

## **Introduction:**

The Committee was active from July 2018 through February 2019. Many hours were spent gathering and deliberating on data and analyses to inform our recommendations. We would like to thank Town Manager Mark Haddad and Fire Chief Steele McCurdy for their assistance in gathering this data. A vote was taken by the Committee, 4 in favor and 1 opposed, recommending the hiring of 2 additional full-time firefighters in order to provide 24-hour staffing of the fire department. Additionally, the committee unanimously voted to recommend the creation of an ad hoc committee to assist the town and Fire Chief with recruitment and retention strategies for on-call and volunteer personnel.

## **Methods:**

- Engage community
  - Through public forum
  - Information memo published to Groton Herald
  - Open meetings
  - Invitation to submit questions, comments, suggestions
  - Planned on a survey
- Analysis
  - Data requests from Fire Chief and Town Manager
    - Budgets, call data, staff data
  - Public data downloads from Massachusetts public database

## **Engage the Community in establishing a desired level of service**

- Committee discussed several strategies to engage the community and ultimately decided that, before we could ask the community what their expectations were of the fire department, we had to first establish a baseline understanding of how the department currently functions, and inform the community of the basics.
- With that goal in mind, the committee developed a brief memo that outlined what we thought would be helpful information for the average resident to understand how the fire department operates and the challenge that it currently faces.
- This memo was published in the Groton Herald, posted to the committee's website, and advertised through Facebook and the TalkAboutGroton mail list.
- A community survey was planned, however, the Selectboard decision on 26 November to impose an early January deadline on the committee made a survey untenable.
- A public forum was held on December 7, 2018 at the Central Fire Station. The majority of attendees at the forum were senior citizens and the firefighter community, advocating to hire additional staff in order for GFD to become staffed 24/7.
  - The environment was not conducive to dissenting opinions.
- In addition to the public forum, the committee received 6 letters (Appendix D) from individuals and interest groups advocating for 24/7 staffing., and 1 letter expressing concern with costs and advocating for alternatives. Note: a request for letters was made at the public forum.

- While the committee acknowledges that the feedback received may not necessarily represent the majority of the community, without hearing more dissenting opinions despite the invitation for comments, we have to conclude at this time that a vocal subset of the community desires 24/7 staffing and coverage of the fire department.

### NFPA/OSHA/ISO Standards

- National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)
  - 3000+ codes/standards based on best practices
  - Includes 4-minute arrival time standard for the first engine 90% of the time.
  - "I do not know of any fire department that meets that standard." - *Dr. Burton Clark, Executive Fire Officer, 44-years fire service, educator, writer.*
- Commission on Fire Accreditation (CFAI)
  - Groton is not accredited.
  - Would require additional FTE to meet documentation requirements
  - 247 of 27,198 fire departments nationwide are accredited. (<10%)
- OSHA 2 in - 2 out
  - Requirement to have 2 firefighters go inside a building together (2 in)
  - Requirement to have 2 firefighters outside a building ready to help (2 out)
  - Groton relies on call firefighters to meet this standard, and will continue to rely on call firefighters while <4 firefighters in house full-time.
- ISO Insurance rating
  - Scale of 1-10 used by some insurance companies to set homeowner insurance rates in a town. 1 is the best. 10 is the worst.
  - Not all insurance companies use ISO, e.g., State Farm, the largest residential insurer in the nation does not use ISO to set rates.
  - Determining factors include fire hydrants in town, water quality and pressure, distance from stations to far points, training facilities, dispatcher speed, and staffing.
  - Groton is currently a 4. Will be re-evaluated in 2019.
- Massachusetts General Law 48
  - Administers application of state fire codes and training.

### Analyses

	2000	2010		2018	
	Value	Value	Change	Value	Change
Population	9,547	10,646	+10.3%	11,482	7.8%
Number of buildings	3287	3671	11.7%	3885	5.8%
# of fire calls	256	449	75.4%	512	14.0%
# of medical calls	366	686	87.4%	783	14.1%
Fire Dept Operating Budget	\$370,276	\$756,649	104.3%	\$1,049,000	38.6%
Municipal Operating Budget		\$11,298,200		\$15,280,000	35.2%

- Demographic changes

- Fire Department staffing
  - 2013 - 2018: Chief, 5 career responders, ~35 on-call responders
    - Firehouse staffed 6AM - 6PM
    - 4 on-call stand-by scheduled 6PM - 6AM (~\$50/person/night)
  - 2019: Chief, 7 career responders, ~35 on-call responders
    - Firehouse staffed 6AM - 6PM
    - Firehouse with one person 6PM - 8PM (2 required to respond)
    - 4 on-call stand-by scheduled 6PM - 6AM (~\$50/person/night)
    - Increased depth of coverage by 1 person, 8AM - 8PM, 7 days
  - Request: Chief, 9 career responders, ~35 on-call responders
    - Firehouse staffed 24 hours per day
    - No standby on-call responders.
    - Returns to 2013-2018 depth of coverage
  - Career responders are present at the station from 6am-6pm (highest call volume ~70% of calls)
    - Career personnel expense 2018: \$794k; includes overtime expense is ~\$95k
  - On call responders are on duty at home from 6pm-6am when the fire station is unstaffed (lower call volumes ~30% of calls)
    - Total expense 2018: \$233k
    - On call personnel must report to a fire station in order to get uniformed and equipped before responding to an emergency
  
- Call volume and type
  - Responds to approximately 1,150 emergency calls per year. All calls are responded to with a presumption of truth and emergency
  - 4-5% are fire emergencies (~10 structure fires a year)
  - 60-65% are medical emergencies
    - Basic Life Support
      - Provided by GFD
      - Responds to all EMS/Rescue calls
    - Advanced Life Support
      - Provided by Ayer, Pepperell, Townsend, Westford
      - Dispatched with initial call. ~20% of EMS/Rescue calls.
      - Provides cardiac care, intubation, IV, etc
  - 20-30% are other, good intent, and alarm responses
  - Other community responsibilities: Community education, home and building inspections, equipment maintenance, trainings for certifications
  
- Response Time
  - Response time analysis is based on staffing GFD with 5 full-time career firefighters. The impact of adding 2 additional firefighters in 2019 is unknown and depends on how they are deployed. Currently, the plan is to deploy most of this new coverage between 8am-8pm. The addition of these firefighters is not

expected to improve response times. Only one firefighter will be staffed between 6pm-8pm, which requires him/her to wait for a 2nd on-call responder to arrive before responding. Response times during 8am-6pm is already at or near its fastest capacity.

- The fastest response rates are during the staffed hours of 6AM – 6PM
- On Saturday and Sunday, when there are only 2 personnel at the fire station, the average response rate is approximately 1 minute slower than weekdays which typically have 4 personnel at the fire station.
- Important to note that there is a limit to response time improvements. This is a function of geography and station location. That critical limit appears to be about 6 minutes in Groton.
- While faster response times are important to outcomes in medical emergency there is a limit to how fast response needs to be in order to be effective. GFD currently averages 6:05 during staffed hours and 11:37 during unstaffed hours.
  - Note: The committee requested response time data for calls met through mutual aid but was informed that response time data for mutual aid responders to Groton calls is unavailable. Groton receives less than 50 non-ALS mutual aid support from neighboring towns per year.
- Academy of Emergency Medicine Journal indicates a lower threshold of approximately 3 minutes for high-risk patients (cardiac arrest) and approximately 4 minutes for intermediate-risk patients (suicide attempts, accidental exposure, unconscious patients, penetrating trauma, respiratory complaints). Outcomes for responses longer than 4 minutes is relatively unchanged.

## Alternatives

- Alternative shift configurations
  - Limited by OSHA standard that no one firefighter enter into a potentially dangerous situation alone. While not all calls are “dangerous situations” it doesn’t make sense to staff the department with only one person who can only respond under special conditions. The department should be staffed with two personnel to respond to all calls, or not at all.
  - Even without the additional 2 FTEs already approved, if GFD shifted staffed hours by two hours (8am – 8pm), Groton would be able to cover ~42 more calls per year (~3%)
  - Staffing the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> firefighters to work a shift that extends into 8pm – when volume is still high – Would cover 9.7% more calls per year bringing total to 80%.
    - *Steele: “I was a proponent of adding all four because the adding of two was not nearly as efficient in their usage. The bang for the buck just isn't as big. The situation that needed to be addressed was not just a nighttime issue, but also a daytime issue. We were able to alleviate some pressure on both days and nights by arranging the staffing that way. To swing those hours differently at this time would be counterproductive and require more taxpayer money just to maintain it at status quo. This however doesn't prevent it from changing a little in the future. By extending into the two busiest nighttime hours we at least covered*

*one of the larger and ever evolving issues of on-call availability during those hours. In addition, our pool of people available to work either on overtime on-call personnel filling in had evaporated away to zero over the summer and burnout was occurring at an incredible rate. The only immediate fix was to add more staff to both cover these hours better, but to make the pool slightly bigger so that when vacancies occur we can actually find someone to work. This issue has been occurring for years and needed to be addressed. The only manner in which we would alleviate pressure on both is the staffing plan that was put in place.”*

- Still does not satisfy the goal of 24/7 coverage to presumably improve outcomes during unstaffed hours
- Initial overnight coverage by police officers already on duty while awaiting on-call responders
  - An early assertion was made by the Fire Chief that it may not be legal to provide initial coverage in this way. This assertion was not verifiable and has since been retracted.
  - Cultural challenge to asking police department to provide initial coverage for Fire Department calls. Police department has requested additional staffing over the years and may request additional staffing to meet the need if PSO coverage is sought.
- Outsourcing overnight coverage to private service
  - Represents a loss of revenue in ambulance receipts
    - Currently, Groton generates about \$300k per year in receipts, about 1/3 occurs during the unstaffed hours. The loss in ambulance fee revenues would be ~\$100K per year savings would be ~\$73K in standby on-call expenses plus additional hourly on-call pay. The net loss in revenue would also incur longer response times due to private services not being located in town.
- Recruit more on-call firefighters – More on-call firefighters have little to no impact on overnight response time. However, the town of Groton should continue to aggressively recruit on-call firefighters to help alleviate the burden throughout the day, which could potentially allow GFD to adjust shift configurations to provide staff overnight.
- Regionalized fire department – Prior to convening this committee, Groton was in discussions to regionalize its fire department with Dunstable. However, Dunstable has since regionalized its fire department with another neighboring town and concluded regionalization discussions with Groton.
- *Steele: GFD is also limited in its ability to adjust shift configurations because “union constraint is [such] that once we lock into one shift configuration, we cannot simply change it on a whim or political breeze. Any changes in working condition or hours need to be negotiated.”*

## **Recommendations:**

- Form an ad hoc town committee to aggressively recruit and retain on-call and volunteer staff (see Appendix A for details). Retention has proven to be a significant

challenge for GFD. According to Chief McCurdy, on-call firefighters will often go through the extensive training provided to all new firefighters only to lose them from our roster due to full- or part-time paid employment at departments in neighboring towns. Groton should consider the costs and benefits for providing substantial retention incentives beyond a simple \$50 on-call standby pay.

