



Opportunities for Sharing Fire and EMS Resources

An Evaluation of Existing Conditions and Opportunities for Templeton and Phillipston

March 11, 2020



About CGR

- **Founded in 1915, CGR is the Northeast's leading firm on issues of municipal efficiency, reorganization and service delivery**
 - Headquartered in Rochester, NY
 - Deep portfolio of government service evaluations for clients across the Northeast
 - Thought leadership partner with clients, tailoring solutions to individual community desires and needs
- **Four major practice areas delivering expert support on the range of issues facing local governments**

CGR Personnel

- **Paul Bishop, Project Director**
 - Principal at CGR, leading all of the firm's public safety, emergency services and law enforcement engagements
 - Recent fire and EMS clients include City of Cortland(NY), Cities of Lewiston and Auburn (ME), Racine (WI), Greece (NY), Irondequoit (NY), and Dutchess County (NY)
- **James Harrington, Fire Service Operations**
- **David A. Riley, Senior Associate**
- **Data Science Team**

Charge for the Study

- *The Towns of Templeton and Phillipston have joined **together to determine which, if any, elements of their Fire/EMS service might be suitable for sharing.** This will range from the command structure to the administrative support structure to training, toning out of services based upon physical locale, sharing of equipment and/or maintenance, and sharing of training. Further they seek a review of their existing practices to determine where there may be room for improvement and what best practices – if any – they should be seeking to adopt.*

Methodology

- Onsite Interviews and site visit in July 2019
- Data request for financial and operational information
- Follow up phone calls and data requests
- Initial report and options presented in November
- Revised report and expanded options shared as final draft in March 2020



Opportunities for Sharing Fire and EMS Resources

An Evaluation of Existing Conditions and Opportunities in Templeton and Phillipston

February 2020

Prepared for:

Towns of Phillipston and Templeton and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Prepared by:

Paul Bishop, MPA, NRP
Project Director



Quick Data Overview

Category	Templeton	Phillipston
Population (2018 ACS)	8,100	1,800
Total Budget (2020)	\$9,690,274	\$4,603,957
Fire/EMS Budget (share)	\$723,652 (7.5%)	\$250,253 (5.4%)
EMS Revenue (share)	\$302,389 (42%)	\$32,000 (13%)
Other Revenue	\$11,048	
FD Calls for Service (5 year average)	863	167
Cost per resident	\$89	\$139
Cost per call	\$838	\$1,303
Paid Staff @ station per week	208	80
Calls per pop	0.106	0.107

Key Findings (1 of 4)

- Already share dispatching and have strong mutual aid with each other
- Both fire departments have a higher demand for emergency medical services (EMS) services than fire/rescue. EMS calls account for 80% of Templeton calls and 73% of Phillipston calls over the last 5 years
- Templeton Fire Department (TFD) has a paid paramedic/firefighter on duty at all times
- Phillipston Fire Department (PFD) has a paid EMT/firefighter on duty 40 hours per week, when on-call staff are less likely to be available
- Both departments use a combination of scheduled per-diem or on-call staff to fill in the rest of the schedule
- Neither department has on-duty staffing sufficient to meet the essential firefighting response

Key Findings (2 of 4)

- Both towns have made appropriate capital investments in fire department apparatus and their ambulances. TFD took delivery of a new fire engine in November 2019. PFD received a new Forestry/Squad vehicle in early 2019.
- Templeton is rated by the Insurance Services Office as having better fire protection (6/6x) than Phillipston (9), but both could improve their ratings without substantial investments.
- Templeton's fire chief is expected to answer EMS calls as the second person on a crew, leading to frequent interruptions in his workflow and hampering his effectiveness.
- Phillipston relies on the teamwork of a part-time chief and a full-time captain to manage the department operations

Key Findings (3 of 4)

- The pay scale for both departments is at the low end of pay range with their peers and comparable departments. For positions that they both have, the departments pay similar rates, but lower than many of their peers.
- Templeton's share of its budget toward the fire department, and its per capita cost, is relatively low compared to peers. Phillipston's share of the budget toward the fire service is high compared to its peer group, but the per capita cost is comparable.
- Looking at the last five years, PFD response times have a median of 8 min 48 seconds; TFD's median response time is 7 minutes. PFD's response time lowers to an average of 7 minutes during hours when it is staffed in the station.
- In Templeton, keeping the on-duty staff at Headquarters places them near 45% of its calls, reducing the response times.

