

# Daily Hampshire Gazette

[Home](#) [News](#) [Opinion](#) [Sports](#) [Business](#) [Arts & Life](#) [Obituaries](#) [Classifieds](#) [Calendar](#)

## Grant will help South Hadley's fire districts seek ways to share services



*Ken LeBlanc, chair of the District 2 Prudential Committee, in front of the South Hadley District 2 Fire station. STAFF PHOTO/CAROL LOLLIS*

By [EMILEE KLEIN](#)

[Staff Writer](#)

Published: 02-13-2024 8:04 PM

Modified: 02-14-2024 5:42 PM

[South Hadley](#)[fire districts](#)[water districts](#)

SOUTH HADLEY — After several failed attempts to merge the two fire districts that serve the town, the governing bodies of those entities are now exploring sharing services in hopes of saving money — without uprooting the district structure.

Money from a technical assistance grant from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission will be used to solidify services currently shared — such as mutual aid and equipment usage — between Fire District 1, which serves the southern half of town, and Fire District 2, which covers Mount Holyoke College.

[Privacy](#) - [Terms](#)

northern part of town. The \$7,500 grant, secured by Fire District 2, will also look at the possibility of the future sharing of things like IT or legal services and employees. PVPC employees will facilitate conversations between the two districts and research any information on sharing services.

"The idea here is the efficient consolidation of services to improve for the long term how things are done," said Eric Weiss, director of economic and municipal collaboration at PVPC. "That's not to say anything is bad right now, but it's about looking to the future, knowing things get more complicated and expensive as time goes on."

Kenneth LeBlanc, chair of the District 2 Prudential Committee, said the committee pursued the grant in the face of rising costs of governing. Operation costs, municipal health insurance rates and even the cost of water continues to rise, which raises the burden on taxpayers.

LeBlanc said the two firehouses and water districts organize operations and personnel differently and require a large amount of planning and communication before settling on sharing services or personnel.

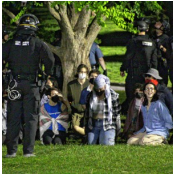
"None of this will be all of a sudden, but you have to pave the foundation and start planning ahead," LeBlanc said. "With the turnover of both fire chiefs in the two districts, it would have been nice to have this in place to have looked at the opportunity to have one fire district between both districts."

The two districts have shared other services for years, however. The fire departments have a mutual aid agreement to assist with large or complex emergencies, and the water districts supply each other water in an emergency. The water districts often loan each other equipment as well.

However, when Superintendent of Water District 1 Jeff Cyr asked at a joint Water Commissioners meeting on Feb. 1 about sharing employees between the two districts, District 2 officials said they could not spare personnel long term.

Article continues after...

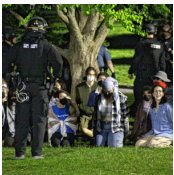
## Yesterday's Most Read Articles



[More than 130 arrested at pro-Palestinian protest at UMass](#)



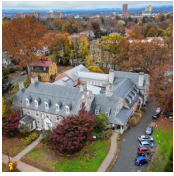
['Knitting treasure' of the Valley: Northampton Wools owner spreads passion for ancient pastime](#)



[UMass student group declares no confidence in chancellor](#)



[Guest columnist Josh Silver: Northampton school budget — Let's start with kindness, accuracy and respect](#)

[With Jones project in question, Amherst won't sign lease for temporary digs](#)[UMass graduation speaker Colson Whitehead pulls out over quashed campus protest](#)

“What I’m hearing is that (Water District 2) has your priorities as far as projects, and there are times where we may reach out and not be able to get a person to help us,” Cyr said.

LeBlanc said the districts watch for grants but small governing bodies are often passed over in favor of large ones.

“We are such small entities on our own. It does cut us out of some of the bigger pools of money out there like grant money or some kind of project funding because we don’t qualify,” Water Commissioner of District 2 Kate Bedard said during a joint water commissioner meeting.

Fire District 1 Prudential Committee Chair Bruce Perron said the district opted to sign a letter of support for the grant to allow District 2 to lead the project.

Both LeBlanc and Cyr said the grant is not the beginning of a merger, but rather a way to reap the financial benefits of one district without reorganizing the entire government structure.

“The end goal here, if we only manage to accomplish one item on this list, and it saves money for the taxpayer, than we’ve accomplished something,” LeBlanc said.

The last attempt to merge the districts occurred at Town Meeting in 2009. It was shot down by a simple majority of 2,522 to 2,250.

*Emilee Klein can be reached at [eklein@gazettenet.com](mailto:eklein@gazettenet.com).*

[f Share on Facebook](#)

[🐦 Share on Twitter](#)

[✉ Share via E-Mail](#)



**Half-time Administrative Assistant**

08.24 | Administrative

**Painter**

25.24 | Construction &amp; Trades

**Building Commissioner / Zoning Enforcement Officer**

11.24 | Construction &amp; Trades

## Support Local Journalism

Subscribe to Daily Hampshire  
Gazette

[Subscribe Now](#)

### More News for you

[Valley lawmakers seek shorter license for FirstLight hydropower projects](#)

05-09-2024 8:03 PM

[State Senate budget funds free community college for all](#)

05-07-2024 2:16 PM

[‘We can just be who we are’: Thousands show support for LGBTQ community at Hampshire Pride](#)

05-05-2024 12:18 PM

[Doors open at Tilton Library's temporary home at South Deerfield Congregational Church](#)

05-04-2024 2:00 PM



23 Service Center Rd  
Northampton, MA 01060  
413-584-5000

- [Terms & Conditions](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)
- [About Us](#)
- [Accessibility](#)

## Circulation Customer Service

- 413-586-1925
- [circulation@gazettenet.com](mailto:circulation@gazettenet.com)

## Social Media

- [Facebook](#)
- [X](#)
- [Youtube](#)
- [Instagram](#)

## The Newspapers of New England Family

- [Amherst Bulletin](#)
- [Athol Daily News](#)
- [Concord Monitor](#)
- [Daily Hampshire Gazette](#)
- [Greenfield Recorder](#)
- [Monadnock Ledger-Transcript](#)
- [Valley News](#)
- [Valley Advocate](#)
- [The Concord Insider](#)
- [Around Concord](#)
- [NNEdigital](#)

By using this site, you agree with our use of cookies to personalize your experience, measure ads and monitor how our site works to improve it for our users

Copyright © 2016 to 2024 by H.S. Gere & Sons, Inc. All rights reserved.