

**Hamlin, Morton,
Walker Fire District
Consolidation Study
Baseline Review and Analysis of
Options**

December, 2011

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Hamlin, Morton & Walker Fire Districts

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Hamlin, Morton and Walker Fire Districts having been cooperating on providing fire suppression and emergency medical services to the Towns of Hamlin, Kendall and Clarkson for many years. Each district is serviced by one fire company and each of them supports the other during the most difficult emergencies. These three fire districts have long and proud histories and are well respected by their neighboring fire districts in the northwest quadrant of Monroe County and the northeast quadrant of Orleans County.

As many districts across the State have experienced, the costs of running a full service fire department are escalating due to enhanced regulations for fire suppression equipment, increased standards for firefighter training, and public perception of what is expected for the tax dollar. At the same time, and related to the increased training standards, there are fewer and fewer volunteers to staff the fire companies. Additionally, the recent economic downturn has placed a greater emphasis on the need for fiscal efficiency while the new property tax cap in NYS has heightened people's attention to the costs of local governments.

In pre-emptive anticipation of a time when tax payers may call for a referendum on consolidating the fire districts, the three districts decided to pursue a study to look at the operational and tax impact associated with a consolidation. The study was made possible now because of a New York State Local Government Efficiency Grant as part of the State's effort to encourage the consolidation of local governments.

Baseline Analysis

The three districts cover the entire Town of Hamlin and small portions of the Town of Kendall and Clarkson. For much of the past half century the Towns have seen growth in population contributing to greater demands on the local fire companies. However, that growth has not been consistent across the entire Town. The wealthier enclaves in the community have centered in the middle part of the Town and along Lake Ontario; areas that largely fall within the Hamlin Fire District. The Walker and Morton Fire

Districts have less assessed valuation leading to a slower pace of growth than the Hamlin District.

Strategically, the three districts are well positioned within their Districts. Together, the three fire houses provide excellent coverage along major north/south and east/west routes in the towns which has contributed to excellent response times. The committed membership in each fire company further enhances an excellent quality of service for the citizens in each District. The ISO ratings speak to the good quality with no District rated lower than 5-9. The ratings may be higher except for the rural nature of the Towns and the lack of public water in some areas.

In 2010, the three districts responded to a combined 831 calls for service. Nearly two thirds of those calls were handled by the Hamlin Fire District while the remaining was split between the other two Districts. On average, the Hamlin Fire District responded to 1.5 calls for service per day while Morton responded to a call every other day and Walker approximately one every three days. The vast majority of the calls were related to Emergency Medical Services (EMS), not fire. This reflects a trend over the last several decades in which fire departments are increasingly responding to calls that are not related to fire suppression. This change is forcing many local fire departments to train differently and have equipment on hand that are different than the traditional fire suppression equipment from the past.

The combined budgets of the three departments for 2011 were \$731,000. This was up from 2010 and generally has been increasing for the last several years. On average, six of every ten dollars of each budget was allocated to fire and EMS services. In the case of Walker and Hamlin, approximately 10% was allocated to debt while Morton has no current debt obligations. Walker has five years remaining on its debt while Hamlin has nine years left to pay down its debt. The remaining pieces of the budgets were split between employee benefits and transfers to reserve accounts. Of particular interest is that the combined fund balances of the three districts tops out at \$846,000.

The three districts are each well equipped with the Morton District in the most need of replacing a vehicle. Its oldest vehicle is from 1991 and it already needs to be replaced. All apparatus is in good working order in each fire house. In aggregate, there are seven pumper/tankers and two heavy rescues along with 3 light rescue vehicles. This number of apparatus may be more than is necessary in each of those types of apparatus. Thus, a consolidated district may offer opportunities to reduce the number of apparatus over time and avoid future capital purchases in some cases.

Corporate cultures between the three districts are very similar. While each company has a long history and unique identity, the culture of each company does not differ significantly between the three districts. This is to be expected as each fire house is located in the Town of Hamlin which according to census data is a largely homogenous community. The membership in each fire company is very committed to their goal of protecting the community and takes pride in responding to and handling emergencies that arise within their District.

Options Analysis

Several questions emerged during the baseline analysis that needed to be answered during the options analysis phase. The key questions revolved around potential cost savings, command structure, and impact on volunteers. The committee addressed each of these questions in order to determine whether the consolidation of the Districts would be beneficial to the community.

The committee developed a mock budget based upon the 2011 line items adopted by each District. Based upon the line item analysis, the committee determined that at a minimum a combined budget was likely to produce a cost savings in aggregate of nearly \$39,000 less than the current combined budgets. This represents 5.4% of the current combined budgets in potential savings. This savings is on par with many other communities around the State who have demonstrated through consolidation that typical savings ranges from 2-7% on average.

The great potential in merging the budgets, however, is not in reducing operating costs. The great potential is the ability to develop a long range capital purchase plan for all three districts. The combined fund balances offer an opportunity to not only replace the current fire truck in Morton without debt, but also to develop a plan that could replace all the vehicles over the next 12-15 years without debt financing. Setting aside reserves in the operating budgets annually means that the fire district could comply with NFPA recommendations and replace vehicles every 20-25 years. This would assure that the apparatus across the district always remains at the peak of performance throughout its recommended useful life.

The most significant concerns raised relative to command structure resulted from the fear among the Morton and Walker membership that their fire companies would be “swallowed up” by the larger Hamlin Fire District. In order to address this, the committee developed a command structure model that assured there would be representation from each fire company in the district level leadership. The model includes one fire district chief, two deputy chiefs and three assistant level chiefs. The district chief and deputy chiefs would be elected at large by the full membership of the combined district. The assistant chiefs would be

elected by each fire company to serve as the local fire company chief and assistance chief to the district. This hybrid of electing the district level positions would assure that membership in each fire company retains visibility at the district level and is afforded opportunity to serve at that level. In addition to the six chief positions, the district would also appoint three captains to cover EMS, training and safety. One additional position of lieutenant for EMS would also be appointed. In all, membership from each of the current districts would have access to eight district level positions, equivalent to the eight levels of leadership currently available in each of the current districts. Each fire company would also retain captain and lieutenant level positions thus increasing opportunities for leadership over the current system. It is important to note that no plan has been developed to turn any position into a paid position. All positions will remain volunteers in the district.

While the impact on volunteers remains unknown, the experience of other districts that have consolidated suggests that loss of membership was low. That is not to say that each company would not experience some turnover. However, the turnover will likely be balanced by an influx of interested members due to the larger district and the perception of increased opportunities. CGR did learn that the smaller companies remain very concerned that they not lose opportunities in regards to serving in district level positions. As Hamlin's membership is over half of the total membership in the combined district, their voting power could create this disparity. To the extent that a combined district resulted in an overwhelming representation of former Hamlin District members in the district level positions, Morton and Walker District members could decide to transition to departments outside of the consolidated district to enhance their opportunities to serve in these types of leadership positions. Each current fire district and fire company is going to have to communicate clearly throughout a possible transition to assess the degree to which this might occur and impact the ability of each company to continue to provide the quality service that the current districts are known for.

The report itemizes the impact on standard operating procedures and company bylaws. Based upon analysis, the similarities between the SOP's and company bylaws suggest that a transition will not be problematic. Some differences will have to be reconciled with regards to training requirements, advancement requirements and requirements to serve in leadership positions, but these types of changes are achievable and the committee believes they can be worked out between the three companies.

One of the largest benefits identified during the analysis surrounded the opportunity to expand and streamline the training that could occur between the three districts. Some of the training requirements do vary and the facilities available for training also vary. The variability in training creates certain challenges when multiple companies are on scene at an

emergency. Similarly, combined training and streamlined SOP's may also encourage that each vehicle be similarly equipped. The enhancement in training and the streamlined equipment should enhance the response to emergency events. It will also build cooperation and trust between the three companies and improve visibility for all members who are interested in ascending into district level leadership positions.

New York State is offering implementation grants to facilitate the transition should the districts consolidate. The availability of grants creates an opportunity now that may not be available in the future. Additionally, the new tax cap will continue to put pressure on the districts to control costs even in the face of increasing mandates. These pressures are not diminishing and it may be advantageous to follow through with consolidation now in consideration of the momentum that has been built resulting from this study.

The consolidation of the districts is something that can be accomplished through the current fire commissioners acting as local government entities. While the public is not formally engaged in a public referendum, a public hearing will be required. The Town Councils of Clarkson, Hamlin and Kendall will jointly appoint the first slate of five fire district commissioners who will serve until the first formal election for the new district.

Conclusion & Recommendation

Based upon the financial benefits available to the three districts through cost savings, future cost avoidance, and long range capital purchase planning, there is good but not sufficient reason to pursue a full consolidation of the three fire districts. In order to be sufficient, the committee needed to determine that the quality of service will not suffer and that the membership of each fire company will be able to continue to meet its obligations. The committee has developed a command structure that is sensitive to this. Additionally, the opportunity to cross-train and enhance training among all members suggests that a consolidated district could improve the service that is available to citizens across the district.

For the cost benefits and potential improvements in service available in a consolidated district, the committee recommends that a full consolidation of the three districts be pursued at this time. This is a non-binding recommendation on the current districts. Each current district will need to cautiously assess this recommendation relative to their own perceptions of the impact on their local fire companies and the service levels currently offered. The committee further recommends that each fire district take intentional action to meet with the members of their local fire companies in order to make them fully aware of their intentions and further listen to their concerns about the consolidation. Through intentional and open

communication, the challenges can be addressed and the community can be better prepared to meet emergency situations.

Acknowledgements

CGR is grateful for the assistance provided by each fire company and the members of each Board of Commissioners. Sincere appreciation is expressed to Greg Speer for his facilitation with the study committee communication process. We also thank the full Study Committee for their commitment and willingness to serve and their insight and help throughout the process. Thank you to the chiefs in each fire department for giving us access to members and providing us all the data and information we requested.

Staff Team

Senior Associate, Scott Sittig served as the project director and lead writer for the final report. Staff support was provided by Research Associate Mike Silva, Information Systems Manager Kate Bell, and Research Assistant Hannah Dalager.

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SECTION I: BASELINE ANALYSIS

What Exists in the Morton, Hamlin and Walker Fire Districts

Introduction

The Hamlin, Morton and Walker Fire Districts having been cooperating on providing fire suppression and emergency medical services to the Towns of Hamlin, Kendall and Clarkson for many years. Each district is serviced by one Fire Company and each of them supports the other during the most difficult emergencies. These three fire districts have long and proud histories and are well respected by their neighboring fire districts in the northwest quadrant of Monroe County and the northeast quadrant of Orleans County.

As many districts across the State have experienced, the costs of running a full service fire department are escalating due to enhanced regulations for fire suppression equipment, increased standards for firefighter training, and public perception of what is expected for the tax dollar. At the same time and related to the increased training standards, there are fewer and fewer volunteers to staff the fire companies. Additionally, the recent economic downturn has placed a greater emphasis on the need for fiscal efficiency while the new property tax cap in NYS has heightened people's attention to the costs of local governments.

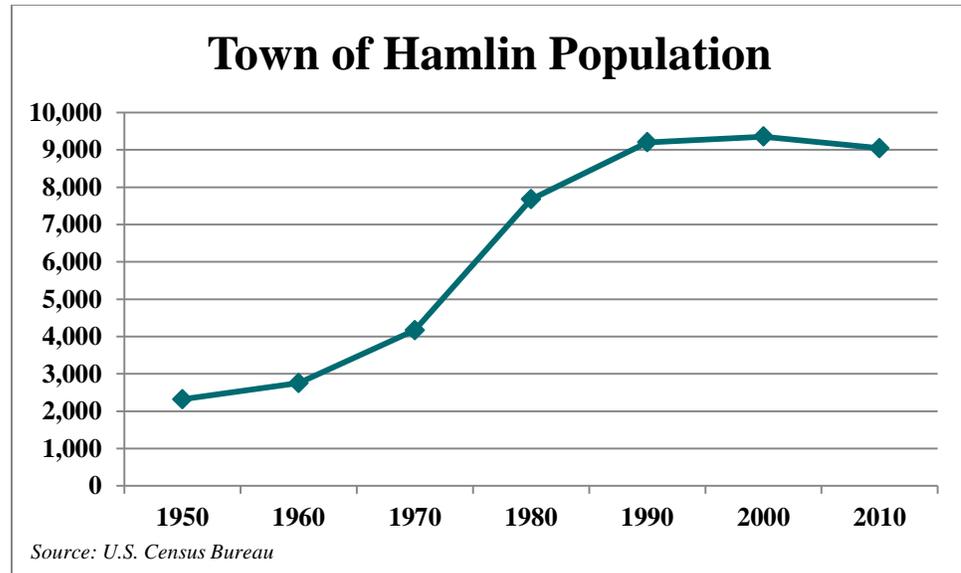
In pre-emptive anticipation of a time when tax payers may call for a referendum on consolidating the fire districts, the three districts decided to pursue a study to look at the operational and tax impact associated with a consolidation. The study was made possible now because of a New York State Local Government Efficiency Grant as part of the State's effort to encourage the consolidation of local governments.

District Demographics

It is very difficult to find reliable census and demographic data for fire districts that do not follow city, town or village boundaries. As noted already, the majority of the three fire districts in this study cover the Town of Hamlin. They also cover small portions of the Towns of Kendall and Clarkson. For the purpose of getting an idea of the scope and area covered by the three districts, we have reviewed only the Town of Hamlin.

The second largest town in Monroe County, Hamlin has a land area of 43.4 square miles with an additional 1.1 square miles (2.5%) comprised of water. The population density is approximately 208 citizens per square mile. In 2009, there were approximately 3,522 households in Hamlin or 80 households per square mile. Over 75% of all households are single family structures with an additional 12.5% that are mobile homes. The remainder of the housing units is multiple family dwellings. 7.1% of the housing stock has been built since the year 2000.

The Town of Hamlin had a population of 9,045 people at the 2010 decennial census. Per the table below, the Town has been losing population since 2000 when it reached its high point of 9,355. However, from 1950 – 2000 the Town experienced a four-fold increase in population as a result of migration patterns throughout Monroe County.



As a point of reference, the Towns of Clarkson and Kendall have followed a similar growth pattern. The Town of Clarkson increased by 250 % between 1950 and 2010 while the Town of Kendall increased by 100%.

District Assessed Valuations & Tax Rates

The boundaries of the Hamlin Fire District encompass the largest assessed valuation of the three districts. Per the table below, Hamlin Fire District captures 53% of the total assessed valuation of the three districts, and 62% of the total within the Town of Hamlin.

2010 Assessed Valuation - Town Portion of Taxable Value				
Districts	Kendall	Hamlin	Clarkson	Total
Hamlin		\$242		\$242
Morton	\$41	\$52		\$93
Walker		\$93	\$28	\$121
Total	\$41	\$387	\$28	\$456

Data in Millions

Exemptions within the districts vary. Hamlin averages around 8.2% of the assessed valuation as exempt while Morton and Walker vary by location. Within Morton, the Town of Hamlin registers 22% of properties as tax exempt while the Town of Kendall registers only 10%. Walker ranges

from 0% exempt in the Town of Clarkson to 5% exempt in the Town of Hamlin.

The 2011 tax rates for each of the districts varied by as much as 15% in the Town of Hamlin. Town of Hamlin residents paid \$1.505 per thousand if they lived in the Walker district while residents in the Morton district paid \$1.736 per thousand.