- The limited community feedback that we have received overwhelmingly supports GFD becoming staffed 24/7 with the goal of reducing response times during the 6pm-6am shift. Given this feedback, this committee recommends bringing full time staff up to the requested 9 FTEs plus fire chief in order to achieve 24/7 staffing.
- On the condition that the addition of firefighters should be an operational priority that does not require an override. The town must look at current spending plans and prioritize the most critical needs of the town.
- The committee further recommends that the Fire Department develop a rolling 5-year spending plan that anticipates growth and funding needs well in advance of becoming an urgent safety concern for the community. This will also help the town to carefully plan current municipal spending with future needs in mind.
- Upon further consideration, the committee also recommends that the Select Board, in conjunction with the Finance Committee, carefully assess the financial impact and sustainability of hiring 2 additional firefighters in the upcoming fiscal year budget to future years.

**Information Requests not received:**

1. Standards performance reports – Against MGL 48 standards, OHSA standards, NFPA standards, ISO standards
  - a. In the absence of these reports, the committee accepts the representation given by the Fire Chief
2. Response data from mutual aid
3. Information regarding staffing levels for a given cohort, determined by demographics, population, square miles, etc. This would have helped us in determining reasonable alternatives.

## **Glossary of Appendices**

Appendix A: On-call recruiting and retention challenge

Appendix B: Data analysis, plots, and tables

- B.1: GFD Staffing
- B.2: Annuals calls to GFD
- B.3: Average response rates in minutes
- B.4: Response times for 2015-2017
- B.5: Distribution of calls by hour
- B.6: Seasonal distribution of calls load and response times
- B.7: Response rates for ALS and BLS
- B.8: Growth in Groton
- B.9: Types of calls received by GFD

Appendix C: Letters from individual committee members

- C.1: Letter of dissent from Jenifer Evans
- C.2: Letter of support from Ryan Monat

Appendix D: Letters from community members

- D.1: Groton Fire Call Department
- D.2: International Association of Firefighters of Groton
- D.3: Art Prest
- D.4: Carole Prest
- D.5: Daniel Coelho
- D.6: Erik Paulson

## Appendix A

### DISCUSSION OF ON-CALL RECRUITING AND RETENTION CHALLENGE AND IMPORTANCE

In 2016 the Groton Fire Department (FD) contracted with Municipal Resources Inc. (MRI) to provide technical service and guidance to assist in the development of a fire service Strategic Plan. The results of their work were published in two products: an 18-page management letter dated May 26, 2017, followed by a 45-page Strategic Implementation Plan, dated September 2017. The May document serves as a comprehensive executive overview while the second provides detailed actions, tactics and timeline of a multi-function implementation, with 28 recommendations spanning three years.

MRI offered that Groton has two principal challenges, both of which this committee endorse:

1. Regardless of service level. Groton “will require significant effort and community effort to recruit and retain on-call personnel”. (committee unanimous)
2. If the town wishes to improve the “service level”, that is, response time improvement coupled with 24/7 coverage, we should add 4 full-time firefighters over a 2-year period. (committee split)

Addressing the first challenge of maintaining a robust, trained and engaged on-call staff is imperative! Financially the Town of Groton is not prepared to staff a full-time fire department (~24 FTE). We must renew our commitment to growing and developing on-call staff. As MRI states, this activity must be ongoing.

The committee recommends 2 key strategies towards reaching the on-call staffing goals:

1. Expand range of actively pursued recruiting and retention options, and recognizing increasing membership is a realistic goal.
2. Focus on recruitment of women

Several items weigh against present day fire department volunteers. Most communities reliant on an on-call aspect of staffing are experiencing the similar problems. Some causes may be:

- Social and cultural changes have diminished volunteerism as a source of pride.
- Training requirements are extensive and exhaustive.
- Less leisure time due to lengthened commuting and necessity of two jobs.
- High attrition rates with reduced longevity on staff.
- Groton specific: The town has evolved to become a bedroom community where many residents work outside of town.
- Groton specific: The town has evolved to have fewer businesses in town that encourage workers to be volunteer firefighters, and provide the flexibility to serve during the day.

The inevitable conclusion of the foregoing is that recruiting and retaining on-call staffing is an uphill battle with little expectation of success. Traditional recruitment campaigns are met with diminished interest, and often successful, newly trained hires move on.

To win this battle, we must consider alternative recruiting methods. We must consider how the town and society has evolved. There are more tele-commuters today than ever before. Many workers have flexible hours. Many companies encourage workers to volunteer. Additionally, the number of self-employed consultants is at an all-time high and growing. How do we attract these residents? The action plan and recommendations from MRI to address this challenge are extensive and diverse:

- Social media enhancements
- Improved recognition
- Highly competitive on-call hourly rates
- Town paid Health Benefits
- Targeted Grant writing to fund these activities/incentives

The committee urges the Selectboard to recognize that fire department on-call staffing issue must be addressed as a strategic imperative. For years to come, the issue will inevitably remain, and is unsolvable by funding.

We urge the Selectboard to appoint an ad hoc, permanent committee to be the extra shoulders for the Chief in addressing this challenge. The premise is that members representing different groups could bring fresh ideas, new energy, new methods and group leverage to bear on the problem. Perhaps the current Selectboard member designated as prime for the FD, a member of FinCom who can provide insight and guidance on financial incentives, and a representative from human resources to assure incentives are appropriate in light of other town employee benefits. These members would work with members of the FD and the Auxiliary FD.

We suggest that this committee become a Support Team, with the purpose of expanding the community's awareness of the acute recruitment/retention crisis. As an ongoing norm, these individuals need to chase solutions that may be difficult and have unlikely positive outcomes. e.g.

- A. Appoint an individual in the Auxiliary to be a chaser of Grant funds. For example, SAFER grants are available to augment recruitment initiatives. These dollars could be used as LED signs, media advertising, social media enhancements etc.

A perception exists that Groton would fail to receive grants because of median income levels. Yet, Westford was successful. *You must first ask.*

This same individual could pursue other Grants. Currently 19 different Federal organizations have funds available for EMS staffing. Grant writing is difficult and often disappointing, but experience, repetition and tenacity are ultimately rewarded.

- B. Appoint a Support Team individual to aggressively market FD Activities. This individual would create and implement initiatives and public awareness activities on behalf of all members of the FD.

This person would be prime for the creation of a town marketing plan and campaign via conventional media and social media. Content will include news items, department statistics, and recognition of existing staff and families.

Success will be measured by a wider knowledge of the recruitment issues, recognition of current staff, and improved responses when semi-annual sign up campaigns are launched.

- C. Appoint the FinCom member to support the Chief with developing new initiatives that actively consider financial incentives, e.g. health benefits, tax abatements, fee waivers,

(dump stickers). This individual would be expected to be a concerned idea originator. She/He would champion ideas that were found to be credible and exercisable. HR would be involved to ensure they were consistent and not in conflict with existing benefits across all town departments

In addition to increased options for recruiting, we recommend an increased focus on recruiting women in particular. Firefighting must look to other industries for guidance. Many industries and employers are turning to women as candidates. In the trucking industry, 65,000 driving positions a year go unfilled as too few men apply, and too few women have been accepted. Additionally, many communities have civil service requirements which often block women due to physical fitness and strength requirements. We believe a key pillar in the Fire department's on-call challenge will be a concerted effort to double the number of women currently enrolled.

Presently, GFD has 8 women on-call, which is comparatively better than national percentages. Our committee believes that a doubling of female responders is achievable. The board suggests that the chief form a special focus group. Members would include himself, existing female staff, and ideally 1 or 2 community women recognized for past/present Groton leadership roles.

We expect that this group would form a grassroot source of suggestions

- Why did we decide on a career as an EMT or call FD?
- What would we tell other women about the rewards of this work?
- Do we genuinely feel equal and, if not, why not?
- What would you do to attract more women, specifically?
- Is there a realistic chance to attract at home moms?
- Do we need to air any particular dissatisfactions?
- Are there any scouting groups, to be targeted? Etc

In summary, this focus group would wrestle with the recruitment issue but address only half the population; the half that has been often overlooked.