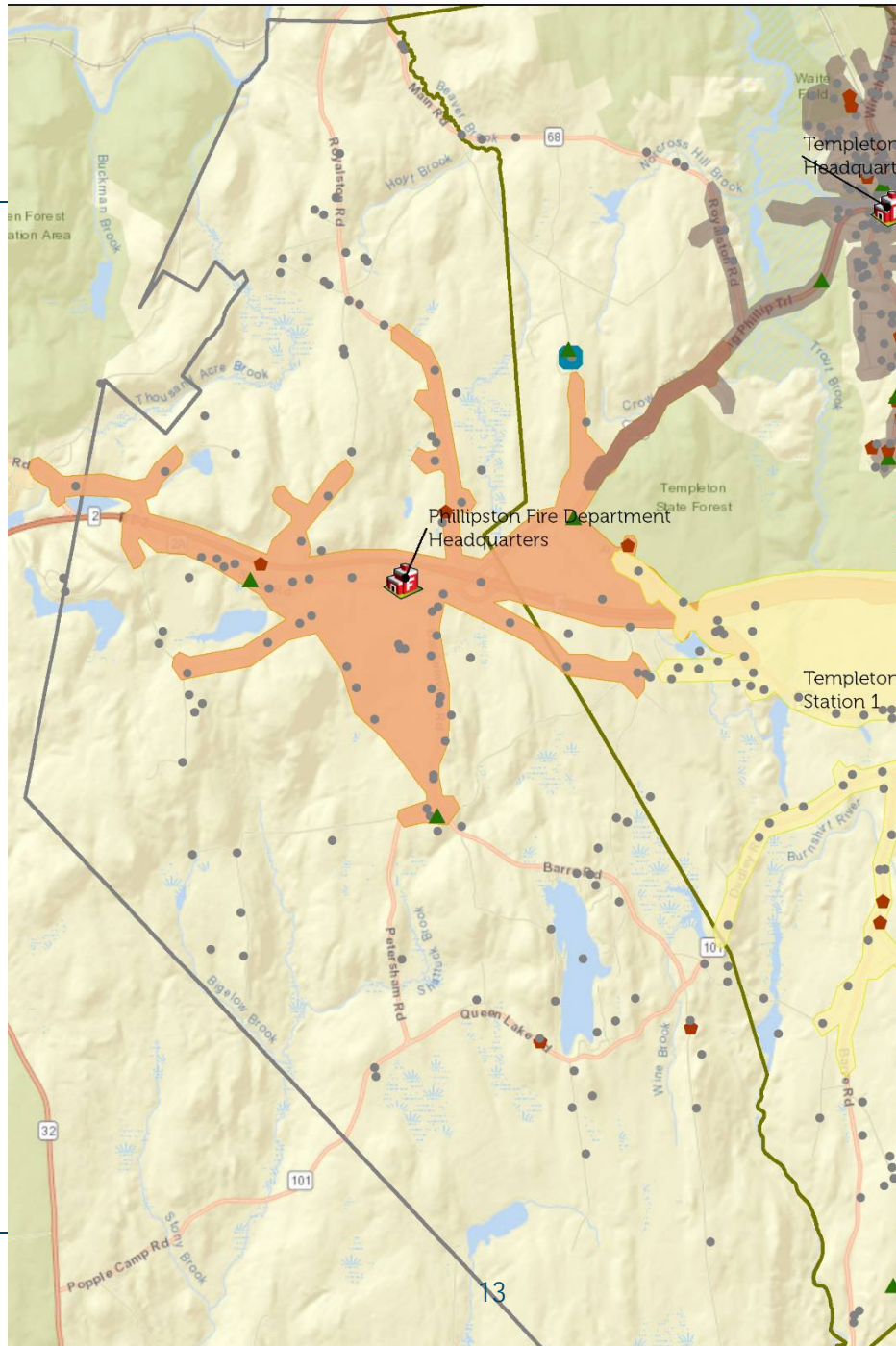
Key Findings (4 of 4)

