Present from the Northfield Board of Selectmen:
Chairman Glen Brown, Selectmen Debra Shephard, and Stephen Bluhm. Town Administrator Glen Smith

Present from the Tilton Board of Selectmen:
Chairman Katherine Dawson, Selectmen Tom Cavanaugh, David Wadleigh, Albert LaPlante, and Tim Pearson.
Town Administrator Joyce Fulweiler and Secretary Catherine A. Woessner.

Scott McGuffin; moderator

Chairman Glen Brown called the Northfield Board of Selectmen’s meeting to order at 6:00PM.
Chairman Katherine Dawson called the Tilton Board of Selectmen’s meeting to order at 6:00PM.

Scott McGuffin will be the moderator for the meeting between both Boards's of Selectmen.
Mr. McGuffin went through the agenda with the Selectmen to see if there were any additions or deletions by both Boards. Both Boards are in agreement with Mr. McGuffin’s agenda as presented.

Opening comments:
Tilton:
Selectman Katherine Dawson: Is glad both Boards are finally having this communication regarding the Fire District and hopes it continues in years to come and to continue this type of communication where they have items such as the Library and Fire District in common.
Selectman Tim Pearson: Is in agreement with Selectman Dawson and also hopes they can find those common areas and things they can agree on so they can have a substantive discussion with the Commissioners. The Tilton
Selectmen do not have a second agenda or intentions of doing anything on their own or otherwise and think they all recognize the economies of scale exist within the District and finding the right way to work that for both Towns is the right way to go.

**Northfield:**

*Chairman Glen Brown:* Is in agreement with Selectman Dawson that Tilton and Northfield have always worked in the past on different issues, the Library and Fire District and sees no reason it should not continue. Chairman Brown expressed concern regarding articles in the newspapers stating that the towns have issues with each other and feels this is not true. Meeting together this evening is a good example of both towns working together and hopefully will work together and do what is best for the District and not against each other.

*Selectman Stephen Bluhm:* Not exactly sure this is where they should be starting but hopefully between the two Boards they can make the best of it. Selectman Bluhm stated that the District is its own entity, they have elected officials just as the Selectmen and believes this should have been taken up first with the Fire District on exactly what they are going to discuss in the near future. There are two Fire Commissioners in the audience this evening and this would be a good forum for them to understand where the two towns are coming from. Selectman Bluhm feels a meeting should have started with the Fire Commissioners first.

*Mr. McGuffin* stated the first topic of discussion will be; areas of concern; and perceived deficiencies;

**Northfield:**

*Chairman Brown:* Feels there has been too much reliance on the MRI Study and feels it is a study of Tilton’s needs for Tilton taxpayers. A lot of the issues coming up should be directed to the Fire Commissioners themselves for study.

Mr. McGuffin interjected that Tilton may have commissioned the MRI Study but there is valuable information in the report for everybody, Fire District, Commissioners and Tilton and Northfield. Mr. McGuffin asked Both Boards to try to use this report as a resource for information.
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TILTON:

SELECTMAN DAWSON: Feels the common area of deficiencies that both towns share is the response time. Both Northfield and Tilton have areas in their towns that have unacceptable response times. Tilton’s area is east Tilton and Northfield has southwestern area. The solution is in the MRI report, or at least one solution they suggest is in there. The number of full time firemen is not adequate which is identified in the report so does not know why Northfield feels the report is one sided.

Chairman Brown: Opinion of MRI report is that it was done for the Town of Tilton, did not look at the Fire District itself. Also if Northfield was notified in the beginning they could have asked to join Tilton so MRI could have looked at both Towns and done a study of T-N and the Fire District as a total.

Selectman Cavanaugh said the information regarding doing the study was made available to the public nine months before they hired MRI to do the study and neither the town of Northfield or the Fire District expressed any interest in being a part of it. The residents of Tilton were very supportive of this study as it was a warrant article at Town Meeting 2008.

Selectman Pearson also commented that the MRI study was very complimentary of the Fire District personnel and many aspects of the District. They also identified a number of things; one issue is that Tilton’s issues are not being considered seriously by the Fire District. Part of the reason why the Tilton Selectmen wanted to talk to the Northfield Selectmen in the beginning is that they all represent the community as a whole and need to discuss what the needs are. Selectman Pearson said there is not any pressing issue that he has heard so far that Northfield is concerned about a given area of fire protection in Northfield at this stage.

Selectman Bluhm said he has not received any complaints of deficiencies in Northfield. With Northfield being twice the size of Tilton, why is a smaller town having these issues when the Fire Station that responds is in Tilton. Selectman Bluhm also said he thinks Tilton should have gone to the Northfield of Selectmen first to see if they would be interested in the study.

Selectman Dawson feels they need to stop discussing who was not notified of the MRI study and discuss the issues of east Tilton coverage which has
been brought to the attention of the Fire Commissioners with no resolution. The average response time is acceptable. Selectman Dawson does not agree. Three people have died in east Tilton in February 2006. Selectman Dawson said it does not matter whether or not they went to the Northfield Selectman and Fire Commissioners regarding the MRI Study. The MRI study identified problems and not just Tilton’s problems; they are District problems as well. Selectman Dawson said the Tilton Board of Selectmen have tried to work with the Commissioners. The Selectmen need to get involved as they are responsible for the taxpayers within their towns. Safety is part of that responsibility. Selectman Dawson said they need to sit down and figure out what the two town’s should do, what the District should do and what can be presented to the voters and what they can afford to resolve these issues.

