



Town Council Meeting Minutes

Monday January 21, 2016, at 6:00 PM, in the Matthew Thornton Room

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

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Harrington led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Announcements

The Town Council will conduct a budget meeting on Monday, January 25th at 6:00 p.m. in the Matthew Thornton Room. Regular meetings of the Town Council will be conducted on Thursday, January 28th and February 11th at 7:00 p.m. in the Matthew Thornton Room.

Tuesday, February 9, 2016 is the Presidential Primary. Polls will be open from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Merrimack High School located at 36 McElwain Street.

Review of Proposed FY17 Budget

Assessing

Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Paul Micali stated the department's budget is nearly flat. The only real increase is for the 53rd week of payroll and health insurance.

Councilor Vaillancourt questioned costs associated with vehicles, and was informed there is one town-owned vehicle that the Assessor has access to (Ford Focus). Councilor Dwyer requested the number of individuals working in the Assessing Department be stated. It was stated there are three full-time staff and one contract Assessor who oversees the department; valuation, revaluations, abatement process, etc.

Communications

Police Chief Mark Doyle stated he has worked very closely with the Communications staff, Asst. Communication Supervisor, John Spence, and Lt. Levesque who now oversees the division with Captain Dudash as the Commander of the entire Administrative and Support Services Division. There are very few changes to the budget with the exception of an additional full-time Dispatcher, which is still being worked. There is an ongoing negotiation with the Collective Bargaining Unit regarding the opportunity to bring someone on board in a full-time capacity and remove two of the part-time positions that are currently unfilled.

One minor change in the budget is that no allocation has been proposed for renovations or upgrades. The one renovation project the division had last year went well. It is now a very professional looking and professionally run division because of the efficiencies realized just through the design and the way Town Council Meeting Minutes – January 21, 2016

the communications flow through there now because of the way it has been designed and some of the improvements they have been able to take advantage of through that renovation.

Chief Doyle spoke of the radio upgrade that was discussed at length about a year and a half ago. The division has started moving toward making some improvements on the overhaul of the entire system. This year they included, and have already installed, the microwave system that lends its communication from the base station at the Police Station to the Hutchinson Road water tower repeater. That improvement has made quite a bit of difference, and is something they expect to continually improve upon during the entire overhaul process, which will take place over the next two years. Monies have been put aside in a Capital Reserve Fund (CRF) to ensure that continues to move forward as planned.

Because of the increase of the full-time Dispatcher position, the proposed FY17 budget represents an approx. 9% increase over FY16.

Town Manager Cabanel commented discussion of the Dispatcher crosses over two budgets. Approx. 2 months ago the Animal Control Officer (ACO) became a Police Officer leaving that position vacant. The department has experienced difficulties retaining Dispatchers, particularly part-time Dispatchers. After discussing what is of most importance to the department, the decision was reached to have a full-time Dispatcher and a part-time ACO. Town Manager Cabanel stated she is very pleased with that efficiency as it provides the Town with a full-time position it truly needs, and moves to a part-time position something that is not necessarily needed on a full-time basis.

When asked what an ACO might do that a patrolman might not, Chief Doyle stated a Patrolman would do all of the duties if the ACO were not present, which occasionally happens, particularly on the weekends, e.g., pick up strays, injured dogs, respond to wildlife calls, which are roughly at about 45 calls for service per month. Although they address other tasks in the station, that individual's responsibilities are focused specifically on handling the calls for service relative to domestic and wildlife calls. When asked if there is a fixed schedule or if the individual is called on an as-needed basis, Chief Doyle stated that is one of the challenges that they look at relative to the calls for service. The ACO works a Monday through Friday schedule. The division considered where it could get the biggest bang for the buck, e.g., Tuesday through Saturday, etc. A few years ago there was a part-time ACO that worked on the weekends. When they did away with that position they did an analysis to look at where those calls for service were falling, and it was generally between 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. It wasn't a lot more than what was happening over the weekends, but enough to show that individual was needed during the course of the week as opposed to over the weekends. What they felt was the appropriate thing to do was to bring that person on in a full-time capacity from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Any overflow is handled by the officers on duty who file a report, and ensure those reports are followed up during normal business hours for the ACO.

Councilor Boyd spoke of Line Item 01-05-8107-0; Wages - Part-Time noting he was informed there are two part-time Dispatchers that are paid at a rate of \$16.91 and a more seasoned Dispatcher at a rate of \$18.06. However, the budget indicates a pay rate of \$16.91 and another at \$19.46, which was zeroed out. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director stated the information provided for the positions is accurate. The pay rate of \$16.91 indicates 1,000 hours. That represents 1,000 on-call hours. If they need someone to come in they call them in. It is an average of the \$16.91/hr. If they

utilize the Dispatcher who has a pay rate of \$18.06 they would have less on-call hours available to them. Their on-call budget is \$16,910. If they have a Dispatcher who calls out sick and they can't fill it with another Dispatcher they will contact an on-call individual to fill the shift. That is how they use their on-call Dispatchers. There are no permanent part-time positions; those are the two positions are being eliminated from the budget. It was stated the title could be changed to on-call Dispatchers for the sake of clarification.

Councilor Boyd remarked he was shocked by the 45 calls/month, which is a little over 2/day. He had tried to review the data for Bedford and Hudson knowing they have full-time ACOs, and was unable to obtain the data. He questioned if the Chief looked at data of neighboring communities. Chief Doyle stated he did not, but could obtain that information and provide it. The department conducted its own analysis, and outside of the calls for services that would normally be attributed to an ACO, the ACO has also assisted at homicide scenes, delivered paperwork, does a good deal of work relative to the civil forfeitures that are put out, and works very closely with the Town Clerk, assists with house checks when needed, ambulance calls, at structure fires when there are traffic concerns (cross-trained as a traffic officer), etc. It is a bonus to have that individual as cross-trained as possible.

Councilor Boyd spoke of the relationship with the Animal Rescue League in Bedford, and questioned if any expansions are seen for the future, e.g., with Nashua or Manchester. Chief Doyle stated the department has a very good relationship with the Animal Rescue League. They do a lot of good work because they have the right people doing the work. When they approached the department back in 2007 and discussions began about closing what at the time was the pound down at the Wastewater Treatment Facility because of the litany issues they had there, they welcomed the Town with open arms and for short money (\$500/year). They take in all of our strays, they do their email and social media blasts relative to the Granite State Dog Recovery. There is plenty of push so when we have an incident when we have taken in a dog or a stray they are right on the ball. They have a drop off system in place so after hours they are cared for right away.

Councilor Boyd remarked part of the reason for his asking these questions is that he wants the community to know the changes proposed for this position have been thoroughly considered, and the determination reached there is better value to having a full-time Dispatcher. Chief Doyle stated his belief the division will find in short order that part-time individual will be able to be placed right where they need to be to handle that concentration of calls for service specific to and attributed to the animal control piece. They had the data to be able to drive them in that direction, and he does not believe residents will see any change in the level of service they have come to realize and expect.

Councilor Dwyer commented 45 calls may sound like a lot, but some of the calls are related to individuals who witnessed a deer or bear, and the animal is already gone, but the call is still registered as an animal call. Councilor Boyd remarked that supports his point that 45 is a small number. Councilor Dwyer questioned why the Supervisor is called an Assistant Communication Supervisor. Chief Doyle responded that one position was adopted into the contract at the time that the Collective Bargaining Unit was formed.

Councilor Koenig questioned Line Item 01-05-8510-0; Capital Reserve Fund; in FY16 the budget amount is \$146,000, for FY17, the department requested \$175,000, and the Town Manager has recommended \$182,000. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Micali responded that is related to

the three-year plan to put monies aside to cover the cost of the radio upgrade. Town Manager Cabanel commented the department submits its budget, and then they meet with her and Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Micali to discuss the department's request. Normally if something like this occurs, they will agree to it, and the Town Manager will change the department column in the spreadsheet. As they are all in agreement, that number probably should have been changed.