- The Phillipston FD is centrally located and provides adequate response to all areas of town. Their station meets their needs as they currently operate, but lacks capacity for firefighters to sleep at the station.
- TFD Headquarters station is not at modern fire service standards.
- Electronic Record-keeping for both FDs could improve in the areas of training and maintenance.
- TFD needs substantial investment in their SCBA as their masks and regulators soon will be no longer supported by the manufacturer for routine maintenance or repair.

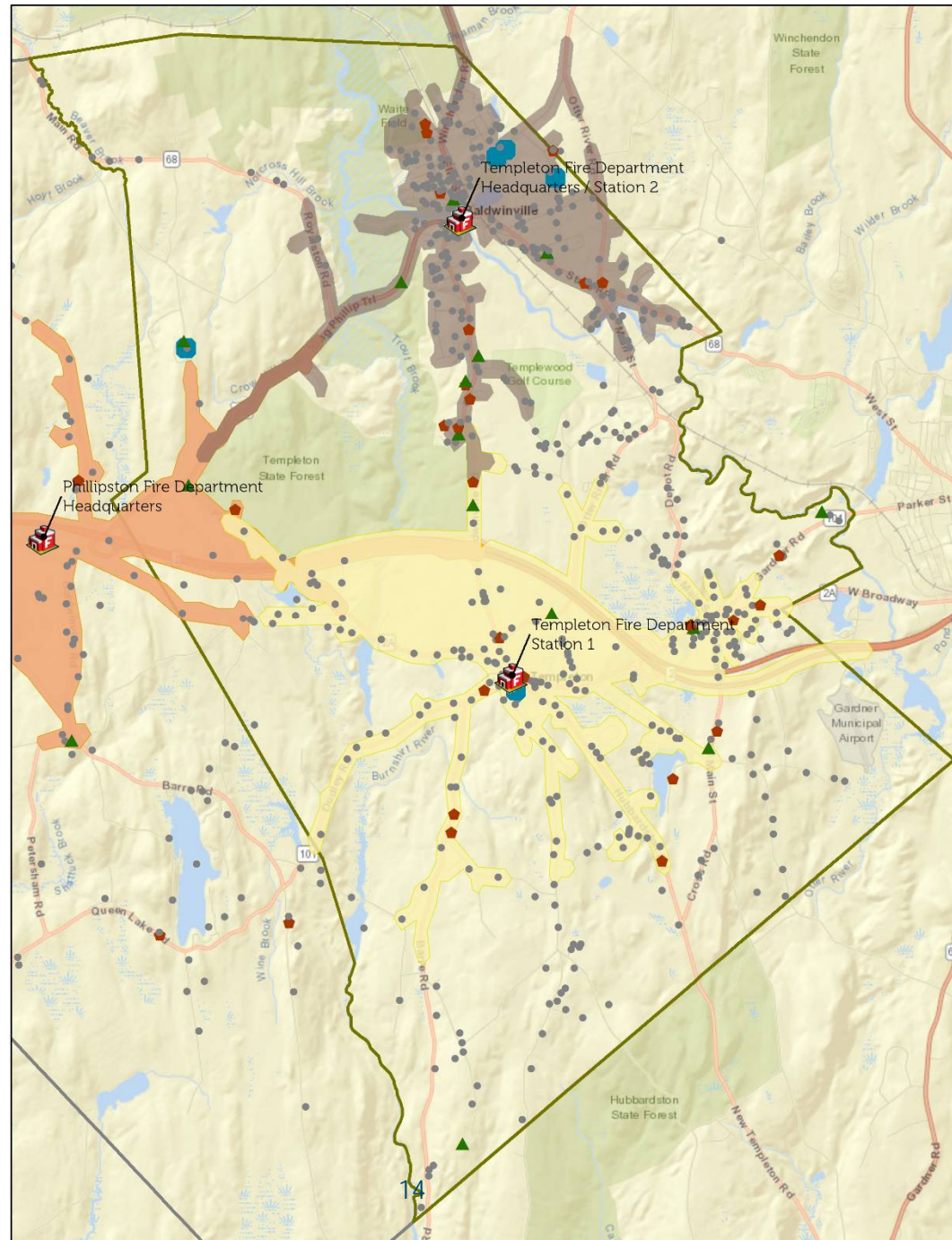
Call Type Distributions

(5 year average)	Templeton		Phillipston	
Total Calls	863		167	
01: Fire	10.6	1%	2.0	1%
02: Accident Related	66.2	8%	21.8	13%
03: EMS Calls	631.2	73%	99.8	60%
04: EMS Mutual Aid	1.8	0%	0.4	0%
05: Assist Police	43.4	5%	4.4	3%
06: Assist Other Agency	17.2	2%	16.4	10%
07: Fire Alarm	42.6	5%	7.0	4%
08: CO Detector	5.2	1%	2.2	1%
09: Fire Service	28.8	3%	8.8	5%
10: Outdoor Fire	6.2	1%	1.6	1%
11: Other Fires	6.0	1%	2.2	1%
12: Hazmat/Gas Spill	1.8	0%	0.6	0%
13: False Alarm/Call	1.6	0%	0.0	0%

PFD Calls for Service



TFD Calls for Service



Context for Options

- The rural nature of the community precludes the level of fire protection and EMS found in more densely populated areas;
- The competition for municipal dollars under the tax ceiling forces difficult choices between public safety and other community needs;
- There are a limited number of adults physically able and interested in becoming involved in the fire service;
- The “graying” of the population both increases the demands for EMS service and decreases the number of people available to provide the service;
