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Town Council Meeting Minutes

Monday, January 20, 2014, at 6:00 PM, in the Matthew Thornton Room

Chairman Rothhaus called the meeting of the Town Council to order at 6:00 p.m. Present at the meeting were Vice Chairman Yakuboff, Councilor Boyd, Councilor Dwyer, Councilor Harrington, Councilor Koenig, Councilor Mahon, and Town Manager Eileen Cabanel. Director Micali was excused.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Rothhaus lead in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Announcements

The next regular meeting of the Town Council will be conducted on Thursday, January 23, 2014 at 7:00 p.m. in the Matthew Thornton Room.

Review of Proposed FY15 Budget

Library

Wendy Thomas, Chairman, Board of Trustees, informed the Council the budget has been reviewed by the Trustees line item by line item, and the Trustees have unanimously agreed it is a fair and prudent budget. Yvette Couser, Library Director, commented the Trustees had included in their proposed budget a 3% salary increase for staff, which is now off the table. She stated concurrence with the proposed budget submitted by the Town Manager.

Ms. Couser noted some figures were provided by the Finance Director such as personnel related costs and those for electricity, natural gas, water, and sewer. She noted the reduction in Line Item 01-15-8230-0 Postage was recommended by the Finance Director. There is a proposed increase to Line Item 01-15-8321-0 Maintenance Buildings (\$1,415) to address ongoing repairs. The increase in Line Item 01-15-8353-0 Computer Services (\$1,989) is the result of a change in the web hosting vendor and increased costs associated with membership in the GMILCS consortium. GMILCS is an integrated system which controls check-in, check-out, borrower cards, etc. A small increase (\$38) is proposed for Line Item 01-15-8359-0 Other Outside Services resulting from the installation of the CASSIE time management system through Librarica. It provides patrons the opportunity, when using a public computer, to utilize their library barcode or generic barcode (printed on daily basis) to log in thus freeing up staff time. Line Item 01-15-8374-0 Programs, has increased (\$2,000); all programming, e.g. events for children, teens, and adults. Ms. Couser spoke of focus on lifelong learning and presenting different types of programs to the public.

Although no change in the budget for Line Item 01-15-8450-0 Library Materials, the individual components of that line item have been changed to more accurately reflect expenditures. A new database is being added (Safari), which holds computer manuals. Requests came from a member of the Strategic Planning Committee and a patron. With two requests, the database was considered. It is believed, given the frequent changes with computer software, having the training manuals available through a database would provide the most up-to-date information in a form other than printed.

Line Item 01-15-8502-0 Buildings, has a proposed increase of \$42,179. The request is for monies to be allocated from the capital reserve fund for roof repair. An infrared roof scan was completed in the fall. The scan identified three areas holding heat, which means they are not drying. It is a two-layer roof and the retention of heat indicates retention of water in the second (lower level) roof. The quote received was \$106,000 - \$120,000. While discussing the issue with Director Micali he questioned whether the desire was to put a new roof (40-year lifespan) on a building the library did not wish to remain in. It is believed the solution may be to patch repair the roof in the three localized areas. The vendor has agreed to work with the library and the budgeted amount.

Vice Chairman Yakuboff questioned whether more than a single vendor has been contacted for a quote. Ms. Couser responded she has been on the roof with two vendors. One individual she spoke with does not deal with commercial flat roofs. The vendor that has worked with school buildings was contacted. Vice Chairman Yakuboff spoke of other available vendors. Ms. Couser remarked the library has worked with one of the vendors in the past and she does not know that they were completely satisfied with some of their answers when recently asked to review the roof. She remarked there are vertical skylights on the roof and when thinking the leak might be a window problem they call in the window vendor who says it is a roof problem and the roof vendor says it is a window problem. The decision was to go with a new vendor to get a fresh look at the roof. She stated her appreciation for Garland Roofing having been willing to conduct the scan, which is part of their maintenance when working with school buildings. They also were highly recommended.