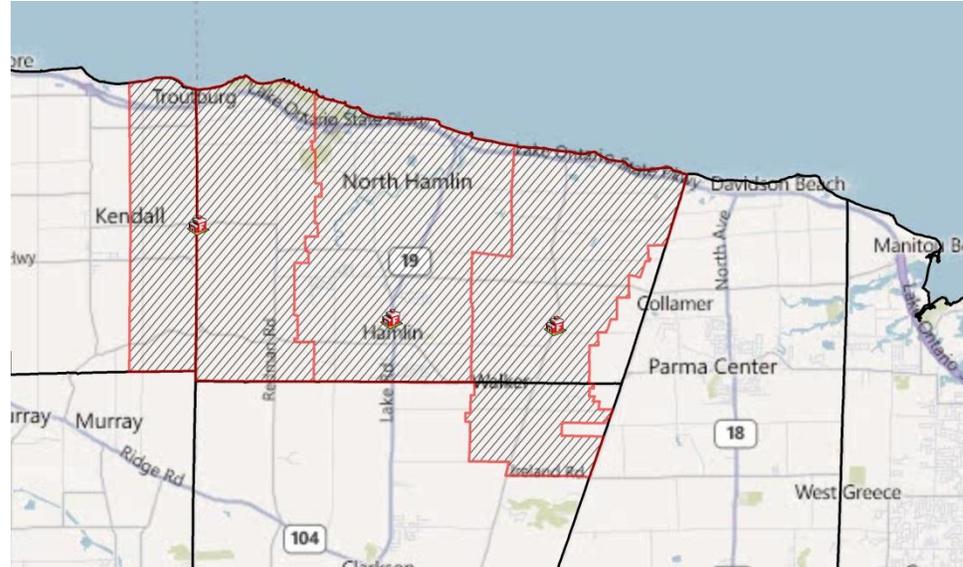
2011 District Tax Rates			
Districts	Kendall	Hamlin	Clarkson
Hamlin		\$1.590	
Morton	\$1.736	\$1.736	
Walker		\$1.505	\$1.505

The assessed valuations differences help drive the decisions made in local budgets. When tax rates are similar across different levels of assessed valuation, it suggests that local budgets are scaled accordingly. Later in the report we'll expand on these numbers and explain budgetary differences that drive the tax rates.

District Maps

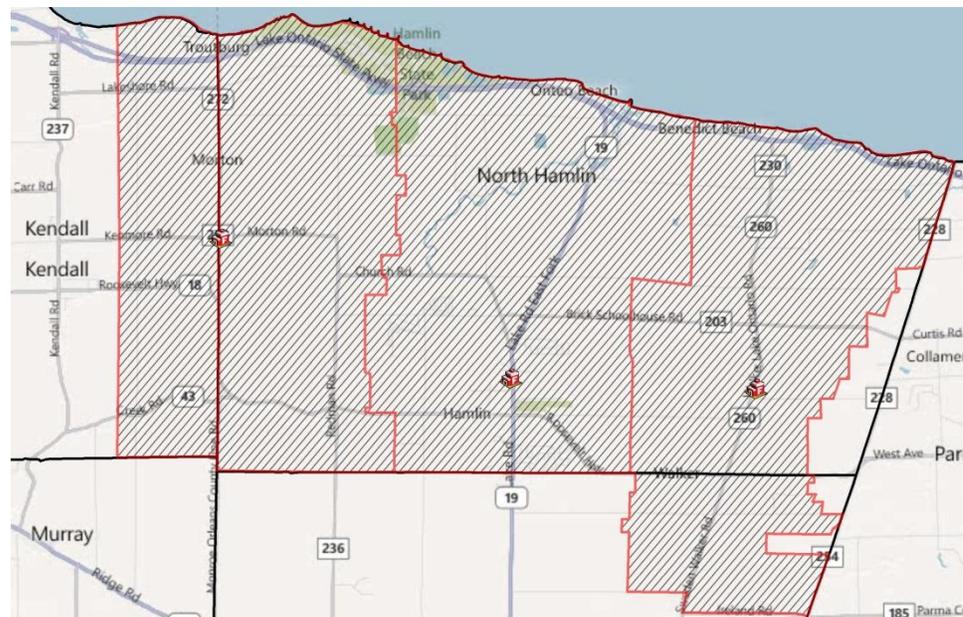
The Morton, Hamlin and Walker Fire Districts collectively provide coverage to the Town of Hamlin except for a small area on the eastern edge along the Hamlin Town line. The Morton Fire District also encompasses a portion of the Town of Kendall in contiguous Orleans County on Monroe County's western border. The Walker Fire District provides coverage to an area of Clarkson that is south of Hamlin on and around Route 260 extending south to County Road 219.

The map below shows the boundaries of the Fire Districts and the boundaries of the Towns of Hamlin, Parma to the east, Clarkson to the south and Kendall to the west. Hamlin Fire District is the only district whose boundaries do not extend beyond the Town of Hamlin.

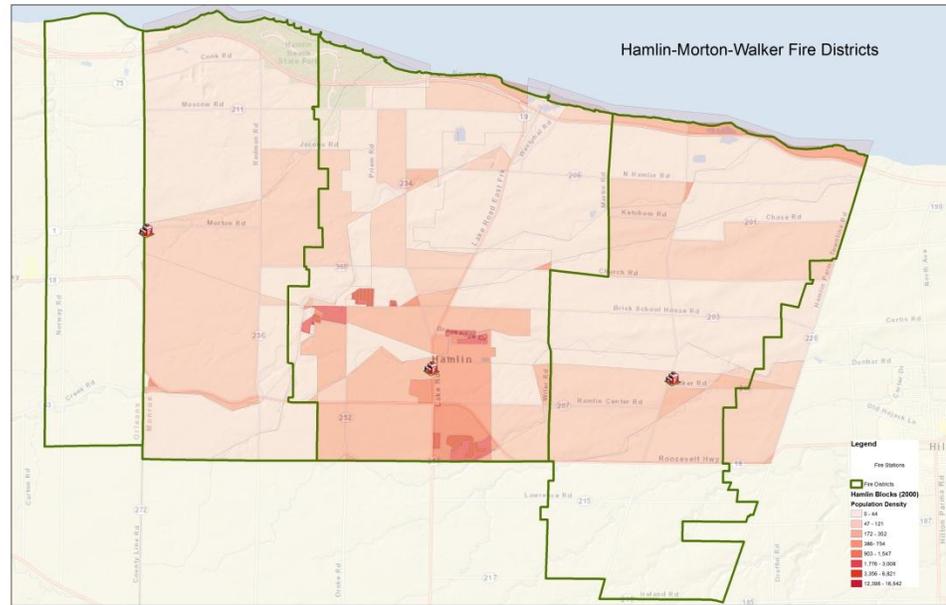


Fire House Locations

The fire departments are spread favorably for quick response throughout the entire Town of Hamlin each located along a major north-south (N/S) corridor. Morton is advantageously located at the corner of N/S Route 272 and Morton/Kenmore Road, a major east-west corridor through the District. Hamlin is located along Route 19 that runs N/S through the entire Town. Walker is located along Route 260 that is also a N/S corridor through the entire Town and extending down through Clarkson. Both Hamlin and Walker are also within seconds of an east-west corridor if needed.



The concentration of properties and population among the three fire districts is in the center of the Town of Hamlin. The concentration of population is serviced by the Hamlin Fire District. The map below is a heat density map for population within the Town. Except for lakefront properties, the fire houses are located ideally for the concentrations of population within their districts.



District ISO Ratings

Nearly 45,000 fire departments across the United States participate with the organization ISO in order to classify the quality of their firematic capabilities. ISO evaluates a community's fire-protection services through its Public Protection Classification (PPC™) program rating local fire departments on their ability to respond to and fight structure fires.¹ The rating system is based on a scale of one through ten with class one generally representing superior property fire protection while class 10 indicates that the area's fire-suppression program does not meet ISO's minimum criteria. When ISO generates a class rating of one through eight, the properties are all within five road miles of a fire station and within 1,000 feet of a fire hydrant. Classification ratings of 8B are for properties more than 1,000 feet from a fire hydrant but where the fire apparatus available can provide up to 200 gallons per minute of water for 20 minutes in those areas. Class 9 ratings are for properties more than 1,000 feet from a fire hydrant where the additional 200 gallons per minute is not available.

¹ <http://www.isomitigation.com/ppc/0000/ppc0001.html>

A community's overall PPC depends on its:

- Communications (I.e. Dispatch) capacity;
- Equipment, training and location of department(s); and
- Water supply and distribution system(s).

Less than 1/10th of one percent of fire departments in New York State carry an ISO rating of Class one (1) (the highest). Fifty-six (56%) percent of all fire departments in New York State carry a rating between Classes four through six while another 25% carry a rating of Class nine.²

Split Values

ISO can generate single or split rating classes for communities. The primary reason for splitting the classification is that the area covered by a department is large enough to encompass multiple classes for rating properties. As noted above, the distinguishing factors would be proximity to a fire station and a water supply. When ISO develops a split classification (for example 5-9), the first class (Class 5 in this case) applies to properties within five road miles of a fire station and within 1,000 feet of a fire hydrant. The second class (Class 9 in the example) applies to properties within five road miles of a fire station but beyond 1,000 feet of a hydrant and unable to pump water at 200 gallons per minute in those areas. Properties beyond five road miles from a fire house generally fall into a Class 10 rating.

District Classifications

The Hamlin, Morton and Walker Fire Districts range in ISO rating from 5-9 to 4-8B. One of the contributing factors to the differences in ISO rating is when updates were done. Hamlin and Morton have not updated their ISO rating since 1995 while Walker went through a review in 2007. Since 1995, there has been significant expansion of the water lines throughout the Town of Hamlin which will influence the ISO ratings for Morton and Hamlin in a positive direction when they conduct their next review.

ISO Rating for Districts by Town

District	Hamlin	Kendall	Clarkson
Hamlin	5-9		
Morton	5-9	5-9	
Walker	5-8B		4-8B

² <http://www.isomitigation.com/ppc/1000/graphs/NY.html>

As seen in the table above, Walker Fire District maintains the best overall ratings. The primary difference for the better ratings in the Town of Clarkson versus the Town of Hamlin is the presence of a better water supply within the Town of Clarkson.

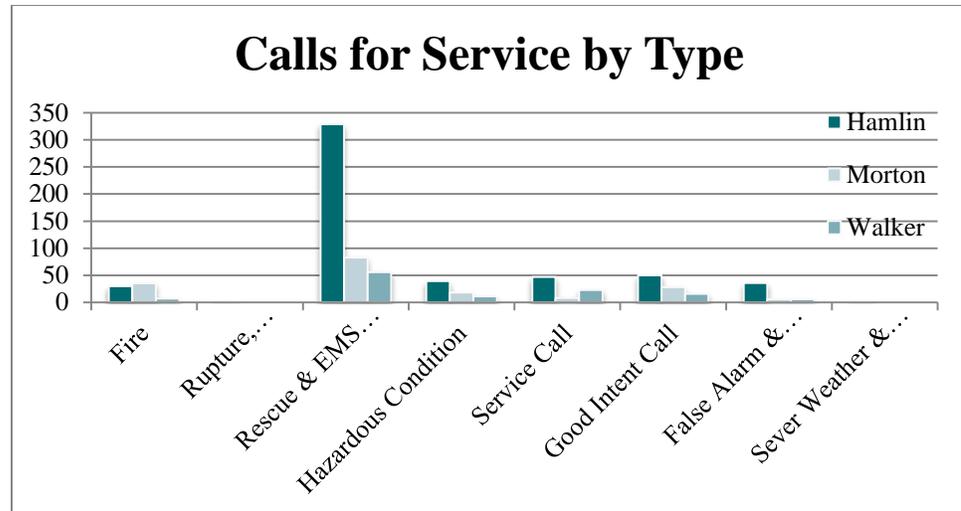
Demand for Service

The three districts respond to varied quantities of calls for service. This makes sense considering the difference in the number and density of households and traffic patterns throughout the town. The table below highlights the number and type of calls that were responded to across the three districts in 2010.

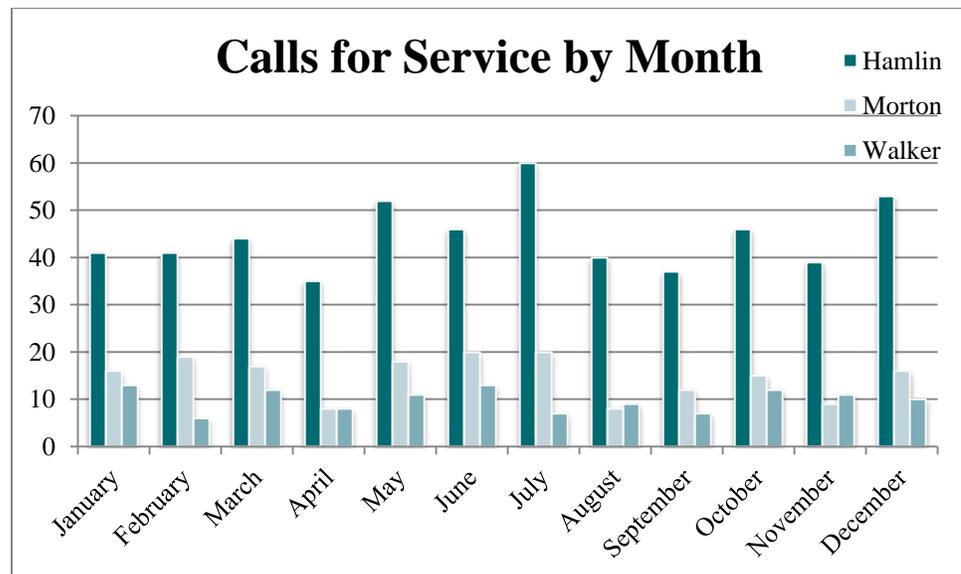
2010	Hamlin	Morton	Walker	Total
Fire	30	35	7	72
Rupture, Explosion, Overheat	1	0	0	1
Rescue & EMS Incident	329	83	56	468
Hazardous Condition	39	18	11	68
Service Call	47	8	23	78
Good Intent Call	50	28	16	94
False Alarm & False Call	36	6	6	48
Sever Weather & Natural Disaster	2	0	0	2
Total	534	178	119	831

As observed in the table, Hamlin responds to 64% of the calls within the three districts. These numbers only include primary response in which the department was the first one dispatched for the event.³ By far the largest source of activity for the departments is related to rescues and emergency medical services (the majority of which are EMS related).

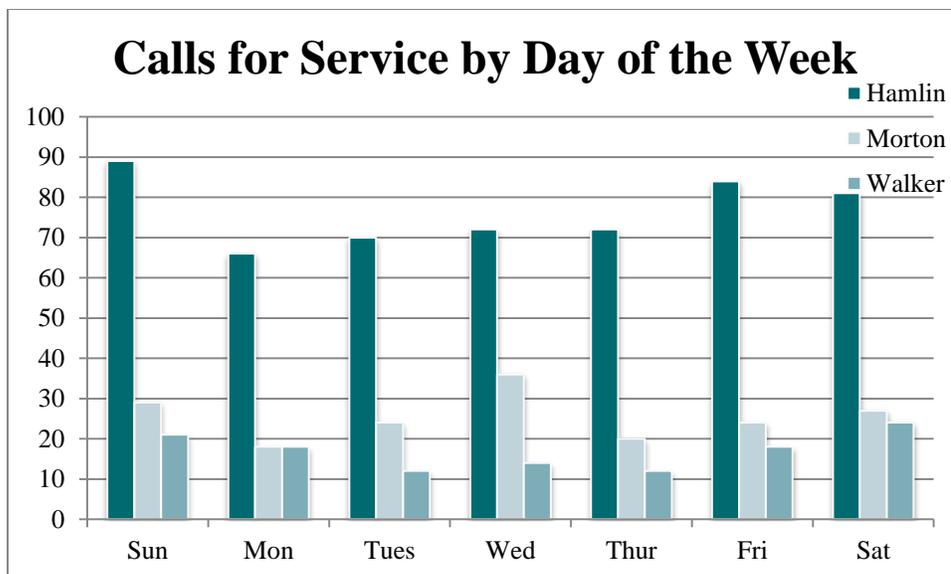
³ Morton's events capture activity that happened in Hamlin and Kendall while Walker's events capture activity in Hamlin and Clarkson.



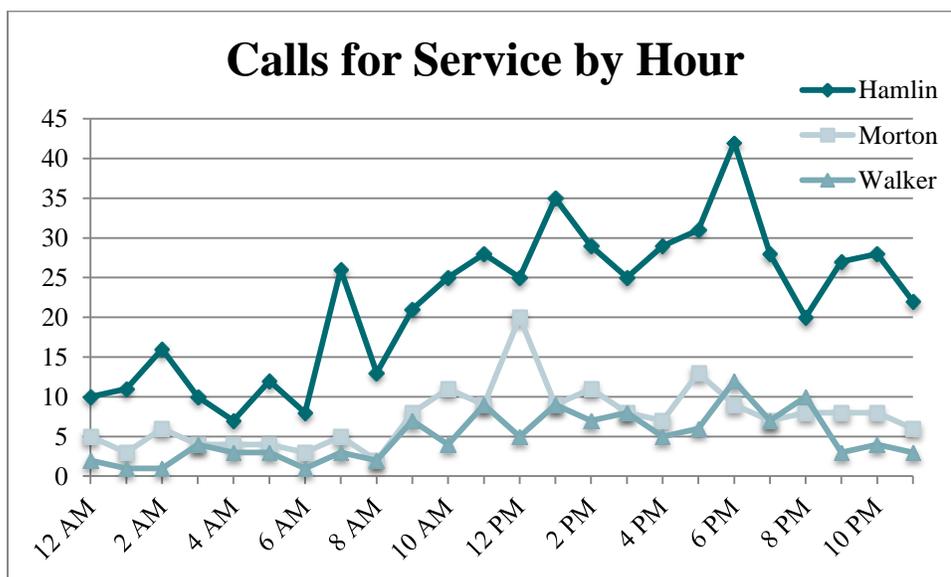
It is interesting to note that the type of activity encountered by the fire departments today stands in sharp contrast to just a couple of decades ago when fire departments mainly responded to fire suppression calls. In a 2006 study conducted by our firm for the Monroe County Fire Advisory Board, we noted that between 1990 and 2004, calls for fire suppression to suburban fire departments decreased by 2% per year. During the same period calls for EMS increased by 8% per year. Data captured in 2010 for the three districts appears to confirm that EMS is now the primary responsibility of local fire departments.