Police

Chief Doyle stated the budget, as proposed, differs slightly from last year's with only a few minor changes including a conversion of a full-time ACO to part-time. This budget represents a 0.89% increase over FY16.

The proposed allocation under Line Item 01-04-8321-0; Maintenance-Building, is not for major renovations or anything like that. Discussions were had around painting the inside of the building. Although it has been painted sporadically since the renovation (20 years prior), it has not been painted completely since that time. There is also façade work that needs to be done. The brick face of the building is starting to buckle and crack all the way around the base of the building. There is the need for further review to determine if that is something that can be addressed within the confines of the budget.

Town Manager Cabanel commented the Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director inputs salary information for every employee into each department budget. Since the budget was prepared, there have been significant changes to staffing, e.g., retirees, new employees, and movement within the department. There is about \$50,000 worth of cuts that could be made to the amounts listed under salary, e.g., retirement, workers compensation, etc. Those specifics can be provided for the Council's discussion on the 25th.

Councilor Vaillancourt questioned how shift overtime works, and why the department would budget for overtime as opposed to hiring additional staff. Chief Doyle responded there are a few challenges with the way the shifts work; officers work 4 days on and 2 off; all except Lieutenants/staff officers, the Sergeants and patrolmen who actually cover the shifts and patrol work a 4 and 2. The Detectives work a 5 day work week. That promotes a little bit of a challenge because it is not easy just to throw another officer into the mix to cover a shift because notwithstanding the shifts that individual would cover, you are still, on those days off, going to have a cycle through where shifts necessarily won't be covered.

What they have done to almost mitigate that is gone to a minimum/maximum staffing concept (few years ago); meaning they have a minimum number of officers they all feel collectively the shift can work with. With the two officers coming on board, they will take those officers and put them where the majority of calls for service are. They understand although they would be working a 4 and 2 they will be offset so they don't share the same day off. That will provide that breadth of coverage across the spectrum of that shift concentration of calls for service.

Because they have a number of officers with years of service who have accrued an amount of time whether that be vacation, personal, sick, etc., there is the possibility for the need to provide coverage. When they put in for time a review is done of the coverage, and a determination is made if it is

something they can get away with (have a number of extra manpower on because they have not dipped below that minimum staffing). If so they don't have to cover the shift. There are occasions, which occur periodically, where those shifts have to be covered with overtime because they don't want it to drop below a sector officer in each sector and a Supervisor working the shift so that they can ensure the level and quality of service that is needed is provided.

What they need to do is continually look at what that overtime piece is. They are hopeful, and only time will tell, when those new officers are cycled into the system, probably a year from now when they will be on their own, that they will be able to look at the overtime piece and see if it is working the way they want it to.

The challenge is do they make that move to get another officer, if it will make that much of a difference, or do they stick with the overtime they are working with, and then look down the road a year from now if it is still working, whether they need to continue on that same path with the number of overtime hours they have allotted, whether they need to adjust the minimum manpower staffing concept, etc. It is a dynamic thing that is continually looked at and reassessed. It is not a magic number where you've met so many hours of coverage in the shift that you can automatically say this equals one man per shift or per squad or even the entire division that will mitigate the number of hours. It is not that simple.

Councilor Vaillancourt noted the guarantee that annually the numbers are crunched to determine if it is financially feasible to continue, taking the scheduling into consideration, to pay this much overtime, or if another officer should be added. Chief Doyle commented they are reminded regularly by the Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director that that is their responsibility, and they do that. Councilor Vaillancourt commented the overtime number is substantial and constituents question it. It is good to understand how they arrive at that.

Chairman Harrington commented, if the department gets beyond what is determine to be the minimum, the overtime piece provides some flexibility when it is needed, e.g., scheduling to provide coverage during times of vacations, sick time, etc. Town Manager Cabanel commented what makes it really difficult for both Police and Fire, is the concept of having something like a floater rather than filling in with overtime, when you are talking about 365 days/year, 24 hours/day. They go to the extent of figuring out the amount of vacation time employees have accrued, how much, on an average they use, the amount of sick time, the amount of training needed, etc. This year there have been quite a few people out for long periods of time. It is looked at very carefully each and every time.

Councilor Vaillancourt questioned Line Item 01-04-8300-0; Travel & Meetings; specifically, what is covered. Chief Doyle responded that could be any number of meetings, e.g., Chiefs of Police meeting that could require a stay over. Every year there is a Chief's meeting in the fall and in the summer. The line item would also cover the FBI National Academy Associates meetings. There is a re-trainer the department participates in every year. It could also cover meetings that take place at the station, e.g., host another department coming in for training, etc. He commented he is not sure the department has expended the \$2,500 on a regular basis. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Micali stated it also covers matters related to Gunny. Councilor Dwyer questioned if it is brass or rank and file under the meeting category. Chief Doyle stated it is all inclusive. He spoke of having sent a number of officers to Use of Force training, Simunition training in CT, etc.

Councilor Vaillancourt questioned Line Item 01-04-8503-0; Vehicles. The department request was \$134,500, and the Town Manager's proposed budget indicates \$111,000. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Micali stated the Chief was looking for three vehicles. The figures were a bit on the high side. When the new State contract bid was reviewed, they discussed it, and decided to reduce the budget amount. When asked, Chief Doyle stated the Town Manager's budget would provide sufficient funding to obtain the three vehicles desired.

Councilor Rothhaus remarked the notation on the spreadsheet indicates the department request (\$134,500) "reflects the CRF for Police vehicles...increased by \$20k.". That same notation is attached to the Town Manager's proposed budget, which is identified as \$111,000. He questioned if the notation is true for the Town Manager's proposed budget as well. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Micali stated the comment should indicate the CRF would be increased by \$5,000. He remarked they got a very favorable State contract; almost a negligible increase (\$100/car increase).

Councilor Boyd spoke of the Prosecutor having left the community, and that the Town is funding the position. He questioned if advertisements have been made to fill the opening. Chief Doyle responded "she starts Monday", and comes with a pretty impressive pedigree; worked at the County Attorney's Office in Rockingham County for a number of years, was the Prosecutor in Deerfield, and came very highly recommended and regarded.

Councilor Boyd questioned when the reorganization was done, and was told it was in 2012. He questioned if the Chief could elaborate about the value of the Prosecutor in the community in terms of what the former occupant used to do and how he envisions the Prosecutor helping the community moving forward.

Captain Michael Dudash commented Captain Albert, Chief Doyle, and Lt. Denise Roy have all prosecuted. The one thing the department was without was that expertise to really dig into motions and arguing motions. There is something to be said for someone who has a law degree when it comes to answering a 17-page motion. That is something he was faced with recently, and something that takes hours and hours to respond to while being something that seems to come natural to Prosecutors. The individual coming on board, Lisa Rick, is someone who is very impressive. She has a great resume from working with the County Attorney's Office in Rockingham County where she did both defense work and prosecution work. For the Town it is its second Prosecutor, and the first with the all-around experience.

Councilor Boyd spoke of the importance of having someone with the practical experience of knowing what motions to file, rules to be looked at, etc. He spoke of a recent case involving the Concord Police Department where they looked at one particular law, but neglected to look at the footnote. It resulted in a civil lawsuit as a consequence.

Captain Dudash commented with Ms. Rick coming from the County Attorney's Office she is someone who has dealt with felonies. Her expertise will be welcomed.

Councilor Boyd questioned, with the Alternative Treatment Center (ATC) coming to Merrimack and the State now allowing Naloxone/Narcan to be purchased over the counter at pharmacies, will there be any increased training provided to Police Officers not just from an enforcement standpoint, but also from an Administrative standpoint. He provided the example of an individual coming from the ATC

with their prescription, and continuing on to conduct errands during which the prescription falls out of the individual's car, etc. Chief Doyle stated there are a boatload of rules through Health & Human Services that he is starting to collect. Relative to officers and when they encounter an individual who has a card to be able to obtain therapeutic marijuana and what they need to do to be able to verify that information, there are hot line numbers that will be in place at the State to verify the individual is in the system. They can obtain specific information about who they are, etc. There are some limitations relative to the health information that would be available to a healthcare provider that would not be available to the Police. There will be a learning curve with the department regarding what the officers have to do in the event they encounter individuals who have therapeutic marijuana; how much they can have, if it is not them but a caretaker that is going to the location to pick it up, are they able to and if so how much can they carry, for how long, and for what distance. There are some very strict guidelines. It is not going to be something that can be absorbed overnight. There will be some specific training.

