

Gaston County Fire Commission Meeting

March 13th, 2025

The meeting was held Thursday March 13th, at 6:00 p.m. in the Emergency Operations Center located at 615 N Highland Street, Gastonia.

I. Call to Order, Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance

Rob Smith called the meeting to order. Bob Hovis made a motion to approve the agenda as presented, with the addition of the Agriculture Center's Certificate of Need 20252272-29. Richard Albaugh seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

II. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

III. Business Agenda

A. Richard Albaugh made a motion to approve the February 20th, 2025, meeting minutes. Bob Hovis seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.

B. Sub-Committee Updates

- Rescue: No update.
- Capital: No update.
- Closest Department: Justin Westbrook reported that the subcommittee met with Lucia Riverbend and Crowders Mountain to assess coverage areas within their districts. In Lucia Riverbend's district, they identified four areas within the 9E classification:
 1. **Winding Trail/Fox Run Area** – The options for coverage include establishing an engine aid agreement with Stanley Fire Department or adding a new fire station in the area.
 2. **Upper Stanley Road (Quarter-Mile Border of Alexis and Lucia)** – Coverage could be provided by shifting the district line back a quarter mile to allow Alexis Fire Department to cover the area, or by adding a new fire station.
 3. **1700 Block of Stanley Lucia Road (East Gaston/Lucia District Line)** – Since East Gaston already has a 9E classification on this stretch, they would be excluded. Coverage options include an engine aid agreement with Stanley Fire Department or constructing a new fire station.
 4. **Dead End of Mountain Island Lake (Riverside Dr/Horseshoe Bend Beach Rd Area)** – The only feasible coverage option is an engine aid agreement with Mount Holly Fire Department.

The subcommittee would like to pair this review with East Gaston's assessment, but due to mapping issues, they will need to wait to address all the changes at once.

For Crowders Mountain, two key areas were identified:

1. **Foy Road (off Linwood Rd)** – Currently a 9E area, but Gastonia Engine 8 can provide coverage within the five-mile response radius. Crowders Mountain is comfortable with an engine aid agreement for this area.
2. **Canterbury Rd (Kings Mountain)** – Crowders Mountain plans to discuss coverage options with Kings Mountain Fire Department.

Additionally, they discussed the impact of potentially losing Crowders Mountain Station 2. If that happens, a new 9E area would emerge, covering the golf course area from Peaceful Leaf to Bessemer City. The Bessemer City Fire Department could provide full coverage for that area. The subcommittee recommends moving forward with these discussions. Director Hunter will send a letter to the affected departments. Bob Hovis motioned to proceed with communication to Bessemer City Fire Department with Richard Albaugh seconding. None opposed. The motion was passed unanimously.

- C. Fire Service Agreement Update: Scott Hunter reported that the latest version of the contract, returned by the Fire Chiefs and Keith Bost, is still under review and has been sent to their attorney. He distributed a marked-up copy to the Fire Commission for review, and the Commission discussed the highlighted sections.

Highlighted Parts Discussed:

Section 1 – Definitions – Approved Merger, Certificate of Need, Effective Date, Fire Commission, Municipal Takeover

Section 3 – Services Furnished by the Department – Medical Response

Section 5 – Department's Non-Profit Corporation Status 501C4

Section 11 – Books and Records

Section 17 – Annual Financial Audit

Section 23 – NIMS

Section 27 – Municipal Takeover

Section 30 – Certificate of Need

This highlighted copy will be added to the Fire Commission's Shared Drive for further review.

Regarding budgets, a revised timeline will be issued due to the delayed submission of fire budgets.

IV. **New/Old Business**

- V. Chief Towery presented **Certificate of Need 20252272-29** on behalf of the Agriculture Center Fire Department for the purchase of air packs. The estimated cost is **\$304,236.29** fully funded through an AFG grant. Justin Westbrook motioned to approve the Certificate of Need, with Rich Albaugh seconding. With no opposition, the motion was unanimously approved.

- VI. Scott Hunter stated that the **Capital Need Requirements** wording should be updated to read, "**Any funds requested from the Reserve Fund.**" Richard Albaugh motioned to approve the change, with Eric Withers seconding. The motion passed unanimously with no opposition.
- VII. The budget meeting with Fire Chief presentations will be held **April 16th, 2025, starting at 5:00 PM.** The Fire Commission will have a closed work session prior, on **April 9th** to review budgets.
- VIII. **Adjournment**
Motion to adjourn by Richard Albaugh, seconded by Eric Withers. The motion was approved unanimously.