Based upon the 2010 data, there is no discernible pattern for calls by month with only moderate upticks in activity during the May, July and December months relative to the other months of the year. Similarly, demand for service was relatively even throughout the week with some increase on the weekends relative to Monday through Thursday.



Calls for service did show some discernible patterns when viewed by the time of day. As one might expect, there are more calls throughout the day than during the overnights with the high points between noon and 10pm.



In aggregate the departments responded to 2.3 calls per day in 2010. However, that number is certainly misleading as each department was responding to their own calls. In 2010 Hamlin responded to calls at a rate of almost 1.5 per day while Morton responded at .5 per day and Walker at .3 per day.

Response Times

As was stated earlier, the locations of the departments allow for quick access to all areas within each district. This is evidenced by the response

times to the calls for service that came through the district in 2010. The Morton Fire Department responded to all calls in their District by having someone on scene an average of 4.6 minutes after Monroe County 911 dispatched a call. Walker's response time mirrored Morton's at 4.6 minutes following dispatch. The Hamlin Fire Department responded similarly in 7.1 minutes.

Hamlin's higher call volume relative to the other districts and the types of calls they respond to may lead to a slightly higher response time on average across all call types. To examine this CGR did some further analysis on just calls for fire related services. When looking only at this category of response, we found that Hamlin's average response time was 3.9 minutes from dispatch to arrival. Morton's response time was 4.0 minutes for the same types of calls while Walker's response time was 4.8 minutes. This would indicate that some calls in the district may require faster responses than others thus influencing the overall response time.

Response time can be affected by numerous other factors as well, including time of day, availability of fire and EMS personnel and weather conditions.⁴ While the times represented in our analysis provide relative benchmarks, they should not be used to draw significant conclusions about the relative efficiency of one department versus another.

Secondary Calls and Mutual Aid

In general, the primary calls are the most important calls for any department to handle. However, due to the volunteer nature and smaller size of the departments in most rural and suburban communities, almost all of the departments are called upon to backup other departments through mutual aid. In some cases the mutual aid is automatic (usually in the case of structure fires) while in others it is with standby protocol. Departments may respond by filling in the station vacated by the first responders with equipment, and/or respond on scene to support other departments who are the primary responders.

In the table on page 8 that noted the service calls by type, Hamlin was dispatched 30 times for structure fires in 2010. However, due to automatic aid, they would have been expected to respond to the other 42 fire related incidents in the other districts. Hamlin also has an automatic aid

⁴ CGR reviewed the standard operating guidelines and did not find significant variation between the three districts on who may respond to a fire scene in a personal vehicle versus a district vehicle. In each case, firefighters are encouraged to respond to the fire hall first, unless the fire scene is closer to them or on their way to the fire house. Chiefs are empowered to respond directly to scenes of emergency and their arrival typically defines the response times that are calculated in this section.

agreement with Hilton, Brockport and Kendall while Morton has automatic aid agreements with Kendall, Holley and Brockport.

District Budgets

The Hamlin, Morton and Walker Fire commissioners each develop annual budgets and file annual audits. The budgets are driven by the needs of the fire companies within the district inclusive of foresight and planning for future capital purchases. In 2010, Hamlin comprised 54% of the combined \$700,000 budget for the three districts. Walker's budget was 26% of the total while Morton's was only 20%. The proportion for the 2011 budget remained substantially the same with Hamlin at 53%, Walker at 25% and Morton at 22%.

District Budgets for Fiscal Years 2010 & 2011 (1,000's)

Line Items	Hamlin		Morton		Walker		Total	
	2010	2011	2010	2011	2010	2011	2010	2011
Fire Protection	\$210	\$217	\$66	\$102	\$118	\$122	\$394	\$440
Employee Benefits	\$66	\$68	\$29	\$21	\$19	\$20	\$114	\$108
Debt Service	\$38	\$37	\$0	\$0	\$21	\$20	\$59	\$58
Interfund Transfers	\$65	\$65	\$46	\$40	\$21	\$21	\$132	\$126
Total	\$380	\$386	\$141	\$162	\$179	\$183	\$700	\$731

It is not uncommon for budgets to have aberrations in one given year that are not indicative of the average. Thus, CGR requested four years of historical budget data to see if the relationship between the districts observed in 2010 & 2011 was indicative of the trend over time⁵. Based on median calculations of four years of budget data, CGR found that Hamlin comprised 53% of the combined median budgets while Walker was at 26% and Morton at 21%. Thus, the relationship observed in 2010 & 2011 appears to be consistent with the recent past.

Due to the difficulty explained earlier in not having population tracked within fire district boundaries, it is nearly impossible to develop per capita expenditures⁶. Another metric we have employed as a proxy for per capita spending is the use of dollars per call for service. In the table below you can see that the average dollar per call figure is \$842. The median is

⁵We received 2008-11 budgets from Hamlin and Walker and 2009-2012 budgets for Morton. We received 2007-10 annual audits from each of them. Rather than isolating one year, CGR chose to use the median figures for each district over each 4-year period. The median was used rather than a mean (average) because in some cases the budgets had one time purchases and non-annual expenditures captured in a given year.

⁶ Per capita analysis is often a better way of comparing operational budgets across municipalities (or in these case districts).

Morton at \$792 per call. Hamlin conducted operations with the lowest dollar per call⁷ at \$712 while Walker operated with the highest some 2.1 times higher than the median. Walker's call volume, however, was down from the previous two years. In 2008 Walker responded to 157 calls. If we apply that call volume to their 2008 budget, their dollars per call was \$1,044.

2010 Budget Analysis - Dollars per Call				
Item*	Hamlin	Morton	Walker	Total
2010 Budget	\$380,225	\$140,915	\$178,748	\$699,888
Calls for Service - 2010	534	178	119	831
Dollars per Call	\$712	\$792	\$1,502	\$842

It is interesting to note that if we assume the call volume remains the same but apply the 2011 budget figures to the above table, the overall average increases by 4.5% to \$880 dollars per call. The most significant change is for Morton which increases over 15% to a new level of \$912 dollars per call. Hamlin increases by only 1.6% to a new value of \$724 dollars per call. Walker's value increases a modest 2.2% to \$1,535 dollars per call.

In the sections that follow we will explore the details associated with each district budget which will help put these numbers into better context. CGR reviewed the finances in each district in three primary areas. The first was an overall budget review. Each operational budget is broken down into four main categories: Fire Protection; Employee Benefits; Debt Service (current portion); and Interfund Transfers. We then looked at the outstanding total debt associated with the district. Last, we focused on the fund balance, or cash resources available for future years. Where possible, we have focused our budget analysis on the 2011 district budgets.

Walker

Budget

Walker budgeted 67% of its 2011 operational budget in the line item called fire protection. An additional 11% was budgeted for employee benefits. Eleven (11%) percent was budgeted for debt service and the remaining budget (11%) was an interfund transfer to the reserve accounts. The three district average in 2011 for these categories was 60%, 15%, 8% and 17% respectively. Thus, Walker's budget is weighted more towards operations and debt compared to the averages of the three districts combined.

⁷ Morton's calls include the calls from Kendall and Hamlin.

Fire Protection

The fire protection budget line consisted of salaries, equipment and contractual expenses. The district paid small stipend salaries to a treasurer and secretary as well as to someone for janitorial services in 2011. An additional small fee was paid to a records administrative officer. In total, the district paid \$4,595 in salaries/stipends.

The district budgeted \$27,000 on equipment in 2011. The line item was slated to purchase communications equipment, EMS supplies and equipment, hoses and fittings and protective equipment.

The district budgeted \$90,020 (74%) of the fire protection line item for contractual expenses. This category includes administrative costs (dues, audits, office supplies, etc.), utilities, travel expenses, building maintenance costs, fire equipment repair and maintenance costs, property liability and costs for OSHA mandated physicals.

Employee Benefits

The employee benefits line for Walker consisted of payments to social security for the salaries/stipends paid to employees and worker's compensation. Worker's Compensation cost was budgeted for \$18,300, or almost 95% of the total employee benefits cost.

Debt Service

Walker's annual debt service obligation is \$15,000 plus associated interest. The principal portion is paid annually while the interest is paid semi-annually. In 2011, the interest payments totaled \$5,319 making the debt service line item \$20,319.

Interfund Transfer

The district transferred \$21,000 to its reserve funds in 2011. They transferred the same amount in 2010.

Debt

In 2011, Walker is in year five (5) of a ten (10) year bond used to purchase one of their pumper fire trucks. The original bond was for \$175,000. By the end of December 2011, the outstanding balance on the bond will be \$115,000. Starting in 2012, the principal payments are scheduled to increase to \$20,000 annually and the bond is scheduled to be paid off at the end of 2016.

Fund Balance

The most recent fund balance figures obtained from the Walker District showed balances as of January 31, 2011. In sum, the Walker Fire District had a combined fund balance of \$254,000. The fund balance is held primarily in three separate accounts. The largest account is for the

purchase of new fire trucks and has \$172,000 associated with it. The next largest account has \$42,000 which is designated for the purchase of smaller equipment. The remaining account has \$40,000 and is designated for improvements, largely reserved for the building. There is a fourth account that has a negligible amount (\$100) that is kept on the books until the account can be closed.

Morton

Budget

Morton budgeted 63% of its 2011 operational budget in the line item called fire protection (up from 47% the previous year). An additional 13% was budgeted for employee benefits. Morton did not budget for debt service and the remaining budget (25%) was an interfund transfer to the reserve account. The three district averages in 2011 for these categories were 60%, 15%, 8% and 17% respectively. With no debt, Morton was able to put more in reserves relative to the three district average and spend more in operations on some needed upgrades.

Fire Protection

The fire protection budget line consisted of salaries, equipment and contractual expenses. The district paid small stipend salaries to a single person for treasurer and secretary services in 2011. In total, the district paid \$3,200 in salaries/stipends.

The district budgeted \$28,910 on equipment in 2011. The line item was slated to purchase new turnout gear and a new phoenix tool, among other things.

The district budgeted \$68,510 (71%) of the fire protection line item for contractual expenses. This category includes administrative costs (dues, audits, office supplies, etc.), utilities, travel expenses, building maintenance costs, fire equipment repair and maintenance costs, property liability and costs for OSHA mandated physicals.

Employee Benefits

The employee benefits line for Morton consisted of payments to social security for the salaries/stipends paid to employees and worker's compensation. Worker's Compensation cost was budgeted for \$20,500, or almost 99% of the total employee benefits line.

Interfund Transfer

The district budgeted to transfer \$40,000 to its reserve funds in 2011. This was down slightly from the previous year's total of \$46,000 that was transferred to the reserves.

Debt

Morton does not have any outstanding debt associated with the district. The bond they used for the purchase of their fire truck was paid off five years early in 2009.

Fund Balance

At the end of 2010, Morton had a combined fund balance of \$190,000. The fund balance is held in three distinct accounts. The largest account is for the purchase of new fire trucks or other firematic apparatus and has \$118,000 associated with it (62% of the combined total). The next largest account has \$43,000 which is designated for capital improvements to the building. The remaining account has \$29,000 and is designated for small equipment purchases and/or repair of existing apparatus.

Hamlin

Budget

Hamlin budgeted 56% of its 2011 operational budget in the category called fire protection. An additional 18% was budgeted for employee benefits. Ten (10%) percent was budgeted for debt service and the remaining budget (17%) was an interfund transfer to the reserve accounts. The three district average in 2011 for these categories was 60%, 15%, 8% and 17% respectively. Hamlin has the largest workers compensation budget of the three districts thus driving up its employee benefits line relative to the average of the three districts.

Fire Protection

The fire protection budget line consisted of salaries, equipment and contractual expenses. Hamlin budgeted a total of \$22,825 in the salaries line item. Small salaries/stipends were paid to a treasurer, secretary, and a custodian totaling \$7,000. In addition, the line item includes expenses for legal fees, elections, employee assistance, medical costs, the annual audit and computer maintenance. Several of these administrative expenses were captured under the contractual line items in the Morton and Walker budgets.

The district budgeted \$62,800 on equipment in 2011. The line item was slated to purchase new apparatus, radios, hose and foam, hose testing gear, EMS and rehabilitation equipment, and turnout gear among other things.

The district budgeted \$130,895 (60%) of the fire protection line item for contractual expenses. This category includes administrative costs (dues, audits, office supplies, etc.), utilities, travel expenses, building maintenance costs, fire equipment repair and maintenance costs, property liability and costs for OSHA mandated physicals.

Employee Benefits

The employee benefits line for Hamlin consisted of the budget for worker's compensation. Worker's compensation cost was budgeted for \$43,620 and made up the budget for the entire line item.

Debt Service

Hamlin's annual debt service obligation is \$25,000 plus associated interest. The principal portion is paid annually while the interest is paid semi-annually. In 2011, the interest payments totaled \$12,250 making the debt service line item \$37,250.

Interfund Transfer

The district budgeted to transfer \$65,000 to its reserve funds in 2011. This was consistent with the 2010 budget but was significantly higher than 2009 and 2008. If the district were on a five year replacement program, this annual transfer would total approximately \$325,000 every five years for the purchase of a new vehicle.⁸

Debt

In 2011, Hamlin is in year nine (9) of an eighteen (18) year bond used to finance the construction of an addition to their fire station. The original bond was for \$450,000 and was financed in 2003. By the end of December 2011, the outstanding balance on the bond will be \$225,000. The bond is scheduled to be paid off at the end of 2020.

Fund Balance

At the end of 2010, Hamlin had a combined fund balance of \$409,000. The fund balance is held in five separate accounts. The largest account is for the purchase of new fire trucks or capital equipment and had \$179,000 associated with it (44% of the combined total). The next largest account was the operational checking account which had \$119,000 at the time. A third account designated for the building and associated repairs had \$105,000 at the end of 2010. The two other accounts are for a checking account reserve (\$1,000) and an equipment reserve (\$5,000).

Personnel and Membership

The Walker, Morton and Hamlin Fire Districts each have one volunteer fire company that services the district. There are no paid employees within the ranks of the fire companies. The fire districts do pay small

⁸ While vehicle costs vary, if a brand new customized piece of heavy apparatus was purchased this year it would range in the \$300,000 - \$400,000 range based on testimony from each of the fire districts.

salaries to support staff filling roles as treasurer and secretary. Each company establishes the protocol for membership. No company is currently offering a length of service award program (LOSAP) to any of its members. Each district has a similar command structure, although the criterion for assuming the positions is different in each district⁹. In total, the three districts have 106 combined active firefighters. Thirty-six (36) of the combined members are certified as EMT and six serve only as EMS. One hundred of the active members are eligible for either interior or exterior service.

Walker

Currently the Walker Fire Company has 27 active firefighters. Twenty-five of the members are fire-fighters while two (2) are certified solely for EMS. Eight of the members are classified for exterior service only while 17 are classified for interior firefighting. Of the 27, seven carry EMT certification and eight others carry the certified first responder (CFR) certification.

There are three layers of elected line officers listed in the annual report. The layers consist of Chief, Captain, and Lieutenant. There is one District chief, one deputy chief and one assistant chief. There are two captains and one lieutenant. Walker also lists that it has two safety officers which are usually appointed positions. In total, there were eight listed line officers in the department in 2010.

In addition to the active members, Walker has 13 inactive life members, 10 active social members and 12 active members in the Ladies Auxiliary.

