

THE CITY OF ALPENA AND ALPENA TOWNSHIP



ANALYSIS OF FIRE DEPARTMENT CONSOLIDATION OPTIONS

September 2007



REHMANN ROBSON

Certified Public Accountants



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A member of THE REHMANN GROUP



September 7, 2007

Mr. Thad Taylor
Interim City Manager
City of Alpena
208 North First St.
Alpena, MI 49707-2885

Ms. Marie Twite
Township Supervisor
Alpena Township
4385 US Highway 23 North
Alpena, MI 49707

Dear Ms. Twite and Mr. Taylor:

We have completed the Analysis of Fire Department Consolidation Options for the City and Township of Alpena. This final report contains the findings and conclusions resulting from this analysis and suggestions for future operations and fire services consolidation.

We appreciate the cooperation extended to us by employees in each fire department. In each case we found employees to be cooperative, candid and willing to offer suggestions for improving the provision of fire and emergency services to the greater Alpena area.

We have sincerely enjoyed this opportunity to work with the City and Township. Should you have questions concerning this report, please do not hesitate to contact me at 517-841-4912.

Very truly yours,

REHMANN ROBSON

Mark W. Nottley, Principal
Governmental Consulting Division

THE CITY OF ALPENA AND ALPENA TOWNSHIP
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SECTION I

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SECTION I

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Rehmann Robson was retained by the City of Alpena and Alpena Township to conduct an analysis of the feasibility of combining the fire services of the two communities. In conducting the review, it has been our intention to provide the City and Township with a thorough assessment that will facilitate future decision making on this important issue. Toward this end, the evaluation has considered:

- The service area and service scope
- The operations of the two departments
- The issues and obstacles pertaining to consolidation
- Opportunities for improved organizational and operational coordination
- Other issues pertaining to consolidation.

METHODOLOGY

In conducting the study, we have obtained information from a number of sources, including:

- On-site interviews with firefighting personnel in both fire departments
- Interviews with the Interim City Manager and Supervisor
- Interviews with other individuals within the Alpena emergency response network
- Ongoing data gathering intended to gain a full understanding of the two fire departments
- Collection of benchmark data from other similarly-sized Michigan fire departments
- Research related to specific issues and concerns.

MAJOR FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on information obtained from these sources, we have compiled this final report document. The report is organized as follows:

- *Section II:* A summary of the background issues surrounding the study.

- **Section III:** Findings and conclusions related to five key areas including:
 - The service area
 - Alpena Fire Department (AFD) operations
 - Alpena Township Fire Department (ATFD) operations
 - Analysis of consolidation issues.
- **Section IV:** A suggested course-of-action.

In regard to Section III, specific conclusions are as follows:

A. Overview of the Service Area

1. THE SERVICE AREA’S POPULATION IS GRADUALLY SHRINKING AND GROWING OLDER.

- Population trends are downward
- The median age and over 65 population are relatively high
- Service demand will likely grow

2. THE HOUSING STOCK IS ALSO RELATIVELY AGED.

- Particularly in the City of Alpena, but also in the Township
- This is usually an indicator of higher fire risk

B. Alpena Fire Department

1. AFD APPEARS TO BE A HIGHLY PROFESSIONAL CAREER FIRE DEPARTMENT.

- The Department is well funded with a wide service scope
- Operationally comparable to downstate career fire departments

2. AFD MUST SERVE THE DUAL ROLE OF AMBULANCE PROVIDER AND FIRE DEPARTMENT – WHILE ASSURING ADEQUATE RESOURCES FOR BOTH.

- Staffing appears adequate but not excessive
- The Township’s support in fire suppression is very important as resources can be thinly spread

3. *AFD'S WORKLOAD IS PREDOMINANTLY MEDICAL-RELATED AND WITHIN THE CITY/TOWNSHIP SERVICE AREA.*

- Fire incidence is low – medical services comprise the majority of Fire Department workload
- More than 80% of total medical calls are in the City or Township areas

4. *THE CITY'S AMBULANCE SERVICE WOULD BENEFIT FROM A SECOND (AND POSSIBLY THIRD) FACILITY.*

- A satellite facility in the M-32 corridor would lower response rate to the outer County areas
- Deployment to the current Township station houses may also serve to lower ambulance response times, however, fire response could also be compromised

C. Alpena Township Fire Department

1. *ATFD IS A RELATIVELY COST EFFICIENT OPERATION.*

- In relation to the Alpena Fire Department
- The cost efficiency is particularly notable when the size of the service area is considered

2. *ATFD LACKS AN EFFECTIVE COMMAND STRUCTURE.*

- All personnel are at the same level – this is not the ideal situation
- Some operational deficiencies are apparent – a result of the lack of command structure

3. *THE PAID-ON-CALL CONTINGENT APPEARS STRONG AND WOULD BE AN ASSET TO A COMBINED DEPARTMENT.*

- Volunteers are highly regarded by both the City and Township Firefighters
- Greater use of this force in a paid-on-duty capacity could be cost beneficial for the Township

4. *THE TOWNSHIP'S STATION HOUSES DO NOT APPEAR TO BE IDEALLY LOCATED. HOWEVER, PHYSICAL OBSTACLES LIMIT AVAILABLE OPTIONS.*

- One M-32 central station may be preferable

- However, the lack of a “ring road” compromises this option

5. *LIKE THE CITY, ATFD’S WORKLOAD IS PRIMARILY MEDICAL RELATED. RESPONSE PROTOCOL IS STILL EVOLVING.*

- The use of engine/pumpers for medical response is not cost effective – ambulances should be used
- Optional approaches are examined

6. *THE TOWNSHIP WOULD BENEFIT FROM A MORE STRUCTURED APPROACH TO FIRE PREVENTION.*

- A fire ordinance, business inspection program and fire preplanning are suggested
- City assistance would be beneficial

D. Analysis of Issues and Obstacles Related to Consolidation

1. *CONTRACTUAL DIFFERENCES WILL BE A MAJOR CHALLENGE.*

- A number of differences exist, primarily in economic benefits, retirement and health care
- Resolution could be expensive and difficult

2. *THE ISSUE OF RANK MUST BE RESOLVED.*

- The rank of Captain has different meaning and responsibilities in each department
- Each department has strong views on this issue – reconciliation could be difficult

3. *IF NOT RESOLVED, DIFFERENCES IN MEDICAL TRAINING COULD IMPACT SERVICE RESPONSE.*

- The two departments are at very different levels of expertise and each feel comfortable at the current level
- Integration of the two forces will require reconciling the medical certification issue – service impact will be a key point

4. *DEPLOYMENT MUST ALSO BE CONSIDERED FOR BOTH FIRE AND AMBULANCE RESPONSE.*

- If three facilities were used, a staff configuration must be determined

- Both fire and ambulance response must be considered in determining the ideal deployment strategy

5. *THE ROLE OF THE VOLUNTEER CONTINGENT MUST BE DETERMINED.*

- The volunteers cannot be underutilized and be expected to remain active
- A meaningful role must be defined

6. *PRESUMING OPERATIONAL ISSUES CAN BE RESOLVED, THE CITY AND TOWNSHIP WILL BE REQUIRED TO DETERMINE THE LEGAL STATUS OF THE CONSOLIDATED DEPARTMENT.*

- A PA 57 Authority is an option that would provide millage funding – other options are also available
- Other issues would need to be decided – a listing is included

In regard to Section IV, our suggestions for the future are as follows:

Suggested Course-of-Action

1. *THE CITY AND TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENTS SHOULD INITIATE AN AUTOMATIC AID AGREEMENT FOR FIRE SERVICE CALLS.*

- The current mutual aid agreement should be broadened to automatic response for a defined service area
- As a first step in an incremental path to an ultimate fire consolidation

2. *AFD AND ATFD SHOULD CONSIDER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A JOINT COMMAND STRUCTURE*

- An Administrative Captain position should be created within ATFD
- The Administrative Captain should report to a Fire Chief administering both the City and Township Fire Departments

3. *TRAINING SHOULD BE CONSOLIDATED TO THE GREATEST EXTENT POSSIBLE.*

- Fire, rescue and emergency medical training should be combined
- To foster camaraderie and operational consistency

4. FIRE PREVENTION PROGRAMMING SHOULD BE UPGRADED IN THE TOWNSHIP, WORKING COLLABORATIVELY WITH THE CITY.

- The Township should adopt a fire ordinance and business inspection program
- Other services should be integrated with the City

5. DISCUSSION AND DIALOGUE REGARDING STATION HOUSE INTEGRATION SHOULD BE INITIATED.

- Initially involving the Township's Administrative Captain and City's Deputy Fire Chief
- Dialogue should then proceed as other initiatives are implemented

SECTION II

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

SECTION II

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

The City of Alpena and Alpena Township are contiguous communities with a combined population of more than 20,000. The City of Alpena is the historic “center city” for the region containing the primary industrial base, the social amenities and much of the public works infrastructure. The Township contains many of the commercial establishments that serve the area – with a mix of concentrated residential development near the City and large tracts of rural, sparsely developed land in the outer Township.

Each community has a long and storied history in fire services and emergency response. The Alpena Fire Department (AFD) has experienced significant professional growth over the prior two decades – with the conversion to a public safety administrative model and the upgrade of emergency medical response to paramedic transport level with responsibility for county-wide service provision. The Alpena Township Fire Department (ATFD) has also experienced positive change in expanding the Department’s service scope in 2005 to include first response to medical calls.

In regard to cooperative endeavors, the Fire Departments have only modest interaction. Some joint training has been undertaken on an intermittent basis and mutual aid is given and received according to need. However, as discussed in the following pages, the Departments, in the course of their respective assignments, exhibit the type of interagency teamwork that would serve the community well in the event that more formal cooperative arrangements were agreed upon and implemented. The result could be a more cost-effective operating arrangement for the provision of fire services.