Selectman Shephard said there are some good points in the MRI report but it is a report for the town of Tilton paid for by the town of Tilton. She feels the proper forum should have been the Fire Commissioners they are the governing body of the Fire District and each town is an entity of the Fire District. She feels they should have brought this to the voters of the Fire District with their concerns and had a study done as a District.

Chairman Brown said it is very troubling to him that the Fire Commissioners have not responded to Tilton’s requests over the past few years regarding the response time in Tilton.

Selectman Dawson reported she attended the Belmont Fire Commissioners meeting and asked them about the Winniesquam Fire Station and they are not keen at that time of reopening the Fire Station and getting back into the same joint venture they were before. They feel it is a valuable piece of property. Selectman Dawson said to set the record straight she never asked them to join the District and did not bring it up nor did she discuss regionalization because she is not a big fan of regionalization.

Chief Carrier was at the meeting and in discussion regarding if the Winniesquam Station was going to work it would have to be staffed full time people some part of the day and it would have to be staffed with Belmont firefighters as the station is in Belmont and it should be one department only so there is no confusion operationally or policy wise. Chief Carrier said he would love to have a fire station on Route 3, on Laconia Road an thinks the most optimum area for covering East Tilton would be somewhere between exit 20 and probably Grange Road.
Selectman Cavanaugh addressed the issue of withdrawing from the District and does not feel that it is a solid consideration right now. He personally feels that they can have a Fire District that is reasonably close to what they have right now and Tilton would spend about the same amount of money. Northfield would spend considerably more money than Tilton to do that. In looking at this there would not be the growth opportunity for the Fire Department or the opportunity for advancement and growth you can have with a bigger District. Financially it is better to stay together. They need to address the issues the residents have. The Selectmen feel that safety should be first and it is the Selectmen’s responsibility to put pressure on the Commissioners to get some answers.

Selectman Pearson would like to bring up the safety concerns first to the Commissioners and does not want them to cut corners for safety. Selectman Pearson does not feel it is their responsibility to be so focused on cost control as to bring issues up that are concerned about safety. Selectman Pearson said he wants the Commissioners to view the issues of safety first and deal with the issues of cost and how they cover that safety second. Selectman Pearson said personally this is where their priority should be.

Selectman Pearson asked if collectively as Boards if they agree that safety is their primary concern. Chairman Brown agrees that safety is the primary concern. Selectman Bluhm feels there needs to be a balance and the numbers in the MRI report do not show this and feels this is an area thing rather than a department issue.

Selectman Dawson hopes they can solve these issues and continue to have this type of forum because she feels the Commissioners can use their help. Communication between the Selectmen and the Fire Commissioners is key. Selectman Pearson stated that so far they all agree that safety is first and seem to agree that they should encourage investments be made outside of the Central Street station.

Moderator McGuffin feels that one of the things that should be institutionalized is participation by Selectmen at Fire District meetings. Mr. McGuffin said they also have to prioritize the deficiencies in the MRI report and asked Chief Carrier for his input on this in terms of safety.

Selectman Dawson said Chief Carrier identified the deficiencies long before the MRI report and they are lucky to have him as Chief. Moderator McGuffin suggested that Chief Carrier tell them how this can be done and
what it takes and what it will cost. The Boards agree. Chief Carrier asked to have this list sent to the Fire Commissioners what the issues are that they agree on. Selectman Dawson suggested the next step would be to meet with the Fire Commissioners and both Board’s of Selectmen. All were in agreement.

Selectman Bluhm said the Northfield Board understands the concerns of the Tilton Board of Selectmen and agrees they need to sit down with the Fire Commissioners. Chairman Brown suggested they give the Fire Commissioners a list of the issues both Boards have agreed upon. Both Boards’ agree.

Selectman Cavanaugh asked Moderator McGuffin to create a letter for both Boards’s of Selectmen and forward it to the Fire Commissioners for their signatures inviting them to a meeting. The first item would be to ask them if it is okay for Chief Carrier, to work on the Selectmen’s behalf to answer some questions listed in MRI report. The Selectmen would like this to be addressed in writing and if possible if they will allow it person as well. Or if they prefer not to be part of that initial meeting and it is just the two Boards again with Chief Carrier or if they want to be there let the Board’s know what is most convenient for them.

Selectman Pearson sees this meeting with the Fire Commissioners as a discussion similar to this evening’s meeting so it is more of a meeting of the minds in terms of the process and what they all want to accomplish. Moderator McGuffin suggested the initial meeting general discussions of safety first and some of the issues and as a matter of respect ask the Fire Commissioners for permission to work with the Chief in terms of responding to some of the inefficiencies.

After the Board’s discussed when they will be available they decided on two tentative dates; Monday October 20th and Wednesday October 22 at 7:00:PM at the Northfield Town Hall.

Moderator McGuffin will write the letter for the Board’s and send to them for their review.

Chairman Brown and Chairman Dawson adjourned the meeting at 7:45PM.