Chief Doyle stated some members of staff and some members of the Criminal Investigation Bureau will take a field trip down to Connecticut where the same company has an operation that has set up shop. He will chat with their Police Department/Police Chief to find out what, if any, issues they have to make sure we are staying ahead of the curve when it comes to what our officers need to be aware of when they open their doors for business in the fall.

Councilor Boyd questioned if there is concern about fake cards. Chief Doyle replied he is sure there will always be that concern, but his understanding is not only do you have to show the card, but by the time you get to the point where you are entering the business, they will be in the system and the system would verify who they are.

Chief Doyle stated the company has been very much up front when it comes to answering questions. When they were in front of the Planning Board he posed a number of questions he wanted answered relative to the security plan they presented, and almost immediately they came back with pretty valid answers to his questions, and really cleared up the questions he had relative to their security plan regarding transportation, holding at the store, where it would be located, alarm systems, etc. That is not to say that we won't have a few bumps in the road because we will. The desire is to mitigate that as much as possible so our officers aren't caught without the information they need, and they certainly don't want to inconvenience folks who are legitimately there to do the things they need to do to get the therapy they need.

Councilor Boyd questioned Line Item 01-04-8460-0; Other Operating Expenses when asking about the \$5,000 allocated for Gunny. He commented the K-9 program has been self-sustaining, and the purchase of a new K-9 vehicle has been approved. He questioned if the line item is the beginning of including the K-9 program in the budget. He spoke of Gunny getting up in years, and of training for a new officer and dog. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Micali responded the Town has to gross budget. As a result, although we have donations that come in for Gunny, the budgeted dollars cover things such as medical insurance, vet bills, etc. By gross appropriating, the money is set aside and there is offsetting revenue for the \$5,000.

Captain Peter Albert stated he sat down with Sgt. Walters to map out the direction for the future. Gunny's career will be done in about 12-24 months. He is in good health, but it is simply the age of the dog. They are already looking at a few sources to purchase a dog, and are obtaining quotes. From there it is a matter of training. Once the department has the dog it goes to the academy with the

Officer. That is about a 13-week academy in Boston. The prices are being reviewed. The K-9 unit would stay the same. Depending on the size of the new dog, it may be necessary to purchase some new equipment such as harnesses. Councilor Rothhaus questioned the cost of K-9 medical insurance, and was told it is about \$1,200/year.

Councilor Rothhaus questioned who pays for the Police Academy when new recruits are sent. Chief Doyle stated the Officer is compensated by the Town of Merrimack. He commented on chatter by the Legislature recently about how the academy will be continually funded. For the longest period of time it was funded through penalty assessments, that little piece that goes on the end of a fine. That has funded the training at the Police Academy; paid for meals, paid for maintenance of the building, training, staff, etc. What they realized over the past few years is that penalty assessment piece not only had been dwindling away but some money had been earmarked for other expenditures. They ran into a funding crunch just recently relative to where they would get the money for it. He has been told that they have found an appropriation to have the academy funded the way it has always been funded. He does not believe it is all through penalty assessments any longer.

Councilor Rothhaus spoke of Officers working an average of 37 and 1/3 hours week, and questioned if the overtime payout starts at that or at 40 hours. Chief Doyle stated, per their contract, they get paid any hours in excess of the 8 they are scheduled during the course of the day. He noted out of 6 weeks they will work four 32-hour weeks and two 40-hour weeks. It averages out to 37.5. Regardless of what hours they are working, whether it is a short week or regular week, if they work more than their 8 hour scheduled shift that is when the overtime kicks in.

Councilor Rothhaus used the example of the two weeks that are 4 days, 32 hours, and then they are called in to work to cover a shift, would the overtime kick in when they get to the 40 hour mark, and was told it kicks in right then and there at the 32 hour mark. Councilor Rothhaus remarked in essence we are paying overtime for anything over 37 1/3 hours.

Councilor Koenig questioned Line Item 01-04-8321-0; Maintenance-Building; FY16 was budgeted at \$45,000 and the department request for FY17 was \$80,000. The discussion was that those funds would be utilized for interior painting and façade work. He commented there was work on the façade or problems with the building years ago where the brick was falling away from the building. Chief Doyle stated it is the same kind of thing, but different. On the east side of the building, the fascia was actually pulling away from the building, and a contractor had to be called in to tack it back into the wall. That was occurring on the back side as well. What they are finding now is that along the bottom edge of the building the veneer is actually falling off of the Styrofoam that was affixed to the side of the building (never stripped down), and it is all falling off. They literally have little piles of the brick face plates all around the bottom side of the building. They started reaching out to understand costs. The cost to address that and the painting was going to be a large number, which is why the \$80,000 was budgeted originally. After discussions with the Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director, they felt it more responsible to hold off on the painting piece at this time. They are still trying to get their arms around what the extent of that repair will be.

Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Micali stated the biggest fear to be that the veneer up higher doesn't start peeling off in the back where people are parking and walking. There are several options for how to proceed. They need to gather all of the necessary information to reach an informed

decision. The problem the Chief was talking about was the red brick that was peeling off the building itself because it was never properly tacked to the building. This is a different issue. It is the veneer that was put in to make the two buildings look similar.

Councilor Dwyer stated the budget is good, but he would be remiss were he not to ask about the overtime number. He stated it comes back to the question Councilor Vaillancourt brought up; we're at \$250,000 in the Police Department and X in the Fire Department. He looks at the Police and Fire Departments as a team. They are the Town's two largest departments and most of the overtime dollars are in those departments. When they are combined it reaches close to \$700,000 or \$800,000.

He stated there has to be a point in time for him to try and get his colleagues to say that is too much, we need another guy. To the credit of the Town Manager she has tried to explain it to him; it is contractual and there is never an easy answer. He doesn't expect an easy answer from either department, he just wants to be on the record to say that \$250,000 is too high, and he wishes he could do something about it, and believes the answer is you don't have enough men. He reiterated he knows it can't be solved at this time, but he wanted it to be stated that is his problem with the budget. Other than that he thinks they are doing a good job with the budget. He thanked the Town Manager for providing a tight budget as well as he thinks everything else that can be done has been done.

Police Detail

Chairman Harrington noted costs associated with Line Item 20-04-8432-0; Outside Detail, are paid by whoever hires the detail. The dollars are listed in the budget because the Town has to expend the funds. However, the Town is paid for the service. It has no impact on the tax rate. Town Manager Cabanel remarked this is what is meant when talking about gross appropriating; just because it zeroes itself out you don't budget nothing; you have to budget the whole thing in expenditures, and then show it in revenues at the same time. It can be deceptive; your budget may look like it increased significantly, but there may be a revenue element that offsets that entirely.

Chief Doyle commented when it comes time to budget for that cost, they look at construction work, contracting work, utility work, etc. that could occur over the coming year. It is kind of a coin flip as there is no certainty. Sometimes the best laid plans get put on a shelf because the economy takes a dive, etc. They have done a pretty good job of trying to figure out what the past history has been relative to work around Town, and the number they have come up with looks to be pretty reflective of what is anticipated for the expenditure under that line.

Councilor Rothhaus commented it sounds to him that siding falling off the building is a water problem from splash back that is down low. He suggested they look, from a landscaping standpoint, for some way of preventing that water from going back. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Micali responded that is why they are getting a lot of different contractors to come in to obtain different opinions.

Code Enforcement

Fire Chief Michael Currier stated there to be no increases in the Code Enforcement budget. Last year's budget was \$369,107 and proposed for FY is \$366,968. There is a proposed reduction of \$2,139,

which is basically around the area of Workmen's Compensation and other benefits as well as telephone expenses.

