

Town of

**Goffstown,
New Hampshire**

24 / 7 Fire EMS Committee

Interim Report

November 27, 2006

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1. The Committee

The Board of Selectmen established this committee to respond to the charge of Article 28 from the 2005 Annual Town Meeting.

“Shall the Town direct the Board of Selectmen to prepare and present a plan that proposes 24-hour Fire and EMS staffing of at least one (1) of the fire stations seven (7) days per week? This plan shall include the use of a system that utilizes full-time and call force employees working a regular work schedule not to exceed 45 hours per week. The proposed plan shall be all-inclusive and be presented as part of the Towns 2006 Budget process. The proposal shall have an effective date of July 1, 2006 as the start date of this staffing system.”
(Obviously the year would change to 2007 throughout this article.)

The committee began with stakeholder meetings of volunteer participants brainstorming issues to respond to the charge of the above-cited article. The Budget Committee & CIP / Planning Board group met on October 16, 2006 at Mountain View Middle School. The Full-time Fire Department employees met on October 17, 2006 at Goffstown High School. The EMT's, dispatchers and call firefighters met on October 24, 2006 at Mountain View Middle School. Lastly, the residents group met on October 26 at Mountain View Middle School. Thom Linehan and Dan Reidy, both from UNH Cooperative Extension, facilitated these meetings.

Each stakeholder's group elected two members to be participants in the 24 / 7 Fire EMS Committee. This group consisted of Sue Tremblay and Fred Plett representing CIP / Planning; Ed Hannigan and David Shaughnessy representing EMT's; Gail Labrecque and Felix Pelchat representing residents; Eric Geissenhainer and Steve Fournier representing the budget committee; Mark Germana and Roger Beaudoin representing call firefighters; Bill Connor and Patrick Laforge representing full-time firefighters; and Teri Gage and Michelle Provencher representing dispatchers. David Shaughnessy subsequently resigned, and the Committee accepted his resignation at our meeting of November 16, 2006.

The committee first met on Thursday, November 2, 2006 at Mountain View Middle School. The group elected Michelle Provencher and Felix Pelchat as co-chairs of the group. Teri Gage was elected secretary. Subsequent meetings were held each Monday during the month of November in the Mildred Stark Room at Town Hall and each Thursday at Station 19. Each meeting started at 6:30 p.m. All meetings were open to the public.

2. Interim Recommendations

The 24 / 7 Fire EMS Committee recommend to the Selectmen:

2.1. Schedule

Replace the work schedule of full time firefighters from the current 6 AM to 6 PM, 7 day a week schedule, to a 4 shift schedule covering 24 hours per day, 7 days a week. Maintenance of the current schedule is very inefficient in providing 24-hour coverage. It is clear that labor negotiations need to take place to make this happen.

The precise form of the 4-shift rotation is a matter of negotiation with significant input from a new fire administration. It would entail rotation of shifts on a schedule involving all full time firefighters / EMT personnel.

2.2. Additional Full Time Personnel

Hire 10 additional Firefighter / EMT personnel such that one station shall be staffed with a core of 5 full time Firefighter / EMT personnel 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The 10 additional personnel, plus the current 10, will result in a complement of 20 full time personnel, operating 5 per shift, over 4 shifts.

This recommendation does not do away with the need for a call force by any means. The call force would be needed to augment full time personnel. Further, it is recommended that a 6th position at the station chosen for the full time personnel be staffed by a call force member, which is already in the budget. Coverage for vacations, sick time and other absences of the full time personnel would also be filled with call force personnel.

The net annualized cost of this recommendation, as shown on Attachment A to this interim report, is approximately \$230,000 per year, using 2007 budget offsets. At an 8¢ per \$100,000 impact on the tax rate (a 2006 Budget Committee calculation), this results in an 18.4¢ per \$1,000 tax valuation, or a cost of \$46 per year on a typical home with a \$250,000 evaluation.

The location of the full time force is to be determined by the new Fire Chief. The intent of the 24 / 7 Fire EMS Committee is to have one station covered 24 / 7 with a 5-person core of full time personnel.

Of the 5-person full time force on each shift, each should be cross-trained to be both Firefighter and EMT capable. Further, one of the 5 should be a fully trained and certified paramedic.