As MRI has said, this activity must be multi-dimensional, constantly driven and it involves all stakeholders. Those stakeholders are all of our government officials, all of our safety/security personnel and most importantly all of our citizens. All stakeholders must be aware of this problem and it is incumbent on town management to recognize -- this is not just about the FD -- it is about all our citizens and how are we collectively going to maintain sufficient staff for our safety. The answer is unrelenting recognition of the call staff and a mindset across all government positions. Searching for solutions, regardless of presumption of failure, must be repeated until we find the right mix for Groton.

Success will be measured by determining the level of ongoing town recognition of the issue, and achieving the goal of 50 volunteers.....with a waiting list!

## **Appendix B**

### **Data analyses, plots, and tables**

### B.1 GROTON FIRE DEPARTMENT STAFFING

Time	Current Staffing		New Staffing		Request	
	Mon-Fri	Sat-Sun	Tues-Thu	Fri-Mon	Mon-Fri	Sat-Sun
0:00-1:00	0	0	0	0	2	2
1:00-2:00	0	0	0	0	2	2
2:00-3:00	0	0	0	0	2	2
3:00-4:00	0	0	0	0	2	2
4:00-5:00	0	0	0	0	2	2
5:00-6:00	0	0	0	0	2	2
6:00-7:00	2	2	2	2	2	2
7:00-8:00	2	2	2	2	2	2
8:00-9:00	4	2	5	4	4	2
9:00-10:00	4	2	5	4	4	2
10:00-11:00	4	2	5	4	4	2
11:00-12:00	4	2	5	4	4	2
12:00-13:00	4	2	5	4	4	2
13:00-14:00	4	2	5	4	4	2
14:00-15:00	4	2	5	4	4	2
15:00-16:00	4	2	5	4	4	2
16:00-17:00	2	2	3	3	2	2
17:00-18:00	2	2	3	3	2	2
18:00-19:00	0	0	1	1	2	2
19:00-20:00	0	0	1	1	2	2
20:00-21:00	0	0	0	0	2	2
21:00-22:00	0	0	0	0	2	2
22:00-23:00	0	0	0	0	2	2
23:00-0:00	0	0	0	0	2	2
	248 Hours/wk		332 Hours/wk		416 Hours/wk	
	5.9 FTE/wk		7.9 FTE/wk		9.9 FTE/wk	

Left table: Groton Fire Department staffing in recent years. 248 hours/week scheduled.

Center table: Groton Fire Department staffing recently approved. 332 hours per week scheduled. Additional coverage added from 8AM-8PM on most days. Increased from 2 to 4 personnel on Sat-Sun. Note, only 1 person staffed between 6PM-8PM. Two personnel are required to respond to an emergency call.

Right table: Groton Fire Department staffing requested. Returns to previous staffing levels during the day. Adds coverage overnight between 6PM and 6AM.

Note: These staffing levels do not account for vacations, illness, training, etc. 42 hours per week, 52 weeks per year is equal to 1 FTE (full time equivalent).

## B.2 ANNUAL CALLS TO GROTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

Time	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Avg by Hour
0:00-1:00	2.7	1.3	3.3	2.7	3.0	2.3	3.7	19.0
1:00-2:00	2.3	5.0	2.3	4.3	3.3	2.0	1.3	20.7
2:00-3:00	5.0	2.0	3.3	1.3	1.7	3.3	2.7	19.3
3:00-4:00	3.3	2.3	3.7	1.0	1.7	3.0	3.3	18.3
4:00-5:00	4.0	1.3	3.3	2.3	2.0	3.3	0.3	16.7
5:00-6:00	1.7	4.0	1.7	2.0	2.7	1.7	2.3	16.0
6:00-7:00	2.7	4.3	5.0	4.3	3.3	2.7	2.0	24.3
7:00-8:00	5.7	5.3	7.0	9.3	6.0	7.3	5.7	46.3
8:00-9:00	9.0	9.7	11.0	11.3	10.0	10.7	7.0	68.7
9:00-10:00	8.0	11.0	11.0	9.7	12.0	11.0	8.7	71.3
10:00-11:00	7.0	12.0	12.7	9.0	13.7	12.7	10.3	77.3
11:00-12:00	9.3	11.0	14.3	11.7	9.0	14.7	7.7	77.7
12:00-13:00	10.7	10.3	11.7	9.3	10.3	9.0	9.0	70.3
13:00-14:00	11.7	11.7	10.7	10.3	8.7	11.7	8.0	72.7
14:00-15:00	9.3	12.3	10.7	7.7	15.7	10.0	8.7	74.3
15:00-16:00	9.0	10.7	12.0	9.7	14.3	10.7	6.0	72.3
16:00-17:00	9.7	13.3	10.7	10.0	11.3	12.3	10.0	77.3
17:00-18:00	8.7	10.3	9.7	11.3	10.3	8.0	8.3	66.7
18:00-19:00	9.0	6.0	6.7	7.0	8.7	9.7	6.7	53.7
19:00-20:00	10.0	6.7	5.7	8.7	15.0	5.0	7.7	58.7
20:00-21:00	9.3	6.0	5.7	8.3	4.3	4.0	6.3	44.0
21:00-22:00	5.0	8.0	5.7	6.0	5.0	4.3	3.7	37.7
22:00-23:00	5.3	3.0	4.0	3.0	5.7	5.0	5.0	31.0
23:00-0:00	3.7	4.7	3.0	3.3	2.0	1.7	3.0	21.3
Avg by Day	162.0	172.3	174.7	163.7	179.7	166.0	137.3	1155.7 avg per year 3.2 avg per day
	2 personnel on staff		4 personnel on staff					

- Understanding the chart:
  - On Sundays, between midnight and 1:00AM, GFD receives 2-3 calls a year (avg 2.7)
  - GFD typically receives 19 calls a year between the hours of Midnight and 1:00AM.
- From 2015-2017, GFD averaged 1156 calls per year.
- From 2015-2017, GFD averaged 3.2 calls per day.
- There is little variation across the day of the week
  - 162 calls per year on Sundays (min)
  - 180 calls per year on Thursdays (max)
- Most calls occur between 8AM – 8PM
- Groton averages 1 call per day during unstaffed, on-call hours, primarily between 6PM-9PM
  - 6PM – 9PM: 0.42 calls per day (1 every 2.4 days)
  - 9PM – 12AM: 0.25 calls per day (1 every 4 days)
  - 12AM – 6AM: 0.30 calls per day (1 every 3.3 days)

### B.3 AVERAGE RESPONSE RATE IN MINUTES

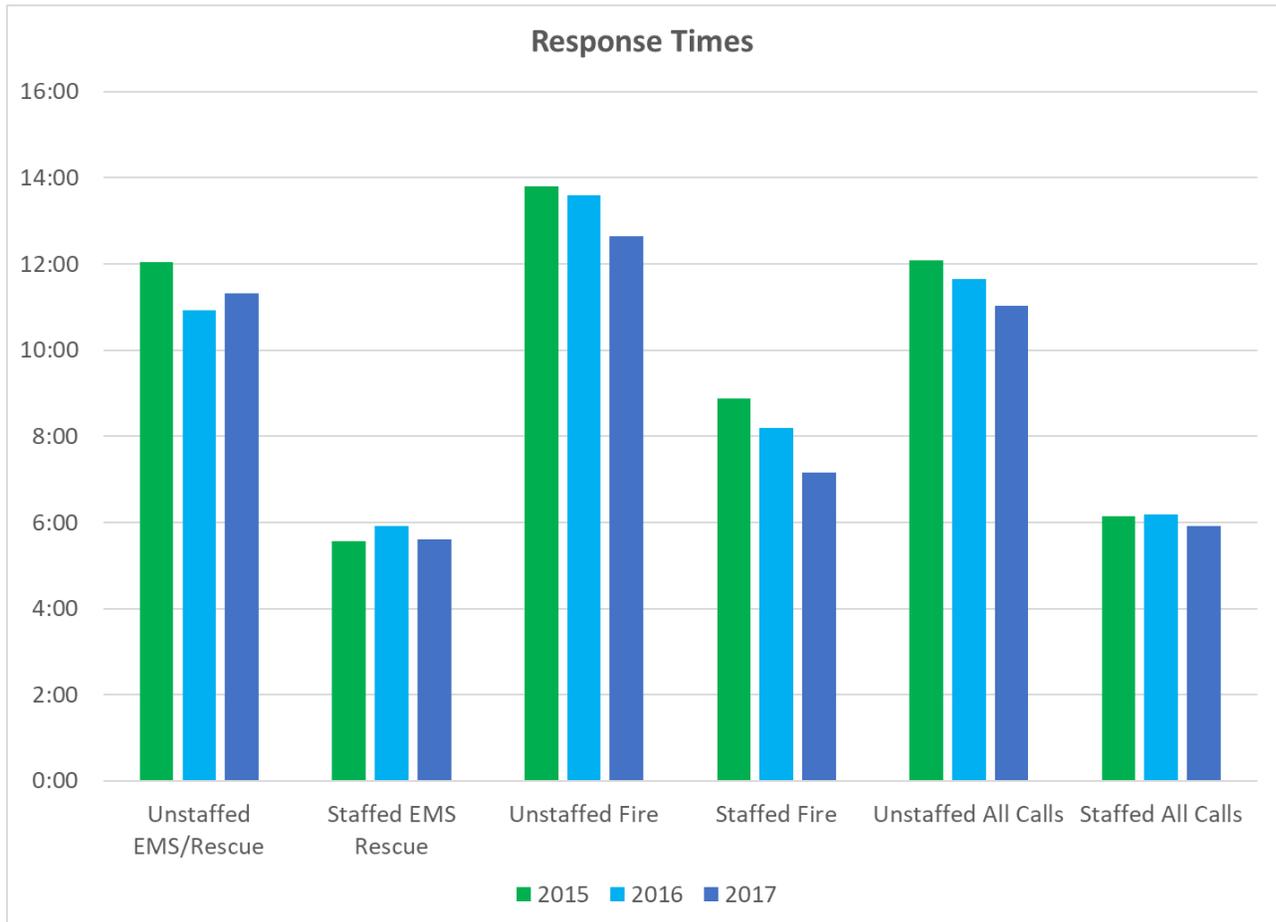
Time	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Avg by Hour
0:00-1:00	12.4	10.8	12.4	12.1	12.2	13.0	14.7	12.7
1:00-2:00	14.6	13.5	12.3	12.3	13.2	14.7	13.3	13.3
2:00-3:00	16.3	12.2	12.9	14.5	12.4	14.6	16.4	14.5
3:00-4:00	8.7	13.6	14.3	8.3	11.0	14.3	13.7	12.5
4:00-5:00	13.1	9.8	10.5	13.1	13.2	12.2	24.0	12.4
5:00-6:00	7.4	12.8	15.2	14.0	13.4	12.4	12.0	12.6
6:00-7:00	10.3	6.6	6.5	5.9	7.8	5.0	6.8	6.9
7:00-8:00	6.2	6.6	6.0	6.8	6.9	5.1	6.9	6.3
8:00-9:00	6.1	5.5	5.8	6.5	6.1	6.9	5.9	6.1
9:00-10:00	8.4	5.8	5.8	5.7	5.1	5.2	5.5	5.8
10:00-11:00	7.2	5.4	5.5	3.9	6.9	4.6	6.0	5.6
11:00-12:00	7.9	5.9	5.8	6.0	5.6	5.9	7.3	6.2
12:00-13:00	6.1	5.8	5.3	7.3	5.1	6.0	6.4	6.0
13:00-14:00	6.8	6.8	6.0	6.1	6.2	5.9	7.2	6.4
14:00-15:00	5.7	6.7	6.7	5.0	5.3	6.4	5.8	6.0
15:00-16:00	6.2	6.2	5.1	6.3	6.1	5.4	6.7	5.9
16:00-17:00	6.5	5.9	7.1	5.2	5.4	6.0	6.9	6.1
17:00-18:00	6.0	5.7	5.9	6.5	6.0	6.6	7.0	6.2
18:00-19:00	9.7	11.4	9.6	10.1	8.0	9.1	11.4	9.8
19:00-20:00	10.4	10.1	10.1	11.4	10.4	10.2	12.1	10.7
20:00-21:00	11.1	9.3	11.2	9.0	9.2	11.3	9.8	10.1
21:00-22:00	11.4	10.4	11.1	9.7	12.0	12.6	13.6	11.3
22:00-23:00	15.2	11.4	11.2	11.8	12.2	14.0	14.4	13.1
23:00-0:00	12.7	10.7	11.1	14.8	14.7	17.0	15.0	13.2
Avg by Day	8.6	7.5	7.4	7.6	7.5	7.5	8.6	7.8