Vice Chairman Yakuboff recommended additional vendors be contacted to ensure competitiveness. When asked, Ms. Couser stated the contractor was of the opinion the patch/partial repair would be a good direction as it would buy the additional time needed. Councilor Mahon questioned the type of roofing in place. Ms. Couser stated the roof is rolled out and has visible seams. They have not yet had the opportunity to sit down with the vendor to go over the full report. However, just walking the roof both the vendors and the maintenance aid noted dips they are not comfortable with. There are drains in the roof which are not draining properly due to the change in the dips in the roof.

Councilor Dwyer stated his view the roof has exceeded its expected lifespan; therefore, he would prefer the capital improvement funds be utilized for their intended purpose and replace the roof. He remarked although there are many who would like the library located in a new facility, should that not occur, the proposed fix would be temporary. Councilor Mahon questioned whether the original quote was for a straight replacement of the existing roof or replacement with a membrane roof. Ms. Couser was unsure of the materials. Town Manager Cabanel noted \$2,000 has been added to the Capital Reserve Fund each year for quite some time. If the desire is for a roof replacement, there would be the need to add an additional \$100,000 to the budget.

When asked about the success of the eBooks program, Ms. Couser stated statistics show a trend in Merrimack with users embracing e-Book technology. The library has 6 e-Readers available. The library has access to OverDrive, through the State, and in addition subscribes to Overdrive Advantage, which is a feature that gives libraries that are members of a shared collection the ability to offer popular titles exclusively to their patrons. With OverDrive Advantage libraries can purchase additional copies of popular titles that are already in the shared collection, as well as titles that are not yet available. The library also uses a third vendor 3M, which is purchased through the GMILCS

consortium. She stated the challenge to be publishers limited the number of copies that can be obtained/used at one time, etc.

When asked what \$6,000 provides, Ms. Couser stated she was unaware of the number of titles the library has. She noted working together with other libraries, there is a committee whose member librarians purchase titles as they come out. What is purchased is permission to have the title. She is not aware of any titles having expired usage. She commented she often hears from publishers regarding their desire to restrict how often we can have people use it. She stated she could reach out to the committees and other librarians in the GMILCS consortium to see what is occurring. When asked, Ms. Couser stated e-Books can be checked out for a period of three weeks.

Councilor Boyd stated his agreement with comments made by Councilor Dwyer regarding replacement of the roof, and stated he would be open-minded to a proposal for replacement. Councilor Mahon questioned the timing with which such a proposal should be brought forward. When asked if she could be prepared to make such a presentation in time for the Council's January 23rd meeting, Ms. Couser stated she would look to meet with the vendor and work towards providing the requested information.

Welfare

Patricia A. Murphy, Administrator, stated the proposed budget represents a decrease from FY14 (\$10,139). The largest area of decrease is in the general assistance portion of the budget and is based on last year's actuals (lowest she has seen in her time in Merrimack (since 1995)). She remarked she is taking a chance recommending cuts in areas such as housing, electricity, medical, and prescriptions, although not proposing reductions that reach the level of last year's actuals, as she does not believe that trend will continue.

Other areas of decrease come under Line Item 01-25-8399-0 Social & Health Services, which is the result of a decrease in the request from one of the agencies. That reduction allowed for adjustments to be made to other agencies, which have requested but not received additional funds over the years.

Chairman Rothhaus questioned Line Item 01-25-8399-0 Social & Health Services; whether the requested amount represents the agency request. Ms. Murphy stated that to be the case; however, noted a single mistake under the heading of "Home Health & Hospice - home health visits and clinics" where the request is listed as \$10,000 and proposed as \$20,000. The original request was for \$10,000; however, the intended request was \$20,000.

Councilor Koenig questioned the figures listed for the American Red Cross-disaster, blood, health & safety education; \$850 budgeted for FY13 and FY14 and proposed for FY15; however, the FY15 requested amount was \$11,501. Ms. Murphy stated their request is typically broken down into several areas. Two areas considered by her are emergency shelter services and education. There has not been the need to run a shelter in Merrimack for a long time and there have not been many occurrences of temporary housing being provided residents as the result of fires, etc.

