



WEARE BOARD OF FIRE WARDS
MEETING MINUTES
August 15, 2023

PRESENT: STEVE ROBERTS- CHAIRMAN, WAYNE MEATTEY- VICE CHAIR, LOUISA ERF-MEMBER, KILLIAN DONNELLY - NON-MEMBER, CHRISTOPHER OLSEN-INTERIM FIRE CHIEF, MARK ROARICK-ASSISTANT FIRE CHIEF, NAOMI BOLTON- TOWN ADMINISTRATOR.

ABSENT: DAVID HEWEY SR.-MEMBER, LEAH CUSHMAN- NON-MEMBER

Chairman Roberts called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

Old Business-Personnel Letters: Interim Chief Olsen said the letters about restructuring the Fire Department have been sent out. Lieutenant Amanda Charest's promotion letter went out and she has been accepted to paramedic school and will be starting soon. Interim Chief Olsen said Fire Fighter Rebecca Chatney started her paramedic clinical hours. Fire Fighters Chatney, Lemay, and Brent have been accepted AM EMT Program, Advanced Intermediate Program. Interim Chief Olsen said they should be getting money back to the Town from the state for the program. Call Fire Fighter Andy Wheeler has been accepted to the Fire Fighter One and Two programs, and Yan, Lieutenant, and Ian start the Fire Fighter Two program.

Old Business-Apparatus: Apparatus two is 210 days out as of July 22 or close to that date. They went with the Ford Chassis because it was the first to come in.

New Business- Personnel: Interim Chief Olsen said all personnel have begun their classes. Lieutenant Charest should be finished next year with Paramedic School. Everyone should be back in service from training in November. The department at that time will be full of AEMTs and will be no EMTs. When Lieutenant Charest finishes paramedic school there will be four paramedics in the department.

New Business- Apparatus: Interim Chief Olsen said Ambulance One is back in service. They have not received a bill yet and will present it to the Board when they receive it. Interim Chief Olsen said the new turbo in the ambulance started throwing codes. Ford said it is okay to still run the ambulance because the codes that are appearing will not hurt the engine. The rest of the apparatus' are in working service.

New Business- Fire Station: Interim Chief Olsen said they had a nice cleanup day at the South Station. Lieutenants Meattey and Charest along with Fire Fighters Brent and Lemay, Assistant Chief Roarick, and Caroline assisted with the cleanup. Interim Chief Olsen thanked Chairman Roberts for coming as well. The computer has been put into a closet waiting for IT to come to take it and bring a new computer. The garage door is still out of service they have called Overhead Door multiple times to fix the door and hopefully be fixed this week. The compressor has been serviced and the paperwork has been mailed out for the air test. Assistant Chief Roarick ordered a couple of cabinets for both stations for the flammable liquids to get into compliance with Building Codes.

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48 **New Business- Activities:** Interim Chief Olsen said that there was an ambulance at the play on Friday
49 night with a member and then an engine crew available at the Old Home Day event. The DART training
50 happened on August 10th at the high school. It was an excellent training. The underwater camera is now
51 back in service for marine operations.
52

53 **Budget and Capital Reserves:** Interim Chief Olsen said 42% of the budget is remaining and 58% has
54 been spent. Some line items have gone over. For example, would be the full-time ENT firefighter wages.
55 He will need to check with Finance Director Rouse to see if that included the 5% increases. The special
56 details are over by 109% and Interim Chief Olsen will get a detailed report from Finance Director Rouse.
57 The safety and medical gear are getting close which include supplies for the ambulances. Interim Chief
58 Olsen said they have had \$4,500 for uniforms for eight officers and it is roughly about \$1,500 for one
59 person's full uniform which is very low for the number of officers. Interim Chief Olsen said as of right
60 now they are only 3.88%. Interim Chief Olsen said the Fire Capital reserve only earns 0.05 each month.
61 The Comstar deposits from January to July have totaled up to \$66,218.52 in revenue. The Finance
62 Department covered \$71,750.76 and the FFR deposits were \$4,704.23. The totals from January to July are
63 \$138,998.99 in the general activity reserve account. Interim Chief Olsen said the Fire Department vehicle
64 equipment special revenue fund there was transferred in May \$201,722.69. Erf asked what the difference
65 was between the Comstar \$128,405.09 net amount and the \$201,722.69 and where the transfer was coming
66 from. Interim Chief Olsen said it is separate the \$128,405.09 is ambulance billing and the Fire Department
67 vehicle special revenue is transferred by the Finance Department and the Finance Director would be able
68 to answer the question. Interim Chief Olsen said the air pack replacement capital reserve only has \$21,036.
69 To replace the air packs, they will need fifty to sixty thousand dollars. Interim Chief Olsen said the general
70 repairs have stayed the same. The summary of the vehicle's repairs is \$11,199.42.
71

72 **Activity Sheet:** Interim Chief Olsen provided the Board with an activity sheet from July through image
73 trend. This is a way for them to print out the activity calls without violating any HIPPA concerns.
74

