



CITY OF FRANKLIN, NEW HAMPSHIRE
Fire Department
"The Three Rivers City"

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Kevin LaChapelle, Fire Chief

Robert F. Goodearl II, Deputy Chief

FIRE COMMITTEE MEETING
February 21, 2017

Call to Order

Councilor/Chair Zink called the meeting to order at 5:08 p.m. at the Fire Station facility.

In Attendance

Councilor/Chair Zink, Councilor Dzujna, Councilor/Member Wells, Councilor/Member Moquin, Councilor Desrochers, City Manager Dragon, and Chief LaChapelle.

Department Presentation

Staffing Profile:

Chief LaChapelle welcomed all present and upon Bob Desrochers request the meeting was started with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Chief started the presentation discussing the current staffing level of the Fire Department. The Fire Department has 17 fulltime members with 12 members that work a 24-hour shift. This is the same daytime staffing that we had in 1987 – other than the addition of the fulltime Inspector in the Code Enforcement Office.

With the eroding of the Call Department we have had to change our staffing profile to the National Standard of the NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) and that is basically to have 1 Engine with 3 personnel respond to fire related incidents. We also depend on our mutual aid partners (Tilton/Northfield) for automatic response.

Basically, we are at our breaking point. The Chief was asked if there was Federal Grants for staffing. He explained that there is and he has been talking with other Chiefs from surrounding areas that have used the Safer Grant for new positions and these Chiefs all stated that they would never do that again.

Manager Dragon mentioned that we as a City would want to make sure that the Council is committed to continue with the program after the Grant is ended before they would look into applying for this kind of Grant.

Chief LaChapelle mentioned that about one month ago, the Fire Department changed the residency requirement from a 5-mile radius from the Fire Station to a 30-minute response. Life styles have changed and the Fire Department has noticed this change with the lack of coverage on some second calls. He mentioned that in 2016 one of our Firefighters worked 926 hours of overtime and one of our Captains worked 883 hours, this fatigue has led to minimal after hours response.

Manager Dragon mentioned that she sees the payroll every week and that these individuals are working a lot of hours and every year we say “we can make it work” and it has come to the point where we need to do something differently.

It was asked if we could use per diem employees and the Chief explained that when we hire a firefighter that person is on probation for one year, and usually cannot cover a shift until 6 months as they need to learn the city as well as our operations. He also mentioned that statistically 63% of all May Day calls were when a firefighter was working an OT Shift and we are just one OT shift away from a disaster.

The Fire Department has cut back on some of the extras that have been done in the past, primarily because of the amount of calls and the same number of staff. In 1997 we responded to 980 calls and 1982 in 2017.

Absentee Landlords:

With the hiring of the second fulltime inspector for the Code Enforcement Office one of the first items they tackled was having the Landlord or manager present when a Welfare Inspection is done. The inspectors were going to the same building multiple times as the Landlord was not getting the information of what was needed to be fixed. This seems to be working. The other thought is to set up a fee schedule for subsequent inspections.

Another issue that has been addressed is the Dilapidated/Burnt-Out buildings in Franklin. Letters have been sent out to the owners of nine of the dilapidated buildings in Franklin and we have already seen plans for the removal of a few of these buildings and have heard from one that he is getting his lawyer involved. It seems we have their attention and having the extra full time inspection has helped a lot.

Manager Dragon says the City is taking the pro-active approach not the re-active approach. One of the ways we are doing this is having inspections done for Welfare Assistance.

Councilor Moquin asked what the difference was between Section 8 Housing and Welfare. Elizabeth mentioned that this is a Legislative Issue as the city does not have a say on Section 8 inspections and who gets it or not. Councilor Moquin mentioned that the City seems to have a lot of Section 8 Housing and this creates a lot of issues for every department in the City.

Ambulance Billing:

The Chief touched briefly on ambulance billing stating that with the demographics of the City of Franklin most of our insurance money comes from Medicare and Medicaid. We are constantly checking to see what we can do differently to receive as much as we can. We recently changed from one billing company to a new one.

Regionalization:

This is an ongoing conversation in the Lakes Region. The Fire Chiefs in the area have discussed this and wants to make sure that regionalization is consolidation not a hostile takeover.

Chief LaChapelle mentioned that he has been in conversation with surrounding communities and is working closely with Sanbornton and Tilton-Northfield Fire Department on this issue.

Other Business:

Councilor Dzujna asked if the Safer Grant was for staff only or if we could get a grant to purchase large one-time items. Chief LaChapelle stated that we did receive an AFG Grant last year and that we bought the airpacks with this money and the Chief has applied for another Grant to purchase equipment for the new Engine 1 which should be arriving in Franklin around the 3rd week in March.

Councilor Zink asked if we wanted to set up another meeting and it was decided to put this on hold at this time.

Councilor Zink made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Councilor Moquin. Meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Carol Morrill".

Carolyn Morrill
Franklin Fire Department