Town Clerk/Tax Collector

Town Manager Cabanel informed the Council of an error made on the budget; she and the Town Clerk had discussed increasing the wages for the position of Town Clerk/Tax Collector by \$2,000. That addition, although intended to be, was not included as part of the proposed budget. She noted one of the individuals has worked for the Town for 25 years and has not really had the opportunity to move on the scale, and in relation to new hires within the Town, her wages have gotten out of whack.

Diane Trippett, Town Clerk/Tax Collector, informed the Council, the proposed budget is similar to those presented in the past; the greatest amounts relate to wage and employee benefits. The proposed budget for operating costs (\$68,651) reflects minor changes. She spoke of an increase (\$1,000) in Line Item 01-24-8230-0 Postage, and the removal of allocations to Line Item 01-24-8352-0 Education & Training; for participation in the IIMC Certification and New England Conference of Towns and Clerks.

Chairman Rothhaus questioned whether it is true there is the possibility the State may not require licensing of dogs to be handled by the Town. Ms. Trippett responded she has not heard that although she is aware there are a number of Bills before the Legislature concerning dog licensing, mostly with regard to fees and penalties related to late licensing. Councilor Mahon stated discussions to be around increasing late fees and penalties to more accurately reflect the cost of collection. Another is enabling legislation for the position to be appointed rather than elected.

Police

Mark E. Doyle, Chief of Police, addressed Line Item 01-04-8321-0 Maintenance-Building (\$18,000). Included in the Line Item is a major renovation of the Communications Center. It does not include the purchase of technical equipment or technology to run the Communications Center for purposes of computer upgrade and the like, it is actually a construction renovation ergonomically speaking so that they allow for the Communications Supervisor as well as Shift Supervisors to more directly monitor the happenings inside the Communications Center. Presently the area has a back office where the Communications Supervisor's workstation is located. He also has a backup radio system. The desire is to turn that around, move the existing wall closer to the two dispatch workstations in the front so he can monitor what is occurring at any given time. In instances of hot calls there are times when the Supervisor has to jump in and assist. It makes better sense for that individual to be in close proximity to those dispatchers. In times of his absence, the Shift Commander or a member of his staff can jump in and maintain a position overseeing what is happening and can lend assistance when necessary.

Town Manager Cabanel questioned whether the upgrade is in the Communications Department rather than the Police Department budget. Chief Doyle responded physically speaking it is in the communications department/division, but the cost has been identified under the overall building renovation for the entire Police Department where the Communications Department is housed.

Councilor Harrington questioned the increase in Line Item 01-04-8111-0 Overtime – Other, noting actual cost in FY13 was \$153,348 and the request for FY15 is \$220,366. Chief Doyle explained half way through last year the department ended its Specials program. During discussions of the FY14 budget there was talk of converting the monies earmarked for the Specials program (approx. \$50,000) to overtime as a way of offsetting the burden on the overtime account so that positions could be filled with full-time as opposed to part-time officers. Special Officers are officers that worked on a part-time

basis and were part-time certified. He stated his impression the additional differential is related to the mathematic algorithm the Finance Director uses to calculate the overtime as there are officers whose salary is on the low-end of the scale and supervisors who may be working on the high-end of the scale, etc.

Councilor Harrington questioned whether vacant positions (due to sick or vacation time) were backfilled with a like position, e.g., Lieutenant for Lieutenant. Chief Doyle responded it depends upon whether the department is at the minimum staffing concept guideline used by Supervisors when filling a shift. There are occasions where Master Patrolmen will work as Supervisors on a short notice call out where the position was unable to be backfilled with a Sargent for example. As a result, there will be some delineation in what that position is being compensated for at any given time. He commented there are other instances where there may be evening shifts during the course of the week where 5-6 officers may be working, and if one is lost, depending on the time of day, traffic issues, etc., the department may or may not want to fill the shift.