Morton

Morton Fire Company has 31 active firefighters on its membership. Of the active members, 25 are eligible for interior, six are exterior only and two serve only for EMS. Eleven of the members are certified for EMT while nine (with some overlap) are qualified as fire police. There are no certified first responders (CFR) on the active membership. In addition to the active membership, Morton has 2 social members and a Ladies Auxiliary of 5-7 women. There are also a few inactive life members, but an inactive membership roster is not maintained to track them.

⁹ Appendix A and B deal with the differences in command structure certification requirements.

Hamlin

Hamlin Fire Company has 48 active firefighters on its roster. Of the active firefighters, 13 are eligible for exterior only, 33 are eligible for interior service and two are EMS only. In addition to the active firefighters, Hamlin also has 12 members of the Auxiliary. Eighteen of the 50 non-Auxiliary members carry certification for EMT and nine are qualified as fire police. One member is a certified first responder (CFR).

Hamlin Fire Company has five classifications of elected line officers: Chief; Captain; Lieutenant; EMS Captain; and EMS Lieutenant. There is one Fire Chief in the district supported by one deputy and one assistant chief. There are two Captains, two Lieutenants, one EMS captain and one EMS Lieutenant. In total there are nine line officers not including two appointed safety officers.

Hamlin also has seven members listed as inactive. Three of them serve as the commissioners for the district while three others carry life member status. There is one treasurer that is also listed as inactive.

Equipment

The three fire districts have all equipped their respective fire houses as stand-alone entities. In aggregate, the departments have 20 active pieces of heavy apparatus that are used to respond to emergencies in the districts. Morton and Walker each have five vehicles while Hamlin has ten. The table below highlights some of the items that overlap.

Heavy Apparatus of the Fire Districts				
Equipment Type	Hamlin	Morton	Walker	Total
Tanker	1			1
Pumper		1	1	2
Pumper/Tanker	2	1	1	4
Heavy Rescue	1	1		2
Light Rescue/EMS	1	1	1	3
Chiefs Vehicle	3			3
Van	1		1	2
All-Terrain			1	1
Boat		1		1
Brush Buggy	1			1
Total	10	5	5	20

In total across the three districts, there are seven pieces of equipment that serve as pumpers and/or tankers. Five more of the vehicles serve as rescue/EMS response vehicles. Hamlin is the only district to have

vehicles for their chiefs. Both Walker and Hamlin have vans they use to transport volunteers to trainings and events. Walker has the only all-terrain vehicle which comes in a well-equipped trailer. Morton is the only district with a boat for water rescue while Hamlin is the only district with a small jeep that is used to address small brush fires.

Facilities

Each fire company maintains a district-owned fire house. Hamlin has the largest facility with eight (8) truck bays, an extra truck washing bay, several offices, a large meeting room, a recreation/day room, showers in the bathrooms, an exercise room, a bunk room and a separate communications room. Hamlin's facility was originally built in 1979 but was renovated in 2002. In addition to the main facility for apparatus, Hamlin Fire Company owns several other adjacent facilities which it leases to the fire district. The facilities include training buildings, storage facilities and recreation/meeting rooms. There are also large open fields adjacent to the facilities totaling approximately 14 acres in all.

Morton and Walker have facilities with smaller footprints than Hamlin and both have been renovated with new additions for meeting space. Morton's main facility has four (4) bays with ten foot doors for its heavy apparatus. Its main facility houses a large conference room with kitchen immediately adjacent to the truck bays. In addition, the Morton Fire Department owns nine (9) acres of land in a separate location.

Walker's facility has six (6) truck bays for its large apparatus. It's newly added meeting space consists of a small kitchen, a small communications room, a larger office/conference room, and a records room. The Walker Fire Department also owns a 2,400 square foot barn and 600 square foot building, both of which are used for cold storage, as well as 16 acres of land.

Intermunicipal Agreements

Walker has an intermunicipal agreement with the Hilton Central School District to use their gas pumps. The state bid rate charged to the school district is billed to Walker at cost. Morton has a similar intermunicipal agreement with the Kendall Central Schools. Hamlin purchases gasoline in partnership with the Town of Hamlin taking advantage of bulk fuel purchasing with the Town.

Benefits and Detriments of Consolidation

Every stakeholder in a consolidation process must weigh the pros and cons of the proposed change. Consolidation decisions are often very personal and consensus may be difficult to gauge for an entire community. In the

sections that follow CGR has outlined several points that various stakeholders will want to consider as they make their final determinations.

Potential Benefits

The primary benefits of consolidation often occur in two different time horizons. There are sometimes limited short-term (immediate) cost savings opportunities, and there are also some efficiency opportunities that may only save money in the long-term. Each stakeholder will have a different tolerance for the time horizon of cost savings potential and will have to weigh that in the balance with improvements in organizational efficiency.

Cost savings and organizational efficiencies are not the only potential benefits of consolidation. Other benefits that may result from consolidation include:

- A better, and more integrated long range plan that results in coordinated capital purchases, and a leveraging of purchasing power with larger quantities;
- A stronger financial position with combined fund balances that will hold tax rates down well into the future;
- Better coordination of volunteers across a larger district may help to improve response times;
- A larger district may encourage participation from new volunteers who see new opportunities in an expanded structure;
- Coordination of assets, training schedules, and standard operating guidelines can increase familiarity of all volunteers thus encouraging better coordination of on-scene activity enhancing resolution of emergency matters; and
- Shared resources may alleviate some pressure on a given district to meet the ISO requirements to maintain insurance premiums.

Potential Detriments

The most oft stated and widely recognized concern for any consolidation is the possible loss of local control. Closely tied to this is the possible loss of identity. Each of the three fire companies potentially impacted by this process has storied histories and membership that spans generations. The members of each company take personal ownership of their facility and their equipment, and each company takes great pride in keeping their local community safe. A consolidation of the districts may result in a structure

that changes the relationship that each local company has with its community.

As companies are asked to work in closer relationship, the pride of ownership will be challenged. A consolidation has the potential to highlight and/or exacerbate underlying personal conflicts that exist between departments. To the extent this is not managed well, the quality and timeliness of response to emergencies could be compromised.

A consolidated fire district would reduce the number of fire commissioners from 15 to 5 if all three districts were consolidated into one. According to NYS Governor Andrew Cuomo, this is the goal of reducing layers of government. However, to some stakeholders in the community this is viewed as a loss of representation. This can be a negative to folks that like to know their elected officials and feel that their ability to connect with them is based both on proximity and personal relationship.

Change of any kind often challenges individual motivations. Volunteers to the existing fire companies may choose to leave and/or switch loyalties within the district in the event of consolidation. If this happens in large quantity, it could lead to a compromise in the quality and quantity of firematic services available in the community.

One of the few perks that volunteer companies have for their members is the potential of leadership within their ranks. Many firefighters work hard to get the training and experience they need to assume roles of leadership ultimately working towards the rank of Chief within the department or district. Under a consolidated district, a new structure may limit the opportunities that were once available on a department level. This could discourage the membership in each department and contribute to an exodus of firefighters.

Cost savings potential usually results from eliminating overlapping costs when budgets are combined. A lower overall cost is then spread over a combined assessed valuation which yields a new tax rate. Depending on how the dollars were allocated previously, the tax rates may decrease due to the lower budget, but the tax rates also may increase due to some tax shifts. Thus, even with lower overall budgets, tax rates may not be reduced.

Finally, any consolidation must address the response time for emergency services. If a consolidation increases the response times in any way, then the consolidation is not working in the best interest of the community.

SECTION II: OPTION ANALYSIS

Consolidation Options for Morton, Hamlin and Walker Fire Districts

Overview

Section I of this report establishes the baseline of resources and services available in the three fire districts. Section II itemizes what options exist for merging the three districts. During the project interviews with members, commissioners and administrative officials of the three districts, several key questions emerged as recurring themes for the study committee to address in the final report. The questions focused on four subjects areas.

- Organizational & Command Structure
- Budget and Tax Impact
- Apparatus/Facilities
- Personnel & Volunteers

The following sub-sections elaborate on these subjects and offer recommendations that were developed by the study committee.

Organizational & Command Structure

One of the underlying concerns of each department in a formal consolidation is whether each existing company will remain intact and what the new command structure will be for the district. The heritage of each company contributes to each corporate culture and helps inspire interest and passion in the volunteers that join. Each member is also encouraged by opportunities that exist to grow in knowledge, skill and leadership roles within each current district. These concerns were influential in the consideration of what leadership system would best suit a combined district.

Multiple structural models were discussed. The key discussion point about the hierarchy was related to the numbers of chiefs the new district would need. The number of chiefs in the system influences the number of supporting positions and the communication and flow of information throughout the district.

Single vs. Multiple District Chief Model

The district chief is the key leadership figure in a fire district, serving as the person in charge on the scene at emergencies as well as the liaison with the Fire District Commissioners. The Chief is instrumental in determining protocol for the volunteers at emergencies, forming training regimens, assuring the fire station is adequately equipped, and staying abreast of the latest technology and firematic developments. In many respects, the fire chief serves as the CEO in a fire district.

Each fire district in this study is concerned about losing their representation in a consolidated district if there is only one chief. Thus, discussion amongst the committee centered on whether to share leadership among three district chiefs in the consolidated district. The study committee highlighted several reasons why this would be very difficult and not in the best interest of the community. The single largest reason against multiple chiefs is the potential confusion it creates on scene in an emergency. It would be difficult and inefficient to have three chiefs sharing equal power and trying to make decisions in an emergency situation. Similarly, the other administrative roles played by a chief are not easily divided and/or shared. There are no good models of this working in other locations and likely for obvious reasons. A shared leadership model at the district level is not an effective model for the district.

Having decided against a shared leadership model for the district chief, the decision of the committee was to build a leadership structure built around a single district fire chief. It is important to emphasize that the district level chief will remain a volunteer. There is no provision in any part of this plan to change the current volunteer structure into a hybrid of volunteer and paid staff. The next set of decisions hinged on how many deputies and assistant chiefs there should be in the structure. Presently there are nine chief positions combined between the three departments (see the Baseline Report for detail). The committee looked at several different alternatives.

Three Deputy and Three Assistant Chiefs

Transitioning to a single district chief will eliminate two of the three current district chief positions. If three deputy chiefs were created and three assistant chief positions, the total command structure would decline in the combined district from nine to seven total command staff. However, this decline in overall leadership is possible due to the size of the district. The deputies and assistants would be able to adequately support the district chief with no loss of coverage or service. In this model the three deputy and three assistant positions could be chosen randomly from throughout the combined district or by having each district elect one deputy and one assistant from their ranks to serve at the district level.

Two Deputy and Three Assistant Chiefs

Based upon the size of the combined district and the combined membership, the committee discussed that three deputy chiefs may not even be necessary. While deputy chiefs will be essential to help carry some of the administrative burden for managing EMS, training and safety operations, one district chief and two deputy chiefs (a team of three) may suffice to accomplish the administration of the district. This would reduce the overall command structure from nine to six. Similar to the structure of

three deputies, the election for these positions could be all at-large or by selection from among the current three fire companies individually.

At-Large vs. Fire Company Specific Elections

The benefit of having at-large elections from amongst the whole membership is that the best and most qualified individuals should rise to the surface when identifying talent to fill the district positions. However, the major concern is that due to the disparity of size in the current districts, the voting power in the combined membership will slant the outcome of elections towards the Hamlin District. Walker and Morton members may potentially be disadvantaged in at-large elections for the district level positions.

In order to address this, a hybrid election process could be developed whereby the top chief and deputy positions could be elected at-large while the assistant chiefs could be elected by each company. Three or four at-large elections and three company specific elections would assure that whether there were six or seven in the command structure, each company would be represented at the District level. Once in the district level command structure, the opportunities should grow for advancement into the top level chief positions.

Recommendations for the top level chief positions shall be made by the combined membership and all who qualify for those positions would be eligible. Presently there is a difference between the districts on how much experience/training in EMS is required to hold the chief position. Since each district currently has criteria for being elected as a chief, a mutually agreeable criterion for adopting the district level fire chief position will have to be developed between the three fire companies.

District EMS, Training and Safety Captains

In addition to the chief positions at the district level, the need will exist to have three captains to help coordinate the EMS, training and safety operations. Each of the deputy chiefs would oversee one or more of these operations. In the case of the EMS function, there may also be a place to have a district level lieutenant to support the EMS captain. Due to the nature of the “captain” title, a district level captain will necessarily duplicate the role of captain within a fire company. Some fire companies may then have two or more captains while others only have one. While the ranks would be the same, the roles would be different as one would be supporting the district level work while the other would be focusing on the company specific management.

Fire Company Organizational Structure

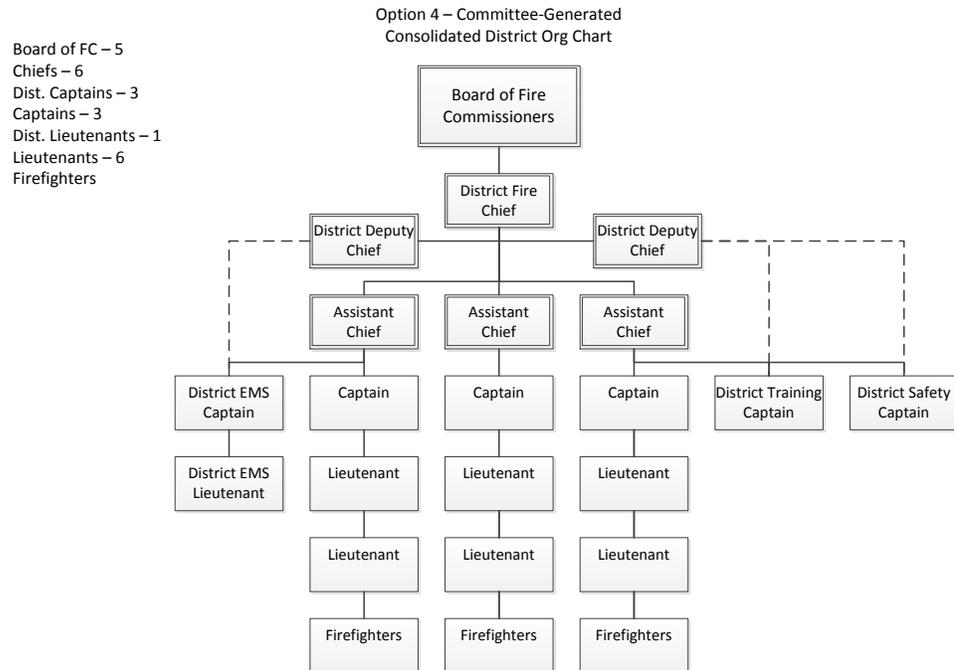
Although the new district level command staff will oversee the operations of the entire district, it is in the best interest of the entire consolidated district that each fire company continues and maintains its current operations. Thus, the consolidated district will retain three fire companies. Each fire company would be overseen by an assistant district level fire chief that would be elected from the membership of its respective fire company. The assistant chief would serve as part of the membership of the overall district. Within each fire company, the command staff would have a rank for one fire captain and two fire company lieutenants.

Election of Commissioners

A consolidated district will reduce the number of elected fire commissioners from fifteen to five. The number of commissioners is set by law and as such must be maintained at a set level of five. There is presently no provision in Town Law that would allow for the election of the district level officers to occur in any way other than through an at-large election. A potential commissioner would be eligible if they resided within the consolidated district and went through the current legal process to pursue election. All eligible voters in the combined district will vote on commissioners with no special consideration given for representation from one current district over another. Voting for commissioners through a Ward system is not currently allowed by law. The transition from fifteen to five commissioners would occur in the December election of the year in which the election for consolidation occurred.

Summary of Organizational & Command Structure

After consideration of the alternatives for command structure, the committee determined that the most streamlined and efficient structure for a new fire district is to have six top level chief positions, three captains and one lieutenant. There will be one district level chief supported by two deputy chiefs. These three positions will be elected at-large. There will be three assistant chiefs who will be elected by their respective fire companies to oversee each company and serve as district level officers. Three captains will oversee the EMS, training and safety operations, along with the one lieutenant for EMS. These four positions will be appointed positions by the district fire chief. The model below provides an organizational chart for the proposed structure.



The model that is proposed provides ample leadership for a consolidated district. The goal was not to make the structure too top heavy, but to balance a streamlined governance structure with the concerns of many that opportunities to hold district level leadership positions may be compromised by the reduction of positions. The structure could be more streamlined, but only at the expense of a position that would reduce opportunities for growth. The structure offers a middle ground for these competing goals.