Councilor Vaillancourt questioned Line Item 01-06-8111-0; Overtime – Other, and requested an explanation of building inspections after hours. Chief Currier stated what happens with building inspections is a scheduling issue; more for weekends especially for residents in the community that are doing work on their own and need inspections, and are not able to have one done during the week. Those inspections are scheduled for weekend hours or after 5:00 p.m. To try to minimize that when dealing with a deck or a smaller structure, they have put together a video inspection. They are allowing homeowners to utilize a digital camera that has a dating system; they put their Sonotubes in for their footings, put the rulers in to show that they are the correct depth, width, etc., and send it to the department so that a video inspection can be performed. That is done for residents only (not commercial). That has been working tremendously. Some of that administrative office overtime is keeping track of records and documentation and taking care of after-hour people that come to the window. The window closes at 4:00 p.m., and there are people that show up at 4:00 p.m., which results in the employee being there until 4:30 or 5:00 p.m.

Town Manager Cabanel questioned if the amount includes events like RibFest, and was told that is correct. Chief Currier noted the Health Division falls under Code Enforcement. There are weekend food inspections for RibFest. Chief Currier spoke of the benefits of having all of the Town's inspectors in a single location.

Assistant Fire Chief Brian Borneman commented Merrimack was one of the first in the State to do that. The Town of Hudson contacted the Chief and they are following the model and having the same results. An Assistant Chief from Berlin, NH reached out to him. They are in the early stages, and communication continues. Chief Currier spoke of having spoken with the Hudson Town Council regarding this model. Councilor Dwyer questioned, and was told the department is made up of three full-time positions and two part-time positions.

Councilors Mahon and Boyd spoke of personal experiences with Code Enforcement, and stated their appreciation for the assistance provided. Chief Currier commented because Fire, Health, and Billing are all in one area, when they schedule foster or daycare inspections everyone can be sent at the same time.

Fire

Town Manager Cabanel spoke of the enormous amount of research that went into determining the best way to staff the department. Very detailed data has been collected for the past several years. She stated she feels very strongly about the overtime amount she has proposed comments it is very unusual for her to propose something like this. The budget was looked at from the point of view of hiring four new firefighters noting if the desire is to have an additional Firefighter you actually have to hire four because there are four shifts. Those costs were considered (around \$370,000/year). If you hired another four Firefighters there would be days when you had 9/shift and days when you would have 8. You would still have the same amount of overtime. These four new people would have vacation time, personal days, training time, etc. There would not be a lot of change in the overtime. She restated she feels very strongly that for the safety of the community and staff a solid 8 Firefighters on staff at all

times is what is needed at this point, and the overtime provides that in the most cost effective manner and equalized fashion, e.g., two people take the day off, one comes in to cover, and you still need overtime. Sometimes there are 8 and sometimes there are 9. Town Manager Cabanel noted if you want to hire four Firefighters you need to provide the overtime to have a staff to 9. With 32 employees, there is a good deal of vacation, personal, etc. time to be covered.

Town Manager Cabanel stated there to be two categories of overtime. Overtime for Supervisors; Lieutenant and a Captain on every shift (1 in each location). It is critical to have two at all times. That is why that category is reflected as always having 2. The other category is to have the remaining 6 Firefighters at all times. The overtime comes in and fills the holiday, vacation days, sick days, etc. She reiterated they have gone to great lengths to hone it down looking at actual numbers. After all of the review and enormous amount of data that has been analyzed, there are circumstances when there is a risk that you may not have the proper staff to handle what needs to be handled. It happens enough that it really isn't a case for mutual aid. Mutual aid is a situation where there is a big fire and surrounding communities come or something unusual happens like having four simultaneous calls, but it can't be because you don't have adequate staff.

Chief Currier reiterated extensive work was done with the Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director in reviewing the information and determining the needs for the department. Most of the line items are flat with very little increase.

Line Item 01-03-8502-0; Building Infrastructure Upgrades/Installations Building Systems shows a significant increase, which reflects the need for money to be put into Station 2. For the past 10 years there has been talk about replacing Station 2. Money to maintain and repair the station has been deferred waiting for that to happen. At this point in time, the need to address the building issues and safety concerns for the station is becoming urgent. This would include addressing problems with the sewer drains, electrical system, leaking roof, deterioration in the siding, and cement floor in the bay areas. When the Firefighters are doing maintenance on the apparatus the water from the bay is now flowing under the walls into the kitchen area. This is not a fix all, but will start to address some of the major concerns to make the station safer for its occupants along with the basic maintenance of the building. Some of the rough costs looked at were to repair the cement and metal work in the floors (\$25,000), upgrade, change, and move some of the electrical work (\$8,000), plumbing upgrades (\$4,000), and sealing the floor and repairing the roof (\$3,000). Within the budget there is about \$40,000. The cost of holding off maintenance for that building for 10 years equates to about \$4,000/year.

Councilor Rothhaus questioned what the noted the \$25,000 budgeted in FY16 was utilized for, and was told it was used for Station 1 maintenance; HVAC upgrade and other repairs.

With regard to Line Item 01-03-8105-0; Overtime - Supervisory, the department has spent time reviewing the safety and supervision of personnel at emergency scenes, and training in evolutions and at the stations. The discussion for overtime for supervisors identified an increased need to ensure they have 2 officers on duty at all times. Supervision is needed in the event of multiple calls. When mutual aid is requested and sending Firefighters out of Town, they need to ensure they send a Fire Officer to manage our people and ensure they are safe. While that Officer is out of Town the other needs to remain to address the needs of the remaining emergencies that happen in Merrimack.

In recent years the department has lost a significant portion of its institutional knowledge and experience. Many of the junior Firefighters that were hired in the past have minimal fire ground experience. They don't have that experience where you could tell someone just to go do something; they have to be supervised in doing it. That will come with experience and time.

They have been consistently over-expending the Officer line item budget numbers year after year because of the belief it is important to ensure we have an Officer on duty. They have been taking from the Firefighter funds to do that. They believe adequate supervision every shift is very critical and provides experience and safety.

With regard to how the breakdown was calculated for the total Supervisory overtime, they started out with earned time or shift coverage, which includes vacation time, personal time, etc. Those numbers were taken into account for all of the personnel on shift. After putting those numbers together and averaging over the four-year period they determined about 67% of vacation time is granted per year, which equates to about 1,241 hours. They looked at personal time. Fire Officers use all personal time granted to them. That equated to 592 hours. When it comes to sick time the department is averaging about 50% of the sick time allotted, which equates to about 648 hours. That total is approx. 2,482 hours or a sum of \$109,583.

Training hours; for EMT Recertification for Officers is 92 hours (\$4,063). Holiday coverage comes to 480 hours (\$21,197). Call back is about 800 hours (\$35,328), fire investigation education, and inspections at 110 hours (\$4,858). The proposed increase for the Officers budget is about \$34,257 making the FY17 budget \$175,028.

Line Item 01-03-8111-0; Overtime - Other is for Firefighter, EMT, and Paramedic overtime. Speaking with regard to how to provide a reasonable, consistent, and timely response while staffing the department for the types of calls that are taxing the resources, Chief Currier stated the key is to keep in mind they are looking for a staffing of 8 on each shift, which would include 2 Fire Officers and 6 Firefighters/EMT/Paramedics. They needed to figure out how to achieve this goal to protect the community and get the best bang for the buck.

Chief Currier remarked at first they look at hiring four Firefighter/EMT/Paramedics, placing one on each shift providing 24/hour coverage. This option would cost \$372,000 (fully loaded). That would still not eliminate all overtime, but may reduce the overtime number by about \$40,000. They would still need to fund for training, earned time, call back to provide coverage to the community during multiple calls and special events such as the 4th of July activities, Open House for Fire & Police, supporting school activities including the Reeds Ferry Fun Day and all of the elementary schools' Junior Fire Muster programs, the Merrimack High School DUI program, the Business Expo., and Merrimack Rocks.

