

## HUDSON BOARD OF SELECTMEN

### Minutes of the March 3, 1998 Meeting w/the Fire Department

1. **Call to Order** by Chairman E. Lorraine Madison at 7:34 p.m.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**, led by Selectman Stewart

### 3. **Attendance**

**Selectmen**: E. Lorraine Madison, Rhona Charbonneau, Shawn N. Jasper, Ann Seabury and Terry Stewart

**Staff/Others**: Paul D. Sharon, Town Administrator; Priscilla Boisvert, Executive Assistant; Frank Carpentino, Fire Chief; Deputy Fire Chief Gary Rodgers; Howard Dilworth, Jr., Coleman Kelly and Nancy Regan

### 4. **Nonpublic Session**

*Consideration to enter Nonpublic Session under RSA 91-A:3 II (c) Matters which, if discussed in public, likely would affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a member of the body or agency itself, unless such person requests an open meeting by Selectman seconded by Selectman carried 5-0 by roll call vote.*

Nonpublic Session was entered into at 7:35 p.m. and was terminated at 8:35 p.m.

### 5. **Discussion of Items**

Chief Carpentino distributed material to the Selectmen. He referred to the department staffing analysis, which spans 83-98, which he explained. From 83-97, the department experienced a 52% increase in emergency calls. With low manpower, he has to bring people back on overtime to cover the station. Chairman Madison pointed out that in 1983 there were only 18 people, but in 1997 there were 33, so there is double the amount staff. Selectman Jasper said there were three shifts then, but there are four now.

Next, Chief Carpentino reviewed the number of alarms. From 1/1/94 through 12/31/97 there were 9,296 calls. Selectman Jasper said they need to break down the types of calls for duration and type. Chief Carpentino said within 15-minutes yesterday, they had four medical calls--but some calls are just false alarms. Night calls are fewer, but are usually longer in duration. Most of the DWI's, severe car accidents, are at night. A lot of fires are at night.

Chief Carpentino said in 95-96 there were 1,194 EMS calls and 1,543 fire calls. In 96-97, there 1,290 EMS calls and 1,543 fire calls. (Automobile accidents are included in the fire calls.) Paul said if accidents were covered as EMS calls, the proportions would shift so there would be more EMS than fire. Chief Carpentino said it would depend on how the primary call is logged. He said there is an increase in residential, commercial and industrial buildings and the population, traffic and the workforce in Town are increasing.

Chief Carpentino said department-wide staffing has to be addressed. There is a need for a second deputy chief to alleviate some of the administrative duties and to oversee the Fire Prevention bureau. He referred to the "Deputy Fire Chief Comparison Chart," Operations Deputy versus Administration Deputy. They need a full time training officer. Right now, a line captain does it as a secondary duty. He does the best he can, but there is no way he can put in the time and effort that is needed. Those two positions should be considered priorities of the department.

Chief Carpentino said they need eight men to man the stations--five out of central and three out of a substation. (He referenced a document that former Chief Carter put together, outlining additional manpower and manning a second station, but he cannot find a copy of it.) Full shift coverage will be expensive. In order to save money, they will need 10 per shift to allow for people having time off, There would be 40 people in operations, with eight on duty and two off. They would go from there if they wanted to cover a third station.

He was able to find some documents that talks about the minimum number of staff if there is only one station, which is

seven: three on an engine, two on an ambulance, two on a ladder truck. They are currently running two fives and two sixes. Chairman Madison said if the voters approve the article for two more personnel, there will be four sixes. If they approve two a year, in two years, he will have seven. Chief Carpentino stressed the importance of a second station, especially with the buildup in the southern end, which impact on the response of the crews from the central station and Burns Hill, especially since they will be crossing traffic.

He then talked about positions and rank. If the Town is not going contract out the fire alarm system, they will need to look at a fire alarm technician. It entails a lot of time, especially with more boxes going in. If the Town decides to go to a combined dispatch center, they will need two more full-time positions, a working supervisor and a dispatcher. At the present time, a shift captain is in charge. Someone has to be responsible for staffing, maintaining, enforcing policies and the budgeting of that area, maintain that area. He recommended seriously considering joint dispatch.

From 1985 to 1997, the department has gone through 40 dispatchers--35 part time and five full time. In the 15 months he has been here, they're training their third batch of dispatchers. The Captains and Lieutenants are overworked and overburdened with extra duty, in addition to doing their regular duties. They are maxed out and something needs to be done to offset the workload. Fortunately, there are a lot of dedicated employees who volunteer to do a lot of stuff without pay.

Right now they're running with three full-time and two part-time dispatchers, trying to get back up to five. One part-timer is looking to get a full-time firefighters job. If they cut the hours of the other two, they may lose them. He recommended revisiting combined dispatch, hiring someone independent to look at it and exempting the people who were involved last time because they may be biased. Whether they go with a combined dispatch or keep it as is, the need to establish a supervisor's position, preferably in PMA. It would take away the conflict and would allow more credibility to the position.

