

# THE OVERLOOK

May 1, 2026 /// NEWSLETTER

## Windham Mountain Club and Windham Foundation Pledge \$60,000 to Fire Companies

The three-year commitment will help Windham and Hensonville firefighters upgrade equipment as costs and emergency demands grow.

by Noah Eckstein

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Windham Mountain Club and the Windham Foundation of New York will contribute \$60,000 over three years to support equipment upgrades for the Windham and Hensonville volunteer fire companies, aiming to help emergency responders keep pace with growth on the mountaintop.

Windham Mountain Club and Windham Foundation will each contribute \$10,000 a year for three years, for a total of \$30,000 from each organization. The money will help fund equipment for the two fire companies, including gear used by firefighters responding to vehicle accidents, structure fires, and other emergencies.

The donation grew out of conversations with the Windham Foundation, town officials, and Windham Fire Chief Jordan Braren about what the fire companies need as the community changes, said Kristen Leach, president of Windham Mountain Club.

“When you grow, everything has to grow with it,” Leach said. “So you’ve got to be able to protect everyone here. And obviously the fire department is a huge part of that.”

Leach said the club’s relationship with the foundation dates to the foundation’s founding in 2004. As Windham Mountain Club, the ski resort known as Windham Mountain until 2023, has pursued its own development, public safety has become a central focus, Leach said.

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“We’ve got to think about the what if,” she said.

Braren, who is in his fourth year as Windham’s fire chief, said the bond between the fire company and the mountain has strengthened in recent years, particularly under Leach, a longtime local.

The Windham Fire Department responds frequently to resort businesses and buildings in the fire district, including the Winwood and Enclave condos, Braren said. The club has allowed firefighters to use resort property for training and drills and has consulted with the department on preliminary development plans.



The relationship has also extended beyond emergency planning. Leach said Windham Mountain Club will host the Windham Fire Department’s annual dinner at Cin Cin! on May 11.

“We’re super excited to host them and get them here,” Leach said.

Leach said the club has also made changes to its plans after feedback from firefighters, including changes meant to improve emergency access around buildings.

“We’ve actually made changes based on their feedback,” Leach said, adding that the club adjusted parts of the plan after firefighters raised potential concerns about emergency access around the building.

Those adjustments extend beyond buildings to roads, traffic, and emergency access during the busy winter and summer seasons.

“We have to think about any roads we put in any development plan, especially with the traffic that we see in the winter here at the mountain,” Leach said. “You’ve got to make sure

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that people can urgently get in and out as needed, whether it's an ambulance or fire trucks. We've got to be prepared."

Braren said Windham has about 26 to 28 active firefighters and could use many more. Like many volunteer departments across the region, Windham faces a shortage of younger members.

The department sent Leach a list of equipment it needs, Braren said. The money could help purchase rescue jacks for vehicle stabilization, self-contained breathing apparatus and bunker gear, the heavy protective gear firefighters wear.

A set of bunker gear costs about \$5,000, Braren said, while an air pack can cost about \$13,000.

Leach said the challenges facing volunteer fire departments are significant, particularly in mountain communities where departments are responsible for responding to homes, businesses, and large properties across long distances.

Paul Mutter, president of the board of the Windham Foundation, said the foundation was proud to support both companies.

"On behalf of the Windham Foundation, we are incredibly proud to support both the Windham Hose Company and the Hensonville Hose Company," Mutter said. "These dedicated men and women are the backbone of our community, answering the call at a moment's notice to protect our homes, our businesses, and our families. The Windham Foundation is committed to investing in the services that keep our entire community safe, and we are honored to play a role in ensuring that both companies have the resources they need to continue their extraordinary and lifesaving work for years to come."

Tyrel Sherman, the Hensonville fire chief, also welcomed the donation.

"Volunteer departments run on dedication, but dedication alone cannot replace aging equipment or keep our people safe," Sherman said in a statement. "This kind of support changes what we are able to do and how well we are able to protect the people who live and work here. When organizations like Windham Mountain Club and Windham Foundation invest in us, they are investing in every family on this mountaintop."