



# ***TOWNSEND FIRE-EMS DEPARTMENT***

*Proudly serving the citizens of Townsend since 1875*

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**Mark R. Boynton  
Chief of Department**

October 15, 2019

## ***Fire-EMS Report 3rd Quarter 2019***

### **ACTIVITY**

Over the summer a couple of major projects were completed. We have switched our cellular phone and wireless devices over from Verizon to FirstNet emergency responder network. After 9/11 the Federal Government decided the nation needed a wireless network dedicated to emergency responders at a discounted rate to eliminate delays and loss in service during emergencies. FirstNet was created put out to bid and awarded to AT&T to manage. Now 18 years later the first of many phases has been completed. FirstNet service is available and we are one of the first in the country to switch over.

For Townsend Fire-EMS this means all department phones and wireless devices have a special black SIM card. This card allows our devices to operate on a separate emergency responder cellular network here in town. When the first respond network is not available it will work on the public cellular network and always have priority over all other traffic. Calls and data are unrestricted, never throttled and we have access to an app store for emergency responder apps. All department members once vetted by FirstNet or approved by me are eligible to subscribe to FirstNet for personal phones at the same discounted rates.

Fire-EMS is dependent on 2-way radios to receive emergency calls and communicate during emergency. Our interested in switching to FirstNet was to expand our 2-way radio coverage by being one of the first to implement push to talk over cellular to radio technology. Over the summer equipment was installed to integrate cellular technology into our radio system. Utilizing an app on our phones we can now transmit and receive on our dispatch radio channel from our phones. When Townsend Fire-EMS personnel leave town we are unable to communicate over the radio to dispatch or resources in town. For example when we transport critical patients to UMass Memorial Hospital in Worcester we are unable to call dispatch over the radio and inform them we are at the hospital or on the way back from the hospital. Now using push to talk technology we are able to monitor what is going on and communicate over the radio anyplace we have a cellular signal.

Currently all full-time personnel, the several of the department's officers, both ambulances and the paramedic truck have these capabilities. Thus far it has proven to be very reliable and a very inexpensive extension of our radio system.

The fire department owned and operated phones have been reliable and we are saving a few dollars per month for service. However several personnel that have switched their personal phones to FirstNet are encountering unreliable service with delays in receiving text messages and in some cases not receiving messages at all. FirstNet AT&T representatives have been very responsive to the issues but unable to identify the cause or resolve the issue. These members are very frustrated and likely going to return to Verizon to resolve the issue.

## **POLICY CHANGES**

Since the last report legal council and the Board of Selectmen have reviewed and approved a ride along waiver to allow outside personnel with an relationship with Townsend Fire-EMS to ride-a-long and observe how we operate. This will allow personnel such as dispatchers, hospital staff and Doctors to ride with us.

## **PERSONNEL**

Paid-on-call firefighter Jonathan Moore is currently in call-volunteer firefighting academy. Call Firefighter Lawrence recently completed EMT Basic certification. Firefighter Araujo is enrolled in an EMT class.

Call Firefighter Dan Silver resigned as he will be moving out of town. Call Firefighter/EMT Chris Williams resigned after a long period of inactivity.

Paramedic Kaila Moorcroft and Firefighter Drew Brassard were hired full-time and started on September 9<sup>th</sup>. Kaila will be attending the full-time firefighter academy sometime next year. Firefighter Paramedic Ron Petrucci was hired and will start on October 21<sup>st</sup>. Once he completes a two week orientation Ron and Lieutenant Ben Niemiera will go on shift and we will officially have full-time staff on duty 24/7.

## **STAFFING**

The summer of 2019 we experienced a reduction in staffing shortages. Although it is difficult to pinpoint the reasons why it is likely due to a number of factors. Hard work of the fulltime staff filling in the gaps, staying on top of the schedule and hiring of two new full-time personnel.

Late October we will officially be staffed 24/7 with full-time personnel and we will get a glimpse of how this will reduce shortages and eliminate dropping to BLS. It will take a full year to get a clear analysis and see the full effect but we should see some significant results starting next quarter.

### **2018-2019 Shift Shortages**

|           | ALS Short (HRS) |      | No ALS (HRS) |      | NOBODY WORKING |      | Fire Short (HRS) |      | Total |      |
|-----------|-----------------|------|--------------|------|----------------|------|------------------|------|-------|------|
|           | 2018            | 2019 | 2018         | 2019 | 2018           | 2019 | 2018             | 2019 | 2018  | 2019 |
| January   | 13              | 41   | 42           | 3    | 0              | 2    | 0                | 11   | 55    | 57   |
| February  | 16              | 14   | 1            | 15   | 14             | 0    | 0                | 0    | 31    | 29   |
| March     | 5               | 24   | 0            | 2    | 0              | 0    | 10               | 0    | 15    | 26   |
| April     | 24              | 22   | 24           | 38   | 10             | 0    | 20               | 0    | 78    | 60   |
| May       | 55              | 20   | 27           | 0    | 0              | 0    | 34               | 0    | 116   | 20   |
| June      | 63              | 35   | 27           | 14   | 0              | 0    | 30               | 0    | 120   | 36   |
| July      | 88              | 56   | 30           | 0    | 0              | 0    | 20               | 2    | 138   | 58   |
| August    | 49              | 54   | 18           | 0    | 0              | 0    | 0                | 0    | 67    | 54   |
| September | 40              | 37   | 6            | 14   | 0              | 0    | 20               | 2    | 66    | 53   |
| October   | 63              |      | 13           |      | 0              |      | 30               |      | 106   |      |
| November  | 39              |      | 12           |      | 0              |      | 4                |      | 55    |      |
| December  | 69              |      | 30           |      | 0              |      | 15               |      | 114   |      |
| Total     | 524             | 303  | 230          | 86   | 24             | 2    | 183              | 15   | 961   | 393  |

### **BUDGET**

I am happy to report we have not experienced an unanticipated expenses thus far and the budget looks good. With the implementation of phase one of the strategic plan I will be keeping a very close eye on the budget, particular personnel cost. The transition to 24/7 full-time coverage has many variables that can be hard to predict.

### **GRANTS**

As you know last fall we received a \$53,334 grant to send four personnel to paramedic school. We manage to send three leaving a balance of \$13,000 in the grant account. Rather than turn the funding back I requested to amend and extend the grant. In November we will be providing pump training for 25 department members and holding a two day active shooter training program for all members to attend.

The Mass Health Ambulance CPE program applications to receive additional reimbursement from Medicaid is due this week. The lengthy application process was completed and currently estimated we will received around \$40,000 in reimbursement that will go into the ambulance receipts account.

## **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 a feasibility study to be completed that was funded with Monachusset Regional Planning Commission grant funds.

Respectfully

Chief  
Boynton