It is the goal of the committee that each current fire company remains in full service and is fully supported by the consolidated district. Every effort should and will be made to offer all eligible volunteer members the opportunity to ascend into district level positions. With more opportunities for cross-training and greater levels of collaboration between the companies, greater visibility will be obtained for all the members allowing for increased opportunities to work up to the district level positions. Criteria will be clearly published that will define the expectations necessary to achieve growth in the ranks of the district.

Budget & Tax Impact

The committee used the three current district's most recent budgets to develop hypothetical models of a merged budget for a consolidated district. Employing line item analysis, the committee worked through the three budgets and assessed what a merged budget would need to keep the three current fire companies operating at the same or similar levels of service.

As identified in the Section I, the three districts budgeted to spend \$731,000 for their combined operations in 2011. CGR developed three hypothetical line item analyses for a merged budget that resulted in cost projections that ranged from an increase over the 2011 combined number of nearly 6% to a decrease over the combined number of 12%. The middle set of assumptions produced a decrease of nearly 4% (detail of the line item analysis is available upon request). The committee met and identified the merits and drawbacks of the assumptions that fed into the three models. The committee then modified some of the assumptions of the second model (4% savings) which resulted in a hypothetical merged budget that could save nearly 5.4% over the 2011 actual aggregate budgets. This committee model would result in a single budget that would cost \$39,000 less for operations. More importantly, due to the efficiencies that are created, the level of service could remain the same or improve based on the types of services that could be shared (e.g. training and certain equipment).

As observed in the table below, the three districts do collect a small amount of revenue that serves to offset the overall budget and lower the resulting tax levy. The revenue that was used in the model is the median revenue figure that was collected over the last four years between the three districts. Using the committee's assumptions, the resulting tax levy would be \$36,800 (5.1%) lower than the 2011 aggregate tax levy (using the median revenue assumption).

**2012 Merged Budget Allocations: Debt Included by District
& \$2,500 Apportioned Revenue to offset Budget = Projected Levy**

Towns/District	Budget Scenarios			
	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Committee
Kendall - Operating	\$64,471	\$57,726	\$52,541	\$57,210
Hamlin - Operating	\$603,039	\$539,951	\$491,448	\$535,126
Hamlin District Debt	\$36,075	\$36,075	\$36,075	\$36,075
Walker District Debt	\$18,905	\$18,905	\$18,905	\$18,905
Clarkson - Operating	\$43,982	\$39,381	\$35,843	\$39,029
Walker District Debt	\$5,720	\$5,720	\$5,720	\$5,720
Total	\$772,192	\$697,758	\$640,531	\$692,065
2011 Budget Less Median Revenue of \$2500	\$728,889	\$728,889	\$728,889	\$728,889
Savings Over 2011 Combined	\$43,303	(\$31,131)	(\$88,358)	(\$36,824)
Percentage Change	5.9%	-4.3%	-12.1%	-5.1%

Why did the committee not choose Option 3? The assumptions used to produce Option 3 were aggressive. None of the current budgets are laden

with “fat” or items that are easy to trim. Option 3 assumes that in some cases there are. Once the committee reviewed those assumptions, it was felt that many of the assumptions were too aggressive and may jeopardize the quality of the service that could be provided by the three fire companies. Some of the assumptions in Options 1 and 2 were too conservative, however. Thus, the committee’s assumptions are a blend of the assumptions from all three options that CGR developed with significant weight given to assumptions in Option 2.

Debt Considerations

New debt in the consolidated district may be incurred in the future and would be spread amongst all tax payers in the consolidated district. However, existing debt will not be spread amongst all tax payers in the new district. Existing debt will remain with the existing districts. In the table above (page 28), it is broken down for the Hamlin and Walker districts since they are the only districts to have current debt. The debt that is associated with each district changes the manner in which the tax levy is calculated. While the total tax levy would hypothetically be around \$729,000, each current district would pay for the operating portion of that through one tax rate while Hamlin and Walker districts would incur an additional cost to pay for the debt associated with their current districts. Once the debts are paid off, the extra tax rates would cease.

Walker District has explored the possibility of paying their existing debt down and/or paying it off completely with the reserves they have available. Due to the type of bond, they cannot pay it off early. However, they are continuing to explore possibilities for early debt retirement. One option includes setting up an escrow account funded by the current reserves that would be used to pay down the debt according to its schedule. This option has not received approval from the State Comptroller but research is ongoing. As of this report, the Walker tax payers will be responsible to pay for their current debt over the next five years.

Tax Impact

As mentioned, the debt and operational costs will result in separate tax rates for each existing district until that debt is fully paid down in Hamlin and Walker. Operationally, the tax impact will be the same and spread across the whole district. The tax rate that results from the committee assumptions in the table above is \$1.38 per thousand of assessed valuation. Each tax paying household would be responsible for this tax to fund the operations of the three companies in the consolidated district.

2012 Mock Tax Rates Per 2011 AV - Debt in Districts

Towns	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Committee
Kendall	\$1.56	\$1.40	\$1.27	\$1.38
Hamlin - M	\$1.56	\$1.40	\$1.27	\$1.38
Hamlin - H	\$1.71	\$1.55	\$1.42	\$1.53
Hamlin - W	\$1.76	\$1.60	\$1.47	\$1.59
Clarkson	\$1.76	\$1.60	\$1.47	\$1.59

As observed in the Mock Tax Rates table, residents in the current Morton (M) district in both Kendall and Hamlin would be responsible for the \$1.38 tax rate. However, in the Hamlin (H) and Walker (W) Districts, the additional cost for their debt raises the tax rate for each of their respective districts. In Hamlin, the debt would add a tax rate of \$.15 per thousand resulting in a tax rate of \$1.53 in total until the debt was paid off. In the Walker district, the additional tax for debt would be \$.21 per thousand resulting in a tax of \$1.59 per thousand until the debt was paid down. If the Walker District pays down all of its current debt, the resulting tax rate would decrease back to the \$1.38 per thousand for operations.

2012 Mock Tax Rates Per 2011 AV - Including Debt

Towns	2011 Rates	Proposed	Difference
Kendall	\$1.736	\$1.38	(\$0.35)
Hamlin - M	\$1.736	\$1.38	(\$0.35)
Hamlin - H	\$1.590	\$1.53	(\$0.06)
Hamlin - W	\$1.505	\$1.59	\$0.08
Clarkson	\$1.505	\$1.59	\$0.08

In summary, the Walker District stands to pay \$.08 per thousand more for the consolidation of the Districts if they do not pay down their current debt. This differential would last for the next five years until their debt is fully paid off. Alternatively, they could pay down their current debt and realize an overall tax rate reduction of \$.12 per thousand. Hamlin and Morton are projected to reduce their tax impact by \$.06 and \$.35 per thousand respectively. Hamlin could increase their reduction to \$.21 per thousand if they paid down their debt.

Fund Balance Considerations

The combined fund balances in 2011 stand at nearly \$850,000. The table below highlights how those fund balances are currently allocated.

2010 Combined Fund Balance					
District	Equipment	Facilities	Apparatus	Operations	Total
Morton	\$29,000	\$43,000	\$118,000		\$190,000
Hamlin	\$104,000		\$179,000	\$119,000	\$402,000
Walker	\$42,000	\$40,000	\$172,000		\$254,000
Total	\$175,000	\$83,000	\$469,000	\$119,000	\$846,000

Merging the districts leverages the combined purchasing power of these fund balances. Presently, the Morton District cannot purchase a new fire truck that it needs by using reserves alone. However, the combined apparatus balance of \$469,000 means that a new fire truck could be purchased this year without debt if the three districts were to share those resources. Of course, if Walker used its apparatus balance to pay off its debt, it lowers the total to slightly less than \$300,000, but still significantly better than the current balance in the Morton fund balance. The Morton fire truck is the only truck that needs immediate replacement and would allow for coordinated planning moving forward to avoid future debt financed purchases (see section below on apparatus purchase planning).

Operationally, the Hamlin District has a reserve that is nearly one third of its operational budget. The Government Standards Accounting Board (GASB) typically recommends reserves in the neighborhood of 5-15% of operations. The current Hamlin reserve spread across the combined hypothetical district budget would be in the range of 17%. This would position the combined district very favorably moving forward.

Facilities and equipment are all in stronger positions in a combined fund balance scenario. As discussed in the next sections, the facilities are not in bad shape and thus current fund balances could be used proactively to help modernize or improve the size of certain facilities rather than simply trying to bring the facilities up to a basic level of functional service.

Apparatus Purchase Planning

CGR developed a mock budget that theorized when vehicles would need to be replaced. With the current combined fund balances, a new, well equipped fire truck could be purchased in 2012. The committee's projected annual operating budget makes provision for annual set-asides to reserves of \$110,000. These annual transfers to reserves would allow for a new piece of apparatus to be replaced every couple of years. NFPA guidelines suggest that the useful life of a fire truck is 20 years. Using a 20-25 time horizon and considering the current age of all the vehicles, a long term strategy could be implemented that replaces each vehicle or phases duplicate pieces of apparatus out over the next 12 to 15 years. Each new piece of apparatus could be purchased debt free using good budget planning from the reserves.

Two Percent Insurance Collection

Another question of concern during the public meeting was how the two percent insurance collection would be allocated among the three fire districts. Presently only the Walker Fire District collects that insurance fee directly. In turn, it hands the money over directly to their local benevolent organization. Hamlin and Morton Districts do not collect the fee allowing instead that the local benevolent organizations receive the money directly.

In a consolidated district, the plan is that each benevolent organization will continue to get the amount that they have traditionally received from insurance proceeds. Payments from the insurance will go directly to the benevolent organizations according to methods already established within the current districts. The process is likely to continue uninterrupted in the case of Hamlin and Morton. Walker may need to adjust the process slightly to allow the payment to flow directly to the benevolent organization.

Facilities Impact

There is no impact foreseen to any of the existing facilities unless a modernization plan is implemented for the Morton fire house. In this regard, the modernization would entail raising the roof of the existing apparatus bays and/or adding a bay on to the end. If a new fire truck is purchased, the typical size of the new apparatus would likely not fit into the doors of the present facility. Raising the roof would allow for larger apparatus to fit and could make apparatus allocation throughout the new combined district easier to plan.

All other facilities are in good repair and/or have been recently upgraded. The committee does not see any reason why facilities would change or inhibit a consolidation of the three districts.

Apparatus Impact

The most significant possible change in apparatus would be in relation to how the equipment is allocated. Presently, the allocation of equipment may not be optimal when all three districts are considered as one. One combined district creates shared resources and offers more creativity in how pieces are allocated to respond to the types of incidents that are typical throughout the region.

Over time the number of pieces of apparatus is anticipated to be reduced. For instance, the number of tankers and pumpers (or pumper/tankers) is likely larger than the whole area needs. Over time, considering the apparatus replacement plan discussed above, the number of these pieces of

equipment may be reduced. General consensus suggested that three main pumper/tankers with one backup would likely serve the district. This would mean that over time the current seven pumper/tankers could be reduced. This presents significant future cost avoidance and allows for planning on other types of purchases that could enhance the level of service not currently provided.

Similarly, the number of heavy rescue apparatus and the associated tools and equipment is likely higher than the consolidated district needs. One heavy rescue for the whole consolidated district with light rescue/squad vehicles in each fire house may suffice. Over time, this presents cost avoidance opportunities and opens up possibilities for other types of purchases to enhance the level of service.

One other benefit that has been discussed is that one combined district presents possibilities for cross-training on the vehicles. Realigning the placement of vehicles, cross-training and assuring that each vehicle is similarly equipped will enhance the level of service and response that each of the companies can provide in an emergency.

Equipment & Impact on Response Time

A concern was raised during the public hearing that current pager and dispatch operations may be disrupted in a larger operation. As with any transition, changes will cause adaptation to a new system. The frequencies of the pagers and the dispatch protocol will not be difficult to change. Intentional meetings with the Monroe and Orleans Counties 911 operations will insure that calls are dispatched and the radio/pager frequencies are harmonized to assure proper response.

What could be more problematic is the response of volunteers to a larger area. While not anticipated or hoped for, current members may not want to respond to calls in areas other than their current district. Each current district should assess the degree to which current members may or may not be pre-disposed to respond to calls in the larger area. Each fire company will have to address with its own membership the process/plan for response and a new protocol will have to be implemented for the entire district.

In general, aggregating the membership should help to improve the response time in the whole district. Volunteers will not be constrained by existing boundaries and thus calls that are currently only dispatched as secondary to current districts will be dispatched as primary. Since the whole Town of Hamlin is not that large, expanding the pool of volunteers available for primary dispatch should help to improve overall response.

Personnel & Volunteer Impact

The impact on volunteers is difficult to predict. CGR learned through interviews with the members of each of the fire companies that there is a great deal of distrust that exists between them. The distrust is fueled in part by the identities each local company has defined for themselves. More significantly, however, the differences in size between the three companies cause significant concern. The smaller companies in Morton and Walker do not want to be “swallowed up” by the larger operation in Hamlin.

Volunteers view this potential in terms of their opportunities to ascend leadership and serve in the capacities of assistant, deputy or district chief. If the smaller companies perceive that their opportunities are diminished, then they may be discouraged and lose interest in the company over time. If members in Morton and Walker perceive they are not offered the same chance to serve at the district level, then they may seek opportunities in other districts or departments.

CGR contacted four other districts in New York State that have been through a consolidation of districts or departments. In each case, though the transition was met with resistance by some of the existing volunteers who had been with the companies for a long time, the younger volunteers were more open to the merge. The older volunteers stayed with the companies even though it was not their preference to merge. From the anecdotes we received, there was not mass loss of volunteers from any of the departments. It could be argued that a merger may result in future growth as new volunteers actually join because they see a larger district as offering more opportunities than a smaller one.

While these are just anecdotes, it will be incumbent on the current districts to accurately assess the likelihood that each of their current companies will be able to maintain the existing membership. The goal of the committee is that each company remains fully engaged and that opportunities increase for members in each company. Since the plan is to retain each company, the existing fire companies will still retain a certain amount of autonomy and identity. This will help insure that the culture in each company remains recognizable and if there is a transition, it occurs slowly over time.

Standard Operating Guidelines

CGR conducted a review of the Standard Operating Procedures/Guidelines and the By-Laws and Policies of each department. The following is an overview of the comparison between the SOP/SOGs in each department. In-depth analysis of the SOP/SOGs and By-Laws and Policies, as well as Training Requirements, can be found in Appendices A-C respectively.

Standard Operating Procedures/Guidelines

The operations of the three fire departments are governed by the following documents:

- Hamlin Fire Department Standard Operating Guidelines (105 pages)
- Morton Fire District Standard Operating Procedures (204 pages)
- Walker Fire District Standard Operating Guidelines (55 pages)

Currently, these documents cover some of the same operations but also contain unique guidelines. A consolidated fire district will have options for how to govern independent fire companies with operating procedures, but synchronization at a district-wide level will be preferable and helpful.

Departments may continue to have distinct operating procedures to regulate operations that are unique or more common to the department, but it is important that these not be incompatible with district-wide policies. Some procedures may need to be revised to lesser or greater degrees. Below is a discussion of procedures that may require a review or more substantive changes to ensure compatibility. For a complete review of procedures, including procedures covered only by one SOP/SOG, see Appendix A.

Should the three departments choose to pursue departmental consolidation at some point in the future, a more comprehensive overhaul of operating procedures would be necessary, as a single set of operating procedures would need to be developed.¹⁰ Reconciliation of the standard operating procedures between districts will be done best by those with fire-fighting experience and expertise.¹¹

Possible Action Items

Each operating procedure is briefly described and followed by an action item that identifies actions or changes that may need to be performed. In some cases, action may not be necessary but may allow for greater efficiency.

¹⁰ Morton Fire Department is currently in the process of reviewing and revising their SOP.

¹¹ Resources for reviewing and synchronizing SOP/SOGs:

- National Fire Protection Association (www.nfpa.org)
- Operational Safety and Health Association (www.OSHA.gov)
- ‘Developing Effective Standard Operating Procedures,’ FEMA (<http://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/fa-197-508.pdf>) A portion of the FEMA document is included in Appendix A.