2 personnel on staff     
  4 personnel on staff

- Town-wide average response rate (2015-2017) is 7:48, or 7.8 minutes.
- The fastest response rates are during the staffed hours of 6AM – 6PM
- On Saturday and Sunday, when there are only 2 personnel at the fire station, the average response rate is approximately 1 minute slower than weekdays which typically have 4 personnel at the fire station.

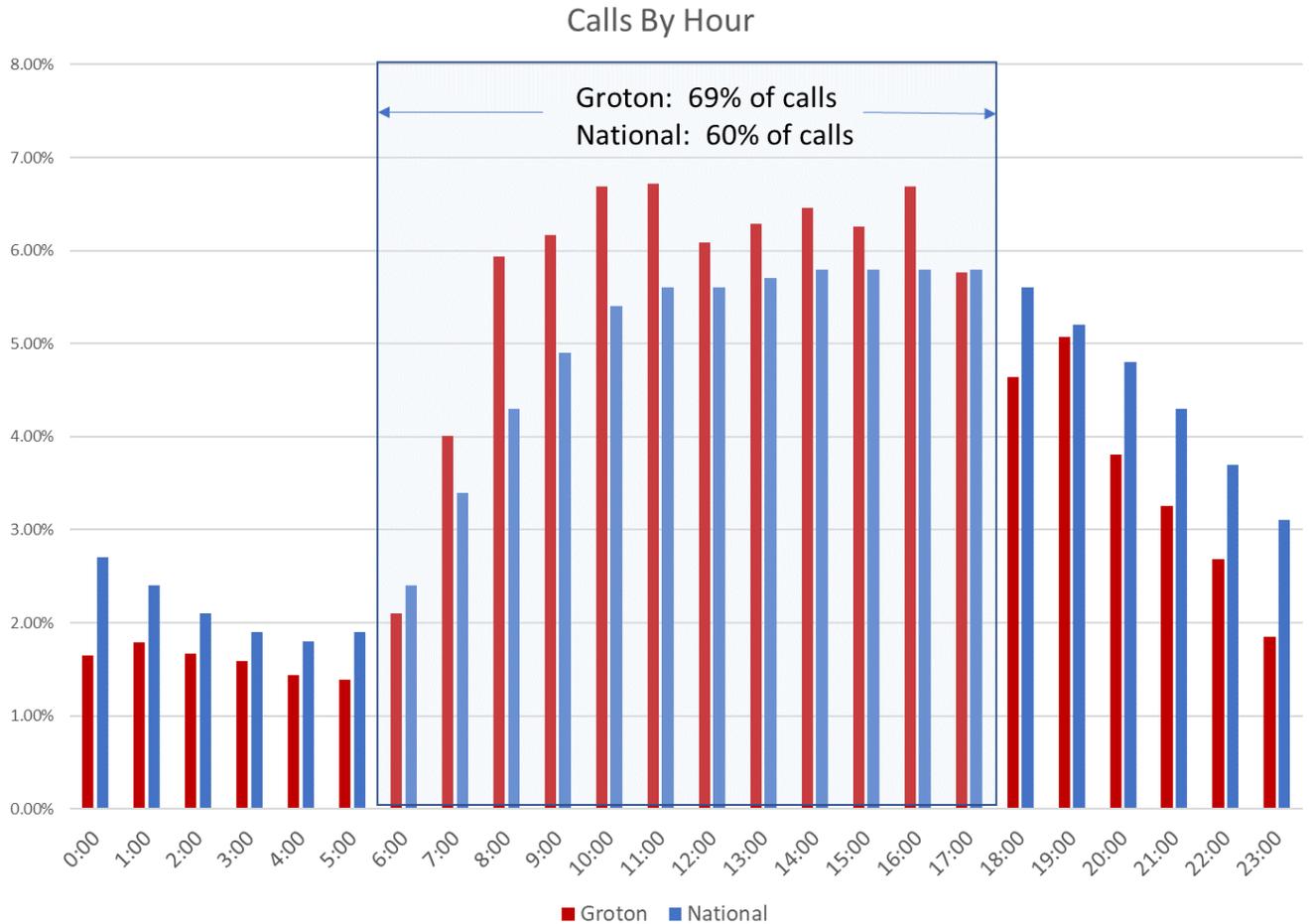
Time Period	Calls per Year	Calls per Day	Calls per time period	Avg Response Time
6AM – 6PM	800	2.2	70%	6:05
6PM – 9PM	156	0.4	13%	10:11
9PM – 12AM	90	0.2	8%	12:22
12AM – 6AM	110	0.3	9%	13:01
<b>Total</b>	<b>1156</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>7:48</b>

#### B.4 RESPONSE TIMES FROM 2015-2017



- 2015-2017 Data provided by Chief McCurdy.
- Response times have remained relatively constant or decreasing slightly over the last three years.

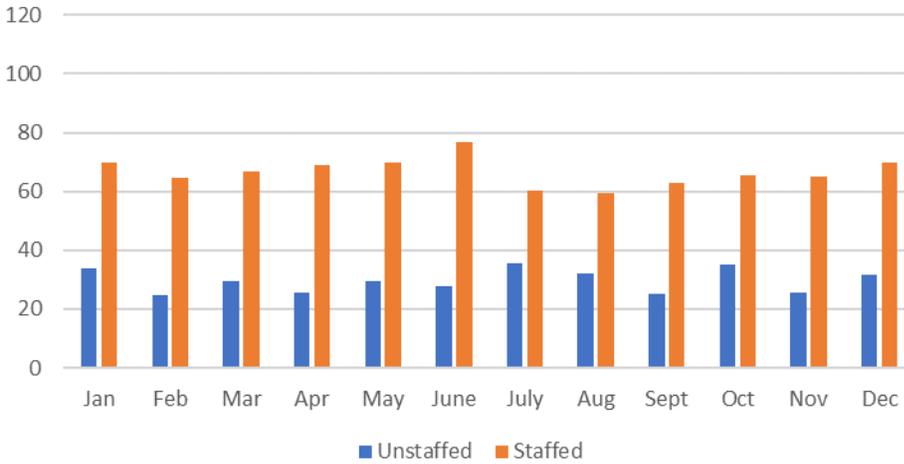
## B.5 DISTRIBUTION OF CALLS BY HOUR: GFD AND NATIONAL



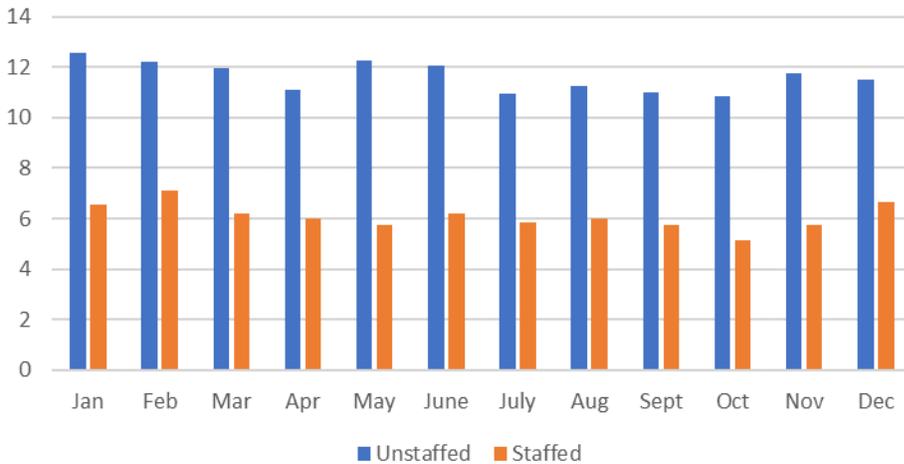
- Nearly 70% of calls to GFD occur between the hours of 6AM – 6PM when the fire station is staffed by two or more personnel.
- Groton’s call distribution is similar to the call distribution around the nation, but weighted more towards the day and away from the evening & night.
  - Groton’s distribution is higher than the national averages between 7AM – 6 PM.
  - Groton’s distribution is lower than the national average between 6PM – 7AM.
  - Groton’s distribution is significantly lower between 8PM – 1AM.

