

HUDSON, NH BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Workshop with the Fire Department on February 17, 2004

Selectmen: William P. Cole, Kenneth J. Massey, Shawn N. Jasper, Ann Seabury and Teresa Stewart

Staff/Others: Steve Malizia, Town Administrator; Priscilla Boisvert, Executive Assistant; Kathy Carpentier, Finance Director; Shawn Murray, Fire Chief; Charlie Chalk, Deputy Fire Chief of Support Services; Gary Rodgers, Deputy Fire Chief of Operations; Lt. Dave Morin; Lt. Fred Brough; FF Kevin Blinn; FF Pat Robertson; FF Steve Benton; Ray Rowell; Leo Bernard; Coleman Kelly; Richard Maddox; Matt St. Laurent; Lynne Ober, HLN; Anne Lundregan, TEL

Chairman Cole opened the workshop at 7:00 p.m. and recapped the February 3rd workshop, at which time they discussed the mission statement for the Fire Department, aspects of the call force—its mission, organization, its current status and where it may go in the future; organization and chain of command; Training/Safety Officer; and the union logo on uniforms.

Follow-up action taken by the Board of Selectmen on February 10, 2004: 1) Appointment of Deputy Gary Rodgers to *Deputy Chief of Operations*; 2) Position of Assistant Fire Chief re-titled to *Deputy Chief of Support Services*; 3) Appointment of Charlie Chalk to Deputy Chief of Support Services; 4) Position of Fire Marshal re-designated to *Captain, Training/Safety*; 5) Authorization to advertise for position of Captain, Training/Safety; 6) Union logos, designations, etc., to be eliminated from future purchases of uniforms, accessories or equipment by Fire Department personnel in their official capacity; and 7) All future uniform purchases by Fire, Police and DPW must first come before the Board of Selectmen for approval.

Tonight's focus was to discuss the goals and objectives of the Fire Department and get some insight with regard to the call force and some of the issues they had asked the Chief to look into. Chief Murray said he has been working on a number of items, including the call force and job descriptions throughout the department. He has gone through some of the policies and made various changes. (Several handouts were distributed to the Board throughout the Chief's presentation.)

Robinson Road Fire Station Chief Murray proposed recruiting three new personnel for Robinson Road for a total of seven call firefighters for call-back coverage at this station. Previous to January 1, when they had a serious incident, the majority of the full-time firefighters would go to Central Station, but now three full-time firefighters, who live in the Robinson Road area--Captain Tice, FF Blinn and FF Robertson)--have been responding to Robinson Road to increase manpower and to enable the crews to work together. He will need to find a Level 1 course for the new personnel, if they are not certified.

Burns Hill Road Fire Station Chief Murray talked about consolidating this station with Central Station. When Burns Hill was staffed round the clock, the role of the call firefighters diminished. With a full time crew there, the engine goes out right away on a call and leaves the tanker there. In a memo, Lt. Brough suggested consolidating Company 4 crew with the crew at Central Station, which would increase manpower at Central Station by adding the five Company 4 members to the five Company 3 members, bringing the number of call firefighters assigned to Central Fire Station to 10. It provides more manpower for Engine 3, or other equipment needed to respond. Currently, the only other apparatus available at Company 4 is Tanker 5 that seats two. Lt. Brough will monitor the call and if a tanker is needed, he will respond appropriately. This provides the call members more opportunities to actively respond to emergencies and subsequent calls that come in and it provides the opportunity to learn more apparatus and equipment for the call firefighter to gain experience.

Chief Murray said these changes were the result of discussions of ways to keep call firefighters active and motivated.

Selectman Massey asked if there was a backup to Lt. Brough on the tanker. Chief Murray said no, there was only one driver up there. Selectman Jasper asked what the plan was if Lt. Brough wasn't there because there would leave two pieces of apparatus sitting there. Chief Murray said that was no different than Robinson Road during the day. Selectman Jasper said except there was the hope of call personnel coming in. Chief Murray said the hope is for a bigger pool of drivers, but right now it is only FF Kraus. Chairman Cole asked if FF Kraus could be put on notice to pull tanker duty, if required. Deputy Chief Rodgers said when the personnel get trained, they would go to Burns Hill Station and take those pieces. If they are not dispatched, they will come to Central Station.