After further in-depth discussion it was determined the best bang for the dollar would be to maintain 2 Officers and 6 Firefighters/EMTs/Paramedics on each shift. That is what they are calling a strong 8. This is not a permanent fix. As the community continues to grow and emergency demands increase, this will continually have to be reviewed and discussed.

With regard to the overtime costs, the same type of information was reviewed; they looked at vacation, personal time, sick time, and under the Firefighter's Union they have professional development time.

After the average the numbers are about the same; 67% of vacation equates to 2,299 hours, 100% of personal time came to about 1,152, 50% of sick time is 1,680 hours, and professional development time at 100% is 240 hours. The total is 5,371 hours at a cost of \$194,645. Training hours for EMT/Paramedic re-certification is 841 hours (\$30,481), holiday coverage is 1,440 hours (\$52,190), call back is averaged at 2,300 hours (\$83,360), Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) for overtime adjustment is \$20,693. Firefighter overtime has a proposed increase over FY16 of \$62,381, which is a total budget of \$381,387.

Chairman Harrington questioned why there was nothing listed next to EMT Advanced recertification. Chief Currier responded that was when they had the volunteer EMS section and were providing programs and classes for them. They no longer have that. The volunteers are all basic EMTs. Town Manager Cabanel noted the amount is combined with the line above that description. Chairman Harrington questioned if a similar situation exists with the description "training new staff", and was informed when they had looked at hiring four Firefighters that line was added. Chief Currier stated that would have been used for a one-time training program to bring new Firefighters up to speed; bring them in during the day for 1-2 weeks and would have to provide overtime to ensure still covering those times. When asked, he stated that amount would not have been included in the cost of a fully loaded position as it would have been a one-time thing.

Town Manager Cabanel commented she realizes the overtime amount is a lot of money, and something the Council has to look at very carefully. She spoke of the analysis provided the Council relative to the types and frequency of calls over a certain number of years. The deepest analysis performed related to medical calls as they are now in the area of 63-64% of all calls. The analysis shows medical calls fall into two different categories. One is a Basic Life Support (BLS) call and the other an Advanced Life Support (ALS) call. Town Manager Cabanel provided an explanation of the information provided to the Council (can be viewed as part of the [PowerPoint](#) presentation). From 2009-2015 calls for BLS remained fairly even. Where an increase is being seen is in the number of ALS calls. Those are issues responded to by Paramedics, and relate to the labor required to attend to a call like that. A BLS call starts with 2 Firefighters where an ALS call has 5. Calls in general for medical are increasing, but the breakdown of what kind of call matters.

Councilor Rothhaus questioned why the number of calls has increased. Vice Chairman Mahon remarked the population is aging. Town Manager Cabanel stated they do not know why the calls are increasing, they just are. Councilor Rothhaus questioned if the department is taking more calls as opposed to other ambulance companies, and was told that is not the case. Chief Currier stated the population is aging, and the standard of care over the last 5-7 years has increased. There are new State protocols every two years, and the level of care increases, which is beneficial to the patients.

Chairman Harrington commented the healthcare system has changed as well. There are people coming home that didn't used to come home. Those calls or complications increase. Assistant Chief Borneman stated the standard of care is important because the level of care or service that is provided those they interact with is better than it was in 2009. Every two years State protocol comes out. The entire State looks at how to intervene faster, do better, etc. As those ALS skills have come up across the State, the requirements on the department, under protocols by State law, dictate that you act at that level if you are trained.

Assistant Chief Borneman reiterated the aging population and the actual level of care is important. With the equipment they have acquired in the past few years that fits in with these protocols, they are transporting patients and are achieving balloon times less than an hour. He stated his belief that is driving that number. He explained by balloon times he means catheterization in the heart; from the time they reach them at the door to the time they have inflation in the Cath Lab most of the time is less than an hour, which is directly attributed to the level of care being provided.

Councilor Rothhaus commented the explanation provided that patients are being sent home earlier and may have to go back makes sense to him when it comes to the increased frequency.

Town Manager Cabanel addressed the information provided relative to the kinds of calls the department has attended to over the years. All medical calls were combined. Numbers were provided for fire calls, hazardous materials, motor vehicle accidents, mutual aid given, natural disasters, rescues, and service calls. The number of calls has gone up. The greatest level of increase is related to medical calls.

When asked about service calls, Assistant Chief Borneman stated the numbers are driven by the National Fire Incident Reporting System, which is a national database that FEMA runs. They specify what calls are. A fire type call is anything considered a fire type of call, e.g., brush fire, fire in the building with not structure damage, etc. Hazardous material could be an oil spit, a CO call, etc. Service calls are everything that doesn't fit into one of the boxes listed. As an example he spoke of a service call from someone who returned home to discover water from the apartment above them coming through their ceiling. Chief Currier commented there is better fire prevention. With the Fire Marshall there are better and more inspections taking place. They go in and out of the Merrimack Premium Outlets multiple times of the year, e.g., just before Black Friday Assistant Chief Borneman took an entourage with him, and they went through every store to make sure exits were open, they are not storing things inappropriately, etc. just to prevent a little thing turning into a big thing. When asked how they document those prevention efforts, Assistant Chief Borneman responded it is hard to articulate what they prevented. There is a systems approach that has been ongoing for a long time where they say in some ways they are in the business of putting themselves out of business.

He commented even though the number of structure fires across the country is decreasing, the intensity and the danger is increasing because of the materials used to construct the items being put into homes today compared to 40 years ago. Over-stuffed furniture is a hydrocarbon based product. It is all inhibited with fire preventing materials, however, when it does ignite from whatever cause, it burns hotter and faster.

Assistant Chief Borneman remarked going back to the institutional knowledge aspect, they have hired some great people, but the experience does not happen as quickly. In 2014 the department lost a combination of 166 years of experience to retirement; 2 Firefighters with 27 years each, 1 Firefighter with 31 years, a Lieutenant with 27 years, a Captain with 25 years and another Captain with 27 years. It is almost impossible to get that degree of institutional knowledge back. That fits into the piece of the requirement for two Supervisors. The fires are much more intense, the complexity, overlapping of calls, etc. To have that Supervision is necessary.

He stated to meet the overtime number they are operating in they are dropping to 7 Firefighters some of the days, and trying to cover that with a part-time EMS person. That is 7 firefighters not 8 and an EMS person during the day, which is where a lot of the calls are. If something happens at that fire or there are calls they cannot plan for, they are only putting 7 Firefighters on it. That EMS person has no fire certifications, etc. Dropping to 7 is something he equated to rolling the dice, and they have been rolling the dice for a while.

Chief Currier reiterated what the Town Manager had stated; in the future if they need to make a move to 9 then that needs to be the next ceiling. You can't hire 9 and then every time someone goes on vacation drop another one. If the decision were reached to go to 9 then they go to 9. If not, and all that is needed is 8, then they will staff to 8. The overtime cost helps the department achieve the strong 8 they are trying to maintain.

Assistant Chief Borneman commented working 24 hours a day/7 days a week for 365 days they can't anticipate when high volume will be. When you look at the scatter chart you note calls are all over the place. Town Manager Cabanel displayed scatter charts for one-month periods, which indicated consistent multiple calls in the same hour throughout the month, but not in a pattern.

Councilor Dwyer remarked he has never personally suggested that the number go below 8 or that it go to 9 or 10. Eight seems to be the number for each shift. He commented, over the past few minutes he has heard that we want to make sure we have 8 or we don't have 8 and want to get to 8. He stated he does not like the budget because of the overtime number, but that is beside the point. If 8 is the number per shift neither he nor anyone else he has heard speak has suggested anything different. Chairman Harrington commented she does not believe the Council has ever gotten involved in numbers. Councilor Rothhaus stated by contract, we don't refill the first out, e.g., if someone takes a vacation day we don't fill that slot so they are down to 7.