Related to this, most Michigan cities and townships are looking at methods for reducing costs. Shrinking tax bases, rising employee costs, the property tax limitations imposed by the Headlee Amendment and Proposal A, and the continuing reductions in State of Michigan revenue sharing have created a negative financial trend at the local government level. Like other communities, the City and Township of Alpena are affected by these financial pressures and are continually challenged to “do more with less.”

Recognizing the need to explore cost beneficial alternatives, the City Council and Township Board commissioned a study focusing on the potential cost advantages and feasibility of combining the operations of the Alpena Fire Department and Alpena Township Fire Department. Selected to perform this study, we proceeded to conduct a thorough analysis of the issues pertaining to fire services consolidation. The results of this study are contained in the following sections of the report.

In regard to the presentation of the study’s findings, we have attempted to create a readable document that summarizes the strengths and weaknesses of the current system and specifies the various obstacles that must be addressed if a fire services consolidation was to move forward.

This analysis is contained in the following Section III. Our conclusions and recommendations are then formulated from this analysis and presented in Section IV.

SECTION III

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

SECTION III

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

In this section of the report we present our findings and conclusions pertaining to the organization and operations of the Alpena Fire Department and Alpena Township Fire Department, and the various issues that are pertinent to service consolidation. To facilitate review of the report we have divided the discussion into the following subsections.

- A. Overview of the Service Area
- B. Alpena Fire Department
- C. Alpena Township Fire Department
- D. Analysis of Issues and Obstacles Related to Consolidation

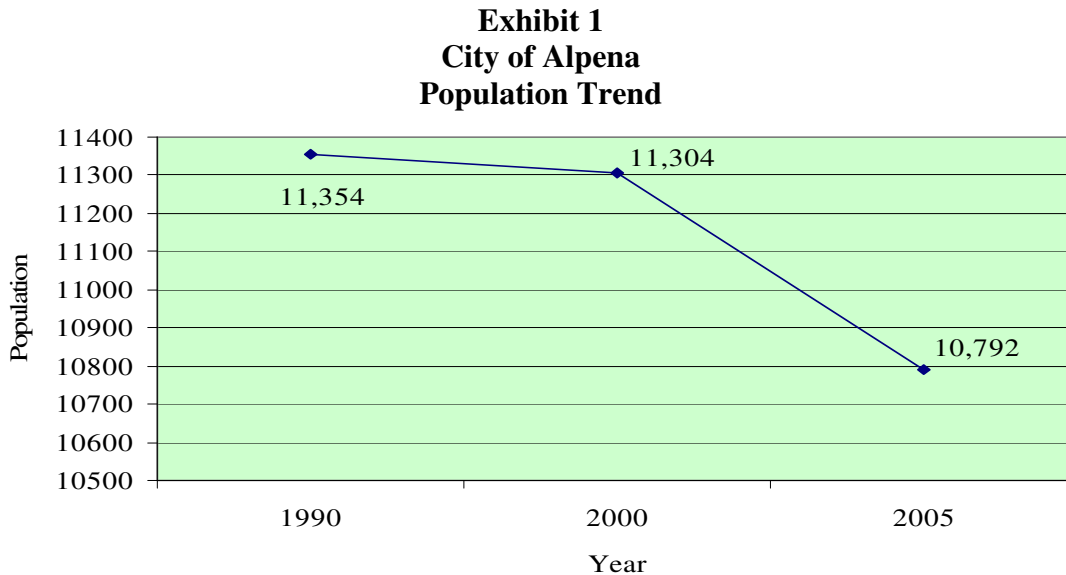
Each area is discussed separately in the following pages.

A. Overview of the Service Area

As a first step in the study process, it is necessary to gain an understanding of the service environment. In this case, to gain some perspective on the service demand and fire risk that a combined department would face. Related findings include the following:

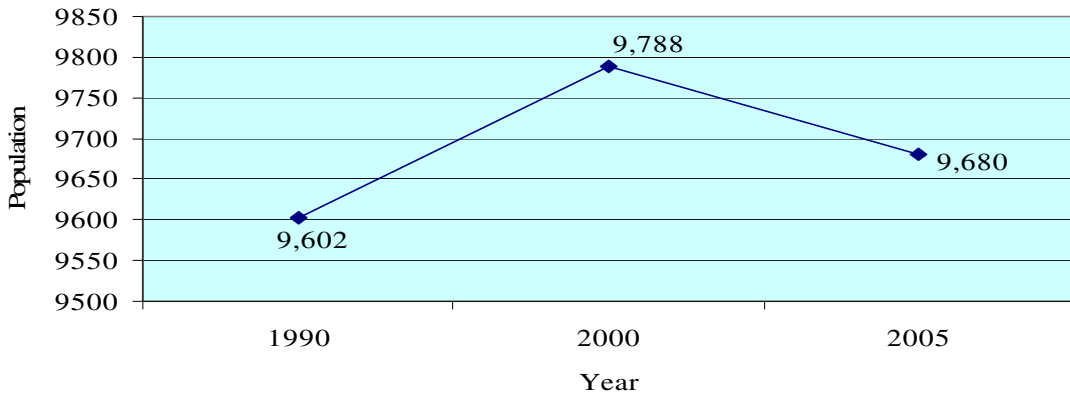
1. THE SERVICE AREA'S POPULATION IS GRADUALLY SHRINKING AND GROWING OLDER.

Exhibits 1 and 2 illustrate the population trends in the City of Alpena and Alpena Township over a previous fifteen year period.



Source: City of Alpena Comprehensive Plan

**Exhibit 2
Alpena Township
Population Trend**



Source: Alpena Township Comprehensive Plan

As seen in the exhibits, both communities are exhibiting a downward trend in population; with the City experiencing the largest decline. As with most older, industrialized towns, this has been an ongoing trend, dating to the 1960s. Related, the City’s 1960 census population of 14,862 was more than 35% above the 2005 estimated population of 10,792.

In addition to declining population, as seen in Exhibit 3, the remaining population in both communities is growing older with significant levels of over 65 population.

**Exhibit 3
City and Township of Alpena
Demographic Statistics – Population**

Statistic	City of Alpena	Alpena Township
Population*	10,762	9,680**
Median Age	39.6	41.9
Over 65 Population	19.6	16.7

* 2005 population, all other statistics are 2000 census

**An estimated 10% seasonal population is not included

Sources: City of Alpena Comprehensive Plan

Alpena Township Comprehensive Plan

In contrast to the above, 2000 census results for the entire state of Michigan are as follows:

- Median Age: 35.5
- Over 65: 12.3

Demographically, the Alpena area is becoming more aged and less populous. While the service population is declining, the remaining residents are, on average, older, and more likely to require services provided through the two Fire Departments – including first responder and paramedic transport emergency care.

2. THE HOUSING STOCK IS ALSO RELATIVELY AGED.

Communities with aged housing stock generally pose greater fire risk, due to issues of code compliance. As seen in Exhibit 4, both of the Alpena communities have significant levels of housing that were constructed prior to 1970. Moreover, almost 40% of the City’s housing stock was constructed prior to 1940 – before the adoption of the City’s building codes.

**Exhibit 4
City and Township of Alpena
Demographic Statistics – Housing**

Statistic	City of Alpena	Alpena Township
Housing Units	5,200	4,757
Housing Age	-	-
- pre 1940	39.1%	5.3%
- 1940-1970	47%	70.1%
Total Pre 1970	86.1%	75.4%

Sources: City of Alpena Comprehensive Plan
Alpena Township Comprehensive Plan

Summarily, the City and Township face a similar demographic future (though more extreme in the City). It includes:

- A declining population
- A large percentage of elderly population
- Minimal new growth
- An increasingly aged building stock.

In the scenario, the services performed by the Alpena Fire Department and Alpena Township Fire Department may be in increasing demand. Conversely, financial resources could become more finite as new growth is limited and tax limitation statutes, such as Proposal A, limit available funding.

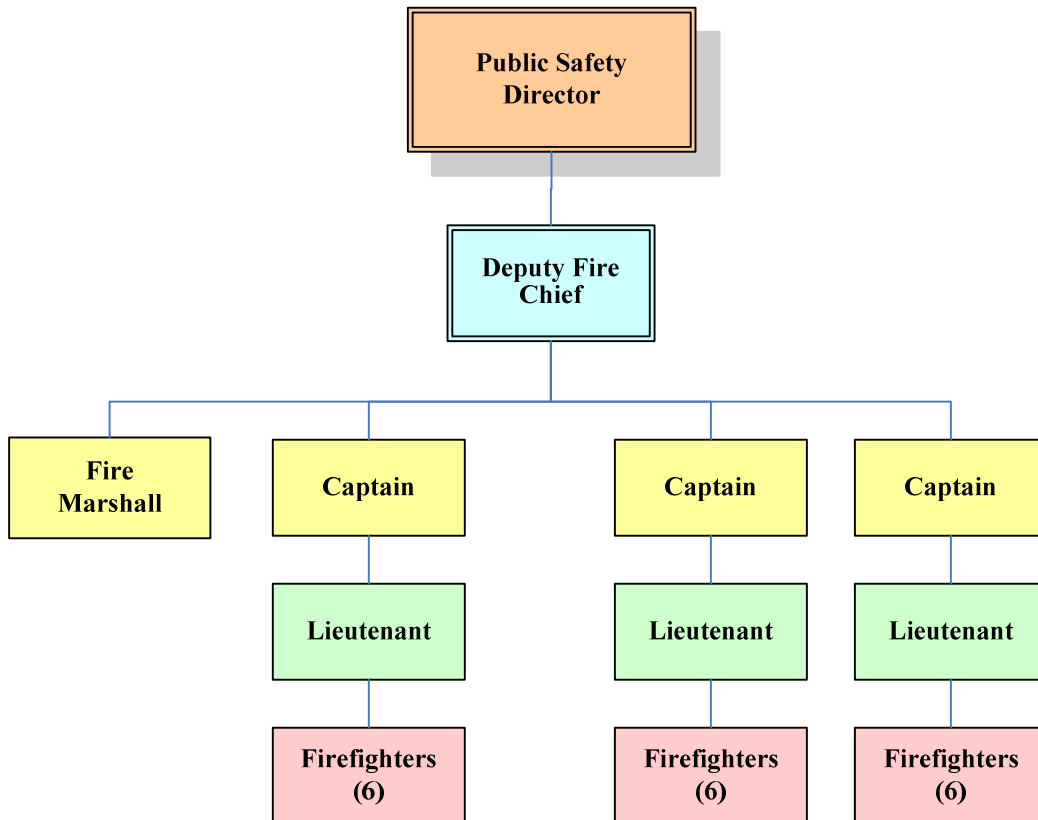
In this situation, it will be critical to maximize the use of all resources. As highly labor-intensive operations, the two Fire Departments will continue to require significant outlays. Finding ways to improve the cost effectiveness of these operations will be critical. A fire services consolidation could be one option, as examined in this report.

