracts with the Harrisville Volunteer Fire Department Inc. for fire services
- Village currently does not own anything related to the fire department (building, trucks, gear, etc.)

The Harrisville Volunteer Fire Department Inc. is a not-for-profit corporation.

- The Corporation consists of a President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, 6 Board Members, and a Fire Chief and two Assistant Chiefs.
- These positions are all elected by the volunteer members annually
- Currently, there are 25 members of the Harrisville Volunteer Fire Department Inc.

The Harrisville Volunteer Fire Department Inc. owns:

- Fire Hall Building and the parcel it is built on (Parcel ID# 013.03-02-02.7)
- All the fire equipment, including trucks, turnout gear, etc.
- Also pays all for all utilities, fuel, and building maintenance

Harrisville Fire Department - Contract with Village

In past years, the Village of Harrisville has executed contracts with the Harrisville Volunteer Fire Department Inc. for fire services. In 2016, the Village Board decided a contract was not necessary because the Fire Department is a department of the Village. Instead of a contract, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was drafted.

- The MOU was approved for the 2016-2017 fiscal year (Jun. 1, 2016 - May 31, 2017), but has not been signed by the Harrisville Volunteer Fire Department Inc.
- The MOU for the 2016-2017 fiscal year stipulates that the Village is to pay the Volunteer Fire Department Inc.:
 - \$4,495 for the Vehicle Fund
 - \$5,777 for Operations and Maintenance
- The fees above represent the Village's share of the Fire Department's budget for the 2016-2017 fiscal year. The amounts are exclusive of any payments that flow to the Volunteer Fire Department Inc. through the contracts with the Towns.
- Village residents pay for Fire and Rescue services as part of their Village tax; there is not a separate tax rate for Fire and Rescue services.
 - The calculated rate that Village residents paid on their 2017 taxes, if it was broken out separately from the rest of Village services, is:
\$0.78 per \$1,000 of assessed value

Harrisville Fire Department - Contracts with Towns

The Village of Harrisville and the Harrisville Volunteer Fire Department Inc. executes contracts with the Town of Diana and the Town of Pitcairn for fire services.

Currently, the contracts are for 1 year terms and contracts have been executed for 2017.

- For the 2017 fiscal year (Jan. 1 - Dec. 31, 2017), the Town of Diana fees include:
 - \$35,713 for the Vehicle Fund
 - \$27,040 for Operations and Maintenance
 - **\$62,753 total contract**

- For the 2017 fiscal year, the Town of Pitcairn fees include:
 - \$15,305 for the Vehicle Fund
 - \$11,719 for Operations and Maintenance
 - **\$27,024 total contract**

- The contracts for both Towns state that the fees above are paid by the Town to the Village on or before February 29, 2017, and the Village shall pay the monies to the Volunteer Fire Department within 10 days of receipt of payment.

Harrisville Rescue Squad Inc.

The Harrisville Rescue Squad is a separate not-for-profit corporation that provides ambulance and EMT services. It is NOT a Village department. The Harrisville Rescue Squad Inc. executes its own contracts with the Village of Harrisville and the Towns of Diana and Pitcairn.

The contracts are for 1 year terms and are current.

- For the 2016-2017 fiscal year (Jun. 1, 2016 - May 31, 2017), the Village of Harrisville fees include:
 - \$2,100 for the Vehicle Fund
 - \$1,900 for Operations and Maintenance
 - **\$4,000 total contract**

- For the 2017 fiscal year (Jan. 1 - Dec. 31, 2017), the Town of Diana fees include:
 - \$15,700 for the Vehicle Fund
 - \$14,000 for Operations and Maintenance
 - **\$29,700 total contract**

- For the 2017 fiscal year, the Town of Pitcairn fees include:
 - \$6,727 for the Vehicle Fund
 - \$6,026 for Operations and Maintenance
 - **\$12,753 total contract**

The Harrisville Rescue Squad Inc. rents space in the Harrisville Fire Hall from the Harrisville Volunteer Fire Department Inc. for \$4,500/ year.