- **Radio Procedures:** Basic guidelines for radio use, including radio language and channel usage.
 - **Action Item:** Standardization of radio communication vocabulary and protocol may be necessary. Equipment compatibility would need to be ensured and radio channels may need to be reassigned and/or standardized to allow for proper communication.
- **Occupational Safety and Health Program, Committee and Safety Officer:** Establishing the presence of a program, committee and safety officer satisfying the OSHA rules.
 - **Action Item:** A review of all three departments' OSHA programs and safety officer duties may be necessary to ensure that each is meeting OSHA guidelines. Depending on whether the district or the department is responsible for meeting the OSHA guidelines, standardization of these procedures may be necessary upon district consolidation.
- **Hydraulic Tool Use:** Operating procedures for using the hydraulic rescue tool, including who may operate and who must be present to provide medical support.
 - **Action Item:** Morton and Walker's guidelines for operating a hydraulic-powered tool differ in the number of firefighters operating the tool and supervising the procedure. The departments may have different tools that require these different procedures, or the practices may actually be different. A review of the hydraulic tools and best operating procedures may be necessary to inform both training on and use of the hydraulic tool.
- **Emergency Response:** Guidelines for deployment of apparatus/vehicles and personnel to the various types of calls for assistance. This includes the order in which apparatus are to be taken to a scene.
 - **Action Item:** Upon consolidation, it will be necessary to inventory apparatus/vehicles, create a consistent naming/numbering system, and update the emergency apparatus response orders. This may also be an opportunity to review deployment procedures for all three departments and assure that they are aligned for the most effective and efficient service.

- **Mutual Aid Operations Guidelines:** Guidelines for responding to calls for mutual aid, including who may respond and which vehicles may be used.
 - **Action Item:** District consolidation may provide the opportunity to review mutual aid procedures to ensure that the three departments are working together in the most effective and efficient way.
- **Incident Command System:** Chain and procedure of command at an emergency scene.
 - **Action Item:** There appeared to be no significant procedural differences in the incident command system or the passing of command. There may be some difference in vocabulary regarding types of command (forward, mobile, fixed, fast attack, nothing-showing, etc.). It may be necessary to develop consistent language across all procedures for the purposes of clarity and safety.
- **Protective Clothing & Equipment:** Requirements for maintenance and use of protective clothing and equipment, including helmets, hoods, boots, etc.
 - **Action Item:** It appeared that all three departments have similar requirements for safety gear. However, it could be important for equipment experts to compare the departments' equipment and make sure that the standards are similar and that there will be no compatibility problems.
- **Fire Hose & Testing:** Description and procedures for use and testing of the various hose types.
 - **Action Item:** Fire hose testing for each department is contracted out to the same company, so standardization already exists in this area. A brief review of hose use procedures may be necessary to ensure that no significant procedural differences exist.
- **Ground Ladders:** Description and procedure for use of the various ground ladder types. Morton's SOP covers ladder requirements and maintenance while Hamlin's SOG goes into more detail about actual use of ladders at a fire scene.
 - **Action Item:** While there appeared to be no procedural difference, it is also true that the procedures do not cover

the same material. A standard set of ladder use guidelines may need to be created.

- **Firefighter Assist & Safety Team (F.A.S.T.):** Procedures for the F.A.S.T. when undertaking a firefighter rescue operation. F.A.S.T. should be available whenever firefighters are using SCBA inside a structure.
 - **Action Item:** Walker and Hamlin have relatively similar F.A.S.T. procedures but Morton does not address F.A.S.T. in their SOP. As F.A.S.T. may be utilized in mutual aid incidents and also requires special training, it may be necessary to standardize F.A.S.T. training and procedures across the three departments. There may also be opportunities for sharing F.A.S.T.s between departments.

Training

Training requirements for members of the three departments are presently a top priority. If the districts consolidate, synchronizing and standardizing these requirements will be of great importance to the leadership of the district. Some shared training opportunities already exist and a consolidation will likely increase these experiences. Inter-departmental training should also be encouraged. Joint training opportunities may be limited by the size of the group and capacity of the facilities, but that should not discourage the opportunities.

For coordinated training to be successful, it may be necessary for training procedures and requirements to be standardized across the departments. Currently, each department has a point system that measures members' participation in training activities throughout the year. The departments could standardize the point systems, although it is not a necessity unless the consolidated district requires each department to adhere to the same point schedule.

Training Requirements¹²

Hamlin's training procedures, as laid out in their Department Constitution and By-law, do not define the specific topic, but 24 hours of department training are required annually for active class firefighters. Members must also obtain all training necessary to meet OSHA requirements. Additional training for drivers and officers is also required.

¹² The training requirements of Hamlin and Walker are discussed in greater depth in Appendix C. Morton's training requirements has not been made available.

Walker Department requires between 30 and 37 hours of training for active members, while new members must obtain 47 hours. The topics covered in Walker's training are laid out in Appendix C. Both departments require a probationary period and the passing of NYS Essentials or Basic Firefighting courses.

While Walker appears to require more training hours, it may be that Hamlin's members must obtain more than 24 hours in order to meet the OSHA requirements. Hamlin does not stipulate the specific training topics covered by the department's 24 hours of training, but they are likely to be similar to those covered by Walker's training. Walker's training requirement documents are the most thorough, and so they may be a good standard with which to start creating consolidated district training requirements.

Driver Training

As apparatus and vehicles are district-owned, driver training is an area that lends itself well to joint training at the district level on all apparatus in each department. The opportunity of joint or cross training means that standard driver training requirements may be necessary and beneficial.

Company By-Laws

Under district consolidation, the three fire departments will likely retain their individual by-laws and policies, although some changes may be necessary for compatibility with district level standard operating guidelines. While there are several differences in the by-laws of the departments, as can be viewed in Appendix B, only a few of them may require substantive changes. These are discussed below, along with an action item identifying actions that may be necessary or preferable.

- **Seniority, Longevity, and Officer Requirements:** Years of service and seniority are important features in the fire department structures. In addition to some departments having longevity requirements for elected office, longevity and/or seniority can be factors in command structure and status within the fire department. Specifically, Hamlin requires members to have served 2 continuous years immediately prior to being elected as a Line Officer. Hamlin Line Officers must also work their way up through the ranks, serving first in lower ranks before being eligible for higher ranks.

Hamlin also requires the Chief, Deputy and Assistant Chiefs, and Fire Captains to be New York State EMTs and to be approved drivers on all district apparatus. Fire Lieutenants and Captains are also required to take NYS Intro to Officer and Officer I courses,

respectively. Walker and Morton do not appear to have the same officer requirements.

Action Item: Under district consolidation, years of service, seniority, certifications and service as an officer would need to transfer in such a way that members perceive their new standing to be fair and representative of their service. If a consolidated district had a district-level Chief, members of the Walker and Morton fire departments would need to be considered equally with Hamlin members until a new policy could be phased in that would require uniform certifications for the new position.

Should the district pursue departmental consolidation at some point, officer requirements, seniority and longevity would need to be standardized, again giving consideration to fairness.

Implementation Process Overview

The process for consolidating the jurisdictions of adjoining fire districts is governed by General Municipal Law Article 17-A. Unique to this case, the implementation process will follow this formal study of the merger implications (a formal study is not required in GML 17-A for a consolidation of local government entities). Each district's board of commissioners will have the opportunity to examine this non-binding report and determine if consolidation with the other two districts in this study is in the best interest of their district. If a determination is made that a district board wishes to pursue jurisdictional consolidation, then the commissioners would enter into a joint consolidation agreement with the other two districts. The joint consolidation agreement must contain the key elements of a consolidation plan. The required elements are specified in GML Article 17-A, Section 752. A draft template for the joint consolidation agreement is also provided as Appendix E to this report.

Upon commissioner endorsement of the consolidation agreement in each current District, the joint consolidation agreement must be publicized for public review and comment. Subsequently, the agreement will be subject to separate public hearings in each district or a joint public hearing of all the districts. Following the public hearing(s) the commissioners may choose to revise the consolidation agreement and publicize it. No further hearings are necessary.

The final step in the process is for the commissioners in each District to approve and sign the joint consolidation agreement. The agreement may specify that the consolidation takes place immediately upon approval; or it may specify a future effective date. At the point the consolidation becomes effective, the Town Councils of Kendall, Hamlin and Clarkson must work jointly to appoint the first slate of five commissioners. The joint consolidation agreement may specify that the appointed slate of

commissioners be representative of the three districts helping to insure a better transition in the process. The appointed commissioners will serve in the interim until the first formal election of commissioners for the consolidated district. The election would most likely occur on the second Tuesday of the first December following the effective date of full consolidation.

Transitions in command structures would occur once the consolidation becomes effective. This will be the most significant immediate impact of consolidation. In the case of Hamlin, Morton and Walker, it is likely that there will be few other changes relative to fire houses and apparatus in the immediate aftermath of the vote. Over time, the new set of commissioners and new fire chief will begin to make transitions in the operation of the district to implement the changes that are necessary.

Appendix D contains a process map that identifies the key points outlined in this section of the report.

Analysis of Benefits and Detriments to Consolidation

Potential Benefits

The three districts would be in a much stronger position financially if they merge. Not only will one budget allow for a financial savings of over 5% from the current 2011 combined operating budgets, but merging the fund balances will create greater leverage for capital purchases. Each fire district will be facing the new 2% tax cap and future budgets will be constrained by the limited growth available under the new law. Yet, costs for services including equipment and higher standards for training continue to rise. Merging the finances of the three districts will alleviate some of this pressure and help position the consolidated district on a stronger foundation moving forward.

A new consolidated district offers improvements in efficiency by consolidating the administrative structure from nine chiefs and fifteen commissioners (24 positions) to six chiefs and five commissioners (11 positions). One benefit is the reduction in the need for volunteers to fill these roles. However, more significantly, several barriers are removed that have historically caused poor communication and lack of partnership between the districts. Having one set of commissioners responsible for making the decisions for the district also eliminates multiple decision making (a.k.a. governing) bodies. One district level chief will help streamline the command structure and facilitate a good protocol in emergency situations. A leaner command structure should promote better communication between the fire companies and aid in improving the overall productivity of the fire companies.

While it is uncertain whether the overall pool of volunteers will grow, pooling from a larger area for volunteer membership should enhance the response and coverage for the entire district. Allowing for the entire membership of the three districts to respond to the primary dispatch of an emergency will encourage a broader and timelier response. Additionally, the pool of volunteers can be coordinated more effectively during deployment to emergencies and for training purposes. The pool of volunteers available to serve as commissioners will also be enhanced.

Potential Detriments

Each fire company has a storied history and strong local identity in their community. The interviews with local membership have revealed a significant concern that each local company could lose their identity in this process. To the extent that any one company gets overshadowed in the consolidation, it is possible that a fire company could lose its place in the community. Since each company will be encouraged to remain active in a consolidated district, the threat to a loss of local control is minimized. However, a consolidated set of commissioners will have to remain sensitive to the needs of each company and find ways to encourage their company culture, growth and development.

Related to this, a consolidated district is going to have to encourage inter-departmental collaboration. Since there is an inherent level of distrust that currently exists among some of the members in each company towards the other companies, a consolidated district command staff and the commissioners should find ways to build trust that will minimize the potential for conflict between the fire companies.

Each fire company takes pride in the ownership of its vehicles and equipment. The fire companies will need to find ways to encourage sharing and learn to take pride in the apparatus and equipment of the entire district. Treating all equipment as if it is their own will build trust between the companies and reduce the concerns over time about sharing equipment.

There will be a reduced number of fire commissioners for the public to access. While this may help improve efficiency, many citizens will perceive that this is tantamount to a loss of representation. Each of the fire companies in concert with the new leadership and the new set of commissioners will have to work hard to engage the public and assure citizens from each of the current districts that their interests are being represented just as well as they were before.

There is likely no way to insure that all of the volunteer membership remains intact through the transition. Each fire district needs to be proactive during the transition and the new leadership needs to continue to

be proactive to engage members from each of the districts early and often throughout a transition. If members are lost, every effort should be made to encourage new participants to join and begin to rebuild that base in the new paradigm for the future.

Fear of change is often the biggest detriment that faces a consolidation. What is known is often more palatable to members and citizens than what is unknown. Yet, change is inevitable. Whether due to budget constraints (a significant detriment facing many local governments), loss of volunteers, or changes in a community (e.g. increasing/declining population), communities are always in transition. Forecasting the firematic needs of a community is an important role for members of the community to play. Making future plans based upon those forecasts is tricky and poses one of the potential detriments. What if we're wrong? Facing that fear head on is the challenge of good leadership. Failing to face that fear only delays the inevitable decisions and makes the transitions in the future that much more difficult.

Conclusion

The baseline and options analyses have demonstrated that there are opportunities for consolidation available to the three fire districts in Morton, Walker and Hamlin. The committee has analyzed the tangible and intangible impacts that a consolidation would have on the three districts. Based upon all the factors, the results of the analyses lead this committee to a non-binding recommendation that it would be in the best interest of the three districts to pursue a formal consolidation. The consolidation would yield potential cost savings, enhanced and better coordinated training between the three fire companies, and long range financial strength for future capital purchases. The citizens of the community will benefit from a financially stronger district that is better trained, better equipped and more prepared to respond to emergencies and crises that the community is challenged with.

The community is not forced to make this decision at this time. However, the time is ripe. There is financial incentive from New York State to help with the cost of transition. The costs that are facing our fire companies are rising rapidly while the ability to meet those costs has been diminished with the two percent tax cap. The fire companies have long sought ways to create better partnerships and improve collaboration. The company cultures are not so different as to prevent a consolidation from occurring. In summary, the Districts have the chance to make a proactive decision that positions them well for many years to come. If they choose not to move now, it is highly likely they will be faced with this decision again in the near future. Only then, they may be reacting to situations that could have been prevented if action was taken now.

APPENDIX A

Standard Operating Procedure: In-depth Review

Guidelines that overlap all department SOP/SOG's

Hamlin, Morton & Walker

The following guidelines were represented in each district's SOP/SOG. An action item indicates that there may be differences that require review and/or revision in the event of a consolidation of the three districts.

- **Emergency Response:** Guidelines for deployment of apparatus/vehicles and personnel to the various types of calls for assistance. This includes the order in which apparatus are to be taken to a scene.
Action Item: Upon consolidation, it may be necessary to inventory apparatus/vehicles, create a consistent naming/numbering system, and update the emergency apparatus response orders. This may also be an opportunity to review deployment procedures for all three departments and assure that they are aligned for the best and more efficient service.
- **Radio Procedures:** Basic guidelines for radio use.
Action Item: Standardization of radio communication vocabulary and protocol may be necessary. Equipment compatibility would need to be ensured and radio channels may need to be reassigned and/or standardized to allow for proper communication.
- **Protective Clothing & Equipment:** Requirements for maintenance and use of protective clothing and equipment, including helmets, hoods, boots, etc.
Action Item: It appeared that all three departments have similar requirements for safety gear. However, it could be important for equipment experts to compare the departments' equipment and make sure that the standards are similar and that there will be no compatibility problems.
- **Incident Command System:** Chain and procedure of command at an emergency scene.
Action Item: There appeared to be no significant procedural differences in the incident command system or the passing of command. There may be some difference in vocabulary regarding types of command (forward, mobile, fixed, fast attack, nothing-

showing, etc.). It may be necessary to develop consistent language across all procedures for purposes of clarity and safety.

All three districts' SOP/SOGs also cover the operations listed below. Upon comparison, there appeared to be no significant procedural differences that would inhibit consolidation.

- **Drivers of Vehicles:** The requirements for operating Fire District vehicles/apparatus, including drivers' training and operating procedures.
- **Persons Riding in Vehicles:** Regulations for vehicle passengers, including who may ride in the vehicles and how passengers must be situated.
- **Self-Contained Breath Apparatus:** Requirements for the training, use, and maintenance of SCBAs.
- **Accountability Procedure:** Outline of procedure for using accountability tags at the emergency scene. Accountability procedures ensure that each firefighter is accounted for throughout any emergency procedures.

Guidelines that overlap only one District

The following procedures are covered by the SOP/SOGs of two of the fire districts.

Hamlin & Morton

The following guidelines exist in the SOP/SOGs of Hamlin and Morton. An action item indicates that there may be differences that require review and/or revision in the event of consolidation of the two districts.

- **Fire Hose & Testing:** Description and procedures for use and testing of the various hose types.
Action Item: Fire hose testing for each department is contracted out to the same company, so standardization already exists in this area. A brief review a hose use procedures may be necessary to ensure that no significant procedural differences exist.
- **Ground Ladders:** Description and procedure for use of the various ground ladder types. Morton's SOP covers ladder requirements and maintenance while Hamlin's SOG goes into more detail about actual use of ladders at a fire scene.
Action Item: While there appeared to be no procedural difference, it is also true that the procedures do not cover the same material. A standard set of ladder use guidelines may need to be created.