B. Alpena Fire Department

The Alpena Fire Department (AFD) provides a full range of fire suppression, prevention and emergency medical services to the City of Alpena. Additionally, ambulance service and transport is provided to the entire Alpena County geographic area.

The organization of AFD is illustrated in Exhibit 5. As seen in the exhibit, AFD is administered by a Public Safety Director, with day-to-day operational responsibility delegated to a Deputy Fire Chief. From a budgetary perspective, fire and medical operations are represented in separate departmental cost centers, thereby allowing a clear accounting of ambulance costs. Our analysis recognized this division of activities in developing cost analysis and operational comparisons.

**Exhibit 5
City of Alpena Fire Department
Current Organization**



Note: Two current vacant positions at Firefighter level are included in the above employee count.

Key findings regarding the operations of AFD include the following:

1. AFD APPEARS TO BE A HIGHLY PROFESSIONAL CAREER FIRE DEPARTMENT.

Unlike the Alpena Township Fire Department, AFD is manned entirely by full-time career Firefighters. Operating from a modern, centrally-located facility, AFD possesses a well defined command hierarchy, a broad array of equipment, an established training curriculum and ongoing programs in fire prevention, inspection and investigation.

As seen in the following Exhibit 6, AFD’s work scope is much broader than that of the Alpena Township Fire Department. Essentially, greater resources have been expended on AFD – the result is a highly professional (and well funded) fire operation.

**Exhibit 6
City and Township of Alpena
Comparison of Service Scope and Operational Status**

Category of Service	Alpena Township	City of Alpena
Fire Suppression	Yes	Yes
Hazmat	Yes	Yes
Personal Injury Rescue	Yes	Yes
Medical First Response- MFR or EMT Level	Yes	No
Medical First Response- Paramedic Level	No	Yes
Medical Transport	No	Yes
Arson Investigation	No	Yes
Fire Education Program	No	Yes
Fire/Business Inspections	No	Yes
Fire Pre-planning	Now Underway	Yes
Comprehensive Current SOP/SOG	No	No
Formal Training Plan	No	Yes
Capital Replacement Plan	Some	Yes
Fire Officer Certification Requirement	No	No*

* Indirectly, yes, due to promotional system weighting

Source: Rehmann Robson survey

Chief among the differences noted in Exhibit 6 are ambulance and fire prevention activities. More specifically:

- As noted, the City provides ambulance transport. All firefighting staff (with one exception) are certified at the paramedic level. Hence, all ambulance transport, and the vast majority of non-transport calls receive a fully paramedic response – a service level greater than is required for an agency to be certified as an Advanced Life Service responder.

- AFD also appears solid in regard to fire prevention activities. Related, a business inspection program is ongoing, site plan reviews are conducted and fire preplanning is periodically performed by the fire companies.

Also, as seen in Exhibit 6, some work is required in the update of Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG). This is not unusual for a fire service of this size but is an area that should be upgraded. It is a task that the Deputy Chief notes as a personal priority to be accomplished before the completion of his tenure.

Summarily, AFD, despite its rather rural upstate location, appears to operate at a professional level equal to most similarly-sized downstate fire departments. Many upgrades have been accomplished over the prior two decades focusing on facilities improvement, equipment upgrade, fire preplanning and prevention and other operational components.

2. AFD MUST SERVE THE DUAL ROLE OF AMBULANCE PROVIDER AND FIRE DEPARTMENT – WHILE ASSURING ADEQUATE RESOURCES FOR BOTH.

As seen in the previous Exhibit 5, AFD operates with three platoons: each staffed by a contingent comprised of eight Firefighters and command officers. Due to absences, the shifts may operate at seven or even six total personnel with six being the contractually mandated minimum manning level.

The City's contract with the County for ambulance services requires that three ambulances be maintained in service at all times. Should more than one ambulance be called out for service, the City's firefighting capability is decreased dramatically. To rectify this situation it is also mandated that staffing be maintained at four within the City proper (the Fire Marshall is included in this minimum, though not assigned to a platoon).

Related to this, a staff of four can be insufficient for a structural fire of any significance. To bolster the force in these situations, the City uses mutual aid. As the primary responder, Alpena Township will typically respond with both pumpers and a full call-out force.

The mutual aid pact between the two communities is the clearest example of meaningful cooperation between the two fire agencies. AFD's command officers speak highly of the Township's firefighting force and the "safety net" provided by the current call-out arrangement. In fact, the benefits of this arrangement are experienced by both communities – allowing each to "staff-up" in the event of a major fire occurrence, without incurring the day-to-day expense of added staff.

In the case of the City, the cost benefit is particularly pronounced. Operating exclusively with full-time Firefighters, any additions to shift staffing would prove costly. By way of explanation, an increase of one in minimum manning requires 3-4 additional staff (at an estimated \$65,000 in wage and benefits for each).

In regard to staffing, the current minimum appears to be comparable to that of other similar-sized agencies and associated service areas. As seen in Exhibit 7, a comparison of other transport agencies, AFD’s minimum manning level is slightly below average. Additionally:

- AFD is serving a larger population and service area
- Unlike the majority, AFD is not contiguous to other full-service career agencies that could/would assist.

**Exhibit 7
City of Alpena Ambulance Service
Comparison of Minimum Manning**

Fire Department	Population Served	Transport	Certification Level	Minimum Manning	Residents Per Minimum Manning Staff
Alpena (county wide)	30,428	Yes	Paramedic	6	5,071
Garden City	30,047	Yes	Paramedic	5	6,009
Harper Woods	14,254	Yes	Paramedic	4	3,563
Madison Heights	31,101	Yes	Paramedic	9	3,455
Monroe	22,076	Yes	Paramedic	10	2,208
Sault Ste. Marie	38,543*	Yes	EMT-Paramedic	5	7,709
Trenton	19,584	Yes	Paramedic	7	2,798
Wayne	19,051	Yes	Paramedic	5	3,810
Wyandotte	28,006	Yes	Paramedic	6	4,668
AVERAGE	25,333	-	-	6.38	4,278

* Full service to city and two townships: Echo unit for remainder of county

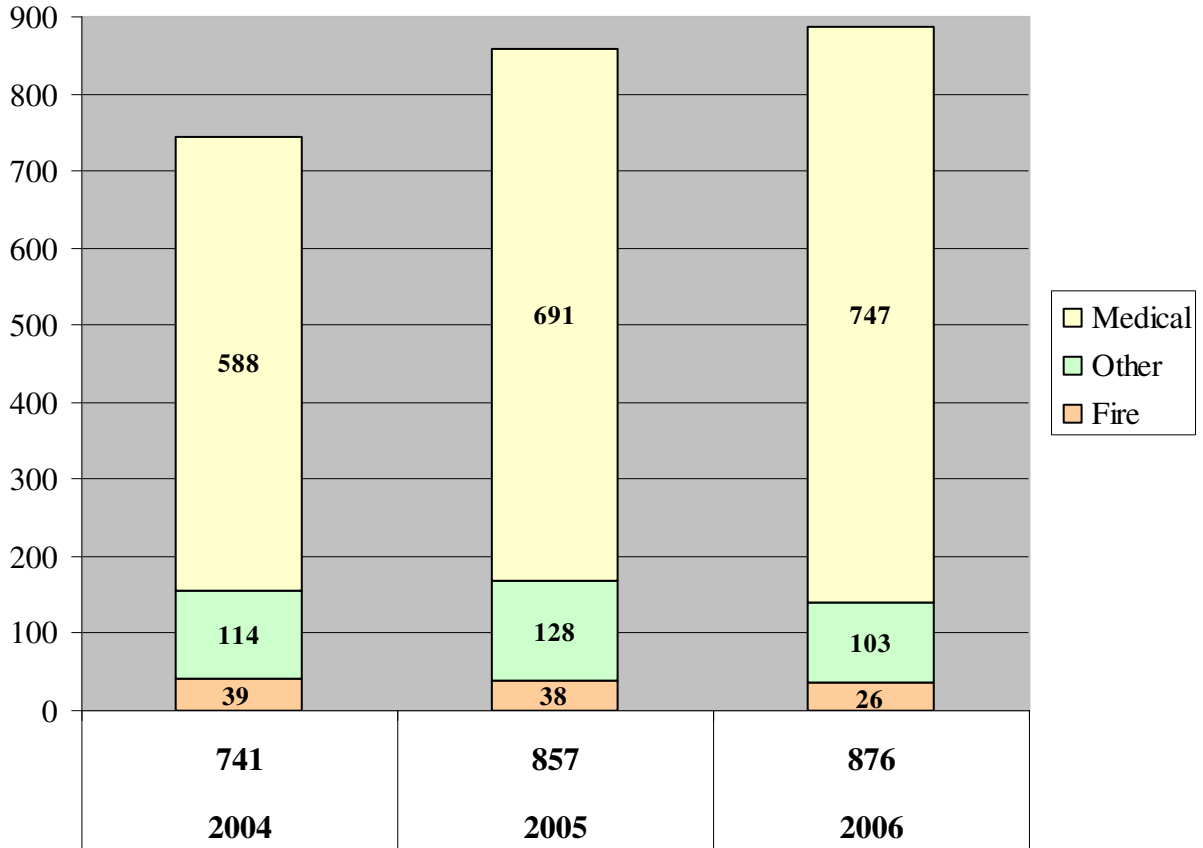
Source: Rehmann Robson survey

In summary, AFD appears to effectively balance the dual responsibilities of a Fire Department and emergency medical operation. The mutual aid agreement with the Township is a vital link in this process and a positive illustration of the benefits that can be derived from pooled resources.

