

Minutes 6 August 2018

Town of Groton

Joint meeting of Fire Dept Task Force Study Committee, Selectboard, Finance Committee

Called to order 6:03PM

Attendees:

Peter Myette (PM)

John Kane (JK)

Ann He Foley (AHF)

Jenifer Evans (JBE)

Chief McCurdy

Mark Haddad

Selectboard

Finance Committee

Old Business

None

New Business

Josh Degen – purpose of meeting is to discuss short term need to cover staffing issue. This meeting and request does not pre-empt the task force.

Chief McCurdy sent memos to Mark Haddad regarding staffing issues brought on by injuries and leave. McCurdy recognized to call firefighters: Cully and Cheeks. Both are private school employees who have been big supporters this summer, but due to school re-opening, hours will be reduced.

Cully: Been on call for 13 years. This is the worse shortage he's seen.

Cheeks: He's been working 12 hour day shifts, plus on-call at night.

McCurdy: This is a safety issue. Errors have occurred due to over-tired employees.

A memo with 3 options to alleviate the problem was presented.

- Option 1: hire per diem staff from outside. Cost ~\$40K. Risk of staff not having sufficient allegiance to Groton.
- Option 2: Hire 2 additional full-time staff. Cost ~\$80K. Better during day, limited at night, but still need a 2nd personnel to respond at night.

- Option 3: Hire 4 additional full-time staff. Cost ~\$122K. (~\$160K additional, plus ~\$37K in call savings.) This the goal of the memo brought to the town.

Ambulance fees can cover the costs one time, but requires a town meeting vote.

Summers frequently have call coverage issues due to vacations, etc.

We are relying more on mutual aid, and not reciprocating equally.

Gary Green (FinCom): understands there's a safety issue. Wants to understand the underlying problem. Would like shift data.

McCurdy: This has been ongoing for 4 years. Just getting worse.

If Groton does not hold up their end of the mutual aid, the town may be charged money by adjacent towns.

Becky Pine (Selectboard): Where would we recruit per diem people for option 1.

McCurdy: advertise, contact adjacent towns.

Currently have 5 full-time staff, and provide coverage 12 hours a day, 5 days a week.

Haddad: Concerned about burn-out of the chief and current firefighters.

Gary Green (FinCom): it's a risk trade-off. We can not get it to zero. We should wait to hear from the study committee.

Peter Myette: the fire task force charge is for the future, not for today. We will not have a result in August.

The options are for 6 month hirings. Can the town hire people for 6 month contracts?

McCurdy: may be tricky or may have extra costs.

McCurdy: one firefighter (20% of career staff) has been out 2000 hours over last 2-3 years. Town has been using per diem and call firefighters to cover this person's hours.

The proposal is for hiring in January. The sooner, the better. To use ambulance monies requires town meeting approval.

Cully: on recruiting. He joined along with 9 others. Only 2 are left. Call department is getting older. Many young call fighters are getting hired by other towns, and not sticking around.

Cheeks: Not confident we can attract per diem firefighters from other towns. Thinks we need a more solid solution like options 2 and 3.

McCurdy: the hiring process is 1-2 months. Will require training, and 6-8 weeks to get gear.

If hiring internally, the call fighters have done call training, not the full academy career training, so still need training.

For immediate need – we will continue to rely on mutual aid.

Next meeting: 13 August.

Adjourned at 7:22 PM

Jenifer Evans