



TOWNSEND FIRE-EMS DEPARTMENT

Proudly serving the citizens of Townsend since 1875

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**Mark R. Boynton
Chief of Department**

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Fire-EMS 3rd Quarter Report

ACTIVITY

Due to COVID the majority of our meetings have been via zoom. In July we attempted to hold an in person meeting in the library parking lot. Unfortunately the tropical storm past threw Massachusetts that evening. The meeting was held virtually and shortly after the meeting many of our personnel end up responding to calls for trees and wires down including a couple of calls for trees on homes.

We are thankful town meeting was held in July and we now have a budget to work with. For the last three years we have requested to replace the 25 year old forestry truck. Unfortunately it was taken off the warrant and we will be waiting for another year. If replaced the chassis was going to be repurposed to replace the Squad. The squad is used on a daily basis for inspections towing trailers and plowing snow. In June the Squad power steering pump failed. Due to the age, miles and condition of the truck and cost to make repairs to pass inspection it was decided to take the vehicle out of service and declare it surplus. Until it is replaced we will not have a vehicle to use for plowing snow. Car 2 or the forestry truck will be utilized for inspections and towing trailers. Forestry 1 is overweight and not wired for trailer lights so it will be used to tow trailers as a last resort.

We are now in the fall brush or wildfire season. At a relatively small fire last week on Warren Rd the pump and motor on Forestry 1 failed. Due to the age of this unit, budget restrictions due to COVID and our failed attempts to replace this truck we are at a cross road on how to proceed. Thankfully the Mass Department of Fire Services was willing to help us out. The skid unit in the back of Forestry 1 has been removed and a loaner skid unit with much lower firefighting capabilities has been installed. The unit has less water and only capable of flowing one small diameter hose line instead of multiple lines. This significantly reduces our firefighting capabilities but is the least expensive option.

We have also declared Truck 10 the fire alarm bucket truck as surplus for similar reasons. The vehicle is 24 years old in very poor condition and no longer needed since we no longer have a hard wired municipal fire alarm system. A 2001 Articat snow machine has also been declared surplus. The machine is old, unreliable and no longer needed. In 2014 we acquired a Kawasaki UTV with tracks that is our primary off road response vehicle.

POLICY CHANGES

No policy changes were made this quarter.

PERSONNEL

Over the past few months we have hired two new per diem firefighter paramedics and one new paid-on-call firefighter and a paid-on-call EMT. Overall we are still short staffed due to the number of personnel leaving due to COVID.

STAFFING

Due to a continued shortage of per diem staff to supplement full-time staff and cover vacations overtime cost continue to be very high. Overall we are tracking to be slightly over budget. I am hopeful over the next six months thing will change for two reasons. Personnel taking time off should slow down as we go into winter reducing overtime. Newly hired per diem paramedics will start taking shifts which will also reduce overtime.

As always I will continue to monitor this closely as we progress through the fiscal year. If necessary changes will be made in staffing to reduce cost for the third or fourth quarter of the fiscal year to remain within budget.

The staffing shortages table that has been include in this report for several years now has been eliminated. The challenge of having no staff working or dropping to BLS level of care has been eliminated by the hiring of additional full-time staff in the 2020 budget. We will continue to monitor the need to implement phase two of the strategic plan of adding four more full-time staff to replace per diem positions. This is a costly step that would reduce our dependency on per diem staff. The current loss of and lack of per diem staff is the reason we are experiencing very high overtime cost. Additional full-time staff would reduce current overtime cost and increase reliability and stability of the schedule.

BUDGET

Building and vehicle maintenance have been a challenge the past several years with repairs running over budget by more than \$20,000. This year will be no different as we are already on track to be overspent by a similar amount this year. This will continue to be a challenge in the future until these budgets can be increased to accurate reflect our annual maintenance and repairs cost.

GRANTS

Fire-EMS was approved for just over \$60,000 in COVID CARES funding used to install power loading systems in each ambulance. This technology now required in new ambulances eliminates the need for multiple people to manually lift or hold the patient stretcher and load it into the ambulance. The power load system mechanically lifts and load the stretcher reducing personnel close contact exposure to patients. It also reduced the chances of personnel injuring their backs.

COVID CARES funding has also been utilized to replace the central fire station washer and dryer which are used on a daily basis to wash contaminated clothing. Two new laptop computers have been purchased along with a multimedia system for the training room. One laptop will be used by the Chief of the Department to conduct online meetings via zoom. The second along with the multimedia equipment will be located in the training room to facilitate meetings and online training.

Annual ambulance Certified Public Expenditure has been submitted to recuperate additional lost revenue from transporting patient with Medicare or Medicaid insurance. This year's estimate is \$28,000 in funding we will recuperate by participation in this program.

COMMUNICATION CENTER

Meetings with Ashby and Pepperell have resumed. During the COVID shut down Ashby and Pepperell signed an inter-municipal agreement that governs the now regional center. Ashby is now dispatched by Pepperell. We would have agree to and join this agreement in order to join the regional center. We are in the process of evaluating this agreement our assessment fee and calculating startup cost. The intent is to present this information to you (Townsend Selectmen) before the special town meeting so it may be on the agenda at the special town meeting for consideration if you so choose.

Respectfully

Chief
Boynton