3. AFD’S WORKLOAD IS PREDOMINANTLY MEDICAL-RELATED AND WITHIN THE CITY/TOWNSHIP SERVICE AREA.

As with many fire agencies, the bulk of AFD’s workload is in the area of medical response. This is illustrated in the following Exhibit 8, a summary of Fire Department calls-for-service for the period 2004-2006.

**Exhibit 8
Alpena Fire Department
Call-for-Service by Type
2004-2006**



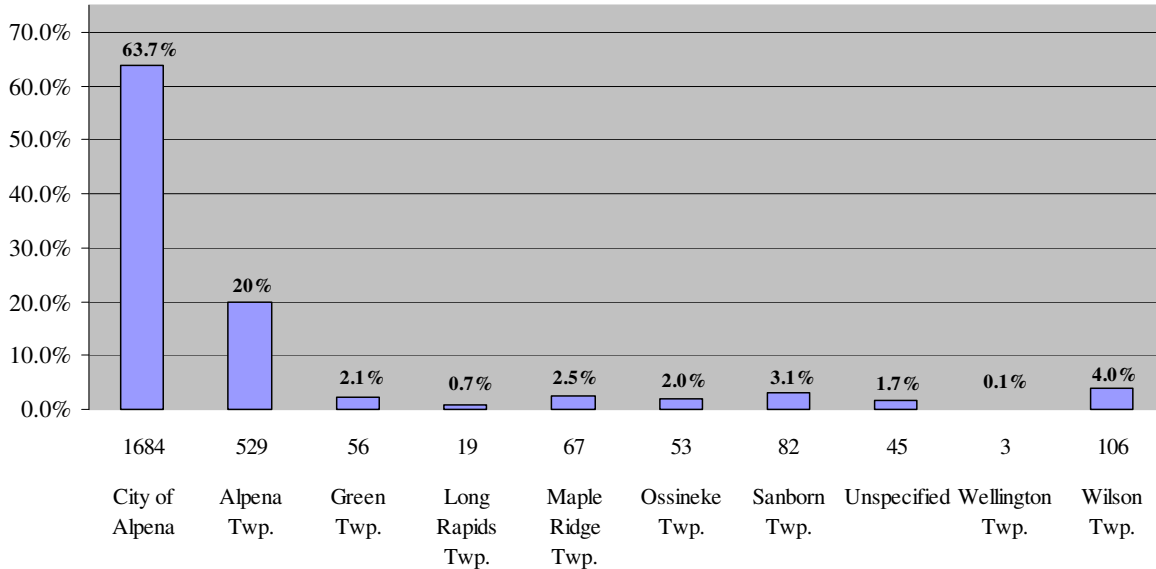
Source: Alpena Fire Department

As seen in the exhibit, actual fire calls are in fact, rare. The majority of Fire Department workload is related to emergency medical response – primarily ambulance back-up and assistance. Consistent with national trends, fire occurrence has declined, and AFD is becoming more focused on fire prevention and medical services. Again, mutual aid with the Township allows the City to maintain staffing at manageable levels and effectively address the infrequent, though serious, fire occurrence.

The cooperation of the two departments and interconnectedness of the two communities extends beyond fire suppression. By way of explanation, AFD has two roles, including: Fire Department activities and response (such as those in Exhibit 8), and ambulance service. As discussed below, a significant level of ambulance service cooperation is also evident.

The output of AFD's ambulance service in calendar year 2006 is illustrated in the following Exhibit 9 – a summary of calls-for-service to each of the jurisdictions receiving this service.

**Exhibit 9
County-Wide Ambulance Service
Response by Jurisdiction – 2006**



Source: Alpena Fire Department

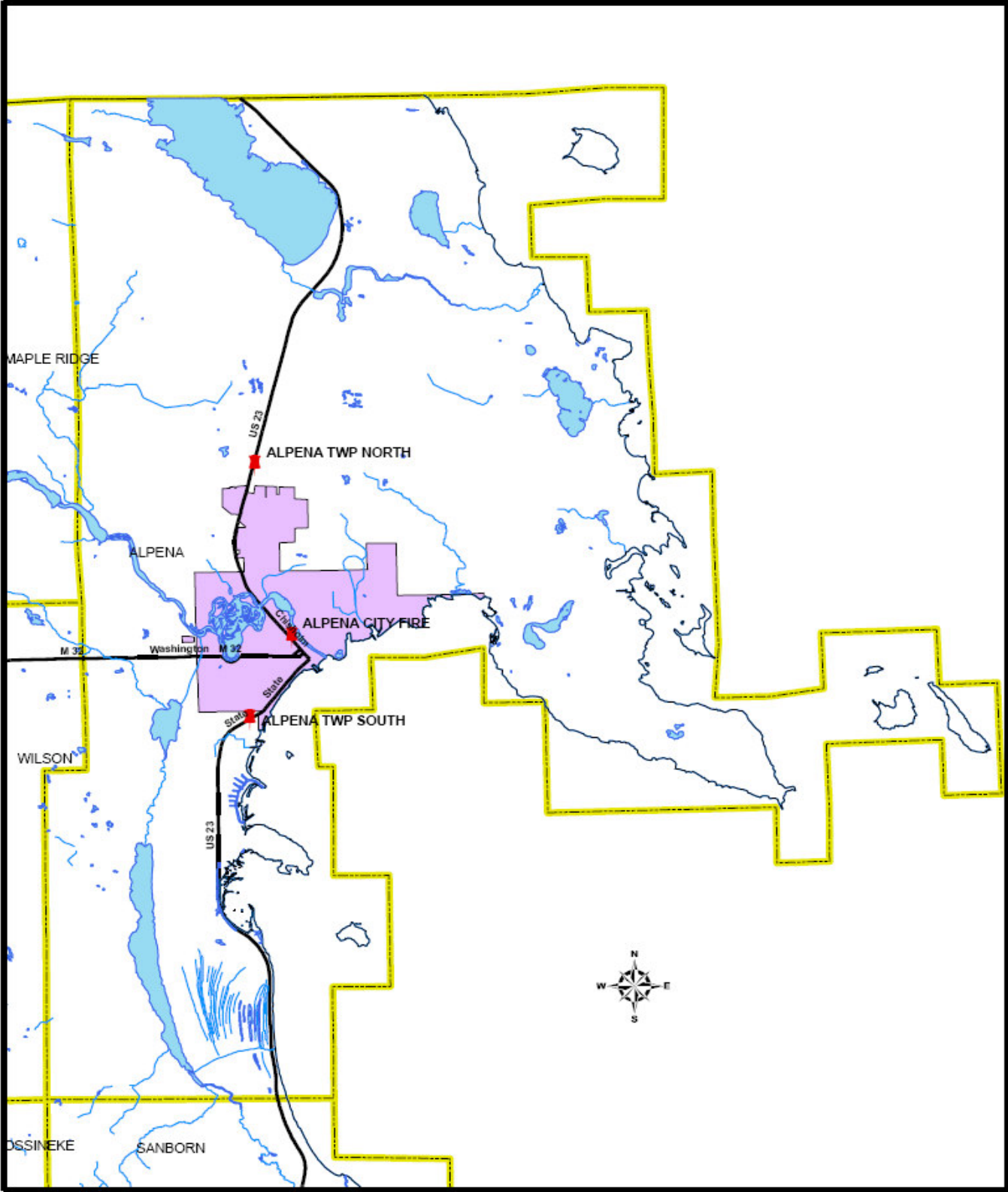
As seen in the exhibit, nearly 84% of all ambulance responses in 2006 were to locations in the City or Township of Alpena. The City, with the majority of medical and senior centers, accounted for nearly 64% of this total. However, call levels to Alpena Township were also significant – exceeding the total of all of the other townships combined.

In this situation, a significant level of medical services cooperation is also evident between the two communities. Alpena Township Firefighters provide first responder assistance for nearly all ambulance calls – working cooperatively with City Firefighters on medical calls to the Township. As with fire suppression, services are intertwined as each community and service provider seeks to address emergency needs.

4. THE CITY’S AMBULANCE SERVICE WOULD BENEFIT FROM A SECOND (AND POSSIBLY THIRD) FACILITY.

Exhibit 10 illustrates the geographic dimensions of the City of Alpena and Alpena Township. The locations of the fire stations are indicated in red.

Exhibit 10
City and Township of Alpena



As seen in Exhibit 10, the City’s Public Safety facility is relatively central for the City population. The Township operates two facilities – one just south of the City’s boundary on US-23 and one approximately 3.5 miles north of the Public Safety facility, housed in the Township Hall. In regard to incident response, the Township uses the river as the geographic divider for determining the response parameters for the north or south fire facilities.

As seen in the exhibit, the City’s Public Safety facility is well situated for City ambulance response and reasonably well situated for service calls to the denser portions of Alpena Township, including the M-32 commercial corridor. The facility’s central location is less desirable for response to the outer areas of Alpena Township, and in turn the outlying Townships.