There are 20 members of the Rescue Squad, including 3 that are EMTs.

Town of Diana Fire and Ambulance Services

The Town of Diana has a Fire Protection District and a Fire District

Town of Diana Fire Protection District

- The Town of Diana Fire Protection District is a geographic area encompassing almost the entire Town.
 - Excludes the Village of Harrisville
 - Excludes the Town of Diana Fire District located near Natural Bridge
 - Excludes Town parcels owned by Fort Drum (Fort Drum does not pay Special District taxes)
- The costs for fire protection and ambulance services are levied on the taxable property within the Town Fire Protection District and collected with the Town taxes. The rate is the same across the entire Fire Protection District and shows on the tax bill as “FP242 Diana Fire Protection”: 0.684871 per \$1,000 of assessed value in 2017.
- The Fire Protection District is served by the Harrisville Volunteer Fire Department Inc., the Harrisville Rescue Squad, and the Natural Bridge Fire Department
 - 2017 Town contract with Harrisville Volunteer Fire Department total: \$62,753
 - 2017 Town contract with the Harrisville Rescue Squad total: \$29,700
 - 2017 Town contract with Natural Bridge total: \$12,000

Town of Diana Fire District

- The Town of Diana Fire District is a separate unit of local government that levies taxes against taxable property within the district. The Natural Bridge Fire Department serves this Fire District.
- The tax rate for “FD243 Natural Bridge Fire”: 1.683278 per \$1,000 of assessed value
- \$3,150 raised by property taxes for the Town of Diana Fire District in 2017

Town of Pitcairn Fire and Ambulance Services

The Town of Pitcairn has a Fire Protection District served by the Harrisville Volunteer Fire Department Inc. and the Harrisville Rescue Squad Inc.

Town of Pitcairn Fire Protection District

- The Town of Pitcairn Fire Protection District is a geographic area encompassing the entire Town.
- The costs for fire protection and ambulance services are levied on the taxable property within the Town Fire Protection District and collected with the Town taxes. The 2017 rate is the same across the entire Fire Protection District and shows on the tax bill as “FD033 Pitcairn Fire Protection”: 0.607294 per \$1,000 of assessed value in 2017.
- The Fire Protection District is served by the Harrisville Volunteer Fire Department Inc. and the Harrisville Rescue Squad.
 - 2017 Town contract with Harrisville Volunteer Fire Department total: \$27,024
 - 2017 Town contract with the Harrisville Rescue Squad total: \$12,753

Workers Compensation Insurance Coverage for Harrisville Volunteer Fire Department Inc. Members

The Harrisville Volunteer Fire Department Inc. active members are currently covered for Workers' Compensation Insurance through the Village of Harrisville, because they are located in the Village of Harrisville taxing jurisdiction. If the Village were to dissolve, the Town of Diana would be responsible to cover them.

- The Village is part of the **Lewis County Self-Insurance Program**
 - The Lewis County Self-Insurance Program taxes Towns and Villages for their portion of the County-wide plan that covers all Town and Village employees, and all firefighters and ambulance responders in Lewis County. Taxing jurisdictions (example: Village of Harrisville or Town of Diana) are assessed a premium, based on:
 - 50% real property taxable assessed value
 - 50% jurisdiction experience - any claims or expenses to the plan in the past 3 years (Harrisville has not had any claims in the past 3 years, so their jurisdiction experience is 0%)
 - Harrisville paid \$1,421 in FYE 16 (Jun.1, 2015 - May 31, 2016) for Workers Compensation Insurance for volunteer firefighters and volunteer rescue members

- An active volunteer firefighter is covered by this insurance regardless if the fire company is a Village Fire Department, a Fire District, or an Independent Fire Company. The taxing jurisdiction (Village or Town) where the fire company is located is responsible for the coverage.