Call force personnel may be trained either for EMS or Firefighter duty, but should be encouraged to cross train.

2.3. Impact of a lesser number of full time personnel

Although the number of additional personnel recommended, 10, could possibly be pared back by relying more on call force personnel, such an approach would not guarantee 24 / 7 coverage – the lower the number of full time personnel, the more the difficulty in maintaining 24 / 7 coverage. This is especially true given our recommendation to go to a 4-shift rotating schedule, where the number of full-time personnel on each shift day and night should be the same. In light of the small incremental cost of hiring the full slate of 10 additional full-time personnel, the Committee strongly recommends that all 10 be hired.

2.4. Ramping

Of course, it is expected that the hiring of the 10 personnel may take some time, and may be on a ramping schedule. While this is anticipated, phasing in the hire of these new personnel over the course of more than a year is not recommended. So some coverage by call force may be inevitable in the short run. This would also ramp the costs of hiring some, so that the first year tax impact may be less than the Committee is recommending.

The committee recommends a warrant article to cover the fully annualized cost of the built out force of 20 full-time personnel so that the voters are fully aware of the cost of implementation that will be required.

2.5. Central Station

The Committee strongly recommends planning for a Central Station. When such a Central Station exists, the five-person core should be transferred to this station.

Discussions took place among committee members about Pinardville, Station 19, and / or Church Street, Station 18. Station 19 has more room, but most of the call force comes to Station 19 as well. Thus, more equipment could be mustered if the personnel were located at Station 18. The Chief could choose to split personnel to partly cover Stations 18 and 19. Neither Station 18 nor Station 19 is ideal.

The Committee recommends authorization of monies for planning and engineering of a Central Station. It is noted that the Capital Improvements Committee had in its recommendations \$75,000 for just such a purpose. The Committee recommends that the Selectmen reinstate this item in light of the 24 / 7 Fire EMS Committee recommendations for additional personnel, and in light of the fact that new tower or ladder trucks will not fit any of the existing stations.

Many towns have used consultants to analyze town fire and EMS functions. The Committee is aware that the Selectmen have considered doing so for Goffstown. We recommend that the Selectmen do so.

2.6. Repair / Refurbishment of the Existing Stations

It may very well be the case that repair and refurbishment will be needed to put the existing stations in working order. The 24 / 7 Fire EMS Committee did not have sufficient time to delve into such details in time for this interim report, given the short time horizon we have had since our formation (we first met on November 2, 2006). All stations are undersized for apparatus likely to be needed in the future.

Construction of a central station will substantially mitigate the amount of work needed at the other stations. This is so because the other stations will become auxiliary in nature.

2.7. Additional Revenue Sources must be considered

The impact of the 24 / 7 Fire EMS Committee recommendations on taxpayers could be mitigated by consideration of non-tax revenue sources. These could include, but not be limited to, imposition of fees for ambulance non-emergency transfers, fire prevention service fees, and fees for false alarms and other nuisance calls. Also, impact fees may be applied to construction of new facilities, and refurbishment to the extent that station refurbishment increases the capacity of the Fire Department to respond to emergencies.

Furthermore, SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response) grants must be applied for. This is precisely the point of the SAFER grants, to assist towns in achieving 24 hour staffing to provide adequate protection from fire and fire-related hazards, through the hiring of firefighters and recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters.

2.8. Privatization of the EMS Functions

It is recommended that the Town of Goffstown retain EMS services as a municipally staffed function. We recommend against privatization. EMS services are self-sustaining, because the revenues cover the costs. The Committee recommends to provide at least one paramedic per shift and to increase the training of other personnel will raise the classification of such fees, thus providing additional revenue.

By retaining the EMS functions as a municipally staffed operation, greater coordination between Fire and EMS functions are possible than when the EMS services are privatized.

2.9. Call Force Recruitment and Development

It is recommended that a new Fire Chief be hired at least partially based on his or her skills in integrating full time staff with call force personnel, and that the Chief be charged with vigorous recruitment, retention and development of such personnel.