Town Manager Cabanel noted the Chief had proposed three police cruisers and a canine vehicle. The canine vehicle was removed from the request. After discussion with the Chief both she and the Finance Director came to agreement that request should be funded (approx. \$34,000). Director Micali has identified a revenue source should the Council wish to include the purchase of that vehicle in the budget. When asked, Chief Doyle stated the vehicle would be exclusively for the canine officer. The current vehicle is a larger Ford Expedition with roughly 112,000 miles. The desire is for a newer, smaller SUV Explorer, which would be more than adequate for use by the officer and canine.

Councilor Mahon noted the \$1 budgeted under Line Item 01-04-8460-0 Other Operating Expenses, K-9 Expenses. He spoke of the intent for the financial burden not to be placed on the department's budget, and questioned, after five years, what that budget might otherwise look like. It was stated the amount, accounted for in a separate line and carried over from year to year, is roughly \$15,000. It is intended to cover upkeep for the dog, e.g., vet bills, etc. Councilor Mahon remarked the account was set up based on the amount of contributions received from outside sources. Town Manager Cabanel stated it is not specifically a revolving fund as it would have to be formally designated as such. What occurs is donations are received and expended. The account is set up to allow for those transactions to occur.

Councilor Mahon remarked he and the Town Manager had a discussion around whether this would be the year that cost should be incorporated into the budget. The service provided has proved to be a benefit to the Town. The useful service time is generally seven years, and it may be time to consider budgeting for that expense. Councilor Boyd questioned whether a succession plan is in place. Chief Doyle stated discussions began last year with Master Patrolman Gregory Walters and Captain Albert who oversees the program. Factored into consideration will be the nature and length of training Officer Walters had gone through to bring Gunny up to speed so that they can provide for a seamless transition. He added it may or may not be Master Patrolman Walters who is the next Canine Officer.

When asked about the type of vehicle intended for the new cruisers, Chief Doyle stated they would be the Ford Interceptor. He commented the department has had extremely good luck with the vehicle, and it has been well received by the officers utilizing it. It comes with the all-wheel drive package, is very durable, and was vetted closely by Captain Albert and the committee formed to review it. There is an

initial up-fit charge for the vehicles; new cages, consoles, backseats, etc. The most expensive pieces of the move from one vehicle type to another are all transferable, e.g., radios, etc.

Councilor Boyd spoke of recent legislation passed by the House to legalize possession of a certain amount of Cannabis and questioned whether any consideration has been given to potential costs involved in policing should it become law. Chief Doyle remarked, from the department's perspective, there are a number of things that come along with the passage of that kind of bill. What kind of burden that places on departments and officers on the streets is unknown, e.g., will there be a need for the officers to carry scales, drug test kits, what will be done with juveniles, etc. He stated the sale of Marijuana remains on the books as a felony, and questioned whether there would be a requirement to investigate every non-illegal possession to the extent they would otherwise be vetting to the point of discovering the source, etc.

Town Manager Cabanel stated a desire to ensure the Council is aware the grant the school was able to acquire for the School Resource Officer ends in September. They have applied for the grant again. It is shown in the budget as revenue; however, it is unclear whether or not the grant application will be successful. When asked, Chief Doyle stated the grant funding began at \$75,000 about five years ago, and he believes it to now be in the area of \$225,000 covering salary and benefits for the five-year period. He explained there are two School Resource Officers, the cost of one is already included within the department's budget.

Chairman Rothhaus commented back when Gunny came on board there was discussion of a potential increase to overtime. He questioned whether the overtime for the canine officer is similar to that of others. Chief Doyle stated there has not been too much of a burden on overtime costs. Although called out periodically, he is on the evening shift where the vast majority of the call outs for the canine occur. On the rare occasion that he is available and off-duty he will be called in. If he is off-duty and not available, they are hopeful either Nashua or the State Police have a canine to bring in. Town Manager Cabanel stated a review of the revenue for the School Resource Officer indicates an amount of \$113,200.

Councilor Harrington questioned the total number of officers, and was informed there are 39 sworn police officers. She questioned the impact the mall has had on the number of calls. Chief Doyle spoke of the run of the mill calls for services they expected to have out there and commented the officers have been able to handle those really seamlessly. He remarked the officers have done a phenomenal job of being proactive with mall personnel and directed patrols. As a result they are not experiencing the astronomical spike in crime that was anticipated could occur. There are issues occurring in terms of shoplifting, credit card fraud, etc., but they are minimal.