## B.6 SEASONAL DISTRIBUTION OF CALL LOAD AND RESPONSE TIMES

### Calls per Year, Viewed by Month

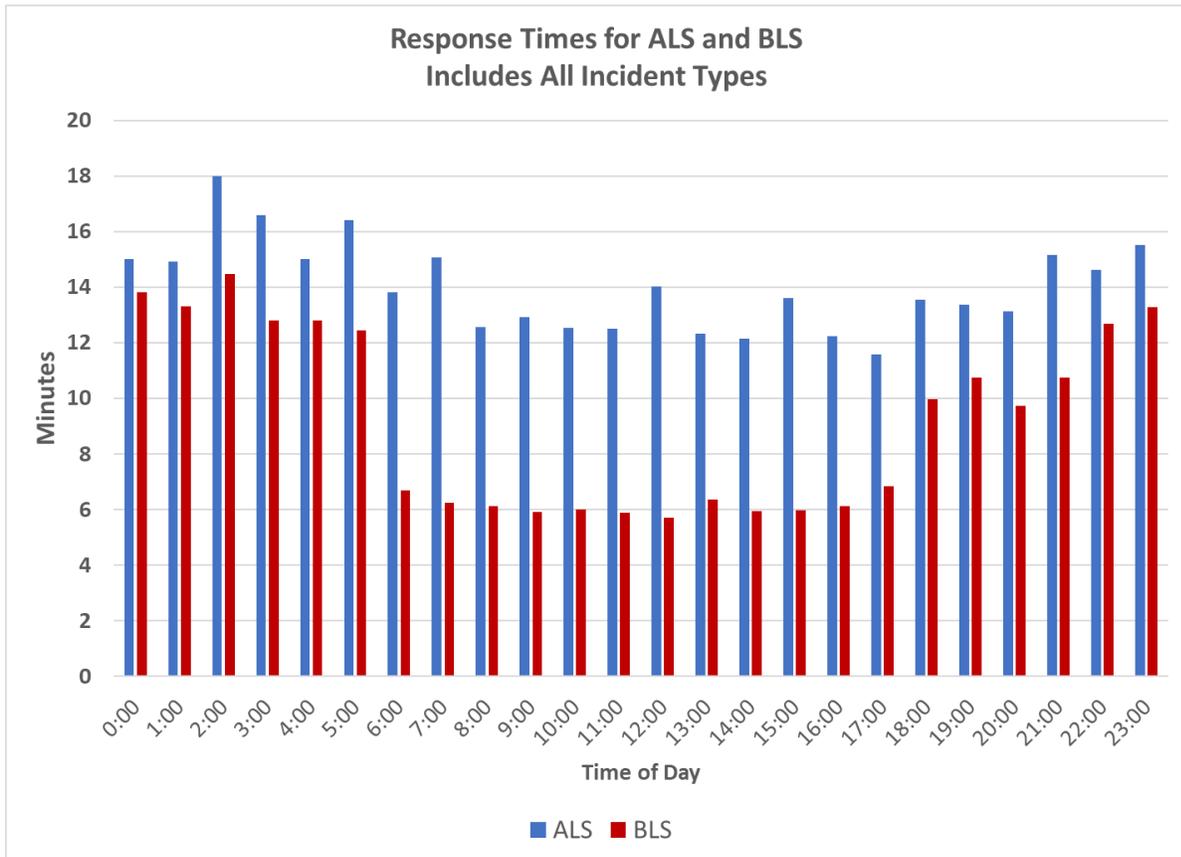


### Response Times by Month



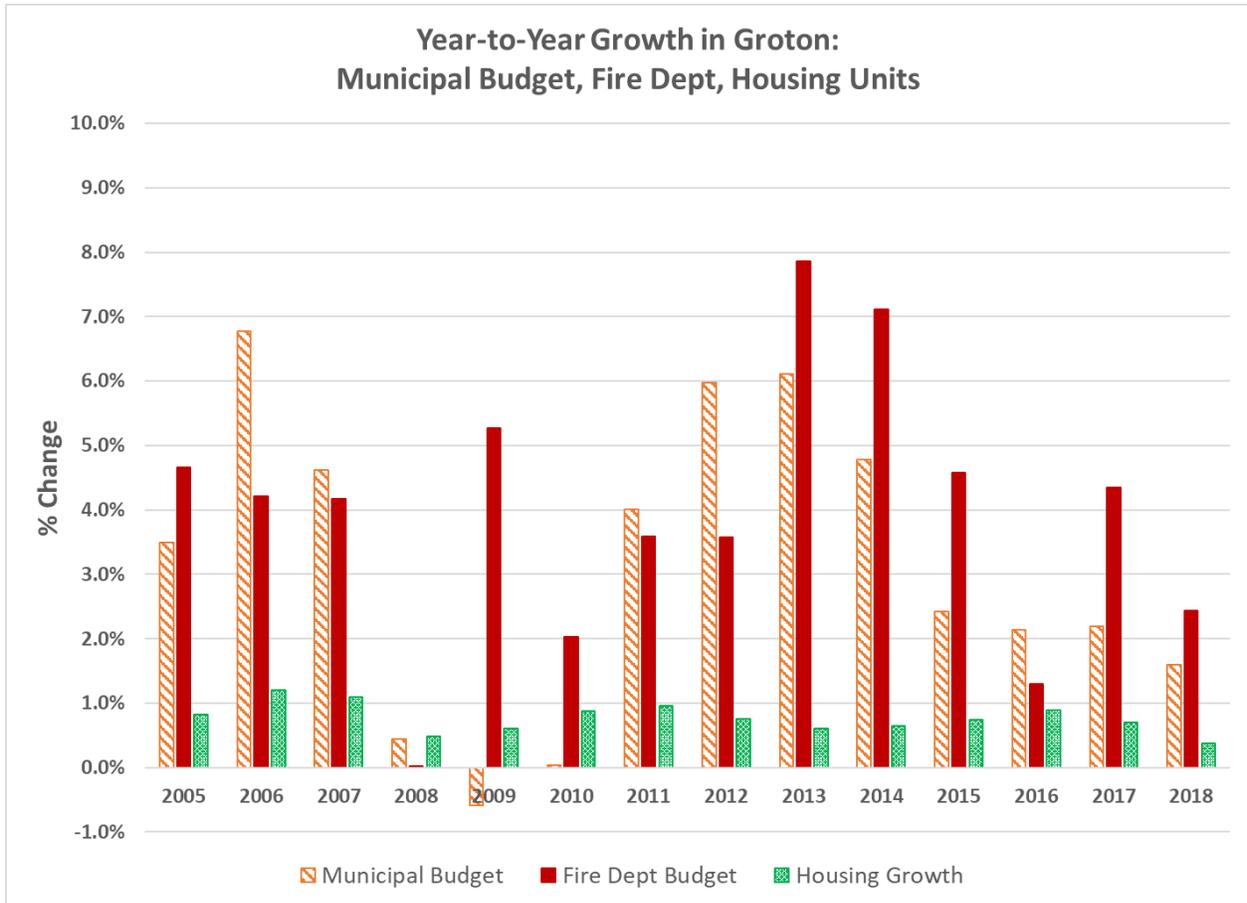
- There is minor seasonal variation in the number of calls to the Groton Fire Department.
  - Ranges from 88 calls per month (October) to 104 calls per month (January, June).
- There is minor seasonal variation in response times by the Groton Fire Department.
  - Ranges from 5:07 (October) to 7:00 (February) with personnel in the station.
  - Ranges from 10:50 (October) to 12:36 (January) when unstaffed, on-call.

## B.7 Response Rates for ALS and BLS



- Basic Life Support
  - Typically provided by Groton Fire Department
  - Provides breathing support, AED, Narcan, etc
- Advanced Life Support
  - Dispatched at time of initial call
  - Provided by Ayer, Westford, Pepperell, Townsend
  - Provides cardiac support, IV, intubation, etc
- ALS response averages 13:31.
  - 6AM – 6PM: 12:50
  - 6PM – 9PM: 13:22
  - 9PM – 12AM: 15:01
  - 12AM – 6AM: 16:00
- ALS is staffed 24/7. ALS is slower overnight as is typical of all responders, due to the human biorhythm cycle. (National Fire Data Center, Fire Report Series)

## B.8 GROWTH IN GROTON



	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2018</b>
Population	9,547	10,646	11,482
Number of buildings	3287	3671	3885
# of medical calls	366	686	783
# of other calls (fire, alarms, good intent)	256	449	512
Fire Dept Operating Budget	\$370,276	\$756,649	\$1,049,000
Municipal Budget		\$11,298,200	~\$15,280,000

- Plot is year-to-year percent growth: Municipal Budget, Fire Dept Salaries & Expenses, Housing Units. Uses a 3-year smoothed average.
  - Municipal budget average growth is 3.1% per year.
  - Fire Department budget average growth is 3.9% per year.
  - Housing average growth is 0.8% per year.
- 5 full-time staffing level. Does not include 2 additional staff hired 2019, or proposed staff.

