

New Castle County Fire Service Strategic Planning Committee
Wednesday, March 11, 2026, at 2:00pm
Location: Government Center – Executive Conference Room
87 Reads Way, New Castle, DE 19720

MEETING MINUTES

Present Voting Members (In-Person or Virtual): Co-Chairman Kenny Dunn, Co-Chairman Dennis Godek, Joe Day, Councilman Brandon Toole, Councilman Kevin Caneco, Kevin Cowperthwait, Fran Williams, Dan Burris, and John Adams.

Absent Voting Members: Dave Del Grande, Bruce Pinkett, Gordon Edwards and Lynn Wells.

Non-Voting Members present: Staff Person Stephanie Warren, County Attorney Aaron Goldstein, and members of the public.

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

- a. The meeting was called to order at 2:02pm by Co-Chair Kenny Dunn.

2. Approval of Minutes

- a. Meeting Minutes from February 25, 2026, were reviewed and discussed.
- b. **Motion:** To approve the minutes of February 25, 2026, meeting:
 - i. Moved by: Fran Williams
 - ii. Second by: Joe Day
 - iii. Vote: In favor – Unanimous, Opposed – None.
 - iv. Motion carried

3. County Council Legislative Updates

a. Ordinance 26-020: Fire Permit Legislation

- i. This ordinance proposes revisions to existing legislation related to fire permits. The changes include updated language and an increase in the commercial permit threshold from \$1,000,000 to \$10,000,000. The ordinance has been tabled pending the introduction of a resolution urging the General Assembly to amend conflicting state law. A state law enacted in 2010 currently limits the county's authority in this area. The resolution urging action by the General Assembly has passed County Council, and the ordinance will remain tabled until state law changes allow the County to proceed.

b. Ordinance 26-021: Line of Duty Death Legislation

- i. This ordinance passed unanimously with sponsorship from all members of County Council. Additional steps are required at the state level to finalize implementation.

4. Request for Proposal (RFP) Process Discussion

- a. The committee continued discussion regarding the development of an RFP for a professional services consultant to conduct an operational study of the County's fire and EMS system.
- b. Overview of the RFP Process – County Attorney Aaron Goldstein provided an overview of the procurement process for professional services:
 - i. The County will use a standard RFP template, with modifications primarily to the timeline and scope of work.
 - ii. Once finalized, the RFP will be publicly advertised.
 - iii. Interested vendors may submit questions and proposals during the submission period.
 - iv. After submission closes, a selection committee will evaluate and score proposals.
 - v. The County will select a vendor and begin contract negotiations.
 - vi. Unlike material purchases, professional services contracts are awarded based on best value, not solely on the lowest price.

5. Proposed Scope of Work for the Operational Study

a. Operational Deployment Analysis

- i. Determine whether the number and type of emergency resources adequately meet current and future needs.
- ii. Evaluate fire station locations, apparatus distribution, and emergency response coverage.

b. Fire and EMS Resource Evaluation

- i. Review the number and type of engines, ambulances, ladders, rescues, boats, and specialty units required for system-wide operations.
- ii. Evaluate ownership and availability of equipment, including reserve apparatus for temporary replacement.

c. Volunteer Participation Analysis

- i. Determine the actual number of volunteers actively responding to calls.
- ii. Differentiate between total volunteers listed and responding volunteers.

d. Standards and Compliance

- i. Assess the County's ability to achieve ISO Class 1 rating.
- ii. Evaluate compliance with NFPA 1720 standards for volunteer fire departments.

e. Special Operations Evaluation

- i. Review funding, deployment, and operations effectiveness of special operations units.

f. Staffing and Apparatus Deployment

- i. Evaluate current staffing models, including the standard of three-person crews.
- ii. Analyze the appropriate staffing levels for fire and EMS apparatus.

g. Ambulance and EMS System Review

- i. Assess the adequacy of ambulance availability and deployment.
- ii. Consider alternative staffing models, including one paramedic and one BLS provider on ambulances.

h. Financial Analysis

- i. Determine cost per response for fire and EMS apparatus by company.
- ii. Compare operating costs to revenue sources including grants, State funding, permit fees, and billing revenue.

i. Regional Coordination

- i. Evaluate the relationship between New Castle County and City of Wilmington for mutual aid responses.
- ii. Consider coordination with out-of-county and out-of-state resources.

j. Organizational Structure

- i. Assess the long-term sustainability of the current fire service organizational model, including administrative structures within individual companies.

- k. Committee members emphasized that the consultant should not be directed toward predetermined outcomes, but instead provide independent recommendations based on best practices and research.

6. Timeline and Deliverables

- a. The Committee discussed potential timelines for the RFP and study process.

- i. It was noted that previous studies required several months for procurement and vendor selection.

- ii. The consultant's timeline for completing the study may impact on the overall cost of the project.

