



TOWNSEND FIRE-EMS DEPARTMENT

Proudly serving the citizens of Townsend since 1875

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Fire-EMS Quarterly Report

ACTIVITY

The final three months of the calendar year were busy as usual. Cold weather, snow and ice increase the number of calls we received for motor vehicle accidents, gas odors, carbon monoxide alarms and structure fires. Although response numbers increased I have no major incidents to report.

POLICY CHANGES

A policy to mentor officer candidates was implemented in October. The policy is to succession plan and give personnel on the promotional list an opportunity to be mentored and learn the ropes before becoming an officer. After reviewing membership participation records from last year we realized more than half of the department is not meeting the minimum requirements for attendance at meetings, training and calls. Members simply do not have the time with all the competing interest and family obligations. The Officers and I have discussed this during several officers meetings and question the accuracy of the numbers. It was agreed we will run the numbers again after the first of the year.

It has recently been brought to my attention by Town Officials that by Town Charter all policies and rules must be approved by the Board of Selectmen. When hired in 2014 I was informed by previous officials the Massachusetts Strong Chief Law was adopted by the town and included in my employment contract therefor I had the authority to run the department but not the authority to hire or fire. The only document currently approved by the board of selectmen are rules and regulations adopted for the department in 2009. I will be working with Town Officials to resolve this. Since many of our policies and procedures are required by OEMS, OSHA, DOL, NVRDD, and our Medical Director all Fire-EMS policies will continue to be followed and enforced but no new policies or changes will be implemented until this can be resolved.

PERSONNEL

Over the last three months we have hired two new per diem paramedic and three new paid-on-call Firefighters. Two probationary Firefighter completed the Mass Call/Vol academy and four members are enrolled to attending the academy starting in January. This training is approximately 200 hours of classroom and practical training at the Fire Academy in Stow.

New members have one year from the date of hire to sign up for the academy and attendance is voluntary and not compensated.

STAFFING

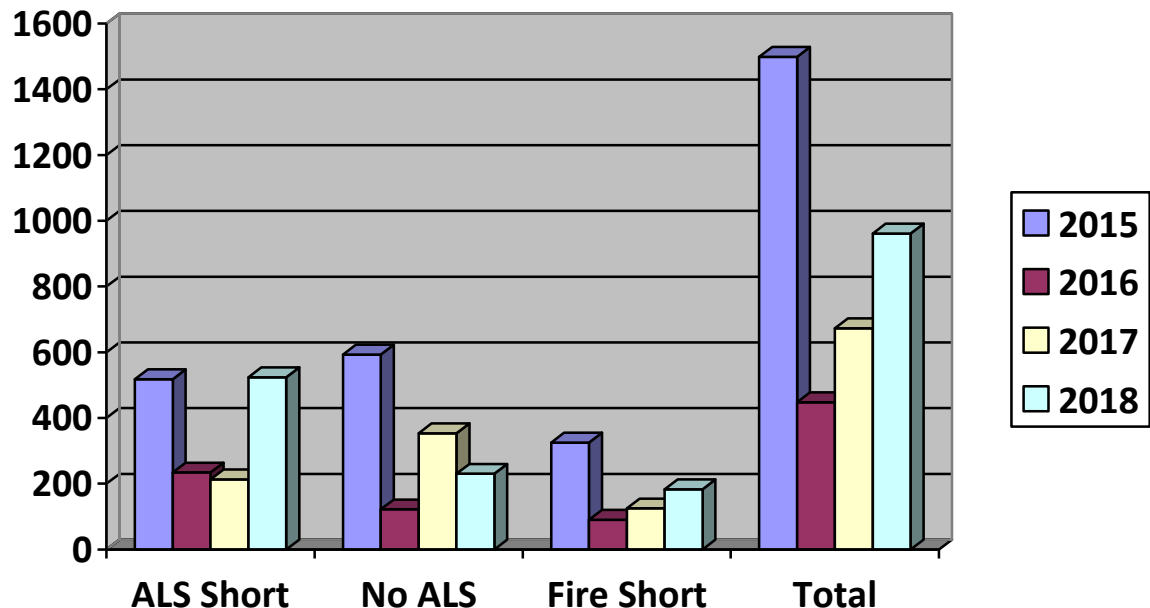
We have been tracking staffing shortages since 2015. Over the last three years efforts have been made to retain and recruit per diem employees by increase compensation rates. Although we have increased our rates by nearly five dollars per hour we have not kept pace with competitors. Our current rate for new paramedics is \$23.50 while nearby competitors are paying \$25 to \$26.

As you can see in the chart below in 2018 we reduced the number of hours we dropped from an advanced life support service to a basic life support service. However we have not eliminated the problem and the total number of hours we were short increased significantly.

2017-2018 Shift Shortages

	ALS Short (HRS)		No ALS (HRS)		NOBODY WORKING		Fire Short (HRS)		Total	
	2018	2017	2018	2017	2018	2017	2018	2017	2018	2017
January	13	9	42	0	0	0	0	4	55	13
February	16	18	1	19	14	0	0	1	31	20
March	5	18	0	27	0	0	10	11	15	56
April	24	0	24	7	10	0	20	0	78	7
May	55	20	27	5	0	0	34	18	116	43
June	63	17	27	28	0	0	30	11	120	56
July	88	36	30	32	0	0	20	4	138	72
August	49	38	18	47	0	0	0	30	67	115
September	40	15	6	76	0	0	20	11	66	102
October	63	18	13	38	0	0	30	0	106	56
November	39	0	12	37	0	0	4	20	55	57
December	69	24	30	37	0	0	15	15	114	76
Total	524	213	230	353	24	0	183	125	961	673

This year's budget request included the fourth year of the four year plan to increase paramedic wages. A strategic plan was submitted in October if adopted additional full-time staff would decrease shortages and eliminate dropping to a BLS level service. The graph below demonstrates the effect our efforts have had on this challenge over the last four years.



BUDGET

We are half way through the fiscal year and the budget is looking good. Currently showing a surplus of \$15,000 in wages due to the staffing shortages. Since our wage cost very depending on the number of calls, severity of the calls and number of people responding predicting the final outcome can be tricky. We are in a good position going into the winter months when fires and the severity of calls tends to increase.

GRANTS

Since being awarded \$53,334 from FEMA a selection processed was completed to decide who will take advantage of this grant and attend paramedic school. Captain Cormier and Firefighter/EMT's Jon Kinney, Eric Modica and Mike Whittier have been chosen and will be attending the school of their choice as soon as possible.

The Mass Health Ambulance CPE program applications were submitted back in October. I anticipate the Town will received approximately \$26,000 in additional Medicaid reimbursement in February or March.

WEST FIRE STATIONS STATUS

Although the project is not complete the dedication and grant opening was held December 15th and well attended. The Fire Station Committee members and I continue to work with the general contractor to correct a few punch list items. The obligations of the general contractor should be completed in the next month or so. Gary Shepherd will be taking care of final landscaping and finishing the monument in the spring.

COMMUNICATION CENTER

Nothing new to report on the communication center. The Ashby, Pepperell, Townsend Regional Communications Committee continues to meet on a regular basis. We are currently waiting for Monachusset Regional Planning Commission grant period to open to fund a study to regionalize communications between the three towns.

Respectfully

Chief
Boynton