- The small size of the operations requires all personnel and particularly the leadership to continuously switch between tasks leading to a decline in efficiency; and
- The national fire service is continuously increasing their standards, requiring capital investment from communities.

Options for Improvement (1 of 4)

- There is little immediate benefit of merging the two departments unless it would allow them to access additional financial resources through grants or a dedicated funding stream such as a fire district.
- Sharing a chief brings little benefit in current environment
- A dedicated training shared officer could be a benefit for the two departments.
- There might be benefit in having on-call or per diem firefighters jointly appointed between the two departments
- Build on recruitment efforts for youth and women
- Involve other employees in the town to participate as callmen OR to assist on the fireground in nonhazardous situations.
 - Phillipston already does this with DPW staff during the day

Options for Improvement (2 of 4)

- Work with the chamber of commerce to identify employees that might be willing to participate as callmen, especially during traditional business hours for fires.
- Hold open “citizen’s academies” to educate the public on the role of the fire department.
- Both Templeton and Phillipston are near the low end of the wage scale for firefighters and paramedics in the region, although they are relatively close to each other in scale. \$1 an hour increase is about \$19k for TFD and \$8500 for PFD
- Consider adjusting hours for PFD career staffing
- Apparatus Replacement schedule needs to consider service life. When time comes to replace ladder, evaluate options such as service company and automatic aid.