- **Occupational Safety and Health Program, Committee and Safety Officer:** Establishing the presence of a program, committee and safety officer satisfying the OSHA rules.
Action Item: A review of all three districts' OSHA programs and safety officer duties may be necessary to ensure that each is meeting OSHA guidelines. Depending on whether the district or the department is responsible for meeting the OSHA guidelines, standardization or these procedures may be necessary upon district consolidation.

Hamlin and Morton's SOP/SOGs also cover the guidelines listed below. Upon comparison, there appeared to be no significant procedural differences that would inhibit consolidation.

- **Media Relation:** Guidelines for speaking with media/press. In both districts, members are expected to refrain from speaking to the press on district and incident matters except as authorized by the Fire Chief.
- **Code of Conduct:** Basic guidelines for firefighter behavior (both on- and off-duty). While the codes of conduct may vary a bit, the spirit of the codes is the same. The goal is that firefighters conduct themselves in a way that is a credit to the fire district and that allows the fire district to achieve its goals within the community.
- **Controlled Substances:** Guidelines about drug and alcohol use (both on- and off-duty). Also covered in the bylaws or policies of the three departments, drugs and alcohol are not allowed on fire district property (except by prior approval for specific events), nor are members allowed to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol when performing their duties.
- **Exposure Reporting:** Procedure for reporting exposure to any type of hazardous material, including but not limited to explosives, gases/chemicals, poisons, biohazards, radioactive materials, etc.
- **Emergency Operations:** Glossary of terms and procedures for the following:
 - Tactical Guidelines – Establish goals of Fire District activity, and guidelines to meet those goals in emergency situations. Goals include: Life Safety & Rescue, Fire Control, and Property Conservation.
 - Water Rescue – Procedures for rescue in the water.
 - Emergency Vehicle Placement – Procedure for parking vehicles around the emergency scene, so as to maximize safety and use.

- Personnel deployment at scene of fire– Procedure for deploying firefighters at a fire emergency scene, including interior and exterior placement, etc.
- Fire Streams – Development and placement of fire streams while fighting a fire.
- Hose Loads – Definitions of the various hose loads.
- Water Supplies – Requirements for adequate and reliable water supply at scene of fire, including minimum flows for zones.
- Ventilation – Procedures for providing prompt and proper ventilation while fighting a fire.
- Motor Vehicle Fires – Procedures for suppressing motor vehicle fires and ensuring firefighter safety at such a fire.
- **EMS General Patient Care:** Procedure for basic EMS care, including which personnel should respond, how patient should be cared for, and necessary reports and clean-up measures to be carried out post-event. Also covers protective clothing and equipment to be used by those providing medical care.

Morton & Walker

The following guidelines exist in the SOP/SOGs of Morton and Walker. An action item indicates that there may be differences that require review and/or revision in the event of consolidation of the two districts.

- **Hydraulic Tool Use:** Operating procedures for using the hydraulic rescue tool, including who may operate and who must be present to provide medical support.
Action Item: Morton and Walker’s guidelines for operating a hydraulic-powered tool differ in the number of firefighters operating the tool and supervising the procedure. The districts may have different tools that require these different procedures, or the practices may actually be different. A review of the hydraulic tools and best operating procedures may be necessary to inform both training on and use of the hydraulic tool.
- **Training:** The initial and annual training required for each type of member, including officers and EMS personnel.
Action Item: As coordinated training may be a possibility in a consolidated district, training requirements may need to be standardized. An in-depth discussion of training is provided in Appendix C.

Morton and Walker's SOP/SOGs also cover the guidelines listed below. Upon comparison, there appeared to be no significant procedural differences that would inhibit consolidation.

- **Disciplinary Action:** Procedure for disciplinary actions and appeals.
- **Leave & Vacation:** Procedure for applying for leave, vacation, medical and injury leave. Also covers compensation rules.
- **Rehabilitation:** Procedure for providing rehab to firefighters during a fire, including how long firefighters may be in action before taking break, provisions for water and food, and mental/physical recovery.

Hamlin & Walker

The following guidelines were represented in the SOP/SOGs of Hamlin and Walker. An action item indicates that there may be differences that require review and/or revision in the event of consolidation of the two districts.

- **Mutual Aid Operations Guidelines:** Guidelines for responding to calls for Mutual Aid, including who may respond and which vehicles may be used.
Action Item: District consolidation may provide the opportunity to review Mutual Aid procedures to ensure that the three departments are working together in the most effective and efficient way.
- **Firefighter Assist & Safety Team (F.A.S.T.):** Procedures for the F.A.S.T. when undertaking a firefighter rescue operation. F.A.S.T. should be available whenever firefighters are using SCBA inside a structure.
Action Item: Walker and Hamlin have relatively similar F.A.S.T. procedures but Morton does not address F.A.S.T. in their SOP. As F.A.S.T. may be utilized in mutual aid incidents and also requires special training, it may be necessary to standardize F.A.S.T. training and procedures across the three departments. There may also be opportunities for sharing F.A.S.T.s between departments.

Hamlin and Walker's SOP/SOGs also cover the guidelines listed below. Upon comparison, there appeared to be no significant procedural differences that would inhibit consolidation.

- **Fire Police:** Procedure for working with Fire Police and expectation and duties of the Fire Police. This includes setting up perimeters and stopping the press and other citizens from entering the emergency scene.

Guidelines that do not overlap any department

The guidelines listed below are unique to the SOP/SOG of the department under which they are listed. A consolidation of any or all of the districts would require that each of these guidelines be reviewed for applicability to each district.

Morton

Morton's SOP's address the following unique issues:

- General administration
- Job description
- Other conduct
- Operating power saws
- Fire Station safety
- Hearing conservation
- Maintenance – repair requests, declaring vehicles unsafe, marking and inventorying equipment, equipment records
- Medical – terminally ill & deceased persons, mass-casualty incidents, infection control, transport by helicopter
- Communications – radio maintenance, paging, cell & telephone systems
- Weapons – no firearms rule
- Hazardous Material Emergencies

Hamlin

Hamlin's SOG's address the following unique issues:

- Search & Rescue
- Forcible Entry
- EMS Squads

Walker

Walker's SOG's address the following unique issues:

- Explorers
- Staging Area
- Specific vehicle use

APPENDIX B

In-Depth By-Laws & Policies Comparison

By-laws, which pertain to the departments, may not need to be standardized under district consolidation. Policies, which are district-approved, would need to be approved by a consolidated district, although some differences could remain across the three fire houses. However, should the three fire departments choose to consolidate at some point, a standard set of by-laws would be necessary. The following is a list of policies, held by one or more of the three departments, which merit consideration if departmental consolidation is pursued. This information may also be helpful during a district consolidation process, as it may increase understanding of the three departments and prompt discussions.

After briefly describing each policy, the ‘action item’ discusses how department consolidation may impact the policy and actions that may be necessary if the departments proceed with consolidation. The potential role these by-laws play under a consolidated district may also be discussed. The policies are divided into categories of substantive action, moderate action, and little or no action, based on the perceived amount of change or discussion that may need to take place.

At this time, it does not appear that there are any policies or practices that are so incompatible that they would prohibit the consolidation of the three departments. There are some areas that may need review and revision, but no issues appear to be insurmountable.

Substantive Action

- **Governance:** The three fire department governance structures differ in some ways. In some cases, it may be just a matter of differing titles (i.e. President vs. Chair), but there may also be actual structural and functional differences as well. Hamlin and Walker’s bylaws are most thorough in laying out the membership and elected office candidacy requirements, election processes, and duties of the various positions. A brief comparison of governance structure follows:

Hamlin Fire Department	Walker Fire Department
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Board of Directors: Consists of administrative officers and fire chief (8 members) ○ Board duties: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review membership quarterly, notify members of delinquency in points or actions ▪ Grant leaves of absence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Board of Directors: Consists of company officers and fire chief (8 members) ○ Board duties: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In partnership with line officers, review membership every 6-9 months, notify members of delinquency

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Submit transfer letters ▪ Select 5 person nominating committee ▪ Conduct trials of expulsion or removal from office ▪ Meet monthly or more frequently as needed ▪ Submit budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meet monthly ▪ Submit transfer letters ▪ Full control & maintenance of the property ▪ Submit budget yearly ▪ Enforce by-laws and constitution ▪ Set up all standing committees ▪ Receive and act on all recommendations and grievances ▪ Review suspensions enacted by Chief or President
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Elected administrative officers – elected each year: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ President ▪ Vice President ▪ Secretary ▪ Treasurer ▪ Membership Director ▪ 2 Property Directors/Directors at Large. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Company officers – elected each year except where noted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ President ▪ Vice President ▪ Secretary – 2 year term ▪ Treasurer – 2 year term ▪ 3 At-Large members – 3 year terms, one elected each year
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Elected line officers – elected each year: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chief ▪ Deputy Chief ▪ Assistant Chief ▪ 2 Fire Captains ▪ 2 Fire Lieutenants ▪ EMS Captain ▪ EMS Lieutenant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Elected line officers – elected each year except where noted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chief ▪ Deputy Chief ▪ Assistant Chief ▪ 2 Captains ▪ 2 Lieutenants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appointed Positions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chaplain, appointed by President ▪ Quartermaster(s), appointed by President ▪ Custodian of Property, appointed by Board of Directors ▪ Constitution Committee, 3 members appointed by Board of Directors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appointed Positions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Training Officer, appointed by Chief ▪ Safety Officer, appointed by Chief ▪ EMS Officer, appointed by Chief ▪ Chaplain, appointed by Board of Directors ▪ Sergeant at Arms, appointed by President ▪ Custodian, appointed by President

Hamlin and Walker’s governance structures appear to be quite similar. Morton is in the process of updating their by-laws, but the overall structure is not substantially different than Walker.

Action Item: It may be important for a consolidated district to have a clear understanding of the governance structures of each fire department. It is likely that the more similar the governance structures are, the more easily the consolidated district can effectively work with the departments.

Membership

- **Membership Requirements & Classifications:** The departments have certain membership classifications and requirements.
 - Hamlin has 9 membership classifications and applicants must meet all the requirements of the membership classification for which they are applying. The membership classifications are as follows:
 - Probationary Members
 - Active Class 1 Interior Firefighters
 - Active Class 2 Exterior Firefighters
 - Active Class 2 Exterior Firefighter EMS members
 - Active Life Members (Class 1 & 2)
 - Life Members
 - Life Exempt Members
 - Auxiliary Members
 - Honorary Members
 - Walker has 8 membership classifications:
 - Active Members
 - Life Members
 - Inactive Life Members
 - Active Exempt members
 - Inactive Exempt Members
 - Charter Members
 - Honorary Members
 - Social Members

Membership requirement details can be found in the by-laws and also in the section on standard operating procedures and training in the report.

Action Item: Under department consolidation, it may be necessary to standardize the membership classifications and requirements. The current classification of members from each department merits consideration when drawing up these standards. Depending on the differences in classifications and requirements between the three departments, this may be a minor or a more substantive process. If members perceive their classification under the department consolidation as fair and accurate, there will likely be more buy-in to the new system.

- **Seniority/longevity:** Years of service and seniority are important features in the fire department structures. In addition to some departments having longevity requirements for elected office, longevity and/or seniority can be factors in command structure and status within the fire department.
 - Hamlin Bylaws, Article II Section IV: “To hold an office, a member must...have served at least 2 continuous years immediately prior to election as an active Hamlin firefighter.” In addition, there are requirements for line officers to serve in lower ranking positions before being elected to the Assistant Chief, Deputy Chief, or Chief position.

Action Item: Under department consolidation, years of service, seniority, and service as an officer may need to transfer in such a way that members perceive their new standing to be fair and representative of their service. For example, members who served as elected officers in one district may be allowed to count those years of service towards the requirements for attaining a higher elected position. It would be beneficial to have a clearer understanding of Morton’s and Walker’s membership and seniority requirements in order to better understand the differences and to visualize a standardized, or at least complementary, system of governance in each department under district consolidation.

- **Membership Point Systems:** Members are required to participate in a minimum number of fire department functions, including alarms, activities and trainings. Hamlin and Walker assess participation by assigning points to various activities and setting a minimum number of points for members to attain by certain dates throughout the year. The point-value of activities, as well as the activities assessed, varies between the fire departments. In addition, the number of points required for members may be based on different criteria.
 - In Hamlin, point requirements are based on membership classification.
 - In Walker, point requirements are based on years of service.

Action Item: Under department consolidation, a standardized point system would be preferable. The departments may need to work together to come up with a system that is fair and make sure that the new system is understood by all members.

Moderate Action

- **Residence requirements:** Some of the departments/districts have residency requirements for membership and/or election:
 - Hamlin Bylaws, Article IV Section IA: Stipulates firefighter applicants must live in or within one mile of the fire district.
 - Morton District Policy Book, Line Officer Residence Policy: Chief & Deputy Chief must live in District. 2 of 4 lower line officers must live in District.
 - Walker Bylaws, Article II Section 1: Stipulates that firefighter applicants must live either in or within 500 feet of the district, or within a three mile radius of the Walker Fire Station.

Action Item: District boundaries and residency requirements may have to be constructed in a way that is inclusive and fair. As the new district would encompass the three current districts, current residency requirements may not follow former district boundaries.

- **Active Membership Limits:** Hamlin Bylaws, Article IV Section IB: Stipulates active interior membership not exceed 50 plus 3 chiefs, with no more than 6 exterior firefighters.

Action Item: The limit on the number of active interior and exterior firefighter members allowed at any time may need to be increased to allow for as many members as are necessary to successfully carry out the functions of the fire department within the communities. The departments could discuss the merits of this provision and determine an appropriate limit, if any, on the number of active firefighters in a consolidated department.
- **Audit & Review Policy:** Both Morton and Walker fire districts have internal/external audit review schedules. Walker requires an external review every 5 years. Morton requires a full external audit every 10 years, with a compilation audit in year 5 of the 10-year cycle.

Action Item: A new Audit & Review schedule may need to be created for a consolidated district and/or department, including an agreement on the frequency of external reviews.
- **Purchasing & Procurement:** Morton and Walker have similar purchasing and procurement policies. The price ranges for which verbal quotations, written quotations, or requests for proposals are required differ slightly.

Action Item: Under district and/or department consolidation, there will be an opportunity to standardize the protocol for purchasing. A standard protocol for purchasing will improve efficiency and purchasing power.

- **Freedom of Information and Sharing of Records Policies:** Morton and Walker outline the procedure for requesting access to records. Morton goes into more depth about how to request records and how to make an appeal when records requests are denied.
Action Item: A consolidated district may want to adopt the most stringent Freedom of Information and Sharing of Records policy to begin with, and then adjust the policy as necessary as time progresses.
- **Uniforms:** Hamlin’s bylaws (Article VIII) outline the different classes of uniforms worn by their members for various occasions. It is likely that Morton and Walker also have specific guidelines for uniform use. The departments’ current uniforms may be different from one another, and there may be different protocol about which uniforms are to be worn for which occasion.
Action Item: It may be important to discuss uniform types and protocols if the departments proceed with consolidation. As uniforms are used to represent the departments, they may carry great symbolic value to the department members. The departments, under district guidance, may want to discuss whether and how to adopt standard uniforms. There are many options for how the process might proceed, including the phasing out of uniforms over time, or the creation of new uniforms that incorporate aspects of the old department uniforms.
- **Auxiliary/Social Members:** Hamlin, Morton and Walker have auxiliary members, a ladies auxiliary or social member whose primary functions are to support the fire department in firematic activities and to help with fundraising. The duties and voting rights of the auxiliary members may vary between the districts/departments, as may the amount of fundraising and participation expected from them.
 - Hamlin’s Bylaws, Article IV, Section VII outlines the classifications and requirements of auxiliary members. Duties include attending at least 3 department meetings per year, earning a minimum of 60 points per year by participating in meetings, work details, funeral details, etc., and helping with fundraisers. Privileges include having a voice and vote at all meetings, eligibility to hold any civil office after 2 years of being a member in good standing, and eligibility for a certain class of uniforms.**Action Item:** The three departments may need to consider how to either merge the auxiliaries, or maintain separate auxiliaries. There may be many options along these lines, including one auxiliary, one auxiliary with building-specific sub-committees, or three separate auxiliaries that coordinate with one another.

- **Fundraising:** Fundraising is an important function in each department, and will likely continue to be important in a consolidated department. Each department is likely to have different ways of organizing and carrying out fundraisers, including some fundraisers that are part of annual events.
Action Item: As each department likely brings successful and unique fundraising methods to the table, it may be very beneficial for the departments to discuss the best way to continue fundraising efforts in a coordinated manner. This may mean continuing with community-specific fundraisers as well as the creation of new, district-wide fundraisers. Discussion of fundraising would also tie into a discussion of the auxiliaries (see above).
- **Explorers/Junior Firefighters:** All three departments have Explorer (Junior Firefighter) programs.