Training and Response Requirements Chief Murray said this addresses some of Selectman Jasper's concerns that were discussed at a previous meeting. The Chief proposed amending the General Order for a trial period by deleting, "All call members will follow a training schedule. This schedule will be provided by the Training Officer," and inserting, "All call force firefighters shall participate regularly in department training, which is defined as attendance at regularly scheduled training sessions and/or participation in the ride-along program in lieu of a regularly scheduled training session. At a minimum, personnel must participate in a seven-hour ride along per month. Each call force member is evaluated on their participation in training programs as compared to the training activity level of their company." Before his coming on, they were evaluating call activity based on the company they were assigned to by compiling the number of responses an individual went to, and their participation in training or other activity, such as station maintenance, vehicle checks, etc. Lt. Brough and Acting Lt. Rudolph would make a decision based on those elements of participation throughout the year. The General Order explains when trainings are held, any specialized training, such as driver training, ride along training, etc. that may be used to replace scheduled training objectives. Call firefighters must attend mandatory training sessions--about five a year--which includes incident command system training, SCBA and HazMat training, emergency driving skills and CPR. Ride-along sessions are encouraged at Burns Hill and Central Station.

Selectman Jasper asked if the seven hours per month had to be served in one stretch. Chief Murray didn't have a problem breaking it up into segments, but the most benefit would be derived from a seven-hour stretch in order to take full advantage of apparatus checks and all of the other duties and responsibilities. Selectman Massey thought the wording mandated the seven hours had to be completed in one stretch. Town Administrator Malizia suggested inserting the word "monthly" to read "Call firefighters are encouraged to ride for the entire shift, but seven hours is the monthly minimum."

Chairman Cole said if the seven hours was going to be split up, they should just make it a four-hour minimum. They need to set a period of time that allows call firefighters to get closer with the full time employees, either in a training mode, a maintenance mode or an on-call mode. He thought splitting the seven hours defeats the purpose. Selectman Jasper said the training requirement adds up to a

substantial commitment. People will have to either give up a weekend day per month, or go in at 6:00 p.m. and stay till 1:00 a.m., which makes it difficult to work the next day. He thought a ride-along on a quarterly basis is what they were talking about. Chief Murray said the problem occurs when he tries to balance a 70% requirement. They could break it into a 6:00–10:00 a.m. or 8:00–Noon on a Saturday. Selectman Jasper thought that would make more sense. Chairman Cole asked if the issue was the total number of hours a year, or the seven-hour stretch. Selectman Jasper said the total number of 84 is two weeks. Chairman Cole said you'd get the same amount by doing four-hour shifts twice a month. Selectman Jasper said they could do 12 five-hour shifts, from 6:00–11:00. He thinks this is something that should be discussed with the people for their feedback. Chief Murray said he'd take a look at it.

Chairman Cole recognized Lt. Brough, who said his schedule allows him to do the seven-hour stretch, but it might be a problem for others. Most of the members who do ride-alongs come in for 6:00–11:00 or 6:00–Midnight. On a Saturday, they work 8:00–Noon or so. Ride-alongs are essential, and it must be for at least a four-hour stretch. If they get paid to do the ride alongs, it won't be nearly as painful. Chairman Cole said they were all agreed that the ride-along was an essential element to the call force for their efficiency and competence, as well as esprit de corps, motivation, etc. The details can be worked out and then come back to the Board at, possibly, the next meeting. Chief Murray said the estimated cost of \$13,241.76 was based on seven hours.
(Start Tape 1, Second Side)