Police Detail

Chief Doyle stated he and Director Micali discussed the budget and proposed a reduction to reflect actual expenditures. Director Micali had questioned whether there was knowledge or insight into any major projects coming down the road. The department has not heard from any of the utility companies, contractors, etc. He stated a comfort level the amount proposed in the budget will adequately cover expenses.

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Town Manager Cabanel provided clarification to the viewing audience the account is a special revenue fund of sorts where there is an exact amount of revenue that goes in to offset the expense. Chairman Rothhaus questioned FY12 actuals, and was informed the figure was \$369,179. Town Manager Cabanel remarked for some time the department was budgeting quite a bit for the mall. In FY13 the budget was \$661,000, which was never realized.

Communications

Chief Doyle stated the Communications budget to be relatively flat. Minor adjustments have been made relative to fixed costs, e.g., electricity, etc. He noted an increase in Line Item 01-05-8260-0 Telephone, Radio voting system (\$2,200), which is a result of the lines put in place for the new voter installed at the Premium Outlets for the purposes of enhanced radio coverage not only for the outlet property, but also for that southeast sector of Town, which runs from Greeley Street to the Nashua line.

Town Manager Cabanel requested input be provided for Line Item 01-05-8510-0 Capital Reserve Fund, Transfer to Communication Equipment Capital Reserve Fund, which indicates an increase of \$15,000. Chief Doyle explained the department is looking to replace the access control and video monitoring system in the building. The present system, keypad access, has been in place since 1994. They have experienced issues with the system, not the least of which is support; running on Windows 95. Should the system go down there may be difficulty in replacing it in a hurry. The camera system is as aged as the access control system. Today's systems are digital, less expensive and easier to maintain. The associated wiring and lines are higher density and high-grade video output. The ability to record, maintain, and retain that video image is much greater in terms of the storage capability, which is something needed for court purposes to reduce liability associated with incarcerated individuals onsite.

Discussions have taken place with a few vendors, and they are close to being ready to put out a Request for Proposal for an all-encompassing system; access control as well as an update and replacement of video monitoring and surveillance system in and around the building.

Code Enforcement

Town Manager Cabanel stated the budget to be basically flat (\$7,601 increase over FY14; most of which is related to benefit costs). Michael Currier, Fire Chief, informed the Council a good deal of time was spent on the budget for Code Enforcement as well as that of the Fire Department trying to identify areas to consolidate, improve operations, streamline, etc. He noted the addition of 120 hours to Line Item 01-06-8111—0 Overtime – Other. One hundred hours have been added for the Administrative Assistant given the countless times customers enter the office at 4:30 p.m. requiring her to stay late (averages about 2 hours/week). Twenty hours of overtime has been added for the Building Inspector who has a lot of requests on Fridays for last-minute inspections. He provided the example of instances where there are inspections required for propane, electrical, and sewer lines having open trenches. The inspector stays late so the trenches can be filled before the weekend to minimize safety issues.

Line Item 01-06-8201-0 Office Supplies (\$495 increase); replacement of health testing equipment for Health Officer, e.g., thermometers that are placed in coolers in restaurants and a thermal temperature

gauge used to gain temperature of food and serving areas. Line Item 01-06-8220-0 Printing (\$455 increase); inspection form is designed for continuity through Building, Health and Fire. Every 2-3 years there is the need to purchase bulk forms (3,000 – 5,000), at a cost of approx. \$360.00.

Line Item 01-06-8332-0 Maintenance-Vehicles, increased by \$700. Line Item 01-06-8334-0 Maintenance-Office Equipment, increased by \$215 due to contract cost increases. Line Item 01-06-8352-0 Education & Training, has been increased (\$1,620) to cover re-certifications and continuing education. This year the building official needs to re-certify for Master Electrician, ICC residential inspections and ICC commercial inspections. The same is true for the Building Inspector. The desire is to send the Building Inspector to a certified ICC plan reader program. The cost of the class would be covered and the class would be taken on the individual's own time (8 weeks).