Their communications equipment is a problem, which they are working to improve. The average age of their radios is 20 years, most of which are police hand-me-downs. They can correct some of the short-term problems, but they need to look at something long range. Everything can be addressed when they look into combined dispatch.

Regarding facilities maintenance, all of the stations need work, plus windows, roofs and heating systems. He recommended that before they do any major renovations, thought be given to moving the locations of the three stations. It has been suggested that the central station is in the wrong place. If it is moved, the other stations will have to be moved, as well. Central station was built in 1952 for a volunteer fire department and it has outgrown itself and additional office and living space is needed, especially if they hire more firefighters. The central station is not user-friendly and not handicapped accessible. Dispatch needs to be expanded and here is no waiting room there. To fill out a permit, people are sitting on the stairs or sitting outside, writing against the wall.

Concerning apparatus, they are doing the best they can, but no matter how good the vehicle maintenance program is, things break down.

(Start Tape 1, Second Side)

Years ago, a plan was put in place to replace apparatus, and that needs to be updated. The Town needs to start putting money away to replace equipment, which is becoming more and more expensive. In the future, they may need to discuss custom built apparatus if they stay in the central station because of the station's size and width of the doors.

Chief Carpentino said with the type and size of the buildings coming in, the Town will need a second aerial device for the southern end of Town, such as a 75' Quint, a versatile, combination ladder truck and fire engine, which would cost from \$300,000-\$700,000. It will take a long time to get the apparatus from the Central station to the south end.

The Chief said code enforcement issues have taken up most of his time since he started--inspections, reviews dealing with contractors or citizens, fire marshal's office, other fire departments. They need to look at getting a Deputy Chief in with a strong background in prevention. More than likely, that position will come from outside the department. He is amazed at how much weight Steve Dube and Shane Sewade have lost because they are completely stressed out. They are in early, they are work through their lunches, and they stay late, completely over-burdened with the work they

have, and that is just new construction. If one of them leaves, the Town will be hard pressed to find someone for the money they get paid to fill those positions. There is no back up and that has been some of the continual problems. Fire Prevention has been an area that has gone unaddressed for too many years.

Chief Carpentino said a lot of things on the MRI checklist have been done, but a lot of things need to be done. Selectman Charbonneau said a Capital Reserve Fund should have been established during the Council years. Chairman Madison said for years no one in Town wanted to spend a penny or do anything unless it was a crisis. She heard that the ladder truck was a waste of money. Chief Carpentino disagreed, saying the Town needs a minimum of one aerial device, and it is used a lot.

He said there are three different Call companies: Engine 1, Engine 3 and Engine 4, with the latter being the one he is most concerned with, as it has the lowest response attendance on calls. When that truck doesn't respond to a call, it impacts the whole operation, especially if it is in that area of Town. That is the station that has been slated for years to be manned. Some people on the Call force are going above and beyond what is expected of them. Lt. Blinn in the central station is also a responding member out of the Burns Hill Station. Engine 1 company volunteered all winter redoing their station, and they've done quality work. Some people need to be let go if they don't participate.

In conclusion Chief Carpentino said the bottom line is there areas that need to be addressed. He needs to know where the elected officials stand and the direction they want him to head. The Fire Department is an integral part of the community and they need to start to plan for the future. It won't happen overnight, and it won't be cheap, but they need to prioritize projects. He will be coming in towards the end of this fiscal year, if he has any money left in some of his line items, to request authorization to use those funds to do other things that need to be done like they did last year. Chairman Madison asked that he not wait until the last minute like last year, adding that if there were large amounts left, then the items weren't budgeted accurately to begin with.

Chairman Madison thought the bartering system of swapping coal for cabinets is a great idea.

Selectman Jasper said they use ambulances a lot to do non-emergency transport. He asked if there has been any thought given to doing them on a scheduled basis because it takes away from the manpower and if it's not an emergency. Chief Carpentino said that has been discussed. Eventually, he'd like to use people back on overtime to do that, and bill the insurance companies to recoup the cost. They will look at that in the future.

Selectman Jasper said contract negotiations will be coming up soon and, concerning dispatching, a lot of departments either do four and two's or they shadow the shifts. Chief Carpentino said shadowing shifts isn't a good idea; Union and Administration have done a lot of research on this. Both sides have agreed that that will be an item for discussion in the contract to try to change. He didn't like the fact that somebody is on night shifts for x amount of years because they are low on seniority. They will look at different scheduling in the upcoming contract.

## **6. Adjournment**

*Motion to adjourn at 9:30 p.m. by Selectman Charbonneau, seconded by Selectman Stewart, carried unanimously.*

Recorded and transcribed by Priscilla Boisvert

Executive Assistant to the Board of Selectmen

**HUDSON BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

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**E. Lorraine Madison, Chairman**

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**Rhona Charbonneau**

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**Shawn N. Jasper**

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**Ann Seabury**

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**Terry Stewart**