### B.9 TYPES OF CALLS RECEIVED BY GFD

Type of Call	Response Time			Call Distribution	
	Staffed	Unstaffed	Average	Per Year	Average
Fire Calls	8:11	13:26	9:48	52	4%
Overpressure	5:55	14:00	7:07	9	1%
EMS/Rescue	5:42	11:27	7:32	721	62%
Hazardous Condition	6:49	11:15	8:06	69	6%
Service	7:20	14:22	9:08	52	4%
Good Intent	6:03	10:13	6:29	29	3%
Alarms	6:20	11:32	7:58	219	19%
Act of Nature	1:00	7:00	6:20	3	0%
Other	4:45	n/a	4:45	1	0%
All Calls	6:05	11:37	7:48	1156	100%

## **Appendix C**

**Letters from individual committee members**

### **C.1 Letter of Dissent as submitted by Committee Member Jenifer Evans**

I do not support hiring two additional firefighters and becoming a 24/7 department at this time for multiple reasons.

- 1.) We just hired two firefighters after the October town meeting vote, effective Jan 2019.
  - a. We do not understand the impact these hires will have on the force in terms of response rates, reduced absenteeism, impact on on-call responders, etc. In my 30+ years in the corporate world, I have always found “growing” a team over time to be more effective than instantly doubling the team.
  - b. These firefighters were hired due to staffing challenges between the hours of 6AM – 6PM. The request and plan for two additional firefighters will return the daytime staffing to the same levels as prior to the “crisis” that led to the emergency hiring. I believe the problems experienced this summer will likely crop up again. When I’ve expressed concern with this, the most frequent answer received has been “then we’ll hire two more”.
- 2.) The staffing plan as presented to the committee requires 9.9 full-time equivalents, working 42 hours per week, 52 weeks per year. It does not account for vacation, illness, or training. I believe the staffing plan is likely to lead back to the staffing problems experienced this summer. For reference, the municipal audit for the police department assumes 10 weeks per year for police officers to be unavailable due to vacation, illness, and training.
- 3.) In my opinion, the committee did not fully consider alternatives to the status quo other than the 24/7 request. I believe the data analysis makes a strong case for considering staffing between 6AM – 9PM, an extra 3 hours per day. The house would be staffed for 83% of the calls. That leaves ~200 calls per year (< 1 per day) to be answered by on-call personnel.
- 4.) Groton provides Basic Life Services (BLS). The Advanced Life Services (ALS) providing critical cardiac care and services involving needles (IVs, intubation) have been, and will continue to be, provided by surrounding towns. The response time for the ALS vehicle does not change with increased staffing at GFD.
- 5.) Data provided by Chief McCurdy shows there has been no degradation of response times during 2015-2017, and no significant increase in number of calls. There has not been any public outcry in recent years regarding lack of services. The only concerns expressed prior to forming this committee were day-time staffing challenges recently addressed with the first 2 hirings. Given the relative stability of the GFD call load and response times, and relative satisfaction of the community, why must this be addressed at this time, possibly requiring an override?

- 6.) The community outreach by the committee was not effective. We held one public forum during the holiday season. It was dominated by two factions: an organized senior citizens group and firefighters from Groton and surrounding towns. The atmosphere was not conducive to various opinions. A citizen even dared anyone to speak opposite the majority.

The committee had plans to do more outreach. The committee was formed around July 1 and told we could take as long as we wanted. The town manager specifically said we could take a full year if we thought we needed the time. Then in a surprise move, the town manager told the Selectboard on 26 November 2018 that he thought the committee was taking too long – an opinion the town manager never shared with the committee despite attending most of our meetings. The committee was then directed by the Selectboard to finish the report in approximately one month, over the holiday season. This unexpected deadline made the planned survey untenable, and reduced the community outreach to the single public forum.

I do not believe we have any real sense of the community desires on this issue.

- 7.) The Municipal Resources Inc report focuses primarily on the challenges the town faces with recruiting and retaining on-call responders. Financially, the Town of Groton can not afford a full-time fire department. It would require a minimum of 16 FTE, and most likely 24 FTE. We need to make on-call responders a high priority. This staffing plan eliminates the 4 standby on-call positions (~\$50/person/night). The report also expresses concern with on-call responders who become unmotivated if not used frequently, and lists under “threats”, the reduction in function of the on-call responders as career responders take on more hours. We absolutely need a strong on-call department. Is the alienation of our current on-call responders by removing standby pay and limiting activities a risk worth taking to improve response time by ~5 minutes, once a day?
- 8.) The Municipal Resources Inc report included surveys of fire department employees conducted in the fall of 2016. The report states “*A significant majority of the respondents believe that the level of fire protection provided by the town is adequate*”, and “*73% of the respondents believe that the level of emergency medical services provided by the town is adequate.*” I have not seen anything that indicates there has been a significant change in services and coverage in the last 2 years to require the immediate hiring of 2 additional firefighters at this time. Why not wait to see the effect of the first two?
- 9.) The average response time for GFD is ~5 minutes slower when the firehouse is unstaffed vs staffed. I do not believe that having the firehouse staffed 24/7 translates to a 5 minute faster responses during the currently unstaffed 6PM – 6AM time frame. The National Fire Data Center, part of FEMA and Homeland Defense, generates run profile reports based on national data gathering. The data shows that even fire departments

with 24/7 coverage have slower response times overnight. They state that this is due to the human body and circadian rhythms. This effect can be seen first-hand in the ALS service provided to Groton. All of the surrounding ALS services are staffed 24/7, yet the ALS response times between 12AM – 6AM are 4 minutes slower than between 6AM – 6PM. I believe staffing the firehouse 24/7 will result in an improved average response time overnight on the order of 2-3 minutes, not 5 minutes.

- 10.) The committee was unable to get information from local resources regarding the benefit of faster response times. Therefore, I did a literature search on response times and outcomes, including a deep dive on patient health ranking systems. There is a significant body of work in refereed journals including Journal of Emergency Medical Services, Journal of American Medical Association, American Journal of Public Health, Lancet, and many others. These studies typically involve 1000+ patients, doctors, and first responders at large medical centers. The key takeaways are that ~94% of EMS calls are non-time critical with respect to mortality. Of the 6% that are, the outcome declines precipitously over the first 4 minutes after which the outcome is essentially flat and poor. The outcome for a 6-minute response is generally no different than the outcome for a 12-minute response, unfortunately.
  
- 11.) The proposed staffing plan provided by Chief McCurdy is to have individual firefighters work 2 x 24 hour shifts over 8 days. Currently, our responders work 8 – 12 hour shifts during the day, and most likely, they are very busy their entire shift. The Town of Groton pays salaries for 248 hours/week of service, and the responders are busy for 248 hours/week. With the new staffing plan, the 2 firefighters on staff overnight will be sleeping when feasible. Overnight calls happen ~100 nights per year. The town will be paying for 416 hours/week of service that will include ~60 hours per week of firefighters sleeping in the station (assuming 6 hours of sleep on duty, and one call every 3 nights.) That translates to ~15% of the salary budget is to have firefighters sleep in the house. For the benefit of a 2-3 minute faster response time once every three days? At the risk of possibly alienating the on-call responders who will no longer be earning money on standby? Based on a salary survey of surrounding communities (Ayer, Chelmsford, Dracut, Littleton, Lunenburg, Tyngsborough, Westford), Groton salaries are generally the highest. This may be due to Groton firefighters not having 24-hour shifts with a 2 out of 8 days work schedule. If we do change to 24-hour shifts, will the town be renegotiating salaries?

In summary, I can not support hiring an additional two firefighters without understanding the impact of the first two hires, with the risk of recreating the scheduling challenges of last summer, with the risk of alienating our very important on-call firefighters, without any measurable benefit in terms of outcome, all for the possibility of decreasing the BLS response time by < 5 minutes. I have seen nothing that indicates this is a critical problem that needs to be addressed at this point in time.

Hiring additional personnel is the biggest challenge to sustainable finances in town, and I believe there should be a solid case before adding full-time employees, with benefits, and pensions to the budget. No data indicates there is a defined benefit for this cost.

My number one take-away from this entire committee is the importance of the on-call department. Financially, this town is not in a position to hire a full-time fire department. We must solve the on-call recruiting and retention challenge. Eliminating the standby on-call positions and reducing the involvement of our on-call department will hurt those efforts. I can not emphasize enough the risk to the fire department and town if we do not address the on-call challenge. There are answers. A number of Massachusetts towns have waiting lists. Holliston is a bedroom community with 14,500 residents, with a fully on-call department, no full-time firefighters, and a waiting list of 20-30 people. This challenge can be met, and it begins with keeping our current on-call personnel involved and incentivized.

Sincerely,

-Jenifer Evans

## **C.2 Letter of Support as submitted by Committee Member Ryan Monat.**

As with everyone involved with this project, I want to thank all of you for your hard work and dedication to this committee. This was my first time taking part in something like this within the community, and I appreciate all of the time and effort put forth by everyone here. It was a pleasure getting to know all of you, and I hope we can work together again in the future.

I feel that we were able to bring to light a lot of issues, including staffing levels and response times, within the Groton Fire Department that have been gradually and naturally changing over the course of many years. I believe that the time has come to deal with said issues in a responsible and timely manner.

