

Town of New Boston

Board of Fire Wards

October 24, 2022

Fire Wards in attendance at the meeting were Wayne Blassberg, Dick Moody, Brian Dubreuil, Joe Segien, Brandon Merron and Derek Danis.

Also in attendance was NBFD Interim Assistant Administrator Laurel Flax.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:00 pm.

Public Comments:

Comment was made that Select Board Member David Litwinovich favored a Safety Complex over a Fire Station, while the other 2-Select Board members favored a Fire Station, and that David was slowing the process down and should be removed from the committee.

Appointments: None

Old Business:

Item 1. Approval of Public and Non-Public Minutes from October 10 meeting

- Brandon Merron made a motion to accept the Public and Non-Public minutes from the October 10 meeting as written. The motion was seconded by Joe Segien. All were in favor. The motion passed.

Item 2. Fire Station/Safety Complex Updates

- Brian Dubreuil highlighted some points in the Fire Station design following his meeting with the Town.
 - The Town has requested justification for all rooms/areas in the proposed new station.
 - The Select Board would like to decrease the square footage of the building to save money.
 - There was discussion of the “What” and “Why” for the various rooms and areas shown in the plan.
 - The size of the Training Room was discussed and the designated Fitness Room was agreed to be a wish rather than a need.
 - There was also discussion of our roster which will initially grow but then probably drop as more of the paid shifts are taken
 - The Board of Fire Wards agreed that the architect should be allowed to work with the design and make cuts where possible while still meeting the specified needs.
- Brandon Merron and Town Administrator, Paul Branscomb, are the contacts for Jason, the architect.
 - Jason has indicated that it will take about a month for the redesign of the building.
 - Brandon Merron will meet with the Fire Station Committee and try to get everyone together on the plan.

- Brian Dubreuil has spoken to David Litwinovich who has stated that he is not against the Fire Station, just that he feels the way the decision to go with a Fire Station instead of a Safety Complex was wrong. He feels that the Fire Station Committee was undermined.
- Brandon Merron reiterated that we need to wait for the redesign from Jason, the architect.

Item 3. Bunting Station Bathroom/Kitchen Redesign

- Brandon Merron indicated that the first water issue that needs to be addressed is the Sprinkler System Upgrade.
 - We would need to replace all water lines for a cost of ~ \$100,000.
 - The cost of the Sprinkler System would be \$200,000 to \$250,000.
 - The current water supply is inadequate. We would need to trench over to the hydrant by Town Hall or install a 30,000-gallon cistern, both of which are expensive projects.
- Brandon Merron has spoken to a contractor about the Bathroom/Kitchen redesign.
 - Anything we do will have to be ADA compliant.
 - There is some question of whether there is enough space for a Men's Bathroom with Shower, Women's Bathroom with Shower, Kitchen, Decon Area and washer/dryer.
 - Estimated cost would be \$100,000 to \$150,000.
- Wayne Blassberg presented a drawing of a possible design for the Bathroom/Kitchen.
 - Brandon Merron suggested making one co-ed bathroom with shower and using the other bathroom/shower space for decon.
- Brian Dubreuil and Dick Moody suggested getting an Office Trailer with bathrooms and showers. Brandon Merron added that a trailer would need a water supply, septic and hear.

Item 4. Budget Updates

- Derek Danis provided an update on the 2023 Budget following his meeting with Brian Dubreuil and Finance Director, Jennifer Allocca.
 - Emergency Funding was authorized starting November 1, 2022 for Per Diem Nights and weekends with Officer.
 - There are 2-Scenarios
 - All Internal Personnel – stay at home and have to respond. They will be paid \$16 per hour.
 - This scenario assume that we can get our current members to take all these shifts.
 - Hire Per Diem from Outside at \$25 per hour rate for nights and weekends.
 - This funding provides 24/7 coverage
 - For the Outside Per Diem, we need a place for them to stay at night
 - Brian Dubreuil reported that we are authorized under the Emergency Funding to rent a place to stay for up to \$2500 per month.
 - Brain Dubreuil also reported that we will be able to rent a 2-Bedroom house within walking distance to Bunting Station.
 - The rent is \$1200 per month and the Electric is ~ \$200 and the oil is ~ \$200, making the monthly cost ~ \$1600.
 - The house has a bathroom with a shower and a washer/dryer in the kitchen.