Selectman Massey referred to the handout, "Recruitment of Personnel for Robinson Road," and asked for the definition of "regularly scheduled training." Chief Murray said that was explained in Call-5. Selectman Massey asked if implementation of this program would result in any reduction in full time overtime. Chief Murray said no, that's not the intent of the program. Chairman Cole said they might see an occasional drop in overtime, but it would be an isolated case. If there were a couple of call firefighters on a ride-along, and there was an incident, and if those call firefighters had the right qualifications and certifications, they would be used instead of calling in a full-timer. Selectman Massey said he thought a call force was to supplement the existing force and, because they are required to be fully trained, they can act in the same capacity as any other firefighter with comparable training. If that is the case, why would they have to call someone who is not on duty to respond to that same fire, if only one additional person was needed. Chief Murray said call firefighters are certified at a minimum requirement. Some have EMS training or apparatus driving skills and certification but others don't. They are a delayed responder, a resource for the full time firefighters, but they don't replace the additional manpower they need for call back. Selectman Massey said if they are there just to ride along and be trained, he didn't see their value. If they are going to be a true, integral part of the department, he would expect other things to happen. Selectman Jasper said the primary reason for the call force is for coverage. The scope of control for an officer is 5-7 and if they are going to 10, he wondered what the intent was to maintain a level of officer structure. Chief Murray said they would try to maintain that span of control. Selectman Massey asked Company 3 and Company 4 would be combined into one company. Chief Murray said he would give it some thought.

Mission Statement Chief Murray said the mission statement for the call force would be the same as the one for the full time force. To do otherwise would separate the two entities and would be counter-productive.

Call Force Evaluations Chief Murray said annual evaluations for the call force used to all be done in December, which put a paperwork burden on the call officers. He proposed that evaluations be done on the individual's anniversary date of hire.

Call Captain Chief Murray said in August 2002, the Board of Selectmen replaced the position of Call Force Captain with Call Force Administrative and Training Lieutenant. If the Board wants to fill this position, it will have to be reinstated. Under Supervision Exercised, it now reads, "In the absence of a full-time officer and while providing station coverage duties, the call Captain will coordinate and assign coverage crews to apparatus and station activities. It is recognized that full time firefighter personnel have a daily working knowledge of the status of apparatus and station activity and shall be consulted to assist a call Captain in making the appropriate decisions."

Chairman Cole referenced #6 under Examples of Duties, and asked if the Deputy Chief was Deputy Chief of Operations. Chief Murray said yes, it was. Selectman Massey noted that also applied under Supervision Received. He asked, if the call Captain was not at the station and an officer was not present, who the OIC was. Chief Murray said it would be the senior on-duty firefighter. Selectman Massey said even if the call Captain were there, he believed the senior full-time firefighter would be the officer in charge and asked for the rationale for the call Captain taking the lead. Chief Murray said there is more responsibility with a Captain's position. Selectman Massey made some comparisons with the Naval chain of command. Selectman Jasper said an officer is a command position, certified and trained to direct people in an emergency. It would be an insult to a call officer not to allow him to make the decision on who goes on what truck. He would be consulting with the full-time firefighter, who had a daily working knowledge of things.
(Start Tape 3, Side A)

Chairman Cole declared a break at 8:00 p.m. and gaveled the workshop back to order at 8:05 p.m.

Chief Murray said there are some initiatives being planned in a couple of years for manning the Robinson Road Station that the Board might be interested in considering. During his interview process, he and Selectman Jasper had a conversation relative to the expansion and renovation of Burns Hill Fire Station, whether or not that should continue to be a major project, or if they should take a closer look at the growth areas in Town. The circumferential highway had a lot to do with the current placement of stations, and that could change in the future. There is also the need for developing a plan for the future needs of the existing fire stations, to include renovation work. The current facilities are beginning to age and are experiencing some issues. For example, they just had to spend \$2,000 for drops to plug in fire apparatus on different circuit breakers at Central Station because they were overloading the electrical system. Selectman Stewart asked when the Fire Department would be advertising for call firefighters. Chief Murray hoped within a month. He'd like to get the Captain and full-time temp on board first and coordinate the new hires with a Level 1 class.

Chairman Cole said they received quite a bit of material tonight to digest, so unless someone felt differently, another workshop could be scheduled at a later date. Being no further discussion, Chairman Cole closed the workshop at 8:15 p.m.

Recorded and Transcribed by Priscilla Boisvert
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