

## **Minutes 30 July 2018**

Town of Groton

Fire Dept Task Force Study Committee

### **Called to order 6:01PM**

#### **Attendees:**

Peter Myette (PM)

John Kane (JK) - Phone

Ann He Foley (AHF)

Jenifer Evans (JBE)

Chief McCurdy

Mark Haddad

### **Old Business**

Approved minutes from 6/25, 7/9, and 7/16.

### **New Business**

John Kane emailed letter to committee with plan for engaging the community to determine if townspeople perceive a problem with the fire dept.

- 1.) Run a 1 or 2 question poll via the Groton Herald
- 2.) GELD bill stuffers
- 3.) Septemberfest booth
- 4.) Transfer station

Committee agreed these are a reasonable first step, but we need more base information first. We need solid background, educational info before building and taking a survey. Agreed a survey is appropriate.

There was a survey done for the audit. Learned it was a limited survey of the Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee, and a handful of community members. It was not a significant portion of the community.

The committee began a review of the Task Force questions sent to Chief McCurdy. Covered questions 1-4. See attachment for Chief McCurdy's initial response to the questions. Additional comments:

- Groton EMS accounts for ~64% of calls. Many towns run 70-75% EMS.
- ISO is the Insurance Organization. It determines the homeowners insurance rate in town. A one step change is typically a \$50-300 cost per year for an individual home. Groton is currently rated a 4, and with a slight risk of slipping to a 5 which would result in higher rates. It is not feasible for Groton to become ISO 3. ISO is typically updated every 3-5 years. ISO rating drivers are

staffing, distance from stations to far points, water quality and flow rate, communications center, dispatcher speed, training capability (place to train with smoke and fire.) Note: Westford and Groton use the same state and Nashua training facilities. The only piece of ISO the Fire Task Committee can effect is staffing.

- To estimate the effect of Indian Hill facility, data was gathered from the high school, and from other locations on the north shore and in Maryland. For incidents per event, data from Tanglewood was used. It is expected to be ~13 calls per year, and 1-2 per major event.
- Two-in/Two-out is an OSHA standard. It applies to Firefighters, not EMTs. Mandates they never enter a dangerous situation alone, e.g., due to hazardous materials. The only way to meet this at all times is with 4 on staff. This committee is only addressing how many hours we have staff at the firehouse. We typically have 4 between 8AM-4PM.
- SOP/SOGs – Operating Procedures and Operating Guidelines.
- Pre-fire planning – recon on commercial facilities. Performed by career and call staffers during weekday hours.
- 8:00 minute standard – independent of town size. The “ideal” for a fully staffed fire department is 4:00.

Next meeting: 6 August.

Adjourned at 6:56 PM

Jenifer Evans

### Task Force Questions 7/30/2018

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2. Please provide the data submitted to NFPA(National fire Protections Assoc);OSHA and the ISO, (Insurance Service Organizations). Specifically, which "Standards" apply to our community and how well did we score?

I have provided the ISO Public Protection Classification report. This report is conducted every 3-5 years (previously 10) to review the suppression capabilities for the community.

3. Does the Fire Department have a projection mechanism or algorithm to predict increase of incidents as a result of significant baseline change? Indian Hill expects to be a performance venue with seating of 3,000. If they have 50% take rate and only 6 events per year....Does that project as meaningful change to our study?

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4. That said, here are some terms and phrases from the report that I don't understand, and one question:

- "OSHA Two-In/Two-Out standard" Do we do that now?

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We are often pressed to meet this requirement or delay action.

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This refers to minimum staffing requirements. We cannot guarantee staffing during the nighttime hours so it is hard to establish a standard of cover.

- “Limited number of SOPs/SOGs.”

These are policies which have been under constant development over the past 3 years.

- “No formal pre-fire planning program.”

Pre-fire planning is obtaining property information and location of critical utilities to better serve the personnel and owner in case of an emergency. We currently conduct pre-fire planning visits.

- “The lack of mobility connectivity and mobile data.”

This refers to computers in the trucks. We are working on a grant to achieve this.

- Where does the oft-repeated 8:00 minute number come from?

It is an industry best practice for combination fire departments that MRI utilizes.

5. Is there an existing map somewhere that plots the population distribution of the town of Groton and their proximity to each fire station?

Asked land use dept about population map. The only map that exists is by 6 districts that do not show density. We can have one made by our GIS company, cost unknown.

6. Municipal Resources recommended the closure of the West Groton station. Do you have an impact study or assessment of what this would mean for emergency response to those surrounding areas that it currently serves? I’m looking for both quantitative and qualitative impact. Is this recommendation something that you agree with? Why or why not?