Councilor Koenig questioned whether continued positive feedback is received on the move of Code Enforcement to the Fire Department. Chief Currier stated there to be a great amount of feedback. He spoke of a contractor in Town who came in and asked to have a message relayed to him that he had initially been adamantly opposed to the move; however, believes it is working fantastically and is pleased with the outcome and service. Chief Currier noted they meet as a team and work together on all projects. Their desire is to bring industry into the community correctly/properly and provide all information during the time of the first visit.

Fire

Michael Currier, Fire Chief, stated there to be a point eight percent (.8%) increase. A good deal of that increase was related to benefits, wages, and the finalization of the union contract. Increases are proposed in Line Items 01-03-8105-0 Overtime – Supervisory (\$6,611) and 01-03-8111-0 Overtime – Other (\$14,604). An increase is proposed for Line Item 01-03-8352-0 Education & Training (\$10,675); due to lack of a training line item within the Fire Department. In the past, they had used a line item that was set aside for the unions, under their contract. A good many of the younger Firefighters are looking to obtain their Associates and Bachelors and are utilizing those funds. The increase is warranted to continue training within the department. He noted the budget is not intended to cover the cost of salaries but strictly cost of classes. He provided an example of a class that took place the prior week in Lebanon, NH, which was attended by 7 or 8 firefighters. The class was called the Art of Reading Smoke and was put on by New York City fire personnel. He spoke of the importance of that information to new Firefighters. They attended the class on their own time; however, the cost of the class was paid by the department. The increase in Line Item 01-03-8332-0 Maintenance-Vehicles (\$6,700) reflects actual expenditures in FY13.

Chief Currier commented vehicles the Town is receiving are more advanced than the technology at the Highway Garage, e.g. when some of the codes come up they do not have the code readers needed. Having spoken with personnel at the Highway Garage, he learned the software for the programs changes so frequently it would be cost prohibitive to continually upgrade the software. As a result some of the issues that arise will have to be addressed by the dealer/vendor. He commented he sees a stagnant progression of these line items; although new vehicles are coming on board, it will cost more to diagnose the problems. Line Item 01-03-8336-0 Maintenance-Other, was increased (\$1,200); due to stretchers, extinguishers, air systems, stair chairs, and defibrillator aging and maintenance costs increasing.

Councilor Harrington questioned staffing levels, and was informed there are 32 full-time firefighters (8 per shift/4 shifts), 3 staff members; full-time Fire Marshall, part-time Fire Inspector, 9 call firefighters, 6 volunteer EMS personnel, and 8 part-time EMS attendants. Councilor Harrington questioned the impact of the mall on the department. Chief Currier complimented the Building Department coming under the Fire Department and the Fire Marshall's Office under Assistant Chief Borneman. He stated a lot of the work that has prevented false alarms, continued responses, etc. is done by Fire Prevention in the Fire Marshall's Office.

Brian Borneman, Assistant Fire Chief, commented with that large of a property it is important to ensure it is and continues to run well. Just prior to Thanksgiving the department performed a life safety inspection of every business. A few minor issues were identified and corrected that day and re-inspected over the weekend. Having the Building and Health Department in the same building and participating in morning staff meetings provides an opportunity for enhanced communication. Overall, he does not believe it to have been a large adverse impact.

Chief Currier stated each morning, beginning at 8:00 a.m., the Building official, Health official, Fire Marshall, Assistant Chief Borneman and he conduct a meeting. They discuss activities of the day, important findings, etc. At 8:30 a.m. they are joined by the Fire Captain and Assistant Chief Pierson for the operations meeting. They discuss new buildings that need to have tours by the firefighters, hazards in the community from the fire and prevention side, etc. At 9:00 a.m., there is a Chief Officers meeting to discuss projects, goals, etc.