- Morton's Junior Fire Fighter program requires that Junior Fire Fighters:
 - Must be at least 14 years old
 - Should act as a support group for the Morton Fire Department
 - Should receive training in basic firematic skills, including hose handling, setting up air bottle fill sites at fire scenes, radio use, the recognition of hazardous materials, fire suppression, and arson awareness.
 - May respond to all non-EMS fire calls.
 - Assist in washing and reloading apparatus.

Action Item: Provided that there are no substantive differences between the Hamlin and Morton Explorer programs, a consolidated department will likely be able to maintain the program with little change. Upon consolidation, may be necessary to provide additional training to current Explorers so that they are up-to-date on usage of all new/different equipment and rules. It may also be necessary for fire fighters from all three departments to receive training on Explorer supervision and expectations.

- **Hall Loan/Use Agreements:** Morton and Walker have policies on renting the fire hall, including who may rent/use, how to apply for rental/use, fees for rental/use, responsibilities of renters/users, and how fire district and/or department property shall be treated during rental/use. In general, both halls may only be used by company members or their families, not the general public. They are usually used for fundraising or company events.

Action Item: It may be preferable for each fire department building to retain its Hall Loan/Use agreements. This could be a discussion between the departments, but as each hall is different

and may be used for different purposes in each community, it may work best to have different agreements for each building.

Little or No Action

- **Alcohol Policy:** The Hamlin Department bylaws and SOG, Walker District policy book, and Morton District SOG each contain guidelines about alcohol use. Each district/department prohibits possession or consumption of alcohol on fire district/department property or apparatus, though Walker provides for exemptions to the rule in the case of pre-approved social or fundraising functions on fire department property. All three departments prohibit members from participating in fire district/department duties, including responding to alarms, while under the influence of alcohol. In all district/departments, violation of this rule may result in suspension or expulsion.
 - Hamlin's SOP contains further guidelines about alcohol consumption. It states that, upon receiving an alarm, a member who has been drinking should evaluate their personal condition and decide whether they are fit to respond. The rule of thumb is 'if you've had more than one drink, do not respond.' Also, any member who has consumed alcohol within four hours prior to an alarm should not drive any of the fire district vehicles.

In addition, Hamlin and Morton state that possession and/or use of illegal substances is prohibited.

- Morton's SOG also prohibits off-duty consumption of alcohol that reflects negatively on the fire district/department.
- **Record Management, Retention and Advisory Board Policies:** Morton and Walker Districts have policies on record management and retention, which are developed and enforced by either an advisory board and/or Records Officer. The policies stipulate that, in accordance with Article 57-A of the Arts & Cultural Affairs Law, record retention practices must adhere to the Record Retention and Disposition Schedule MU-1. Furthermore, only those records that do not have sufficient administrative, fiscal, legal or historical value to merit retention beyond the legal minimum period will be destroyed.
- **Smoking Policy:** Hamlin, Morton and Walker Districts prohibit smoking inside the fire district buildings or on fire district apparatus. Smoking is only permitted outdoors when on fire district property.

- **Sexual Harassment Policy:** Hamlin, Morton and Walker fire districts have extensive sexual harassment policies that define sexual harassment, layout reporting procedures, and identify consequences.
- **Travel & Expense Standard Practice:** Hamlin, Morton and Walker Districts have nearly identical standards for travel and expense practices. These policies identify what qualifies as reimbursable travel, standards for hotel rooms, car rental, meals, and training expenses, how to receive approval for travel, and how to apply for reimbursement.

APPENDIX C

Training Requirements

Below are descriptions of Hamlin and Walker Departments' initial and annual training requirements. Morton's training requirements have not been made available at this time.

Hamlin Training Requirements

Probation: Before becoming a member, probationary members must complete the Monroe County Basic Firefighter or NYS Essentials course within the first 6 months.

Active Class I Interior, Active Class II Exterior Firefighters, Active Life Members: Must complete all required OSHA training and obtain a minimum of 24 hours of Hamlin training hours. Approved district drivers must complete an additional 4 hours of training. These training requirements must be completed by Dec. 1 of each year.

Fire Police: Must complete State Fire Police training as well as the same number of training hours as active firefighters. Fire Police training hours need not all be completed in Hamlin and is at the discretion of the Fire Chief. Fire Police who wish to participate in firefighting duties must obtain all the training required for active members listed above.

Lieutenants: To hold the rank of Lieutenant, a member must be a cleared NYS EMT, have taken the NYS Intro to Officer class (or equivalent) and be an approved driver on all district apparatus or become an approved driver within a year.

Captains: To hold the rank of Captain, a member must have held the rank of Lieutenant for at least one year, be a cleared NYS EMT, have taken Fire Officer I (or equivalent), and be an approved driver on all district apparatus.

Walker

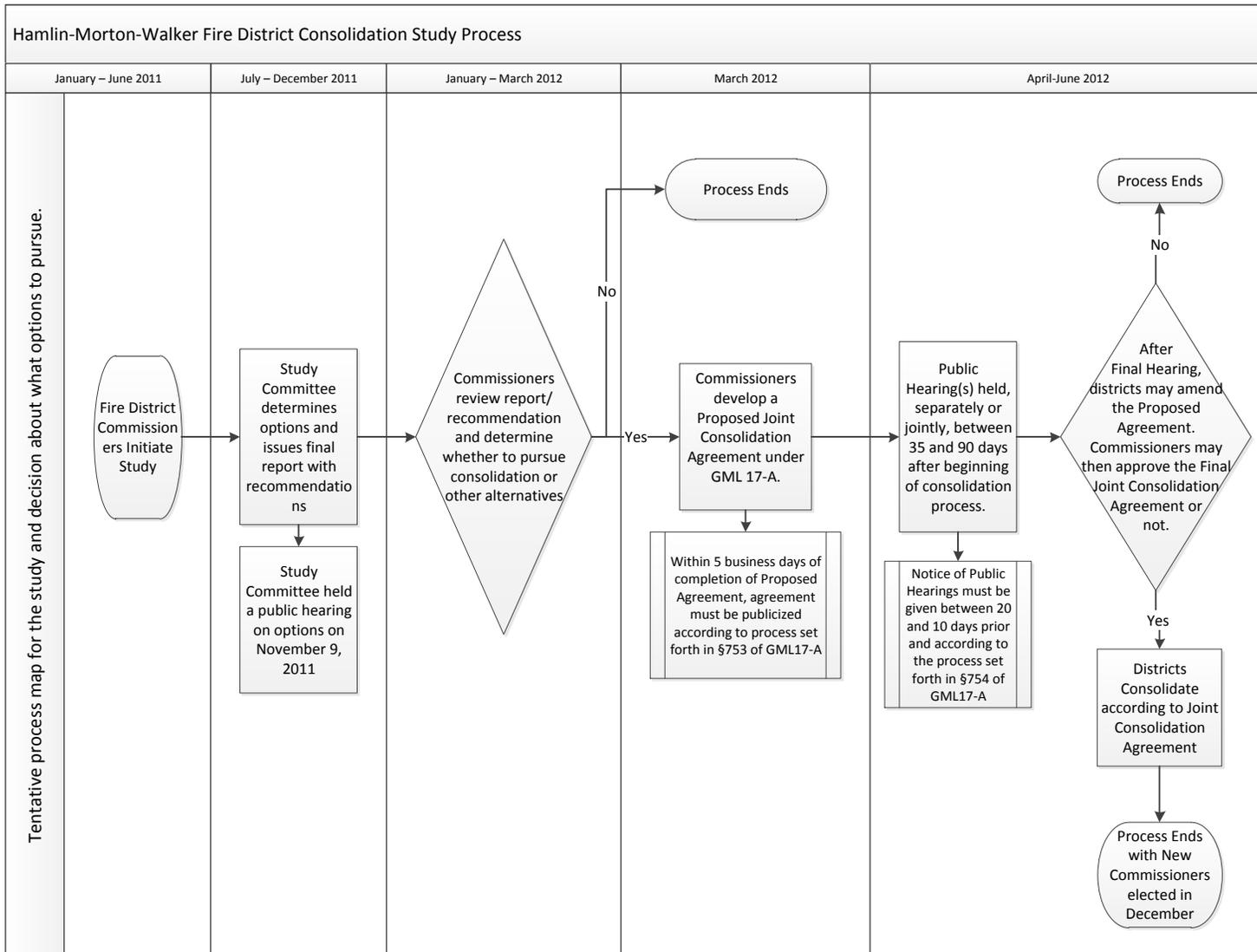
Walker's training requirements are summarized in Table 1 on the following page. Additional training is required for approved drivers of district apparatus. Additional training for officers may also be required, but they are not recorded in the By-laws or Standard Operating Guidelines.

There is a training officer whose duty is to coordinate and supervise all firematic training; assist the EMS and safety officers with EMS and safety training; maintain all firematic, safety and EMS training records; maintain all firematic training equipment; and requisition additional equipment from the chief.

Walker Fire Department Training Requirements												
	Class I Interior		Class II Exterior		Class II Exterior/ SCBA		Class III Firefighter/ Fire Police		Class IV EMS Personnel		Firefighter in Training	
Training Type	Initial Required Training											
Complete Walker Initial Training within first 6 months	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	
Complete NYS Essentials or basic Firefighter course within first 18 months	Yes		Yes		Yes							Yes
Complete NYS Police Training Course							Yes					
NYS EMT or Certified First Responder course									Yes			
6 Month Probation	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	
	Annual Required Training										Min Training	
	Hours	Drills	Hours	Drills	Hours	Drills	Hours	Drills	Hours	Drills	Hours	Drills
Firefighter Orientation											4	2
SCBA	4	2			2	1					4	2
Ladders	2	1	2	1	2	1					4	2
Hose	2	1	2	1	2	1					2	1
Salvage & Overhaul	2	1	2	1	2	1					2	1
Search & Rescue	2	1									4	2
Smoke House Operation	4	1	4	1	4	1						
Forcible Entry											2	1
Safety Total	8		7		8		8		8		8	
General Hazard Recognition	0.5		0.5		0.5		0.5		0.5		0.5	
Fire Station Safety	0.5		0.5		0.5		0.5		0.5		0.5	
Response Safety	0.75		0.75		0.75		0.75		0.75		0.75	
Fire Scene Safety	1.25		1.25		1.25		1.25		1.25		1.25	
Protective Clothing	1		1		1		1		1		1	
SCBA	2		1		2		2		2		2	
Tool & Equipment Safety	1		1		1		1		1		1	
Recent developments in Fire Safety	1		1		1		1		1		1	
CPR	8	1	8	1	8	1	8	1	8	1	8	1
Hazardous Material	3	1	3	1	3	1	3	1	3	1	3	1
Blood borne pathogens	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1
Staging							1	1	1	1		
Equipment Locations							1	1	1	1		
MINIMUM TOTAL HOURS REQUIRED	37		30		33		23		25		47	
NYS MANDATORY HOURS	21		21		21		21		21		21	

APPENDIX D

Implementation Process Map



APPENDIX E

Template of Joint Consolidation Agreement

PROPOSED
JOINT CONSOLIDATION AGREEMENT
PURSUANT TO
GENERAL MUNICIPAL LAW ARTICLE 17-A

This agreement is made on the [] day of [], 20[], by and between the HAMLIN FIRE DISTRICT, having a principal place of business at 1521 Lake Road, Hamlin, New York and a mailing address at P.O. Box 39, Hamlin, New York 14464, the MORTON FIRE DISTRICT, having a principal place of business at 1094 Monroe Orleans County Line Road, Morton, NY 14508-0129 and a mailing address of P.O. Box 164, Morton, New York 14508-0129, and the WALKER FIRE DISTRICT, having a principal place of business at 1420 Walker-Lake Ontario Road, Hamlin, New York and a mailing address at P.O. Box 614, Hilton, New York 14468.

WHEREAS, the HAMLIN FIRE DISTRICT is a fire district duly organized and existing under the laws of the State of New York and a local government entity under General Municipal Law Article 17-A; and

WHEREAS, the MORTON FIRE DISTRICT is a fire district duly organized and existing under the laws of the State of New York and a local government entity under General Municipal Law Article 17-A; and

WHEREAS, the WALKER FIRE DISTRICT is a fire district duly organized and existing under the laws of the State of New York and a local government entity under General Municipal Law Article 17-A; and

WHEREAS, the HAMLIN FIRE DISTRICT, the MORTON FIRE DISTRICT, and the WALKER FIRE DISTRICT desire to consolidate as provided in General Municipal Law Article 17-A;

NOW, THEREFORE, it is agreed by and between the HAMLIN FIRE DISTRICT, the MORTON FIRE DISTRICT, and the WALKER FIRE DISTRICT as follows:

1. The name of each local government entity to be consolidated is as follows: HAMLIN FIRE DISTRICT, MORTON FIRE DISTRICT and WALKER FIRE DISTRICT.
2. The name of the consolidated local government entity is the FIRE DISTRICT.
3. The rights, duties and obligations of the consolidated local government entity shall be the same as the current rights, duties and obligations of the HAMLIN FIRE DISTRICT, the MORTON FIRE DISTRICT, and the WALKER FIRE DISTRICT.
4. The territorial boundaries of the consolidated local government entity shall be .
5. The type of the consolidated local government entity shall be a fire district.

6. The governmental organization of the consolidated local government entity insofar as it concerns elected and appointed officials and public employees is that the position of the elected and appointed officials and public employees <plans for transition, beginning on the effective date of consolidation>. Future elections and appointments of officials will be according to the FIRE DISTRICT'S schedule.
7. The estimate of the cost of the consolidation is \$ for publication and <other consolidation costs TBD>. The estimate of the savings which may be realized from consolidation is \$39,000 per year.

8. The assets of the HAMLIN FIRE DISTRICT and the fair value thereof in current money of the United States are:

Real property.....	\$ <u> </u>
Equipment.....	\$ <u> </u>
Reserve funds.....	\$409,000
TOTAL.....	\$ <u> </u>

The assets of the MORTON FIRE DISTRICT and the fair value thereof in current money of the United States are:

Real property.....	\$ <u> </u>
Equipment.....	\$ <u> </u>
Reserve funds.....	\$190,000
TOTAL.....	\$ <u> </u>

The assets of the WALKER FIRE DISTRICT and the fair value thereof in current money of the United States are:

Real property.....	\$ <u> </u>
--------------------	----------------------

Equipment.....	\$	
Reserve funds.....	\$	254,000
TOTAL.....	\$	

9. The liabilities and indebtedness of the HAMLIN FIRE DISTRICT, bonded and otherwise, and the fair value thereof in current money of the United States are:

Bond for fire station construction.....\$225,000

The liabilities and indebtedness of the MORTON FIRE DISTRICT, bonded and otherwise, and the fair value thereof in current money of the United States are zero.

The liabilities and indebtedness of the WALKER FIRE DISTRICT, bonded and otherwise, and the fair value thereof in current money of the United States are:

Bond for pumper truck.....\$115,000

10. The terms for the disposition of existing assets of each local government entity are that the assets of HAMLIN FIRE DISTRICT, the assets of the MORTON FIRE DISTRICT and the assets of the WALKER FIRE DISTRICT shall be assets of the consolidated local government entity. The terms for the disposition of existing indebtedness of each local government entity are that the indebtedness of the HAMLIN FIRE DISTRICT and the indebtedness of the WALKER FIRE DISTRICT shall <describe

how debt will remain the responsibility of residents in the former district>.

11. The terms for the common administration and uniform enforcement of local laws, ordinances, resolutions, orders and the like within the consolidated local government entity are that they will be carried out by the consolidated local government entity in accordance with <plan/constitution & by-laws of new district...> and General Municipal Law §769.
12. The effective date of the proposed consolidation is _____, 20__.
13. The time and place for the public hearing on the Proposed Joint Consolidation Agreement shall be at _____m. on _____, 20__ at <full address> New York, in accordance with General Municipal Law §754.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have signed this Proposed Joint Consolidation Agreement on the date first written above.

HAMLIN FIRE DISTRICT
By: _____
_____, Chairman of the
Board of Fire Commissioners

MORTON FIRE DISTRICT
By: _____
_____, Chairman of the
Board of Fire Commissioners

WALKER FIRE DISTRICT
By: _____

, Chairman of the
Board of Fire Commissioners