The closure of the West Groton station came when staffing levels reached a point that could no longer sustain an effective or safe response to the community. Many of the staff for the West Groton Station left over years prior to my arrival and it continued in to the early part of my tenure. Deployment of personnel in the department saw two active members driving by the headquarters station in order to staff an engine in West Groton. I determined this to be an extremely ineffective use of personnel as it delayed the staffing of apparatus at Headquarters and therefore to the whole town. Before the official closing of the station, the last call answered out of the West Groton Station was October of 2015.

In order for a station that is staffed by on-call personnel to operate, there needs to be a seed of experienced personnel that can provide direction and leadership. In the case of West Groton, the number of experienced firefighters dropped to a point that new firefighters would not be able to function safely.

In order for a new firefighter to come off the street and have the training and experience to work on their own, 2+ active years of time investment is needed. In the case of West Groton, this time investment, lack of experience and limited recruits presents an insurmountable obstacle to the continued operation of that station.



In the past two years we have had 2 West Groton residents that have started the training process. 1 was not able to complete the other is still training.

7. Municipal Resources stresses on a couple of occasions the importance of managing the cultural concerns of on call vs. career staff "in order to avoid internal conflict". Although the report doesn't explicitly state it, this implies to me that there is a cultural divide. Can you tell me a little more about what the concern is?

The concern in every combination fire department is that cultural differences often exists between call and career staff. One group is primarily employed by the fire department while other serves the community when they are available. While the end job is the same, occasionally friction exists over different things such as pay rates and benefits, experience levels, the feeling that one side is not doing their jobs can occasionally exist. This issue is one that the front-line supervisors have to actively manage.

8. I also noted a few areas in which accreditation is being recommended as a strategic priority, which also implies that we are not currently accredited - CFAI, NFPA, OSHA, ISO. I'm familiar with OSHA, but not the other three. Can you articulate the purpose/value of each and confirm that whether or not we are accredited? What is the accrediting/regulatory body that governs fire department standards in MA?

NFPA- National Fire Protection Association- The NFPA is based out of Quincy MA developing some 3,000 codes and standards based on scientific evidence and industry best practices. These codes vary from our Fire Codes (NFPA 1) to the electrical code (NFPA 70) to initial firefighter training (NFPA 1001) to standards for fire truck (NFPA 1901). The NFPA codes drive ISO and CFAI standards.

CFAI is the Commission on Fire Accreditation International- This is the agency oversee the accreditation process. This process involves about 2,000 hours of preparation for documents and thousands of hours more on the self-assessment portion. Without an additional FTE of administrative help, we simply we do not have the resources to dedicate to this venture. Of the 27,198 Fire Departments in the US only 247 are accredited representing 10% of the nation's population.

In Massachusetts Chapter 48 of the general laws covers the establishment of fire departments. In the state the Fire Marshal oversees the Department of Fire Services (DFS) which administers the application of fire codes and oversees the training programs through the Massachusetts Fire Academy. Within certain sections of MGL 48 NFPA codes are referenced.

9. What is the cost of training for certifying career vs on-call personnel? Are the requirements and costs different or the same for each? I recognize this will also depend on the level of personnel. I'd like to understand the costs and requirements for each level, including the difference between emergency medical vs fire certification and training. What is the status of Groton's application to secure a SAFER grant? There are several recommendations for training personnel, do these imply that we are currently NOT doing these?

The training for career and call is very similar. It is important to ensure that both career and call personnel have similar if not identical training in order to operate as effectively as possible. In



Massachusetts, the Fire Academy is funded by the insurance industry meaning that there is no tuition for personnel to attend. The difference in the cost to send personnel to the fire academy comes from their rate of pay. Career personnel make about \$9 per hour more.

EMT program costs vary but generally run around \$1500. Typically, these classes run at night for about 16 weeks. EMT classes typically run for about 150 hours and are taught in several formats. Alternatively, a paramedic program runs upwards of 1800 hours. We currently get paramedic services from other area fire departments.

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One recommendation is training of our call officers at the National Fire Academy. These classes while extremely valuable compete with regular employment and often cannot be attended. The challenges of training in a call department can be significant as we place more requirements on our firefighters and EMT's they need to make hard decisions around home, work and the FD.

10. Can you please elaborate on how neighboring town departments collaborate in an emergency? As an example, if my house is closer to the Dunstable fire department and I have a medical emergency, will I have to wait until the Groton department can get personnel dispatched to my home?

Each community is responsible for providing service within their borders. That said the utilization of mutual aid is a regular occurrence in the fire service. Typically, each town is expected to be able to handle initial emergency calls without utilization of other community resources. That said, specialized services such as paramedic services are often dispatched simultaneously with Groton. In addition, any report of a building on fire also receives automatic mutual aid from another community. This mutual aid unit is designated as a Rapid Intervention Team( RIT) and has the sole job on the fire ground to rescue firefighters if they become lost, trapped or injured. This RIT allows our personnel to focus on mitigating the emergency at hand without having to staff more functions than we have personnel for. The RIT is a critical piece of the fireground operations and meets requirements set out by NFPA and OSHA.

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