Related to this, we have been provided the following estimates of ambulance and fire truck response times.

Exhibit 11
City and Township of Alpena
Average Response Times to Select Locations

Location	City Ambulance	Township Fire Department	Difference
East of Wessel Rd. and North of Bloom Rd.	13	7.6	5.4
West of Wessel and North of Bloom Rd.	11	6.9	4.1
West of Wessel and Bloom Rd.	8	4.0	4.0
Remainder of North Station Area	6	3.8	2.2
South of Werth and East of Piper Rd.	8	4.8	3.2
Days Inn	4	6.0	(2.0)
Remainder of South Station Area	7	4.5	2.5

Source: Alpena Township and City of Alpena Response Samples and Estimates

As seen in the exhibit, the City’s ambulance service response times to the Township’s and County’s outer areas could be reduced significantly if ambulances were located in Alpena Township’s current fire facilities. Unfortunately, if City ambulances were stationed at both Township facilities, it could also jeopardize the City’s ability to quickly marshal the resources needed for a fire call within the City proper.

From the City’s perspective, the ideal location for a satellite ambulance facility would be along the M-32 corridor. As seen in the preceding Exhibit 11, a location in this area would station that portion of the firefighting force within a four minute drive of the main facility; with the ability to quickly access most areas of the City.

From an ambulance services perspective, the density and heavy traffic flow in the M-32 corridor give rise to a relatively high incidence of injury accidents and emergency calls.

More generally, a satellite station in this area could reduce response time to this service need. As importantly, traffic signals and congestion in this area can serve to slow the progress of City ambulances bound for out-county service calls. An M-32 location could serve as a “springboard” to more timely response to the outer reaches of the County and M-65.

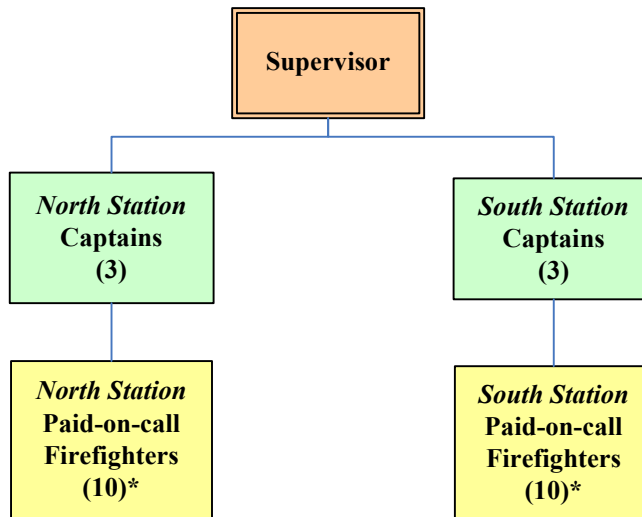
A central location could also be cost-beneficial to Alpena Township – possibly in conjunction with the closure of the two current facilities. However, impediments exist that may make this option unworkable. The “pros and cons” of a central facility are further discussed in the following section of the report.

C. Alpena Township Fire Department

The Alpena Township Fire Department (ATFD) provides fire suppression, emergency response and medical first responder (MFR) services to Alpena Township and a small portion of Maple Ridge Township.

The organization of ATFD is illustrated in Exhibit 12. As seen in the exhibit, ATFD is administered by the Township Supervisor with six full-time Fire Captains and a paid-on-call force. The Captains provide single coverage to each of the Township’s two fire facilities on a 24-hour basis. Approximately twenty paid-on-call Firefighters supplement the full-time force, “toning out” for fire and emergency medical response.

**Exhibit 12
Alpena Township Fire Department
Current Organization**



*Approximate number and breakdown

Key findings regarding the operations of ATFD include the following:

1. ATFD IS A RELATIVELY COST EFFICIENT OPERATION.

As noted above, ATFD operates with a combination of full-time and paid-on-call employees. The station houses are staffed with one on-duty, full-time employee at all times with the paid-on-call staff responding on an as-needed basis. The on-duty, full-time Captain is responsible for responding to the scene with the engine/pumper, thus assuring a relatively rapid response to calls-for-service.

In regard to cost, ATFD’s full-time/paid-on-call operating paradigm is relatively cost efficient – particularly when compared to the City’s full-time, career Fire Department. This can be seen in the following cost comparison:

	Population	2006 Actual Expense	Per Capita Cost
Township Fire Department	9,680	\$653,981	\$67.56
City Fire Department	10,762	\$1,258,185*	\$116.91

*Ambulance Department expenses not included

This level of cost-efficiency is particularly impressive when the size of the service area is considered. As seen in the following Exhibit 13, ATFD’s service area is considerably larger than other surveyed departments of similar population.

**Exhibit 13
City and Township of Alpena
Comparison of Service Areas**

City/Township	Population served	Service area (sq. mi.)	Type of Department
City of Alpena	11,304	8.7	Career
Alpena Township	9,788	105	Combination
Alma	15,000	140	Paid-on-call
Fenton	15,000	25	Paid-on-call
Grandville	16,500	9	Combination
Harper Woods	14,254	2.6	Career
Howell Area Fire	44,000	155	Combination
Manistee	6,586	4	Career
Marysville	9,684	7.5	Combination
Saline Area Fire	22,000	89	Combination
Sault Ste. Marie	16,542	17.5	Career
St. Joseph	8,756	3	Combination
Sturgis	11,285	2.5	Combination
Traverse City	14,532	8.1	Career
Woodhaven	12,530	6.5	Combination
AVERAGE	15,898	36.1	

Source: Rehmann Robson survey

Moreover, as seen in Exhibit 14, the call volume, while not as high as that recorded for the Alpena Fire Department, is on a par with the average of the surveyed fire departments.

**Exhibit 14
City and Township of Alpena
Comparison of Call Volume**

City/Township	Population served	Total Call Volume	Residents per Call
City of Alpena	11,304	2,781	4.1
Alpena Township	9,788	848	11.5
Alma	15,000	300	50.0
Fenton	15,000	542	27.7
Grandville	16,500	1,957	8.4
Howell Area Fire	44,000	1,526	28.8
Manistee	6,586	927	7.1
Marysville	9,684	1,435	6.7
Saline Area Fire	22,000	855	25.7
Sault Ste. Marie	16,542	3,136	5.3
Sturgis	11,285	2,696	4.2
Traverse City	14,532	2,467	5.9
Woodhaven	12,530	1,200	10.4
AVERAGE	16,696	1,508	11.1

Source: Rehmann Robson survey

Essentially, the Township has fashioned an operating model that is cost conscious, yet timely and responsive. However, as discussed below, there are some drawbacks resulting from this cost efficiency – particularly related to command.

2. ATFD LACKS AN EFFECTIVE COMMAND STRUCTURE.

As previously noted, the Township Supervisor is responsible for the administration and overall supervision of ATFD. The Supervisor appears both energetic and sincerely concerned with the welfare of the Department. However, the Supervisor is not a certified Firefighter, nor trained in fire command.

As a paramilitary organization, a fire department is highly dependent on central authority and chain-of-command. Lacking this leadership, ATFD is challenged in a number of key areas. More specifically:

- All of the full-time Firefighters are at the Captain rank. There is no one individual with ultimate decision making responsibility. Typically a Chief, or

more senior officer, would be designated as scene commander for fire incidents – and have the responsibility for determining and defining departmental positions and approach on a full range of operational matters.

- Related to this, a number of ATFD’s operating systems would benefit from more central control and professional input. More specifically:
 - A comprehensive series of standard operating guidelines should be developed as a basis for training and procedural approach.
 - Records management systems should be upgraded and automated. This process is now underway, led by a recently hired Captain.
 - Fire preplanning should be completed with maps and documentation developed regarding the business properties located in the Township.

While ATFD is attempting to make headway in each of these areas, the lack of an effective command structure will continue to hinder these efforts. Related, this is an area in which the Township would benefit from operational consolidation.

3. THE PAID-ON-CALL CONTINGENT APPEARS STRONG AND WOULD BE AN ASSET TO A COMBINED DEPARTMENT.

The paid-on-call contingent is comprised of twenty certified Firefighters, of which five are certified Medical First Responders and five are Emergency Medical Technicians. The contingent is divided into two groups – one responding to the North Station area and one to the South. The Firefighters are further divided between Medical First Responders and those responding only to fire calls.

By all accounts, the volunteers appear to be highly regarded by both the City Firefighters and the Township’s full-time firefighting cadre. From the City’s perspective, the critical mass that this group can bring to a fire scene is highly desirable, and a key benefit to be derived from consolidation.

It should be noted however that our interviews suggested a wariness among the volunteers regarding consolidation. Essentially, some volunteers see an uncertain future in the event of consolidation. Related, the role of this group should be clearly defined and articulated as part of any consolidation discussion and planning.

More immediately, the Township should consider utilizing the volunteer contingent to greater advantage. More specifically, some agencies use volunteers in a “paid-on-duty” capacity. In this scenario, the volunteers are paid their hourly rate to serve in an on-duty capacity, rather than simply call-in.

In the case of Alpena Township, the volunteers could be used for vacancy coverage. By way of explanation, ATFD operates with minimal staffing (i.e. one man per station

house). In this situation, any absence triggers the need for overtime assignment. Related, the Township incurred \$53,393 in overtime costs in FY 2007. A large portion of this total was due to the long-term illness of one Captain, as well as the scheduled vacations of others. Volunteers could be scheduled on-duty to fill vacancies on this type, thereby saving the Township the difference between overtime pay (i.e. typically \$19.29 per hour) and the \$12 volunteer rate (or a lesser amount as negotiated). Essentially, fill-in cost could be reduced by almost 40%.

The use of volunteers in this capacity would require new language in the collective bargaining agreement, and the elimination of contract language barring volunteers from driving the vehicles. The Township would also want to assure that one full-time Captain was on duty in one of the two station houses to assure an adequate level of shift command.

