

District Study Group Meeting Notes

August 26, 2026

Present: Michael Pettingill, Christine Phillips, Ira Brezinsky, Mark Zraunig, Dave King, Chuck Scott, Rick Constant, Carol Constant, Bob Authier, Mark Cavanaugh and several members of the public.

Minutes of August 5 were approved.

Report on Fire Operations by Michael Pettingill and Bob Authier. Dave Keefe, Michael Pettengill and John Moriarty met, and Dave Keefe shared an org chart that he prepared. The org chart gave the best-case scenario for staffing that would include an overall increase of 6 or 7 positions. A benefit of a merger would strengthen the Fire Districts ability to provide deeper career path opportunities. They also discussed physical infrastructure. Two fire stations, and their locations, work well for the size of the town. Building needs have changed since their construction, with the addition of female firefighters, and the greater demand on fire emergencies (smoke detectors, auto accidents, false alarms, smell of natural gas, CO alarms.) While both structures are many decades old, the subcommittee agreed that it would not be prudent to consider new building(s) at this time.

Next steps fire operations: Ask Western Mass Fire Prevention Association/Western Mass Fire Chiefs Association for org charts and budgets of other fire departments of similar size and demographics. Help the Finance committee develop org charts 1) moderate 2) status quo. Questions to consider: What does MHC do to support, what is their role? Should a merger with the town be considered.

Report on Water Operations by Rick Constant. Rick, Chuck Scott, Jeff Cyr, and Tim Cauley met. There are savings that would happen immediately and more overtime. Redundant equipment would be retired as needed. Overlap with staffing would be consolidated through attrition. There is room in the D1 facility for both district operations. This would free up space in the D2 facility for the fire operations. Water operations are funded completely through water receipts. Next steps water operations: Review of water rates and funding sources for upcoming capital projects.

Report on Finance: Ira Brezinsky, Dave King and Mark Zraunig met and are building a spreadsheet of expenses and revenue. They feel they have a good picture of the Water departments with potential savings of \$600,000 annual savings and will continue digging into these numbers. More information is needed from Fire Operations to build out financial scenarios. They are working on org charts at three staffing levels, status quo, moderate, and best-case scenario. Next steps, further review with both fire and water operations and closer look at their budgets. Wilbraham similar in population and a bit larger in size, with 2 station and water rescue. What other communities should be reviewed?

Communications follow up:

Explore avenues to inform the public about the districts and the work of the District Study Group. Explore making meeting minutes available online. Develop an FAQ list and answers. Explore avenues for informing public on our work and conclusions.

Next meeting September 17, 2026, 6 pm, large community room at the SH main Library.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Constant