Councilor Harrington questioned Line Items 01-03-8105-0 Overtime – Supervisory, National Guard Backfill (16 shifts each per year) and 01-03-8111-0 Overtime – Other, National Guard Backfill (16 shifts each per year) x 2. Assistant Chief Borneman explained there are three individuals serving in the National Guard; one officer and two firefighters. The individuals typically do not utilize vacation time but choose not to be paid during those absences. In their absence, the positions have to be backfilled. Notes included within the budget identify Dan Newman, who was the individual providing information on expected hours for all three individuals.

Councilor Harrington questioned the note attached to Line Item 01-03-8111-0 Overtime – Other, Station Shift Coverage (Vacation, Sick Time, Personnel Time, etc.) 4377, which suggested the necessary amount to be \$202,973; however, budgeted is \$167,444. She questioned the impact that would have on coverage. Chief Currier stated the need exists to change operations and call-back to ensure they meet the goals established by the Council and Town Manager. Townspeople vote for a specific amount of overtime, which the department has to meet.

The percentage of medical calls was stated as 72%. Councilor Harrington commented the cost of a lot of those calls is reimbursed through Medicare Ambulance Reimbursement. Assistant Chief Borneman stated the monies are returned to the General Fund for ambulance costs.

When asked to expand upon the explanation of the impact resulting from a smaller amount for overtime, Assistant Chief Borneman stated the need to make adjustments in operations. They run 8 Firefighter/EMTs on a shift. To reduce some of the firefighter overtime numbers if a Firefighter/EMT calls in sick or is on vacation they drop to 7. They backfill the last position with a part-time, daytime

Attendant. With 8 on a shift there are 3 in Engine 1, 3 in Engine 2, and 1 that floats to take the rescue, forestry, second ambulance, ladder, etc. If a call comes in for a motor vehicle accident with a rollover they assume entrapment and take the engine and one guy takes the rescue so that all toolboxes are available. If that one guy is out the rescue does not roll. They will drop to 7 for 14 hours a day, but at night (10:00 p.m.) the overtime for the 8th individual is backfilled as that is when the community is believed to be more at risk, e.g., more residents home sleeping with their children.

Councilor Harrington questioned whether the department typically replaces a position with a similar position. The response was there are a Captain and a Lieutenant on a shift (two officers). Those individuals handle emergencies, sometimes separately. If there is a motor vehicle accident in the south end of Town and Engine 2 goes with Ambulance 1 there is an officer on scene. If there is a box alarm or a car fire in the north end of Town Engine 1 takes care of that. There is a Captain who runs the whole shift plus the engine. They have a rotational or officer training list. The three Chiefs sat down and went through the qualifications of a Master Firefighter and convene an oral board to conduct interviews and determine whether a particular Master Firefighter has the necessary experience to ride that Lieutenant's seat. They believe they have a competent crew they will rotate through to sit in that seat and offset some of that overtime from the officers.

It was stressed the educational aspect is on the job. The best way to provide the education/experience is to allow the Master Firefighter to ride along with an Officer. If at a building fire or a motor vehicle accident with major entrapment, multiple victims, etc. there is the need for an officer that has gone through the academy, is a certified company officer, and has had the experience to handle that. He remarked they have had complaints from the Captain that when a Master Firefighter is on scene he is receiving calls questioning how to proceed. Chief Currier remarked in an ideal world they would have all future officers training with an officer 24/7, but with the fiscal constraints it is difficult. They have done and continue to do the best job they can.

Assistant Chief Borneman commented in response to the question of is it hard to live within those constraints, it is. Will they do it; depending on the calls. They are doing everything that is operationally and command possible and making this work. It is a process and they are on the next step. They will see how it works and how they can improve upon it to minimize the use of overtime.

He commented the department has also changed how it responds to industrial and commercial buildings; previously they would send 3 engines, a ladder, the Chief's car, and an ambulance (National Fire Protection Standards (NFPA) recommend) and then call in overtime to backfill. They don't do that any longer. They send two engines on a triage. Most of those buildings are staffed during the day and empty at night. Most have security systems or guards, and most are fully sprinkled. If a call comes in while responding to the commercial building, one of the engines will break off, knowing if there is a fire the sprinkler system will activate, if there is a fire and they have a security system the department will get a backup call. He stated the only instance where they don't reduce the number of responding units is in the schools when they are in session.