It is the belief of the Fire / EMS Committee that the recommendation for a rotating shift schedule for full time firefighters will allow training schedules during night shifts where both full time and call force personnel may participate. This may result in greater bonding and force cohesion. Furthermore, the overall impact of the Fire / EMS Committee recommendations should improve the outlook of all Firefighter / EMS personnel, as they see essential town Fire and EMS services get the attention that they have long needed and deserved.

3. Longer Term Recommendations

3.1. Continuation of the 24 / 7 Fire / EMS Committee

Although no committee should be perpetuated beyond its need, the Committee does see a need for its existence beyond this interim recommendation to the Selectmen.

The Committee should work with any Interim Chief and the new permanent Chief to implement these recommendations.

3.2. Town Growth and Long term apparatus study

Items for future consideration:

- Long-term population growth trends for the town, as a whole and how it might affect different areas of town;
- Fire and EMS apparatus needs,
- Additional revenue sources, and
- Longer-term station needs.

**Town of Goffstown
24 / 7 Fire EMS Committee
Interim Report
Appendix A**

**Town of Goffstown
24/7 Fire / EMS Committee
Cost of 24/7 Implementation**

Hire 10 new Fire / EMS Personnel:

Cost per Firefighter, Mid-range	\$54,000
Startup Costs per employee:	<u>3,100</u>
Total first year cost	\$57,100

10 Employee Cost:	\$571,000	\$571,000
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		2006 Budget	2007 Budget
Offsets (From Budget Numbers)			
20-42201-41180	Fire - EMS Call Wages - Duty	\$130,000	\$130,000
20-42201-44150	Fire - EMS Clothing and Uniform	2,980	3,000
20-42201-44330	Fire - EMS Physical Examinations	3,200	6,500
20-42201-44340	Fire - EMS Hep B Protection	1,550	700
20-42201-47950	Fire - EMS Other Supplies - Turnouts	7,570	7,570
20-42201-50245	Fire - EMS Radios	1,700	1,700
20-42201-41170	Fire Operations - Call FF Wages - Incidents and Training	8,000	8,000
20-42201-42200	Fire / EMS FICA	8,060	8,060
20-42201-42250	Fire / EMS Medicare	1,885	1,885
20-42201-42600	Fire / EMS Unemployment Compensation	40	40
20-42201-42700	Fire / EMS Workers Compensation	4,000	4,000
10-42201-41180	Fire Operations - Call FF Wages - Duty	77,865	150,000
10-42201-44150	Fire Operations - Clothing and Uniforms	1,800	1,800
10-42201-47900	Fire Operations - SCBA Equipment and Repair	500	500
10-42201-47950	Fire Operations - Other Supplies - Turnouts	2,000	2,000
20-42201-42200	Fire Operations - FICA	4,828	9,300
20-42201-42250	Fire Operations - Medicare	1,129	2,175
20-42201-42600	Fire Operations - Unemployment Compensation	1	2
20-42201-42700	Fire Operations - Workers Compensation Premiums	<u>2,232</u>	<u>4,300</u>
Total Offsets:		<u>\$259,340</u>	<u>\$341,532</u>

Net Cost, 10 new Firefighters:	\$311,660	\$229,468
Cost per \$1,000 of Evaluation:	0.249	0.184
Cost per Typical Home assessed at \$250,000:	\$ 62	\$ 46

November 20, 2006 FRP

Respectfully submitted to the Selectmen of the Town of Goffstown on the 27th
Day of November, 2006 by the members of the 24/7 Fire EMS Committee:

<u>Name</u>	24/7 Fire EMS Committee Office	Stakeholder Group	<u>Signature</u>
Felix Pelchat	Co-Chair	Residents	_____
Michelle Provencher	Co-Chair	Dispatchers	_____
Teri Gage	Secretary	Dispatchers	
Steve Fournier		Budget	
Eric Geissenhainer		Budget	
Roger Beaudoin		Call Firefighters	
Mark Germana		Call Firefighters	
Fred Plett		CIP / Planning	
Sue Tremblay		CIP / Planning	
Ed Hannigan		EMTs	
Bill Connor		Full Time Firefighters	
Patrick Laforge		Full Time Firefighters	
Gail Labrecque		Residents	