

Minutes 9 July 2018

Town of Groton

Fire Dept Task Force Study Committee

Called to order 6:00PM

Attendees:

Peter Myette (PM)

John Kane (JK)

Ryan Monat (RM)

Ann He Foley (AHF)

Jenifer Evans (JBE)

Chief Steele McCurdy (CM)

Russ Harris

Old Business

None

New Business

Discussion of the Strategic Plan and Audit report. Members asking questions, and Chief McCurdy answering:

Question JK: What is the cost/person for a full-time firefighter

Answer CM: Career is ~54K/year base salary, with weighted costs ~\$73K/year. Call fighters average ~282 hours per year at a cost of ~\$6.7K/year. There are additional one-time costs for training and equipment.

Question JK: What is the training requirement for call firefighters?

Answer CM: Training is 2 nights a week, 2 hours each night, plus 1 weekend day, for 4 months to achieve Firefighter I or II status. To receive grants, the fire department must have 90-100% of their firefighters certified at I or II status.

Question JBE: How much of the current funding is received via grants?

Answer CM: Zero.

Question JBE: What is an Auxiliary firefighter, as referenced in the reports?

Answer CM: it is a volunteer, limited, support role. For example, passing out waters. It does not include hands-on fire fighting.

Question JBE: The Explorers program is mentioned. How long has there been an Explorer program?

Note: we should discuss this program in further detail when discussing recruiting.

Answer CM: It was started 2 years ago.

Question AHF: The budget request is for an additional \$278K to add 5 firefighters. But $5 * (\$73K \text{ weighted})$ is \$365K. Why the difference?

Answer CM: There is reallocating of extra dollars from "standby on-call" to full-time. This accounts for ~\$80K. There is also reduction of other call-time expenses.

The budget request for 5 career firefighters was when the department was considering regionalization. With regionalization no longer on the table in the near future, the request was reduced to 4 career firefighters.

The audit report recommends an ideal staffing of:

- 50 call (currently 37)
- 10 auxiliary volunteer (currently 0)
- 9 full-time (currently 5)

We do have automatic mutual aid from surrounding towns for all actual fires. We provide the same.

Comment JBE: There are alternatives to either the status quo or the audit report. The report is a recommendation written by Municipal Resources, a consulting firm that frequently recommends growth, and authored by former fire chiefs in larger towns. It is of interest, but it is not the Bible.

Question JK: What about part-time firefighters?

Answer SM: It has been done, but there are often work environment issues with mixing part-time firefighters with call.

Question AHF: Chief McCurdy, do you agree with the audit report recommendations?

Answer CM: yes.

Question Russ Harris (Groton Herald): During the municipal audit, the fire department was not included because the separate audit was being conducted. The municipal audit was fully briefed to the town, but the fire department wasn't. Is there a plan to do so?

Answer CM: There was a briefing at an October selectman's meeting. Note: It was considered the preliminary report with the report finalized in December.

Comment JBE: The fire department audit report is not as thorough as the municipal audit report.

Question AHF: Is there additional information, or longer version of the report, available?

Answer CM: Additional information available would be the detailed community feedback and the detailed survey results, and a good deal of the raw data.

Comment JBE: Costs is one piece of the cost/benefit analysis. How do we quantify the benefits?

Comment JK: Isn't the question how to improve the response time? Is that sufficient?

Comment AHF: The focus should be on making the community safer.

Comment CM: The first part of the charge for the committee is to engage the community. How do we do that?

Comment RM: He is familiar with many of these numbers and terminology due to his experience in Littleton and Westford. He will share his experience with the growing pains he has witnessed.

Before the next meeting, the committee members should

- *Send an email to Chief McCurdy and Mark Haddad with their lists of questions and requests for information. Title the email "Fire Task Force".*

Next meeting: 16 July.

Adjourned at 7:18 PM

Jenifer Evans

Italics – action item.