4. THE TOWNSHIP'S STATION HOUSES DO NOT APPEAR TO BE IDEALLY LOCATED. HOWEVER, PHYSICAL OBSTACLES LIMIT AVAILABLE OPTIONS.

As seen in the previous Exhibit 10, the Township's two fire stations are located just north and south of the City. These locations provide for a more timely response to the northern and southern extremes of the Township, but are not ideal for the M-32 corridor, the area of greatest potential service need.

In the ideal world, ATFD would be housed in a single central location within the commercial district and in close proximity to the denser population areas. In this scenario, ATFD could still respond north or south to the less populated areas in a relatively timely fashion.

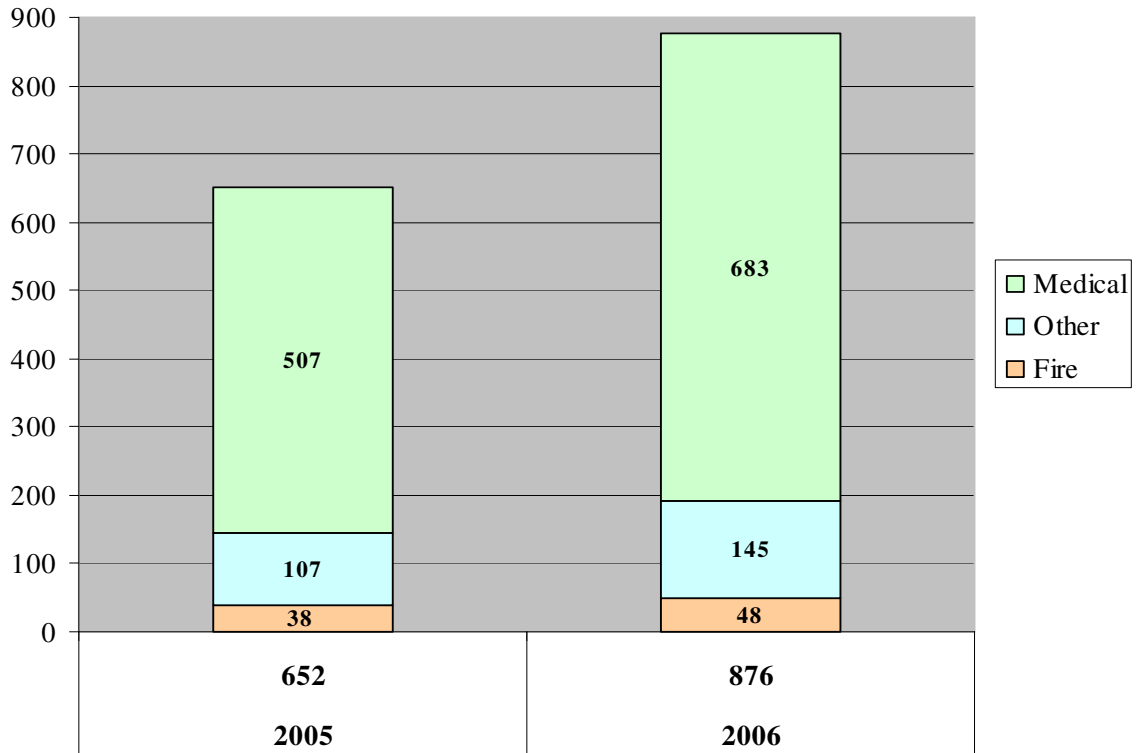
Unfortunately, the Township road system does not support this option. Most notably, there is no "ring road" around the community. Bagley Road would ideally serve this purpose, but does not provide a throughway to the north. Consequently, the northern areas of the Township would be poorly served by a central station.

As an option, a consolidated department, utilizing the three current facilities could improve service to the Township's M-32 corridor while allowing the luxury of maintaining service from the two existing Township facilities. Response time to M-32 service calls originating from the City's facility would reduce response time from an estimated six minutes to four (Days Inn location). Moreover, in the case of a serious suppression incident, the City's full-time force would accomplish a more timely initial set up and attack.

5. LIKE THE CITY, ATFD'S WORKLOAD IS PRIMARILY MEDICAL RELATED. RESPONSE PROTOCOL IS STILL EVOLVING.

As seen in the following Exhibit 15, ATFD's workload, like the City's, is heavily slanted toward medical response.

**Exhibit 15
Alpena Township Fire Department
Calls-for-Service by Type**



Source: Alpena Township Fire Department

With the addition of medical first response in 2005, the workload of the Fire Captains was increased significantly. The service upgrade has been a relative success and is particularly beneficial for the outer Township where ambulance service response is not as timely. As an example, the City’s ambulance requires an estimated five minutes to pass the Township’s North Station and three minutes to pass the South Station. Given this “head start” ATFD’s Fire Captains (and possibly volunteers) can reach the emergency scene to stabilize medical patients prior to the arrival of the ambulance.

The response protocol for ambulance service is still evolving. By way of explanation, ATFD maintains only one Captain on duty, per firehouse, at any one time. All first responder medical response is made using the pumper/engine, thus assuring that the responding Captain is able to redirect the firefighting apparatus in the event of a serious fire incident.

However, responding with a pumper/engine is problematic from several perspectives, including:

- The fire apparatus are bulky with significant water weight. The result is a slower, and potentially more dangerous, emergency run.
- The wear and tear on the fire trucks is much more extensive than would be the case if they were used only for non-medical calls-for-service.

The ideal option to the current system would be to use ambulances. As seen in Exhibit 16, this is common among fire agencies.

Exhibit 16
City and Township of Alpena
Comparison of Medical Response Vehicles

City/Township	What kind of vehicle do you typically use to respond to medical calls?	
	Ambulance or Rescue Unit	Pumper
City of Alpena	Yes	Yes
Alpena Township	No	Yes
Alma	-	-
Fenton	Yes	No
Grandville	Yes	No
Harper Woods	Yes	No
Howell Area Fire	No	Yes
Manistee	Yes	No
Marysville	Yes	No
Saline Area Fire	Yes	No
Sault Ste. Marie	Yes	Yes
Sturgis	Yes	Yes
Traverse City	Yes	Yes
Woodhaven	Yes	No

Source: Rehmann Robson survey

As of this writing, the Township may be receiving one used (though serviceable) ambulance from the City. Ideally, both station houses would be equipped with an ambulance that would be used for most medical calls. In this event, fire suppression back-up could be assured in several ways, such as:

- Limiting the use of an ambulance to one outstanding call/station house.
- Stationing a volunteer at the station house concurrent with an ambulance call – and allowing the volunteer to operate the equipment.

- Entering into an automatic aid agreement with the City for fire response.

6. THE TOWNSHIP WOULD BENEFIT FROM A MORE STRUCTURED APPROACH TO FIRE PREVENTION.

As a combination department with minimal manning, ATFD performs only limited fire prevention activities. More specifically:

- The Township has no Fire Marshal or fire ordinance.
- Related, site plan review is limited to the State Code, as applied by the Building Official.
- As noted, there is no annual inspection program for the 400 businesses operating within the Township.
- Some fire preplanning has been conducted, but there is not yet a complete, up-to-date inventory.

The lack of fire prevention programming does not imply a criticism of ATFD. As previously noted, ATFD is modeled as a cost-efficient, combination fire agency – providing the most value with scarce resources.

However, in considering the issue of consolidation, fire prevention is an area where the Township would derive benefit. The City has well-developed programs in all of the above areas, and in some cases, such as plan review, arson investigation or right-to-know inspection, could potentially expand these services to the Township area at a relatively modest cost – if resources were properly integrated.

D. Analysis of Issues and Obstacles Related to Consolidation

As discussed in the previous pages, the Alpena Fire Department and Alpena Township Fire Department both play key roles in their respective emergency management systems. However, there are significant differences in regard to employee composition and staffing, organization, service scope and many other operational features. In this regard, any effort at operational consolidation will face many hurdles.

In regard to future options, consolidation is not the only alternative. Related, the two communities could simply decide to do nothing. However, a consolidated model would provide a more efficient economy of scale and more standardized service provision to the greater service area.

In this sense, the communities have every reason to seek a more cost beneficial alternative for the provision of fire services. The presence of two separate agencies within such close proximity is a blatant example of service redundancy. Add to this the low incidence of actual fire occurrence, and the need for a more efficient service model becomes even more apparent.

For the sake of discussion, consolidation could be achieved in a number of ways. A far fetched, though available alternative, would be to eliminate the City's Fire Department and contract with the Township for fire suppression services. This would likely result in cost savings for the City but a reduction in service scope and possibly service quality. It would also result in the elimination of the ambulance service – a critical component of the current emergency response system.

Another alternative would be to disband the Alpena Township Fire Department and contract with the City for services. Under this scenario, the Township might receive a broader range of services (i.e. fire prevention) and a full-time, on-duty fire response. However, there is no guarantee that this arrangement would be more cost-efficient. The City's bargaining unit would no doubt demand an increase in minimum manning (possibly justified) and costs would rise accordingly. Additionally, the volunteer contingent of the Township operation would be lost, with a strong likelihood that the City would be unable to resurrect this "safety net."

Summarily, a contract for services is not an option that we would recommend. However, the other alternative, consolidation of the two existing departments, will require the resolution of a number of major issues. These include the following:

- 1. Contract differences**
- 2. Rank**
- 3. Medical training**
- 4. Deployment**
- 5. Volunteer use and status**
- 6. Funding and legal status.**

Each is discussed below.

1. CONTRACTUAL DIFFERENCES WILL BE A MAJOR CHALLENGE.

The full-time Firefighters in both departments are provided with the right to compulsory arbitration under PA 312 of 1969. Essentially any changes to contractual provisions must be negotiated or ultimately presented to a three-person arbitration board for resolution. Act 312 provisions would be binding in the case of arbitration.