Councilor Harrington questioned whether mutual aid requests are monitored. E911 in Concord codes the calls. A Basic Life Support (BLS) call would receive an engine and ambulance. Seventy percent of the calls are coded correctly and the remaining is not. If only sending two people on an ambulance, should they arrive on scene and realize the coding was incorrect, they would be calling for help

resulting in a delay. Charlie Delta Echo calls are all advanced life support calls, e.g., heart attack, difficulty breathing, etc. They have an elevated response and send the engine and ambulance right away. Once on scene they assess the situation. If the 5 individuals will be tied up for any amount of time or one has to jump off the engine so that three can be sent in the ambulance to the hospital because they have to work on the patient, they will call in for coverage. If they get to the scene and realize it is not that bad the engine will go into service rather quickly and staff is available to handle the next call. A good many operational changes have been put in place and are being monitored. He stated his desire to have two officers on the shift at all times.

Town Manager Cabanel stated she had spoken with the Chief last year regarding mutual aid. It appeared the Town was responding a great deal to Bedford. However, most of those calls were ambulance calls. The cost was a wash as whoever transports receives the revenue. If both Merrimack and Bedford respond and Bedford transports they receive all of the revenue and all of the EMS supplies Merrimack provided. The physician from Concord Medical Center (CMC) who testified before the Council previously is in the process of discussing possible grants for equipment for the ambulance because of the department's great success rate. It is hoped CMC will also provide for new CPR devices.

Assistant Chief, Richard Pierson stated the Bedford Fire Department was provided mutual aid on 13 occasions and aid was received from them on 10 occasions. Amherst Fire Department both received from and provided Merrimack mutual aid 3 times. AMR Ambulance out of Nashua has provided mutual aid to Merrimack twice and received mutual aid from Merrimack 3 times. Everyone else is pretty much on a one-to-one basis. He remarked what he has noticed over the past three years is the amount of mutual aid both necessary to receive and give is increasing approximately 10 calls per year. Councilor Harrington commented she has heard from members of other communities that they are really counting on mutual aid, and her concern is you don't staff based on mutual aid. It was stated most of the mutual aid is 50/50 (fire/EMS) and station coverage, and although the number of calls is increasing they are fairly equal with regard to providing and receiving mutual aid.

Ambulances generate \$625,000 in revenue. Councilor Harrington stated her opinion that should count for something. Town Manager Cabanel informed the Council the Chief requested quite a bit more overtime than she included within the budget. Each of those categories under Overtime have a line identified as TM cut, which identifies the amount the Town Manager reduced the request by. She stated her calculations result in an increase of 5% in each of the overtime categories.

Town Manager Cabanel requested the Chief speak to Line Item 01-03-8910-0 Capital Reserve Fund Purchases, Design for South Fire Station (\$60,000). Chief Currier informed the Council after speaking with the Director of Public Works and reviewing the model they used, a decision was made to follow the same model and bring a firm in to look at the needs assessment and conduct interviews. The intent is to determine whether the existing stations are located properly and the number of stations needed and where they should be located.

Councilor Dwyer remarked he finds it hard to believe the department would require the advice of an outside source. He is of the belief the department could make the necessary assessment. He noted \$20,000 was expended for the assessment on the Highway Garage. Councilor Koenig commented when discussing a new building or a space such as that, it adds a certain level of credibility to the

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subject when there is an outside professional looking into the matter; one who doesn't benefit from the use of the building or its features who can supplement the information provided by the department. Chief Currier stated his agreement. He noted the scope of the assessment is wider than was the case with the Highway Garage. The Chief has been tasked to determine if the current three stations are needed and located properly. A long-range needs assessment is required.

MOTION made by Councilor Yakuboff and seconded by Councilor Boyd to adjourn the meeting. MOTION CARRIED 7-0-0

The January 20, 2014 meeting of the Town Council was adjourned at 8:11 p.m.

Submitted by Dawn MacMillan