

Pinewood Fire Department in Wayne County Closed Doors on December 1

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The Pinewood Fire Department in Wayne County has dissolved, effective December 1. Here's the [Goldsboro News-Argus story](#) (requires subscription) about same, from November 19, 2014. The department is "the victim of a shrinking service district" and the resulting loss of tax revenue required for their operation. They were a private non-profit corporation contracted by the county for fire protection.

Rural fire protection in Wayne County was analyzed ~~last year~~ in 2012 by Pennsylvania-based Volunteer Fire Insurance Services, in a study commissioned by the county Board of Commissioners. [Read the study](#) (2.9M, PDF). They noted the Pinewood service area had shrunk because of annexation by Goldsboro. They suggested that the county contract with the city for protection of areas surrounding Goldsboro. They also recommended merging Pinewood FD with Saulston FD. The department opted instead to dissolve. (More about that study in a later posting, along with some other mergers that ~~are happening~~ happened.)

The county and city commenced discussions about entering into a contract, where Goldsboro FD would protect the Pinewood district. But in a November meeting with City Council, there was some confusion and an apparent misunderstanding. The plan was scrapped and the county will instead divide the Pinewood district between five departments. They'll also take ownership of all assets and assume all debt. Scroll down for those details.

Pinewood Fire Department History

From state corporation records, Pinewood Volunteer Fire Department was incorporated on April 13, 1959. The incorporators were James Boyd, Ray Smith, G. F. Peel, Raymond Best, and Marshall Cox. [See the incorporation filing](#), dating April 9, 1959. They protected the rural areas on the northeast side of Goldsboro.

Their station was located at 101 W. New Hope Road. That's their original location. Tax records say the three-bay building has 4,900 square-feet. From Google Street View (shown below), they had two engines (pumper-tankers), a 2001 Spartan/Marion (Engine 4) and a 1986 Kenworth/FMC (Engine 1). Plus a Wayne County EMS ambulance. Click to enlarge top photo:



Google Street View photo



Pinewood Fire Department photo

The second photo is from their [Facebook page](#) and was posted on November 4, 2009. (See also this [second Facebook page](#) for more pictures.) The third truck was Engine 2, now retired and sitting at Wayne Community College. The college also has a Ford ambulance that the fire department operated and later donated for the school's EMS program. (We're working on getting information about other and older retired units. Such as their Hummer brush truck. Also note that their rigs were lettered for "Pinewood Fire District.")

The station property is presently owned by the county. They've been the owner since 2014, if reading tax records correctly. The facility is now Wayne County EMS Station 5.





Pinewood Fire Department photos

Proposed City Contract

In the November 3 minutes of the Goldsboro City Council, the Mayor and council discussed a proposed contract for the city to cover areas currently covered by Pinewood. From the minutes ([see this excerpt, PDF](#)), here are the highlights:

- Contract proposed for county to pay city for fire protection to "cover areas currently served by" PDF.
- As part of discussion, city and county officials also "looked at various donut holes [unincorporated areas] in and around the City."
- Proposed contract is a fifteen-year agreement, to protect properties on fastest response. e.g., properties where Goldsboro FD is the fastest responding department under identical conditions.
- One-year renewal after initial term, unless cancelled with twelve-month notice.
- Agreement can be terminated by either party at any time, after one year's written notice.

- County will "remit on a monthly basis" to the City all fire tax revenues collected on the contracted properties.
- Tax rate will be identical rate to the nearest county fire department, which would've been contracted for protection if the City declined.
- Expectation to establish a Goldsboro Rural Fire District, and with intention of establishing one fire tax rate in the future.
- County would take "necessary legal steps" to "assign these properties to Goldsboro" so the property owners receive the fire insurance rating of GFD. This may require creating a separate fire service district from both GFD and the existing county districts.

- Annual revenues from Pinewood properties, if reading the document correctly, are \$26,787.84.
- Document lists six other fire districts and their revenues.
- Operational factors including 50 additional (annual) calls. Minimal effect on response times and ISO points. Increased rural area, for wildland suppression. Eliminated confusion in county response areas surrounded by city.
- Are those 50 calls per year for Pinewood properties? Or for the properties that would be served by a Goldsboro Rural Fire District? Thinking it's the latter. Ergo the seven different fire district revenue listed.

- Outcome of meeting was recommendation to provide "service for one year and then move to the City's rate." Readers, have a translation of that action item?

Reported the Goldsboro News-Argus on November 17, the county subsequently "dropped its efforts to work out an arrangement with the city." There was an "apparent misunderstanding" that caused Council members to raise an alarm about tax rates. There was also some confusion about the exact services that the county was proposing.

As the paper reports, County Commissioners have instead decided to divide the Pinewood fire district between Belfast, Elroy, New Hope, Patetown, and Saulston fire departments. The county will take ownership of all Pinewood FD assets, and assume all of the organization's debts. The equipment will be sold and the building will remain a location for a "staged" EMS unit.

Got that? Let's amend our open question below.

Open Questions to Readers

Does this (as proposed but ultimately rejected) suggest a direction that may someday be taken in Wake County with suburban areas and donut hole and city contracted protection therein? Couple years ago, the Cary Suburban fire district was created for that very purpose, upon closure of Western Wake's second station.

Does the City Council confusion as described above suggest that such agreements are entirely difficult and perhaps even unattainable at times? Maybe it's a delicate process, the communication of such proposed changes and their implications.

The middle engine (E2?) in picture two is a 1980s Duplex/Young Crusader II from Palm Beach County,FL.

BFD1151 - 12/28/14 - 17:29

Having served private rural fire companies since 1989, I am always saddened by the shrinking of districts and closing of stations as a result of the unwillingness of private/county/city partnerships where all can be winners. For decades communities have invested in equipment, training and personnel for fire protection that municipal systems have been unwilling or unable to provide. Growing tax bases mean bigger revenue streams for these municipalities. Simultaneously, rivalry and conflict between paid and volunteer fire companies (something in existence since the beginnings of the American fire service) have resulted in a systemic conflict of personalities that do not serve the public. The end result will be the eventual extinction of rural private fire companies.

Chaplain Dana McKim - 12/29/14 - 17:41

This make me truly sad. I now live in Virginia but was born and raised in Pinewood within walking distance of the Pinewood VFD. The sound of the wailing siren on top of the station and the white fire engines lumbering down New Hope Rd are some of my most vivid childhood memories. When the house next door caught on fire during my early teen years, the Pinewood VFD arrived quickly and limited the damage to one bedroom and the attic and the house was quickly repaired. I always hoped the department would find a way to survive but obviously Goldsboro annexing most of your residential tax base destroyed any chance of that. RIP Pinewood VFD. You provided outstanding service for many decades.

Neal Beasley - 01/28/18 - 17:25

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To prevent spam we require you to answer this silly question

What are the FIRST TWO LETTERS of the word 'fire'?

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