



TOWN OF GROTON

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Select Board

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Town Manager

Mark W. Haddad

February 17, 2026

Dear Groton Residents:

The Groton Fire Department is a source of pride for our community and provides essential emergency services every day. In recent years, the Department has faced increasing service demands. Call volume has steadily risen, and the August 2024 closure of Nashoba Valley Medical Center increased ambulance transport times, leaving crews unavailable for the next call. Together, these changes have raised ongoing questions about safety, service reliability, and long-term staffing sustainability. In May 2025, voters rejected a Proposition 2½ override to fund additional full-time firefighters.

Since that vote, the operational impacts of the hospital closure have continued across the region. In response, the Commonwealth reviewed the effects on regional emergency services and identified 13 Nashoba Valley EMS providers for support funding, including Groton, that were determined to be the most heavily impacted based on changes in call volume and call times. Groton has been awarded a one-time \$1 million state grant, which must be used by June 30, 2027, to address impacts to the Groton Fire Department.

Beginning March 1, 2026, the Town will use a portion of these funds to conduct a six-month firefighter staffing trial performed by an independent consultant. The trial will not result in a permanent increase to the operating budget. During this period, on-duty coverage will temporarily increase to four firefighters per shift. The purpose of the trial is to evaluate how staffing levels affect response times, unit availability during overlapping calls, reliance on mutual aid, and overall cost. This approach allows the Town to address current service demands while gathering objective information before considering any long-term changes.

During the trial period, the Town/Independent Consultant will collect and review information including:

- emergency response times
- unit availability during overlapping calls
- reliance on overtime and mutual aid
- review the potential impact the new Satellite Emergency Facility will have on services
- overall cost impacts

This trial is an evaluation, not a final decision.

At the conclusion of the six-month period, the collected data will be reviewed and presented publicly to the Select Board and Finance Committee for discussion. Based on that review, Town leadership will determine whether any long-term staffing change should be reconsidered. If a permanent staffing increase is proposed, it would require approval at Town Meeting and, if necessary, by voters through a Proposition 2½ override.

No decision has been made at this time. The purpose of the trial is to ensure that any future recommendation is grounded in data, fiscal responsibility, and an open public process.

Throughout the trial, the Town will provide updates so residents understand what is being measured and how the evaluation is progressing. Any proposal brought forward will be discussed publicly, and residents will have the opportunity to ask questions and provide input before any vote is taken.

Our goal is straightforward: to ensure that when you call 911 in Groton, emergency responders can arrive ready to act immediately, effectively, and within the parameters of safety for both personnel and crew, while remaining accountable to the community we serve.

Thank you for your continued engagement and trust as we evaluate this important public safety issue.

Sincerely,



Mark W. Haddad
Town Manager



Arthur Cheeks
Fire Chief