In regard to the City and Township, the Firefighters work under very different contractual provisions. Key points are summarized in the following Exhibit 17.

Exhibit 17
City and Township of Alpena
Fire Labor Agreement Conditions

Item	Alpena Township	City of Alpena
Holidays	10	8
Vacation (@ 10 years)	144 hours annual	240 hours annual
Sick Time	12 hours/month	12 hours/month
Sick Time Payout	2,400 hour max @100%	1,456 hours max (50% of total)
Pension	9.5% of base to 2,912 hours	Defined benefit plan and 3.25% to 457 Plan
Promotional System	None	Point system
Residency	None	20 mile radius
Food Allowance	None	\$400 annual
Health Coverage	PPO I	PPO I with premium co-pay to \$60/month
Employer-Paid Retiree Health Coverage	None	50% of cost to \$400 max
Medical Reimbursement	None	\$500 max
Dental	\$200 annual limit	Jefferson Pilot Plan or equal
Prescription Co-Pay	\$10/\$20	\$10/\$20
Wage (@ 10 years)	\$12.86	\$13.47
Medical Service Stipend	\$700/annum	\$1,000/annum
Longevity (10 year employee)	2% of base	2% of base
Term Life Insurance	\$30,000	\$25,000

Source: Rehmann Robson survey

While wage is an obvious difference, it is not the most costly or significant. The most consequential variations are in the area of retirement. More specifically:

- City Firefighters have a defined benefit (traditional) retirement plan, and also receive an additional 3.25% of wage in a 457 defined contribution plan. In contrast, Township Firefighters have only a defined contribution plan (“pay as you go”) with a Township contribution of 9.5% of base wage. The City’s offerings are undoubtedly more generous and desirable. The conversion of the Township Firefighters to the City plan would prove costly if this were a condition of consolidation.
- A similar case can be made for retiree health care – an area of rapidly rising costs. The City pays 50% of this benefit while the Township pays none.

As seen in Exhibit 17, other differences are also apparent. Each has cost ramifications – the majority currently favor the City’s Firefighters.

2. THE ISSUE OF RANK MUST BE RESOLVED.

As discussed in the previous section, all six full-time Township Firefighters are classified as Captains. The Captain is responsible for directing the fire scene, operating the equipment and maintaining the fire station. Some Captains have duties related to training, recordkeeping or other specific tasks. However, no particular training is required to assume the position other than Firefighter II and MFR certifications. (However, two Captains are certified as Fire Officers.)

In the City's fire service, command officers rise in rank based on a contractually-specified promotional system. Captains are the shift commanders, with responsibility for scene command and all shift activities and personnel. Fire Officer Certification is not formally required, but near impossible to avoid, due to the weightings used for the promotional system. Four of the City's Captains have achieved the highest level of certification: Fire Officer III. New Captains, as is the case for all personnel, must also be certified Paramedics.

In regard to job complexity, the City's Captain position does appear more complex. Moreover, it is achieved by competitive exam, not simply as a result of hire. Conversely, Township Fire Captains are undoubtedly more skilled and/or experienced in the oversight of a volunteer contingent and rural fire suppression.

Summarily, the issue of rank must be resolved if the two fire services are integrated. Each department has strong opinions on this issue, and mutual accommodation must be achieved.

3. IF NOT RESOLVED, DIFFERENCES IN MEDICAL TRAINING COULD IMPACT SERVICE RESPONSE.

As discussed, the Township currently provides medical first response at an MFR Certification level. In regard to individual certifications, four of the six Captains are certified EMT, and two MFR. Among the volunteers, ten of the twenty have one of these two certifications. In contrast, all but one City Firefighter is certified at the much higher Paramedic level. The coursework and training differential between certifications is significant, as seen below.

- EMT: 194 initial hours
- Paramedic: EMT and additional 1,000-1,200 hours.

Our conversations with Township Firefighters indicate limited, or no desire to "train-up" to the Paramedic level. Should this be the case, it would be difficult to integrate the six Captains into a combined workforce without impacting ambulance service response.

More specifically, the City now provides a fully paramedic response for both ambulance service and back-up (with the exception of one command officer). Moreover, firefighting and ambulance personnel are one and the same. In a consolidated department, Township Captains would become members of a particular shift, shift minimum, etc.. If not

certified at the Paramedic level, accommodations would have to be made. Options that could be available include the following:

- Have all six Captains “train-up” to the EMT Certification level, and run the ambulance with one Paramedic and one EMT, as determined by shift staffing. This would satisfy the State requirements for Advance Life Service, but would be a downgrade from the current service level.
- Limit the Captains to first responder service only. However, this may be difficult to accomplish in the confines of a tightly manned shift – particularly in the event of multiple, concurrent service calls.

In either of the above cases, there would need to be some compromise to the current service response for ambulance transport or first response within the City. Service quality would be comprised for ambulance transport, or, in the case of City residents, first response/back-up. A determination would need to be made regarding the acceptability of these changes prior to the consideration of consolidation.

4. DEPLOYMENT MUST ALSO BE CONSIDERED FOR BOTH FIRE AND AMBULANCE RESPONSE.

As discussed in the previous section, the most likely station house configuration for a combined department would be to retain the three current facilities. A new, central facility on the M-32 corridor could possibly be a long-term consideration.

Presuming that a consolidated department was to operate with the three current facilities, staffing decisions would be the next order of business. Ideally, the combined department would station an ambulance at each of the two current Township facilities thereby facilitating a more rapid response to out-county calls. Ideally, this would involve maintaining a two-man crew at each facility to respond to ambulance and fire calls. If first response/back-up was also desired for the Township area, additional resources would need to be dispatched from the central station (or) the volunteers could be used for this purpose.

As previously noted, the deployment of full-time staff to three facilities could unduly limit the number of staff available for a serious suppression situation in the City. Decisions would need to be made regarding the relative logistical advantages or disadvantages of this option as well as optional approaches for assuring adequate fire coverage.

5. THE ROLE OF THE VOLUNTEER CONTINGENT MUST BE DETERMINED.

As discussed in the findings, the volunteer Firefighters interviewed for this study were wary of the consolidated concept. Specifically, there was a general consensus that a consolidated department, heavily influenced by full-time Firefighters, would bring an end to the volunteer contingent. This would occur through neglect and the diminishment of available calls-for-service.

From the City’s perspective, the volunteers represent one of the key assets to be derived from consolidation. Essentially, this unit would provide the variable staffing that can be used to increase the firefighting force in serious fire situations.

However, to sustain this group, a consolidated department would need to define a more expansive role. Essentially, volunteer Firefighters cannot be expected to maintain training and status, simply to respond to the occasional incident. Moreover, it would be necessary for the full-time unionized Firefighters to embrace the volunteers as part of the firefighting contingent – including these individuals in department activities ranging from training to incident response.

6. PRESUMING OPERATIONAL ISSUES CAN BE RESOLVED, THE CITY AND TOWNSHIP WILL BE REQUIRED TO DETERMINE THE LEGAL STATUS OF THE CONSOLIDATED DEPARTMENT.

A number of options are available for funding a consolidated fire department. One option would be to operate as a separate autonomous authority. If it was desired to fund the combined department with a common tax assessment it would require incorporation as a public authority under provisions of PA 57. Related to this, PA 57 of 1988 is the only legislation and approach for funding a multi-jurisdictional public safety authority through general levy. Put simply, under PA 57, each participating political jurisdiction agrees to incorporate in the authority, and then, by Council or Board resolution, orders a general referendum regarding a millage for funding. A simple majority vote is sufficient for passage. The tax is levied on all taxable property within the authority. In a fire authority, this may seem equitable, since the tax is spread consistent with the value of the property being protected.

In regard to the City and Township of Alpena, the adoption of a PA 57 funding approach would dramatically alter the distribution of costs from the status quo, as it followed the percentage of taxable value. The following is intended to illustrate this point using FY 2006 budgetary totals:

**Table A
Percentage of Overall Fire Expenditures
FY 2006**

<u>Entity</u>	<u>Actual Fire Costs</u>	<u>% of Total Costs</u>
City of Alpena	\$1,258,185*	65.8%
Alpena Township	653,981	34.2%
Total	\$1,912,166	100%

* Ambulance budget total not included

As seen in Table A, the bulk of total fire service costs are currently borne by the City of Alpena. This is to be expected, considering the fact that AFD is a career department with a broader scope of services.

However, under PA 57, costs would be distributed based on taxable valuation. Using the same inputs, PA 57 would impact cost assignment as follows:

**Table B
Percentage of Fire Expenditures
Under PA 57 Scenario**

<u>Entity</u>	<u>2007 Taxable Value (000)</u>	<u>% of Fire Service Costs</u>
City of Alpena	\$263,211	44.9%
Alpena Township	323,382	55.1%
Total	\$586,593	100%

Essentially, under PA 57, Alpena Township’s portion of total cost would increase by more than 20%, irrespective of the actual budgetary amount. Service levels and scope would also improve dramatically as the independent authority would service both entities equally.

Obviously, PA 57 is only one option available for a fire district or authority. The distinction is the ability to levy taxes earmarked specifically for the fire authority. Under other funding options, other criteria such as run volume or population could also be considered in determining relative cost assignment. Related, jurisdictions across Michigan use many funding formulas to allocate fire costs and determine the composition of fire authority boards. The Alpena communities would need to make a similar determination.

From a broader perspective, the City of Alpena and Alpena Township would need to resolve a number of key issues in structuring an authority. This would include:

- How existing assets are to be valued and compensated
- (As discussed) how the budget will be apportioned
- How capital purchases (equipment and facilities) will be budgeted and allocated
- What duties and powers will be delegated to the administrative board
- In the event of dissolution, how assets will be distributed.