Assistant Chief Borneman responded that is not by contract. Chief Currier stated that to be budget driven. Assistant Chief Borneman remarked going back to when they had 9 on a shift and one of the guys retired and the decision was made not to fill the position, they tried to stay at the 8 and couldn't do it with the overtime number. They had to start dropping, and tried to capture efficiencies. Councilor Rothhaus stated that was not the way he understood it. He stated his understanding there are 5 scheduled here and 3 down south. He commented he would have expected, if not dictated by contract, there would have been a lot of complaining that we didn't have the positions filled. Town Manager Cabanel stated minimum staffing is not part of either contract except for the concept of there needs to be 2 people stationed at the Central Station at all times.

Chief Currier remarked if staffing at Station 1 drops below 2 they have to initiate call back to bring the numbers back up to above 2 for the next call. That is in the contract. Councilor Rothhaus questioned if the Council could have, if it wanted to, said we won't backfill until we get down to five. Chief Currier responded it could have, but would have resulted in the need to shut down Station 2 as there would be no one there. Councilor Rothhaus stated surprise that worked that way for so long.

Vice Chairman Mahon commented the Chief has been struggling with this since he came on board as Chief. One of the first things the Council and Town Manager asked him to do was get his manning situation under control and the number of vehicles that were being sent out on the road on a call. This

has been going on since 2007. It has been a constant process that he has been using to try to provide the service and provide for the safety of his personnel while trying to manage his budget. Now we are starting to run up against the situation where we are in between. We have enough to cover a population we had 4-5 years ago, as we go forward we will need more, but we don't need them immediately. Vice Chairman Mahon commented about every 10-12 years we get into this in between stage where we know we will need it as service calls start to ramp up, but when you look at the tax effort it will take to do that, it is a difficult decision to make. We are at that stage again. He stated his opinion the Town has been at that stage for the last two years.

Vice Chairman Mahon commented now we will have the potential for 500 more residential units on the books over the next three years plus the additional commercial square footage. Councilor Vaillancourt added the possibility of a pipeline. Chairman Harrington commented part of the process now is the availability of data, which clearly identifies what is occurring.

Vice Chairman Mahon remarked history has proven having the data to provide to the citizenry to allow the voters to make an informed decision is what results in support of the necessary funding. Councilor Vaillancourt commented, before this meeting, she would not have thought that adding 4 Firefighters to staffing would not have decreased overtime. She commented on the increase in medical calls from 2009 to 2015, and asked if staffing has increased or changed at all since then, and was told it has decreased by 4. Councilor Vaillancourt stated she now understands the current department budget does not have sufficient money in the overtime budget to staff at 8 all of the time, but the overtime proposed in the FY17 budget would allow that to happen. Chief Currier stated that to be correct.

Councilor Vaillancourt suggested it may be, given the potential for 500 additional residential units, a pipeline, etc. that the additional 4 Firefighters may be needed in the FY17 budget. She suggested, if not this year, it is not very far off before the Town is at that point. She commented it is a matter of safety for the residents of the Town as well as staff.

When asked, Chief Currier explained he was working at the last fire, and because of traction and doing things other than command he slipped and tore a rotator cuff. He has three tears, and will have to go for surgery to have that fixed. When asked for additional clarification, he stated in addition to command, he was moving hose, walking around the back of the building trying to address safety, etc. because he didn't have enough staff. Councilor Vaillancourt remarked when the newspaper articles come out citing an increase, everybody starts flipping out. With the data provided, she understands if we are not in need of four Firefighters in addition to what we have now, we are very very close to needing them. If not this year, she is hopeful the residents of Merrimack will support that funding in the next budget.

Councilor Boyd asked for clarification in 2011 we had 28 Firefighters that were reduced down to 24. Chief Currier stated that to be correct. Councilor Boyd remarked in 2011 the actual overtime that was spent was \$350,000. This upcoming budget having 4 less Firefighters on duty, and we are only increasing the overtime by an additional \$30,000 or 8% versus what was paid out 5 years ago. To him it is an increase, but not one he sees as a significant increase.

Councilor Boyd commented on having been informed the future goal is to have 3 Paramedics per shift. Chief Currier stated there are currently 2 Paramedics on a shift. When a Paramedic takes vacation time

the individual does not have to be replaced with another Paramedic. As a result they drop to 1 per shift. Once they do that the Officer's responsibility increases tenfold. When responding to an ALS call he has to decide if the Paramedic is sent to the hospital leaving none in Town or for him to talk to the Paramedic and make that split second decision if the patient is good enough that an Advanced EMT could be put with him to go thereby keeping the Paramedic in Town. If they had 3 Paramedics on a shift and one took time off there would always be two on shift; they run two ambulances. When asked about vacancies, Assistant Chief Borneman stated there are currently none. He added when he was promoted one of the things they looked at, having seen the trends, was how to respond to the need for ALS. Working with the Town Manager and staff they looked at how they could increase the Paramedics (highest skill level) to meet the goal. Some people might say hire all Paramedics. That could result in skill degradation. With 3 per shift, if 1 was out they could drop to 2. In last year's budget, the Council approved it, and the department has started that. They are taking one of the better employees that has the knack for medical training and sending him to Paramedic school. They are looking at trying to increase that over time to get the 12, which is kind of independent of the numbers on the shift.

Councilor Boyd touched upon remarks made by Councilors Mahon and Vaillancourt when remarking, Merrimack is the 8th largest municipality in the State. We have 28,000 residents with significant employers in this Town. We have 3 proposed projects that will eventually put additional housing units in this community. Depending on the age of the people that occupy those, it will drive the BLS and ALS service calls, which are already at 65% (last year). The department has seen an increase of 21%. The Town is increasing the number of BLS and ALS service calls in our community because the demographic is getting older. If the community continues to grow, it will only further tax the Fire and Police departments. He remarked there is a reasonable expectation of an increase of 10-15% over the next couple of years. He stated his opinion the need is not for 4 Firefighters, it is for four Paramedics. There is the need to ensure the department has the right people out there providing the right level of skill and support so that they stabilize and get the patients to the hospital.

Councilor Boyd commented the mission of the Fire Department has changed. It is no longer trying to save a building; they are now saving lives and suppressing fires. That is the goal. If they save the structure in the process, that is an added benefit. We are a first responder community right now. Chief Currier remarked the key to what Councilor Boyd has stated is the right people in the right positions. If you look throughout the State, everybody is looking for Paramedics. The object is not to lose the good ones that we have. When Assistant Chief Borneman was promoted one of the things he set out to do was to ensure that we had a process to hire the right people, and that process was put in. It is very lengthy and very demanding. He stated Assistant Chief Borneman has a process that others in the State want. They want to hire our people just because we are vetting the best people. Just because there is a Paramedic/Firefighter out there doesn't mean he/she is the right person for our Town. That next step in that process was to develop an in-house training program. We know we have good people here. If we can take a good person and make him/her a Paramedic we would have a great Paramedic serving the community. The department is looking at all angles.

Assistant Chief Borneman remarked if the department were to hire four Firefighters the goal would be Firefighter/Paramedics, but he would not want to hire a Paramedic just for the sake of a Paramedic. The problem is everybody else is having the same issues and seeing the same things. The number of Paramedic is dwindling because ALS is increasing everywhere. If the department were to hire four

new positions the goal would be to hire four Firefighter/Paramedics. They are becoming harder and harder to find because of the skillset and the number of hours it takes to achieve that level of training.

Councilor Dwyer commented it is like the Dispatcher positions. Nobody wants that job either. Historically Dispatcher positions and Paramedic positions have not paid well. It is a lot of work, and individuals in those positions move on to other locations for increased salary. He commented New Hampshire has identified a 3% unemployment rate. That is bad news for Police and Fire Departments. Chief Currier stated his opinion Chief Doyle has done a great job of hiring some of the right people in Communications, and what maybe the citizens of the community don't understand is those are first line responders right there. When he is signing on going to a building fire or motor vehicle accident the information they are providing him is priceless. When he gets on the scene and is assigning 7 things to be done simultaneously, e.g., get me an ETA on a Medivac, get me the hospital, activate the trauma team, get me a rescue, and get me another ambulance from Bedford, that is all in one breath, and they do it.