One of the challenges we faced as a committee was bringing everyone involved up to speed. Not only regarding the operations of GFD, but also the broader concepts involved within the emergency response service in this country. Many of the work involved in fire and EMS is difficult to understand, and sometimes accept, even for trained professionals who provide such services. These practices tend to be abstract, and don't always fall into a comfortable category. Emergency responders are expected to be highly adaptable in intense situations, and decisions are required to be made quickly and appropriately. I believe it is the duty of the community to provide every possible resource to emergency response personnel so that they can perform their duties safely, efficiently, and in a timely manner that is acceptable to the community they serve.

We heard from Chief McCurdy, the person whom our town has entrusted to provide both emergency and administrative supervision to help keep our town safe. I believe Chief McCurdy has made a substantial case as to why we need more full-time and on-call fire and EMS staff, and I completely agree with his opinion.

We also heard from the firefighters of GFD, and both the full-time and on-call staff have come together to speak as one in regards to our charge. Never in my 22+ year career as a firefighter, both full-time and on-call, have I seen such a resounding and unified opinion on staffing matters. It is entirely commendable, and I applaud their sincere efforts to serve our community. I also completely agree with their stance on the matter of staffing.

Finally, we also heard from the community at large, both in a forum and individually. The response that I have heard from the townspeople is overwhelmingly in favor of employing more full-time and on-call staff. I agree with this opinion.

It is our charge to learn about the issue of staffing the Groton Fire Department, and the means in which we are comfortable recommending change, if any. I feel it is our obligation to recommend to the Board of Selectpeople that we allow a vote during Spring Town Meeting to hire more full-time staff so that the GFD can continue to provide the excellent and selfless services we've come to expect from the amazing members.

Thank you again!

Sincerely,  
Ryan Monat

## **Appendix D**

**Letters from the community.**

## D.1 Letters from the Community: Groton Fire Call Department

Fire Department Task Force Study Committee

The members of the Groton Fire Call Department would like to take this opportunity to extend our full support and gratitude to Chief Steele McCurdy for his on-going effort to provide the community with the highest levels of public safety by developing a well-trained and disciplined fire department.

When Chief McCurdy joined the Town of Groton Fire Department, the Call Department was a fractured unit. They were in the midst of a highly publicized internal dispute that resulted in a lawsuit between some members of the department and the town. This situation not only created a negative perception of the Call Department, it also drove a wedge into a group that was expected to work together in very stressful situations. Chief McCurdy was able to establish himself as a leader; focusing on moving forward, bringing the department together, and not getting distracted by past events. The morale of department increased dramatically as did the skill set of the members who welcomed the change in direction and philosophy with open arms.

Chief McCurdy continues to develop an extremely effective training schedule that allows members to work on practical skills they need to have in order to safely do their job and protect the community. He has also built a very strong leadership team in his officers; both Call and Professional members. The Chief has the confidence in himself and this team to be able to delegate the appropriate responsibilities that are necessary in establishing an integrated department. He has also demonstrated fiscal responsibility by providing the appropriate tools and equipment to assist the department in achieving its goals while working within an increasingly challenging budget. Working closely with town departments, he has built a strategic plan for the future, and through creative pathways, has been able to assure the department will continue to be well equipped in the years to come.

One area that has been much more challenging for Chief McCurdy is in the recruitment of new call members. Statistically, volunteerism in all forms is declining, and coupled with the time commitment that is required for new recruits, it is a very difficult position to fill. Utilizing a number of different recruitment strategies, campaigns have been launched in all forms; from open houses to direct mailing to social media, all avenues have been pursued. Recommendations have come from outside agencies and other town departments that the Chief has implemented, but even these have had a low success rate. For this reason, Chief McCurdy has requested additional full-time department personnel.

Recently, the department has found itself in a position where staffing has been dangerously low, both on the day and night shifts. This is a trend that does not look like it will be improving without changes being made. It has become clear that in order to adequately provide the emergency services necessary to cover the town, additional members will need to be added to the Professional ranks. These new members will be able to cover the understaffed day shifts while helping bolster certain evening hours that have been more challenging to fill through the Call Department. The Call Department will continue to handle the majority of the night-time incidents; the additional personnel will help supplement some of the busier evening hours.

The town is fortunate to have a department leader as dedicated and focused on building a team as we have. We would like to restate our support of Chief Steele McCurdy and his continued work in providing the community with a well-trained and enthusiastic group of individuals that take pride in being part of the Groton Fire Department.

Respectfully submitted,

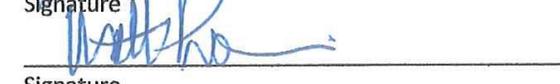
The Groton Fire Call Department

  
Signature

STEVEN SAVAGE FF/EMT  
Printed Name

  
Signature

Arthur Cheeks LT. FF/EMT  
Printed Name

  
Signature

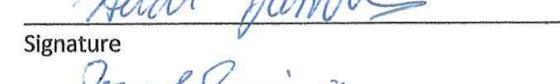
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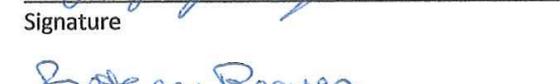
Daniel Coelho FF/EMT  
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MICHAEL PAULIN FF  
Printed Name

  
Signature

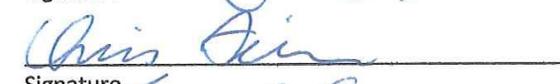
A. Heidi Januskiewicz EMT  
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Signature

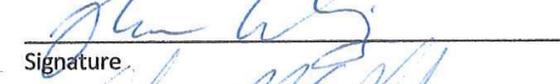
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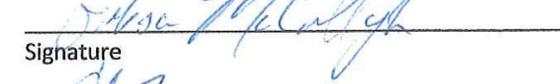
Betsy Reeves EMT  
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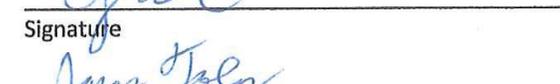
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Printed Name

  
Signature

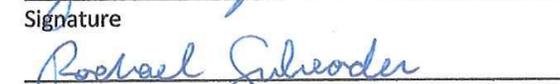
Chris Fischer FF/EMT  
Printed Name

  
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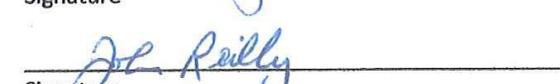
John Weix FF/EMT  
Printed Name

  
Signature

Grant McLaughlin EMT  
Printed Name

  
Signature

Chelsey Gencho FF  
Printed Name

  
Signature

James Foley FF  
Printed Name

  
Signature

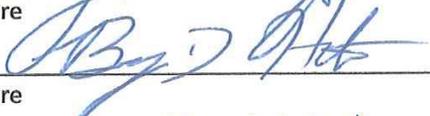
Rachael Fulcrader EMT  
Printed Name

  
Signature

Tom Reilly FF  
Printed Name

Signature 

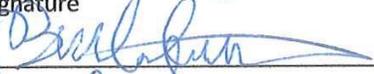
Printed Name Cody McNay FF/EMT

Signature 

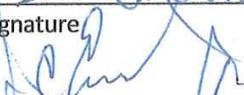
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Signature Chelsea R Hatcher

Printed Name Chelsea Hatcher EMT

Signature 

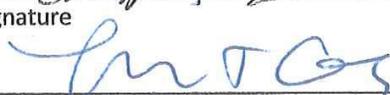
Printed Name Brian Callahan FF

Signature 

Printed Name JAMES C Emshie JR. LSPD

Signature 

Printed Name Christopher J. Curtis FF

Signature 

Printed Name Michael J. Culley Lt.

Signature 

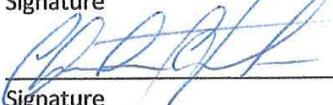
Printed Name Tony Hawgood Lt.

Signature 

Printed Name Jack Leber EMT

Signature Stephanie A. Hamelin

Printed Name Stephanie A. Hamelin FF/EMT

Signature 

Printed Name Christopher Hunter FF/EMT

Signature 

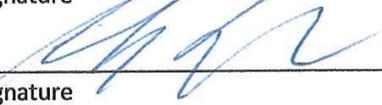
Printed Name Michael MacGregor FF/EMT

Signature Catherine W. Lincoln

Printed Name Catherine W. Lincoln - EMT

Signature 

Printed Name CHRIS BRAUN

Signature 

Printed Name Bradley Cain - EMT

Signature

*[Handwritten Signature]*

Printed Name

*Chi*

Kevin Charland FF/EMT

Signature

*Pat J. Kiley*

Printed Name

Patrick Kiley FF/EMT

Signature

*[Handwritten Signature]*

Printed Name

Anthony Resca EMT

Signature

*[Handwritten Signature]*

Printed Name

Timothy Cunningham FF/EMT

Signature

*[Handwritten Signature]*

Printed Name

Derek DiRubbo FF/EMT

Signature

*Andy Mahoney*

Printed Name

Andy Mahoney FF/EMT

Signature

Printed Name

## D.2 Letters from the Community: Professional Firefighters of Groton Local 4879



### INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS OF GROTON LOCAL 4879

To The Fire Department Staffing Task Force,

The Professional Fire Fighters of Groton Local 4879 would like to express our full support and respect for Chief McCurdy and his efforts to continuously improve the services provided to the community by the fire department. Throughout Chief McCurdy tenure he has worked tirelessly to ensure that the mission of the fire department is meeting the expected level of service throughout the community. These efforts include creating and implementing a set of standard operating policies and procedures, increasing the volume and quality of training, along with increasing recruitment and retention efforts by the department to a level that surpasses anything in the departments past, just to name a few of the items on his growing list of accomplishments. The result of this effort has been the continuous improvement of operational delivery, making services more effective and efficient while increasing the level of safety for both department members and the public. These efforts have also resulted in a dramatic improvement of the morale of both the career and call staff.

