

Town of Columbus Fire Department, Inc.

The Town of Columbus Fire Department was originally chartered by the State of North Carolina in 1949 as the Columbus Volunteer Fire Department and was a part of municipal government from its founding until 1992. In 1992 the department determined that it was necessary to undertake a major capital expansion in terms of both apparatus and a station in which to house that apparatus. The town council and the department agreed to the dissolution of the bond that had existed between the town and the fire department and for both parties to enter into a contract for the department to provide services in return for tax revenues generated specifically to support the fire department.

At its inception the department had a hose reel that was pulled by the members of the department from its station to the fire. This hose reel was replaced by the first piece of motorized apparatus that the department owned. This apparatus was a 1924 Seagraves engine that is still used by the department for parades. In the early days the department had to survive on the proceeds it could raise from square dances and chicken suppers among other activities. The Town of Columbus did contribute some funding to the operations of the department, but the largest share came from the efforts of the volunteers themselves.

In the early 1990's it became apparent to the department that it was going to be necessary to provide a larger facility and more up-to-date apparatus and equipment if the department was to keep up with the needs of the people it served. Petitions were circulated throughout Columbus Township requesting the approval of a levy of a fire tax for the support of the department. The issue was put to the voters and they approved the creation of a fire tax for the support of the department.

As a result the department made plans to build a new station at the corner of South Peak Street and Ward Street and two purchase two additional pieces of apparatus. The current stands on land that was once home to a hotel that was a social and cultural hub particularly when superior court was in session. The hotel had fallen into a state of disrepair over the years and was raised to make room for the fire station that opened in 1992.

The department currently has three engines, two brush trucks, one tanker, a mobile air supply trailer and a truck that is used for medical responses and to pull the air trailer. Since 1994 the Town of Columbus Fire Department has had one paid person with the remainder of the force being volunteers. A list of the current members of the department is found immediately below:

G. M. Tennant Chief and Emergency Medical Technician-Intermediate
 B. J. Arledge Assistant Chief and Emergency Medical Technician
 T. M. Priester Captain
 R. S. Blackwell Captain
 J.A. Smith Lieutenant
 E.R. Champion Lieutenant
 T. K. Avolese Fire Fighter
 A. S. Bennett Fire Fighter
 T. H. Champion Fire Fighter and Emergency Medical Technician
 J.S. Cox Fire Fighter
 J.S. Davis Fire Fighter*
 J. W. Dorsett Fire Fighter
 J. W. Hipp Fire Fighter*
 T. M. Mosca, Jr. Fire Fighter and Emergency Medical Technician
 N. W. Murray Fire Fighter and Emergency Medical Technician
 G.S. Myers Fire Fighter
 K. L. Pack Fire Fighter*
 W. R. Russell Fire Fighter*
 J. J. Sauve Fire Fighter and Emergency Medical Technician
 D. G. Searcy Fire Fighter
 K. R. Shambaugh Fire Fighter and Emergency Medical Technician
 S. P. Stewart Fire Fighter-Cadet
 D.W. Stott Fire Fighter-Cadet*
 N. C. Stott Fire Fighter and Emergency Medical Technician
 T. W. Stott Fire Fighter*
 J. J. Stratman Fire Fighter
 J.R. Waters Fire Fighter*
 P. S. Waters Fire Fighter*
 B. G. Williams Fire Fighter

- *Indicates persons who are also members of the Tryon Fire Department

The department currently provides services in the areas of fire prevention, fire suppression, emergency medical services on a first response basis, hazardous materials response to the operations level, automatic and mutual aid services to neighboring fire departments, services to local and state law enforcement agencies particularly with motor vehicle accidents, and public assistance responses.

The department is governed by a seven-member board of directors and also has a three- member tax commission whose function is to approve the annual budget and the annual tax levy that is requested by the department. The current tax rate in Columbus Township and the Town of Columbus is 0.0425 per one hundred dollars of valuation. This rate is lowest rate charged by any fire department at the current time.

The department is currently in the process of purchasing a new pumper-tanker to replace a 1987 model pumper-tanker. In addition, the department will in the near future expand its services to include automobile extrication using both hand and power tools as a supplement to the services provided by the Polk County Rescue Squad.

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