Section 3

Harrisville Volunteer Fire Department Inc.

Financials



Harrisville Volunteer Fire Department Inc. - Major Assets

Building	Address	Building Value	Contents Value
Fire Hall	14226 Church St	\$960,344	\$91,601
Pavilion	14226 Church St	\$135,233	-

Vehicle/ Asset	Year	Value
Tanker - Chevrolet	1996	\$150,000
Tanker - International	2005	\$150,000
F Series Pumper - Ford	1998	\$200,000
TC5500 Mini-Pumper - GMC	2009	\$200,000
F 150 Pickup Truck - Ford	1998	\$3,000
Rescue Truck - International	1995	\$50,000
Starcraft 21' Boat	1976	\$3,000
Shore Boat Trailer	1976	\$800
88 HP Evinrude Motor w/ power lift	1976	\$2,200
Fan Lee Liner Camper Trailer	1973	\$1,000

Harrisville Volunteer Fire Department Inc. - Financials

Income Details 4/8/2016 - 4/7/2017	
Account	Amount
General Fund	\$75,535.57
Equipment	\$88,672.78
Kitchen Fund	\$125,850.90
Foreign Insurance ¹	\$3,077.97
Not Specified - CBNA ²	\$28.52
Subtract - Hall Rental ³	- \$100.00
Subtract - Harrisville Central School ⁴	- \$75.00
Total	\$292,990.80

¹ Foreign Insurance income is from a tax on certain out-of-state fire insurance policies. Foreign insurance companies contribute two percent of the fire premiums written on property located in the state to be distributed to the fire departments and fire districts statewide.

² CBNA is Community Bank of the North Country – interest from accounts

³ Subtract - Hall Rental refers to the rental deposit that is returned to the person who rented facility

⁴ Subtract - Harrisville Central School is for the fire department ad in the yearbook

Harrisville Volunteer Fire Department Inc. - Financials

Expense Details 4/8/2016 - 4/7/2017	
Account	Amount
General Fund	\$14,903.52
Kitchen Fund	\$83,249.02
Foreign Insurance	\$388.81
Expenses with no account indicated ¹	\$161,844.33
Total	\$260,385.68

¹ The financial report provided by the Harrisville Volunteer Fire Department itemizes all expenses, but not all expenses are classified with an account. There are too many items without an account specified to list here. Please refer to the "Harrisville Volunteer Fire Department Inc. Itemized Financials" on the study webpage under the Reference Documents for additional detail.

Section 4

Overview of Alternatives if the Village dissolved:

This section presents a list of possible alternatives for fire services if the Village of Harrisville dissolved. This list is only provided for information purposes during the Existing Conditions phase of the study.

There will be a more detailed analysis of these alternatives during the Alternatives Phase.



Fire Services - Alternatives

If the Village of Harrisville dissolved, the Fire Department would no longer be a Village Department. Residents of the former Village could receive fire services through:

- ❖ **A Fire Protection District:** the Town of Diana could include the former Village area in its Fire Protection District, and then contract with a fire department for services.
- ❖ **A Fire District:** a Fire District could be established for the former Village area, which would be comprised of 5 elected fire commissioners. The Fire District could own fire equipment and manage fire companies for fire services.

The Harrisville Volunteer Fire Department Inc. is a corporation that owns all of its equipment and the fire hall.

It could continue as an independent fire company post dissolution and negotiate with municipalities to provide fire protection services for a fee.

Fire Services - Alternatives

Joint Fire District

- ❖ The Town of Diana, the Town of Pitcairn, and Village of Harrisville could create a Joint Town/Village Fire District at any time (outside of or prior to village dissolution), so the District would collect taxes directly instead of through a contractual arrangement.
- ❖ When formed, the Towns and Village could maintain the right to appoint the Fire Commissioners.
- ❖ However, if the Village dissolves, the 'Joint' Fire District would revert to a regular Fire District and would then have elections for Fire Commissioners.

Questions or Comments?



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