The staffing levels during the day time hours (06:00 – 18:00) have become an issue over the past couple months. Normally weekday shifts are staffed with 4 personnel plus the Chief. Over the last three months we have had to operate at a reduced staffing level approximately 30% of the time. The level of staffing throughout the last three months has ranged from the full complement of four personnel to as low as a single person. The staffing shortfall creates working environment with a lower than acceptable level of safety, along with lowering the department ability to provide adequate emergency services. This trend seems to occur multiple times a year. The members of the department have been stepping up to cover these gaps to the best of their ability, however members have families and other commitments that have to be balanced as well. By having to cover these gaps, our members are being exposed to more stress and physical demand than what is typical for emergency services. When day shifts run short or are unable to be filled, the effects can often be overwhelming. During a day shift that is short the Chief may be forced to take on a role as a responder in addition to his normal managerial duties.

Some of the on-call night shifts are running short as well (18:00 – 06:00), making for unsafe working conditions which can result in poor service to the town's people. While the men and women who make up the call department are dedicated members of this community they have fulltime jobs elsewhere along with family obligations and many other commitments. They are truly giving all they have to give. The volume of shifts that many of these individuals cover has the potential for burnout due to these employees spreading themselves to thin over an extended period of time.

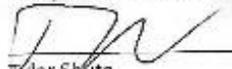


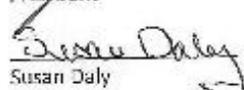
**INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS**  
**PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS OF GROTON**  
**LOCAL 4879**

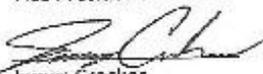
Unfortunately volunteerism as a whole is down, this can be seen in the steady decline in the number of call firefighters across the country. We can see this issue first hand in our department when the department was forced to close West Groton Station 2 due to the lack of call members. This is also reflected in when an on-call shift runs short or is unfilled, it often means response times become longer and some calls may be answered by other towns.

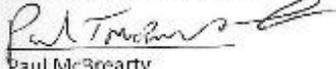
Exhausting mutual aid is something that also needs to be considered. We already heavily rely on mutual aid for their ALS services (Advanced Life Support). When we are constantly asking for their assistance because we cannot answer the call, there could be a future impact. The flip side to us using mutual aid is that we need to be staffed to assist them when needed as well. Mutual aid only works if there is a mutual availability and response from both parties involved.

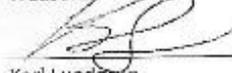
The issues around fulltime staffing is not a problem that was only recognized recently, Chief McCurdy has been advising the town of the need for increased staffing since taking over as Fire Chief. The Professional Fire Fighters of Groton Local 4879 stand behind all of the decisions that Chief McCurdy has made to improve our service to the town and the wellbeing of our department. He has brought to the town's attention an issue that is a priority of ours as well, staffing. It is his job to advise the town on complicated matters involving the fire department and its response to calls for service. The Chief is advising the town that there is a need for increased staffing to allow the fire department to succeed in their mission. The Professional Fire Fighters of Groton fully agree with the Chief and wish to publicly support his decision. Chief McCurdy has done an outstanding job leading and growing this department. The career staff feel that the town needs to recognize Chief McCurdy as the most qualified person to interpret what the needs of the fire department and the community are.

  
Tyler Shute  
President

  
Susan Daly  
Vice President

  
James Crocker  
Secretary

  
Paul McBrearty  
Treasurer

  
Karl Lundgren  
Member

### D.3 Letters from the Community: Art Prest statement

#### From the Bottom of My Heart and the Top of My Head

I must thank the Town of Groton Fire Department and its team of Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) for their care and professionalism when I was injured on Election Day, November 6. They saved my life.

I did a very stupid thing that afternoon. I tried carrying two heavy things down the stairs to our basement. I got about half way down and lost my balance. I fell headfirst down the stairs and smashed my head directly into a wooden bookcase. While I remained conscious, I was bleeding profusely. I managed to get myself into the bathroom. No one was home and my cellphone was upstairs.

Fortunately, my wife Carole arrived home about two minutes later and heard me crying for help. She applied towels to help stop the bleeding from a 5 inch gash in my forehead and called 911. Very soon, the Town of Groton EMTs arrived and assessed the situation. While one was applying pressure to slow down the bleeding, they called for back-up. They wrapped my head in a trauma bandage and continued to apply pressure. They worked together to apply a neck brace, strapped me into a chair and carried me to the waiting ambulance. As we took off for the hospital, one EMT continued to apply pressure to my head while the other was hooking me up to an IV and checking my vitals. Amazingly, in the midst of all this, they found a way to calm me down and even get me laughing. They must have called ahead because there was a team waiting for me at the trauma center at Lowell General. By that time, I lost a lot of blood and I heard the doctor say *"We need to stop the bleeding quickly or he might bleed out"*. That is something I will never forget hearing for the rest of my life. They applied what they described as battlefield protocol which involved stapling the skin back together while giving me morphine and injecting a clotting agent. After multiple x-rays, CT scans, ultrasounds and an MRI that night, they released me the next morning. I look a bit like a Frankenstein mask right now but I'll be okay.

The care I received that night at Lowell General was amazing. But I might not have been able to benefit from the skill of those trauma nurses and doctors if not for the speed and capabilities of our own Groton Fire and EMTs. Chief Steele McCurdy has assembled an amazing group of EMTs. I will never be able to thank them enough for what they did for me last Tuesday night.

I stated publicly at the Fall Town Meeting that the Fire Department is the most important department in Groton but I never thought that it would be my own life that would be saved. They serve to protect your life and property and don't get the credit that they deserve. They deserve our full support.

#### D.4 Letters from the Community: Carole Prest

**From:** Carole Prest [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 11, 2018 9:26 PM  
**To:** Mark Haddad <[mhaddad@townofgroton.org](mailto:mhaddad@townofgroton.org)>; 'Arthur L. Prest' [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Meeting on Groton Fire Task Force

Mark,

Art and I attended the meeting at the firehouse tonight to hear the analysis by the Groton Fire Task Force. While I think that the presenter intended for the presentation to support some task force member opinions that the additional 2 fulltime firefighters/EMTs were NOT justified, I found the data to actually support the addition of 2 full time personnel. Response time during a medical emergency is critical and 5 minutes of improved response time, even providing Basic Life Service, can make the difference between life and death. Each year, we pay thousands of dollars in medical insurance premiums so that, if we need to be hospitalized, the costs will be covered. An additional \$80/year to make sure that we get to a hospital alive seems like a very small additional "insurance" to pay.

Furthermore, the Town hired Chief Steele McCurdy to lead his department and make sound judgements. If he thinks we need this, then I think we need to support him.

Peter Myette requested that people send you e-mails to voice their opinions and so, from me, I would vote 100% in favor of adding the additional full time staff.

Best,  
Carole Prest  
[REDACTED]

## **D.5 Letters from the Community: Daniel D. Coelho, GFD**

To Whom It May Concern,

In regards to the Fire Department Task Force open forum held on 12/11/2018. I have at this point watched through the recording provided on the Groton channel website a few times. I have found that I am in disagreement on a number of points made by the taskforce including the use of averages used to discuss the improved response times as well as what appeared to be a brush off of responses to the tax increases.

What I found more egregious and on a professional level I found insulting was the statements that BLS level EMS only provides what amounts to as comfort care. I have been trained and accredited by the state of Massachusetts as a BLS EMT and I have served the town of Groton for nearly 11 years as an EMT. The comments made about BLS EMS were far from the truth. BLS EMTs are trained, able, and willing to provide life saving care to all patients we interact with, including cardiac events. One of the key aspects of survival in cardiac arrest is prompt and proper application of AED and CPR skills which BLS provides.

I would have taken issue with much of the approach of this committee at least as it was presented during the forum, but this key point I found to be more telling. It shows a lack of understanding of the system and what services are being provided. The comments show a lack of desire to understand exactly what it is that they have been charged to make recommendations on. It is my opinion that the approach of at least some of the committee has been to prove that the requested staffing is unnecessary.

I would summarize this in stating that I have no confidence in this committee. They have a bias born either by a lack of understanding of what they are working on, and or they are coming to the table with a preconceived notion against the request.

I will continue to serve this town to the best of my abilities both as a Fire Fighter and an EMT until such time as I am unable, or the town sees fit to release me from the duties that I have sworn to perform and take pride in performing. I for one support the chiefs request one hundred percent as I believe that the town would be best served by this increased staffing.

Respectfully,

Daniel D Coelho

## D.6 Letters from the Community: Erik Paulson

**From:** Erik Paulson [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, January 14, 2019 2:30 PM  
**To:** Select Board <[selectboard@townofgroton.org](mailto:selectboard@townofgroton.org)>  
**Subject:** Inquiry re: Fire Dept Task Force

Dear Fire Department Task Force,

I'm writing after reading an article this past weekend in the Groton Herald regarding the committee's recommendation to increase the size of the fire department to 9 full time employees.

First, I wanted to thank everyone for the time they have dedicated to this effort. We're fortunate to live in a town with dedicated personnel and citizens willing to volunteer their time to ensure thoughtful decision making.

Public safety is an important objective, but I do have concerns regarding the increased cost of almost doubling the number of fire department employees in such a short period of time, especially in light of the likelihood of personnel costs continuing to increase faster than inflation.

Is there a place I can learn more about how the additional staff will impact the service level provided and the alternative options considered by the task force? I looked on the town [website](#) but didn't see a high level summary. Without having any experience in this area, it seems like there could be opportunities for enhancing services in a cost efficient manner through partnerships with local towns / private companies / leveraging volunteers.

I look forward to learning more.

Thank you and best regards,  
Erik Paulson  
[REDACTED]