Councilor Boyd questioned the challenges the Fire Department would have to overcome if it had an additional four Firefighter/Paramedics coming on as of July 1, 2016, and still be able to maintain 8 people per shift. He commented if scheduling to 8 there are four pieces of the puzzle to interchange depending on how the day factors out with service calls, fires, etc.

Town Manager Cabanel stated the problem is that a person has to be assigned to a shift so they are on a 24-hour shift. You can't move them around from one shift to another shift. There can't be a floater or four floaters. They have to be assigned to one shift. When someone is out they can staff then to 8 instead of 9. There is no way to fit those pieces into the puzzle when a person has a schedule and fits into a shift. Each employee will have a set schedule per contract.

Chairman Harrington questioned if the department were to add the four and schedule for 9 with 8 as a minimum, they would not have to replace a position if 1 person was out. It is when there is more than 1 out that they would have to go to overtime. Chief Currier stated that to be correct.

Town Manager Cabanel commented when you hire four new Firefighters they all have vacation and they all have sick time, etc. You've added another group of hours that figure into the possibility of getting down to 7 on a shift.

Chairman Harrington questioned if the department is more comfortable with an increase in overtime to accommodate that or would prefer to go in the direction of hiring four new positions. Chief Currier stated you could put four new Firefighters on, but if you don't increase the overtime to maintain the strong 8, he would have to drop 2 and be down to 7 again. He stated his current comfort level is with maintaining 8 across the board. Next year or the year after when more data is available for review, if they determine the need is for 9, then they have to determine do they need a strong 8 with a floating 9 or do they need a strong 9.

Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Micali spoke of the breadth of discussions that have taken place with him, the Town Manager, the Chief, and the Assistant Chiefs, with regard to vetting each of the possible scenarios, and the conclusion reached by all was there is the need for a strong 8 right now, and the overtime needs to be up to that strong 8. What is happening now is they are dropping to 7.

With a strong 8 they believe there might be opportunities where we might be rolling the dice a little bit, but not as much as we would if we were dropping to 7.

Councilor Rothhaus questioned if the math has been done on the overtime to identify the percentage of time where if having 8 per shift and having 1 out would result in the need to go to overtime to fill the position versus if there were 9 per shift and there were 2 out requiring you to go to overtime to fill the position. Town Manager Cabanel stated, in her mind, they have gone through all of the different scenarios. It can't be known ahead of time when someone will call in sick, etc. You can't know when there would be one person off on a shift or two. In going through all of the gathering and reviewing of data, it comes down to a very simple answer; always have a solid 8. When you start talking about 9, when that time comes it may be now you need a solid 9. She stated it would be an enormous relief and an enormous improvement right now to have 8 all of the time.

Councilor Boyd stated what he has heard is that 8 per shift and an increase in overtime strengthens the Fire Department. But he goes back to the data from 2011 when they had 9 and \$30,000 less in overtime. Even though the service calls in 2011 were 6% less than what they were last year, were we stronger tactically in 2011 than we would be with what is being proposed.

Chief Currier stated that to be hard to quantify only because back then they maintained that strong 8 and they had 9 and dropped one. The type of calls have changed. We used to be able to send less people to a call. The ALS calls have now increased so the utilization of those resources will be used up quicker. He remarked with where they are right now with the budget, 8 is going to be the solid number. They continue reviewing numbers to determine if next year or the year after that a change will have to be made to a strong 9.

Assistant Chief Borneman stated because of the financial times the Town was facing at the time those positions were eliminated through attrition. They handled that for a while. The Chief did a great job of capturing efficiency. He assessed the risk of the calls and cut back on the number being sent to avoid putting the Town at risk. All of those efficiencies have been captured, but we had to start dropping to 7 sometimes. Sometimes that was working, but they are finding it increasingly harder to do that. When they looked at the goal of getting back to a solid 8 they looked at do they hire Firefighters and drop or do they bring the overtime up to maintain that. He remarked it is a philosophical argument that every community addresses. But how many is that; do you go to 10 and drop 2? In his mind, he believes if you need 8 you need it all the time. In a time when we need more people that is when the emergency call back comes back, that is when they call Nashua in because the fire is happening now. We can't staff to a scenario like London Court burning because the Town can't afford that. That is what the mutual aid is for and what call back is for. A lot of cities may have 4-5 on a shift that they will drop down to, but as a Supervisor when you look at that you look at the number of staff, who they are, what positions they are in, etc. It becomes a management issue.

Councilor Boyd stated he has the same concern regarding adequately staffing personnel so that we are able to address first response issues. Sixty five percent of our calls last year were first response issues. That, to him, is a concern. He remarked he wants to make sure if not this year that we are thinking about adequately staffing for the existing demographic but also for the demographic that is coming. If you bring on additional Firefighters who are not familiar with the Town at the time of buildout, there

will be issues relative to that. He commented to him the window of opportunity is if not now next year. That is what he has been wrestling with.

Chairman Harrington stated her belief that is the issue the entire Council has been concerned with, and she believes the question has been answered.

Councilor Boyd questioned the allocation listed under Line Item, 01-03-8352-0; Education & Training, Paramedic In-house Educational Program, and was told that is intended to allow for three Paramedics per shift. That is the cost to send one of the Firefighters to school to become a Paramedic.

Councilor Dwyer stated he did not like the department's budget from the beginning. The Town Manager has explained it to him. Basically we have 12 guys in white/brass and 24 rank and file for a total of 36 men, roughly, that run the department. Eight is the magic number. Eight times four shifts is 32, but 12 management and 24 guys is a total of 36. That is why it never really works. If you have 12 management and 24 guys you have a total department of 36 men; Firefighters, Paramedics, Management, and you want 8 guys per shift. The problem is, and no one has said it yet, it is the contractual obligations that prevent us from having a different schedule. We're so locked into a contractual obligation in a schedule there is no leeway. There is hardly anything to really negotiate when there is nothing much to talk about in terms of manpower. He commented if the Chief wants 8 men, he wants 8 men, but it is times 4 so there is your 32 guys a day, but we only have 36 men.

Back to the training, sick leave, vacation, etc., it is no wonder why 8 is never fulfilled; there are not enough men in the department, which leads him back to why he hates an overtime budget that approaches a half a million dollars. When he asked a common sense question to the Town Manager over a month ago; half a million dollars to him is unreasonable, as a business person you would hire more people to get that number down, and her response was even if we hired four the overtime budget would still be approximately \$300,000. We hear matrix and calls, but for him, he doesn't think the department has enough men, and he is unclear how they would get to a point of having 8 every day, and even if the decision were made to add to the number, the information provided from the management team is it wouldn't matter; that we would still have \$300,000+ in overtime. He commented he doesn't know what to do with it. You want to try to have a good policy for the Town, policy for the men, etc., and he is unsure how to get there. He remarked it is a matter of frustration at this point for him in why he can't support the budget with its current numbers.

Councilor Vaillancourt noted Line Item, 01-03-8352-0; Education & Training, Public and Private School Fire Prevention Program has a description of Junior Fire Muster, which appears to not be funded in the proposed budget. Chief Currier stated the line to be for memorabilia, e.g., items handed out during the programs. It was determined there would be sufficient money in the budget without adding that line. The program will continue.

Councilor Vaillancourt questioned the discrepancy between the department request and Town Manager budget numbers under Line Item, 01-03-8406-0; Emergency Management. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Micali stated the cost to be associated with an electronic message board and signage. When the budget process began, they had plans for an electronic message board going near the Central Fire Station at a cost of approx. \$35,000. As the process continued, that cost was removed. There are other avenues being sought for acquiring that equipment.

Vice Chairman Mahon commented the Chief will have an opportunity to talk about those challenges when he gets the peer review from Monahan when he brings his proposed project in with a four-story hotel, 120 rooms, 140 residential units, all of that commercial space, and a parking garage on 20 acres. The project engineer is talking about \$958,000 in estimated tax revenue of which the Town would get 22% to try and provide the inspections and prepare for events in that confined area.