- The house is unfurnished and if any appliances break, we would need to replace them.
- The church owns this property and Brian Dubreuil met with them to discuss our use of the property. We have a lease agreement with them.
 - There will be rules and regulations for personnel staying in the house.
 - We will need to police ourselves and keep the house clean as part of duties when on shift there.
- Even if the new station is approved, it will take at least 2-years to build and we will need something like this for Night Shift Personnel.
- This also gives us a washer/dryer for all to use for regular clothes (but not for Gear).
 - The Emergency Funding goes till March, so we need to add these costs into the budget and write a Warrant Article to cover them if there is a default budget.
- The Town Cost of Living Adjustment of 3% was added to all salaries. This was less than the original adjustment which was budgeted at 5%, so that is a decrease in the budget.
- The Per Diem Nights and Weekends were changed to 52 Weeks at \$25.75 per hour. The actual rate of pay will depend on the EMS and Fire qualifications of the person taking the shift. This rate for a FF/P would be \$26.75.
 - Derek Danis added that there is extra here since we will not be able to staff fully at the Paramedic level. The majority of people taking Per Diem shifts currently are at \$18-\$19 per hour. A F2/AEMT would be paid ~ \$23.
- Derek Danis reported that the amount of gas budgeted was increase due to the new Chief of Operations who will be provided a car and gas and will be commuting from Bedford.
- Derek Danis has created a new line item for housing where the \$19,200 per year in rent will show on this line.
- Derek Danis reported that the new Budget is \$968,000 which is a 200% increase from 2022. For comparison, the Police Department budget is \$1,036,000.
- Derek Danis expressed that there are excess wages in this budget and Brian Dubreuil voiced a concern that we will look like we don't need it if we don't use it.
- Brian Dubreuil added that there were 17 times we could not put a truck on the road to respond to a call due to a lack of personnel and this budget is the Board of Fire Wards offering a solution to the problem.
- Derek Danis added that Mutual Aid is not always available either. A discussion of Mutual Aid availability followed. Several departments are short of personnel and Brian Dubreuil agreed that we cannot rely on Mutual Aid to answer calls.
- Wayne Blassberg added that there is a plan for Mutual Aid based on geographic location. The plan is color coded and he will send it out to all. This plan is what dispatch uses for who to call when we request Mutual Aid.
- Brian Dubreuil added that our people are burnt out and when one person responds and gets no help, it tends to drive them away from answering calls. The fix we are proposing is to schedule and pay people to be there to respond.

New Business:

Item 1. Warrant Article Content for 2023 Ballot

- Brian Dubreuil stated that many of the 2023 Warrant Articles are to address funding if the Town budget does not pass.
- Warrant Articles:
 - Reverse 1994 Article 22 – remove “from among the Fire Wards” from the Chief description. Will read Approved by the Board of Fire Wards pursuant to RSA 154:1 IV
 - This Warrant Article will not take effect until 1-year after it is passed
 - There is no cost associated with this Warrant Article.
 - Establish Fire Department Equipment Capital Reserve Fund
 - No Equipment was allowed in the Capital Reserve Fund per the CIP Committee – the Article to add Equipment to the CIP passed, but needed a 2/3 Vote which it did not get
 - Dispatch Services – last year’s wording with new numbers.
 - Remove \$339,000 from Vehicle CRF for Utility 2 as planned
 - If we do not use all the money, it goes back into the fund
 - Rental for “Nan’s House”
 - Covers rent and utilities
 - Null and Void if Budget passes.
 - Station Upgrades
 - Primex list if New Station does not pass
 - Brian Dubreuil talked to Primex.
 - Primex is not like a private insurance carrier. List is advisory and our insurance will not be cancelled, however we could be liable if something happens due to the deficiencies that we were aware of.
 - If New Station passes, we do not need to address all the items immediately, even given the fact that construction of the New Station will be at least 2-years.
 - Shower, Washer and Dryer at “Nan’s House” will help
 - Primex understands that some things are not reasonable and that items that can be done can be phased in over time.
 - Derek Danis indicated that we should get all the numbers to address the deficiencies and indicate that this is a band aid, not a solution. Also, that each year we do not address the issues the cost increases.
 - Brian Dubreuil added that we should prioritize the projects and attempt to address the ones we would be liable for first. The #1 Priority should be Bathroom/Shower/Decon area
 - Brandon Merron will continue to get the numbers and we can decide what to put in. Also, Brandon Merron will address these issues with the Committee. Brandon Merron emphasized that we need to supply adequate working conditions.
 - Wayne Blassberg asked when Brandon Merron’s list would be completed and Brandon Merron indicated 3-4 Weeks. Brandon Merron will send out a spreadsheet with rough numbers.

- Derek Danis indicated that we will need Warrants for all new Personnel costs and other new items if Town Budget does not pass
 - Night/Weekend Per Diem
 - Weekend Officer
 - Day shift is default for half – need to add 6 months
 - COO Wages – Need Warrant to cover 40-hours per week
 - Storage Trailer Rent - \$1500/year
 - Brian Dubreuil indicated that this was petty and should just be in the budget. There was agreement and there will be no Warrant Article for the Storage Trailer.
 - Bunting Station repairs/upgrades
- Brian Dubreuil indicated that we will need LOTS of explanations for everything and that the Town Administrator and Finance Director have assured him again that Salaries will be paid first even in the case of a default budget.
- Brian Dubreuil will consult with Chief Plourde about these articles.
- Derek Danis suggested that we play with the wages since we are unlikely to fill all of the shifts.
- Brian Dubreuil indicated that we are changing from volunteer to call and that 80% of any municipal budget is salary. The majority of the increase in our budget is wages.

Item 2. Fire Prevention Trailer

- Derek Danis reported that last year he was informed that the Bedford Fire Prevention Trailer leaked, was overrun by mice and was unusable. Actually, it is fine and there are no mice. Bedford no longer wants it and asked if we want it.
- The 5-Towns that share the trailer are Bedford, Litchfield, New Boston, Amherst and Merrimack.
- Brandon Merron indicated that it could be stored at Highway or at his Shop
- All agreed that the Fire Prevention Trailer is a great tool and the teachers love it.
- There was discussion of the Registration, Insurance and whether the trailer could be donated to the Association or whether it would need to be transferred to the Town since it is a Bedford Town Asset. It would become another vehicle in our fleet, but the only cost is registration and upkeep.
- Registration and upkeep could come out of the Supplies line in the Fire Inspector's budget or Brazecom could make a donation
- Brandon Merron indicated that he could get the trailer and park it at his shop while everything is figured out.

Other Business: None

Chief's Report: None

Round Table:

- Wayne Blassberg noted that it is possible to get and Interstate CDL without a Medical Card when you renew.

Derek Danis made a motion for Non-Public per RSA 91-A: 3.II (a),(b),(c) Personnel and Legal. The motion was seconded by Brandon Merron. All Fire Wards were in favor by Roll Call Vote. The motion passed.

The Board entered Non-Public Session at 8:32 pm.

The Board reconvened the Public Session at 8:48 pm.

Wayne Blassberg made a motion to Seal the minutes from the Non-Public portion of this meeting indefinitely as allowed in RSA 93. Brandon Merron seconded the motion. All Fire Wards were in favor by Roll Call Vote. The motion passed.

Brandon Merron made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 pm. The motion was seconded by Wayne Blassberg. The motion passed.

Minutes recorded by Laurel Flax.