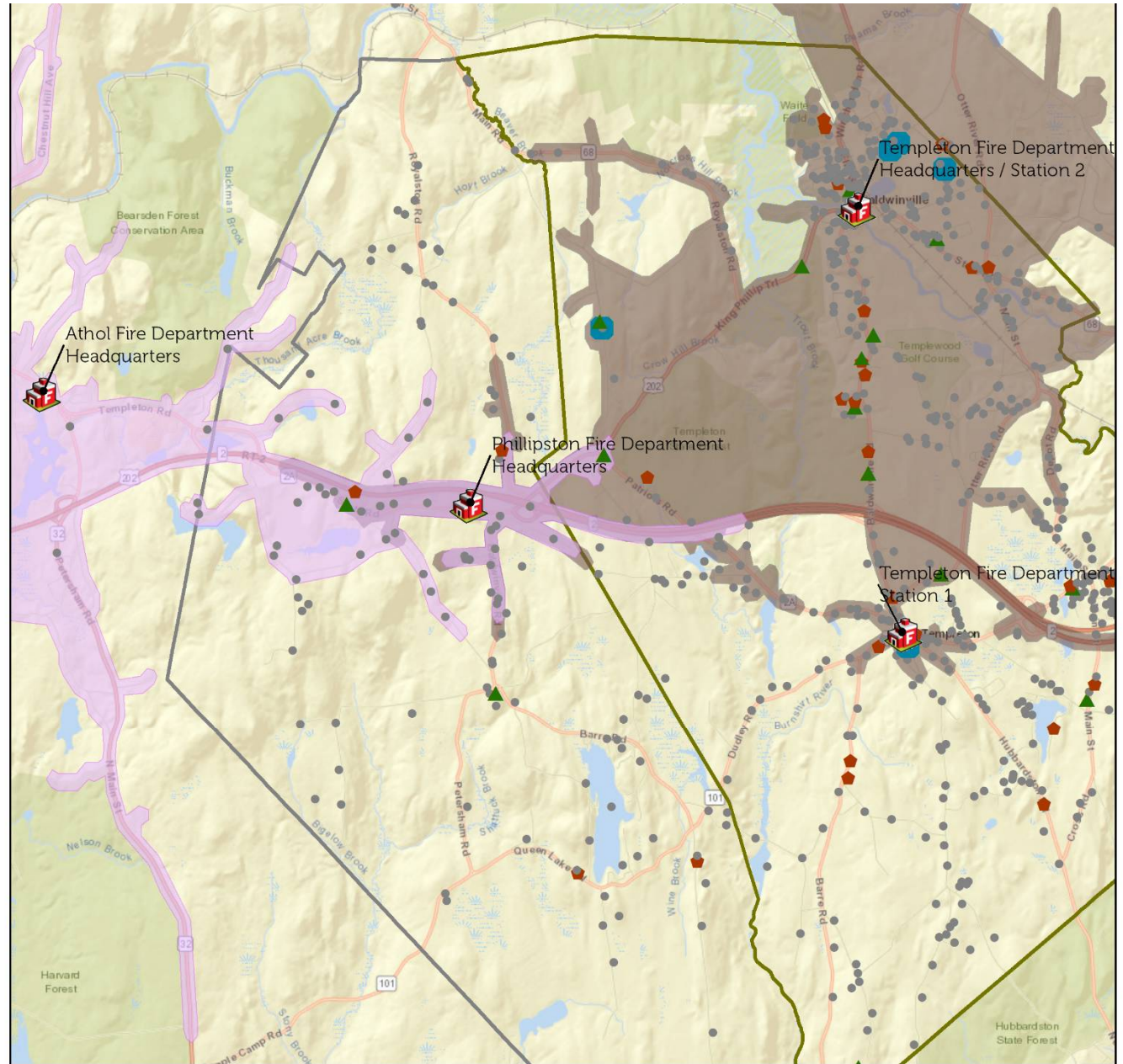
Options for Improvement (3 of 4)

- Apparatus Replacement schedule needs to consider service life. When time comes to replace ladder, evaluate options such as service company and automatic aid.
- Both FDs should consider expanding the use of their software program modules rather than purchasing new
- Billing for non EMS calls is an option but it has not shown to bring substantial returns
- In long term, TFD might consider relocating from two stations to one in a central location
- TFD could improve ISO through testing their water system, tracking their training and implementing a fire prevention program.

Options for Improvement (4 of 4)

- PFD could become a rated FD by mapping and testing their draft points
- PFD could continue with Athol for ALS or split their town using closest available
 - Going to paramedic is not fiscally viable with low call volume
- PFD should consider options to improve response to high priority calls when unmanned
- Both agencies should look at their billing rates

Response for ALS



Questions