Councilor Koenig asked for clarification on the difference in how the department can be responsive without any additional equipment if there are 9 on a shift versus 8. Chief Currier stated it is being able to have the resources (people) to handle the call and the next one coming in or a larger call with the same number of people. Councilor Koenig commented from a first response perspective the department sends out equipment and people to a call. You then call in backup if you don't have enough people for a second call, etc. Chief Currier stated that is where they roll the dice, depending on what the call is. When they have a box alarm (at an industrial facility), they do their due diligence to identify how big the facility is, what they have for contents and material and what their fire load is, are they fully sprinkled, do they have smoke detectors and a full alarm system. If they have all of that information we reduce the call to 2 engines. But when they are responding there they don't call call-back in because history has shown in that facility, through their documentation, that most of those calls have been false alarms. That is rolling the dice. We are hoping when we get there it will be one of those false alarms. By sending two engines he means he gets the district engine going and the second engine is going also, but it is kind of in service. If a call for a motor vehicle accident comes in at the same time that engine will peel off and go to that motor vehicle accident, then they will call in someone else to handle the next call. That is that piece of management, dice throwing; hoping the building they are going to is not going to have a fire, but they have done their due diligence because they also planned that it has a full sprinkler system, has an alarm system, so if there is a fire when they get there, there is at least something helping that first engine until they can call mutual aid to come in and minimize that damage. When you start adding people you start adding those resources to handle those calls more efficiently and handle those multiple calls more effectively.

Councilor Koenig questioned 7 versus 8; does that make a difference in the ability to respond to that building. Chief Currier responded "drastically". When asked how, he stated two engines is 6 people (3 on an engine). If he sends two engines, on each is a driver who is responsible for driving that truck and getting water to where it needs to go. He doesn't become part of that firefighting group. Then you have an Officer who has to walk around the building and make decisions, leaving one Firefighter. There are really two Firefighters going there and a driver, and then another truck going with two Firefighters and a driver. What that leaves back at the station is an ambulance that is fully staffed. If that 8th person is not available and there is only 1 guy on the ambulance he can't respond with that ambulance because State law requires there to be 2. That ambulance cannot go anywhere. That is why 8 is a key number; it provides for 2 engines and an ambulance staffed.

Councilor Koenig remarked going to 9 doesn't really incrementally make a big difference. Chief Currier responded not 9 to respond, but as the Town grows you don't want to go from 8-12 because the cost is huge. You want to go from 8-9 to offset your calls because you may have to send two ambulances out at one time. In that case he may have to pull a guy off the back of the engine, and run a two-man engine company, again rolling the dice hoping his next call is not going to be bad. When you get 10 now all of a sudden you can staff another ambulance all of the time.

Assistant Chief Borneman remarked 65% of the calls are medical calls. If it is a BLS call two people go out, we don't need a call back because you still have your two engine companies available to respond. If you have a second call someone has to handle that. We handle that, but you are minimizing that manpower available for fires.

Town Manager Cabanel noted call back does not address the timeliness issue with regard to responding to a call, and what can happen in a matter of minutes.

Councilor Koenig commented you are still getting a first response to the call. If you get 2 or 3 calls all within the same minute or two you are overbooked and have to call in aid from somewhere else, but at some point you just have to try and figure out am I meeting the first response requirement or not, and does an extra person make a difference if I can't send out another piece of equipment or if I don't have another piece of equipment to send. Having 12 people in the station wouldn't do you any good if you didn't have enough engines to carry them to four calls at once. Assistant Chief Borneman responded the department has enough equipment. The type of call determines the type of equipment taken to the call.

Councilor Dwyer commented there is nothing wrong with the 8 figure, but he would guess more than half the time they don't have 8; between sick leave, training, vacation, etc. That is why the 9 figure helps because they would have 8 more often. As of today and the last 4 years they rarely have 8.

Councilor Koenig responded we have been sitting here discussing this and they have stated we want to have a strong 8, which means we will use overtime to make sure we have 8, and then if we go to 9 we want to make sure it is a strong 9 so we are always at 9. He questioned if a strong 8 is the number and 9 is the comfort level. Chief Currier responded it depends on the types of calls and it gives that officer the ability to move that one person around to that second ambulance or the second call.

Chief Currier stated with the percentage of medical calls, with 8 guys they can handle that. He remarked he can't have enough people if he is first due to London Court burning. Incrementally with the fiscal constraints they have had over the last few years, they have reached consensus of where they should be, but they have gotten to the point of trying to get to that 8 so that it is the same consistently.

Councilor Koenig remarked he understands in a disaster there cannot be enough people, and that is why we have mutual aid, and why we're ready to respond to mutual aid to Bedford, Nashua, etc. Chief Currier remarked you need to have the people to handle the normal calls within your community, and you do your due diligence to determine where you need to be today, and right now/today they need 8 people to take care of it. Next year or the year after, they need to figure out where they need to be in the next 2-5 years. If 5 years says we need to be at 10, how do we get to that in 5 years based on how the Town is growing, how our calls are growing, and when that has to happen. You can't go from 8-10, you need to go from 8-9, and 9 will give you an ability to run the second ambulance, but still have enough people on shift to handle the calls safer. Then a year or two down the road when we plan the community will continue growing, etc., we say we need 10 on a shift, and now we have to have two ambulances all the time, etc.

Councilor Boyd spoke of the fire on Bedford Road. There was a fire hydrant at the corner of Bedford Road and Bean Road. However, it was on the opposite side of Bean Road, which meant the fire hose

crossed Bean Road. The Chief had to deploy and tie up an ambulance to put it on the other side of Bean Road on the off chance that he got a medical call on Bean Road because with the culvert being out he had to have something there to deploy on the off chance that they got a call on Clara Drive or something like that. One ambulance was tied up for X number of hours and the other ambulance was responsible for pretty much covering the entire Town. Chief Currier stated he had that other ambulance there because they still couldn't cross it. He had the first ambulance that would go down Bean Road, grab the patient, come back to the hose, swap the patient to the other ambulance, and continue on. That was the plan because he had to still protect that piece of Town.

Councilor Koenig questioned if ramps could have been placed over the hose to allow for passage. Chief Currier commented on the small number of times that situation occurs. Councilor Koenig remarked the rescue trucks or whatnot have all of these things to jack things up, you would figure they could put down a couple of ramps the height of a hose and allow you to drive over. Assistant Chief Borneman remarked most departments don't have the ramps. They are heavy and expensive, and they could increase workmen's compensation moving them around.

Chairman Harrington commented the Town is reimbursed for ambulance service. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Micali noted the cost was just increased this year. The revenue received this year was \$650,000. Chairman Harrington commented we have to remember there is offsetting revenue.

Next Steps

Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Micali stated Council deliberations on the budget will occur at the January 25th meeting. The Library asked if they could have 5-10 minutes at the start of the meeting to go over questions that were posed of them, and to discuss what their plans are with regard to staffing and the raise opportunity. Representatives from all departments will be present to answer any questions.

He spoke of providing the Council with a spreadsheet of items discussed to date, e.g., additional revenue from motor vehicle registrations, etc., and requested if Councilors are considering the addition or reduction of staff that he be provided that information to allow him to do the calculations in advance of the meeting.

February 9th is the Presidential Primary. It is also the last day for Collective Bargaining Agreements, Petition Warrant Articles, and Petition bonds. He spoke of the need for the Council to certify the boxes before they go to the Secretary of State in Concord. However, if getting a Petition Bond or a Collective Bargaining Agreement that is after the 28th, which needs to be ratified, there may be the need to conduct a special meeting at 6:00 p.m. on the 9th to address that. Petition Warrant Articles can usually wait until the 11th to go over, but a Petition Bond has to be acted on that night by the Council to get moved forward. A meeting will be scheduled for the 9th just in case it is needed. It won't be known if it is needed until 5:00 p.m. that evening.

Adjourn

Approved: February 25, 2016

Posted: March 1, 2016

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

The January 21, 2016 Work Session of the Town Council was adjourned at 9:04 p.m.

Submitted by Dawn MacMillan