* * * * *

In summary, the City and Township of Alpena would face a number of challenges in pursuing the consolidation of the two fire services. These span a full gamut of operational issues, contractual and legal matters, financial considerations and service issues. In the following section we present our suggested course-of-action related to service consolidation.

SECTION IV

SUGGESTED COURSE-OF-ACTION

SECTION IV

SUGGESTED COURSE-OF-ACTION

As outlined in Section III, the issues related to fire department consolidation would present a challenge to the two communities. However, fiscal conditions, future service needs and common sense all point to the need to follow this course.

Even if the City and Township were to undertake fire consolidation immediately, it would still be a long, and potentially contentious process. In place of this, it is our suggestion that the two communities begin an incremental process of consolidation – first focusing on those areas of greater benefit or need.

From the City's perspective, these would include the following:

- Assurance of Township input in the event of a serious fire incident and the continuation of a professional volunteer regimen
- Deployment of ambulance resources to maximize county-wide service quality.

From the Township's perspective, the most important areas would include:

- Upgrading the command structure
- Improving various operating systems
- Increasing fire prevention activities.

To address these needs, a number of cooperative endeavors should be undertaken, including:

- 1. Agreement on automatic response**
- 2. Consolidation of overall command**
- 3. Joint training**
- 4. Collaboration of fire prevention**
- 5. Preliminary work regarding workforce integration and station deployment.**

Each is discussed separately below.

1. THE CITY AND TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENTS SHOULD INITIATE AN AUTOMATIC AID AGREEMENT FOR FIRE SERVICE CALLS.

As discussed, AFD and ATFD currently have a mutual aid agreement. In 2006, the City received mutual aid on three occasions and provided aid to the Township on two others. Aid is provided upon request, with the City sending one manned pumper to Township incidents, and the Township sending both primary pumpers with a volunteer call-out.

Mutual aid appears very effective, but could be further developed as an automatic aid agreement for fire calls. As seen in Exhibit 18, this is relatively common among the surveyed departments.

**Exhibit 18
City and Township of Alpena
Comparison of Automatic Aid**

City/Township	Do you have automatic aid with surrounding communities?	
	Fire	Emergency medical
City of Alpena	No	No
Alpena Township	No	No
Alma	Yes	-
Fenton	Yes	No
Grandville	No	No
Harper Woods	No	No
Howell Area Fire	Yes	Yes
Manistee	Yes	Yes
Marysville	Yes	No
Saline Area Fire	No	No
Sault Ste. Marie	Yes	Yes
Sturgis	No	No
Traverse City	Yes	No
Woodhaven	No	No

Source: Rehmann Robson survey

By way of explanation, mutual aid is received only when requested or as established in pre-defined protocols. Automatic aid would require an automatic response to predefined areas.

Essentially, the City and Township would determine which geographic areas would be subject to automatic aid. This would likely include the entire City and a defined portion of the Township. The specifics would result from discussion and analysis.

The presence of an automatic aid agreement would more effectively marshal the combined resources in fire suppression activities. Fire call volume is low in both communities; consequently, the workload should not prove problematic. Further, it would serve as an incremental step in coordinating the activities and resources of the two departments.

2. AFD AND ATFD SHOULD CONSIDER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A JOINT COMMAND STRUCTURE.

As discussed, ATFD's command structure is severely limited. In the absence of a true Fire Chief, many administrative and procedural matters do not receive sufficient attention.

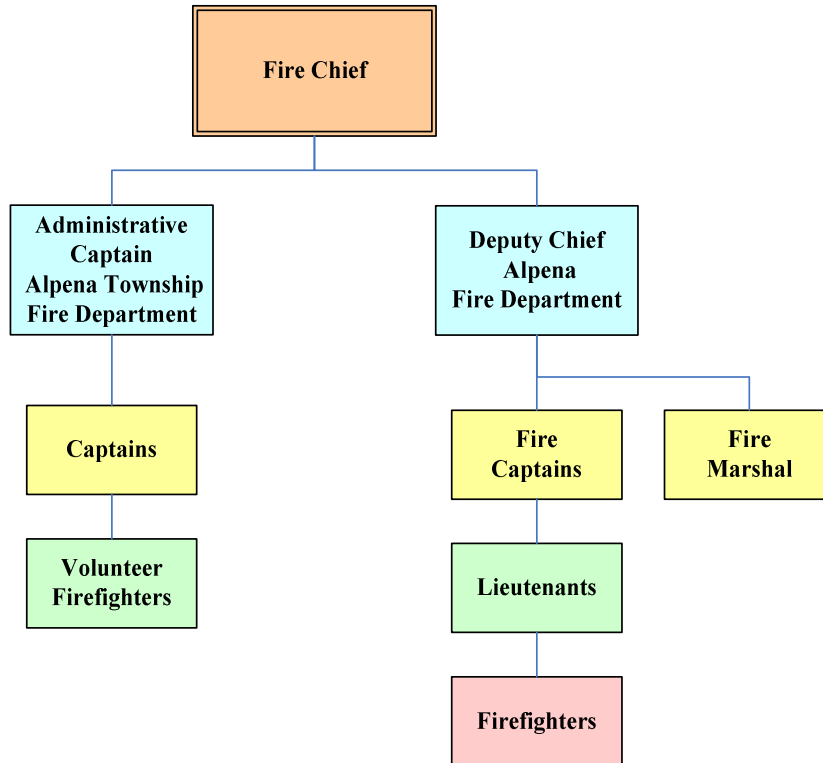
Some of the administrative void is now being filled by a newly recruited Captain. Records management systems are being upgraded, including data related to workload, personnel and activities. Other upgrades to procedures and systems are also planned. This is a positive development; however, it is personally motivated, rather than dictated by the command structure – or related duties and responsibilities. Ideally, the Township would designate one of the six Captain positions as “Administrative Captain” with responsibility for administrative matters. This position would not have the responsibility of a Fire Chief, but would have limited supervisory responsibility, with the ability to delegate tasks and coordinate operations.

This could be considered as a first step in the development of a true command hierarchy. As the next step, the Township could consult with the City regarding the potential for administrative consolidation – effectively putting both departments under the command of a single Fire Chief.

In reality, there may be an emerging “window” for accomplishing this type of command consolidation. More specifically, it appears possible that the Public Safety Director could be vacating the position to become City Manager. Additionally, the Deputy Fire Chief is now retirement-eligible and could leave in the near future. In this situation, a new Fire Chief position would not seem unreasonable – possibly providing administrative oversight to both departments.

Under this scenario, the amount of authority wielded over ATFD would need to be determined. In any event, the Administrative Captain would report to the Fire Chief within the appropriate context. The result could be a more uniform fire protocol, better coordination and the institution of a cost-efficient command hierarchy for ATFD. This organizational option is illustrated in Exhibit 19.

Exhibit 19
City and Township of Alpena
Suggested Combined Organization for Fire Services



3. TRAINING SHOULD BE CONSOLIDATED TO THE GREATEST EXTENT POSSIBLE.

At present, both fire departments train independently. Township Firefighters occasionally attend City training exercises and some joint training has been held in the past related to hazmat. In truth, the vast majority of fire rescue and EMT training could be consolidated, thus providing another avenue toward the ultimate consolidation of operations.

In regard to fire and rescue, this might include:

- Fire Officer classes
- Firefighter I and II review classes
- Annual hazmat requirements
- Rescue operations
- Basic hose, ladder and equipment training
- Other training exercises.

Essentially, the only limitation on joint training would be subject matter that is unique to one agency or the other.

Emergency medical continuing education could also be combined in many instances. As examples:

- Some coursework is common to both certifications (e.g. documentation)
- Some courses can be combined, with “breakouts” at the appropriate time (e.g. basic and advanced airways).

Combining the training programs would help to foster a sense of camaraderie among the two forces, while creating a higher level of standardization and operational consistency in the approach to fire and emergency situations. Further, the inclusion of the volunteers in these activities would serve to strengthen the ties between the full-time and volunteer Firefighters.

4. FIRE PREVENTION PROGRAMMING SHOULD BE UPGRADED IN THE TOWNSHIP, WORKING COLLABORATIVELY WITH THE CITY.

As discussed, the Township has very little in the way of fire prevention programming. In contrast, the City has a comprehensive business inspection program, a substantive site plan review process and fire preplans for most local businesses.

As another incremental step toward fire consolidation (and service parity) the Township should place greater emphasis on fire prevention programming – working cooperatively with the City. Key steps in this process would include the following:

1. The Township should first adopt a fire ordinance. Ideally, this will be the same model code utilized by the City.
2. One or more of ATFD’s fire personnel should gain certification as a Fire Inspector (a two week course).
3. The Township should request the Fire Marshal’s assistance in establishing a business inspection program modeled after the City program.
4. Inspections should be performed by on-duty Captains that are trained for this purpose. As an initial target, ATFD could strive to inspect 50-100 of the businesses in each calendar year. A fee could also be considered to cover the cost of inspection time.
5. With the City’s concurrence, the Township should use the City’s Fire Marshal for all commercial site plan reviews and arson investigations.

5. DISCUSSION AND DIALOGUE REGARDING STATION HOUSE INTEGRATION SHOULD BE INITIATED.

As discussed in this report, there are a number of benefits to be gleaned from the deployment of City Firefighters/ambulances at the Township facilities. Unfortunately, there are also downsides that must be resolved.

These issues do not appear insurmountable, and in fact will become less daunting if a gradual process of consolidation (such as that outlined above) is underway. With the creation of an Administrative Captain position, ATRFD will have an individual to serve as a spokesman for the Department and an expert resource for the Township Supervisor. This individual, in conjunction with the City's Deputy Fire Chief, should begin the process of examining the manpower deployment issue in a structured, service-oriented manner. At the least, this dialogue will serve to crystallize the issue, as other facets of consolidation are initiated and internalized.