75 **Strategic Plan:** Interim Chief Olsen said he was tasked to give the Fire Department a strategic plan. This
76 is a dynamic plan and will be ever-changing. The plan will take about three to five years to complete. The
77 plan can be added to and re-routed if needed. The plan is in Word doc form. Everyone in the Fire
78 Department has access to it and can make changes as needed if they inform the Chief. Interim Chief Olsen
79 asked the Board to look at it and bring any questions back next month. Chair Roberts asked the Board if
80 they would be okay with having a special meeting on August 29th to go over the strategic plan with Interim
81 Chief Olsen. The Board agreed on the special meeting date of August 29th.
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83 **CIP:** Interim Fire Chief Olsen said in the CIP there is a 2024 Fire Rescue apparatus. This would be to
84 replace engine one. Donnel asked what year engine one was. Interim Chief Olsen said it is 1987. Chair
85 Roberts said it would not replace engine one it would replace the first due out of service. Interim Chief
86 Olsen said they are looking to add a headset and portables down the road, along with an ambulance and
87 tanker. They will push the rescue further down the line in the CIP than originally planned. The engine
88 would be around \$850,000 but that is an older number.
89

90 **July 18, 2023 Minutes:** Motion made by Vice Chair Meattley to accept the draft minutes as presented.
91 Seconded by Donnel. Motion passes 5-0-0.
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93 **Manifest:** Motion made by Chair Roberts to accept the Fire Department's accounts payable manifest for
94 checks dated August 17, 2023, for \$7,925.76. Seconded by Donnel. Motion passes 5-0-0.
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96 **Fire Chief Position:** Chair Roberts read an email from Neal Kurk into the records regarding the Fire Chief's
97 position. The email stated to "oppose any Fire Ward's decision to create or fill a full-time Fire Chief
98 position. There is no reason to burden the taxpayers with an addition cost of a full-time Chief. Nearly

99 doubling the current part-time Chief's cost. Weare is growing but it is still a small town and does not yet
100 need any full-time supervisory employees indeed, I would hope you would consider reducing the full-
101 timers and increasing the call force. One that would involve more townspeople helping townspeople."
102 Chair Roberts would like to respond to the email. Chair Roberts said in the fire service, they are here to
103 manage a fire department through the expertise of the Board and the Chief. To work diligently to know
104 how to vote responsibly. Chair Roberts said he does look at the Boards bosses as the voters. In the last four
105 years, the Board has presented the finance committee with full-time coverage. In 2019 the warrant asked
106 for two full-time firefighter EMTs and the vote was 63% in favor and the actual votes were 929 to 584 and
107 continued to pass in favor up to 2022. Chair Roberts said while he appreciates Mr. Kirk taking the time to
108 submit an email and give his opinion the town has shown continuous support in having that service. Chair
109 Roberts said it is the vision of the Board would be the full-time Chief would be an important member of
110 the department not just for administration and supervisory but for responding and working on calls. Chair
111 Roberts said he believes that with the support being reflected through the voters at town meetings and the
112 needs for the department, the Board should put a warrant article together to put before the voters and allow
113 them to say yes or no. Donnel said he can appreciate Mr. Kirks's opinion but he does not agree that full-
114 timers should be reduced. Donnel said that he does not think it is a burden on the taxpayers when the
115 position is a life-or-death situation. Whether the taxpayer uses them or not they are there if you need them
116 to be.

117
118 Board Member Erf read an email from Janice Matthews of 29 Woodbury Road. "Dear Administrator
119 Bolton and the Board of Fire Wards. I have heard discussions in town that the Board of Fire Wards is
120 considering moving the Fire Chief position from part-time to full-time. I am opposed to this action at this
121 time for the following reasons. One within the last six months the Board of Fire Ward members voted to
122 disband and turn off administrative oversight of the Fire Department to the Weare Board of Selectmen.
123 The townspeople voted in March 2023 in agreement with making any significant change in the last few
124 months of existence will be perceived as trying to ram things through or worse pull one over on the
125 taxpayers. Two it is my understanding that there has been a long understanding assertion by those
126 performing the job that the town of Weare Fire Chief duties only required a part-time occupant. What is
127 precipitating the discussed change? Three while the Fire Chief is an appointed position making a 20%
128 increased position scope and salary accompanying added benefits is a significant change in responsibility
129 and associated expenditure. As such it should only be done after a public hearing at a minimum. I believe
130 it should be brought forward to the town by warrant article vote but only after an affirmative
131 recommendation by the Board of Selectmen. Four it is unclear what essential services are not being met
132 due to the current construct of the part-time Chief, further, it is not clear how those services will be
133 recovered by the increase in Chief responsibility and associated salary and benefits. If this is not a proposal
134 based on fulfilling essential services it is equally unclear what additional benefit the town's people and the
135 Fire Department employees will receive by the increase in Chief responsibility. I respectfully encourage
136 full transparency by the Board of Fire Wards and engage the Board of Selectmen and the taxpayers of
137 Weare in this critical and costly infrastructure discussion and decision. I do not see a public comment
138 section of the meeting, therefore I am sending this as an email in advance of the meeting. Please include
139 this with the record of the meeting." Donnel said Interim Chief Olsen and Assistant Chief Roarick have an
140 open-door policy and would encourage any resident to speak with them to have questions answered. Chair
141 Roberts said the Board voted to not have public comment during the meeting two years ago. The reasoning
142 was it would be better served if they wanted to speak, they could request to be on the agenda, and that way
143 the Board could be prepared to have a productive conversation. The Board is not opposed to someone
144 coming to speak with them they just need to request to be added to the agenda. Chair Roberts said he takes
145 a little exception to the ramming something through. The Board has had a history of being very open and
146 transparent. It goes back four years ago when they brought forth a plan to the finance committee and
147 Selectmen. The plan they presented was overwhelmingly supported. Chair Roberts said by law there would
148 be a public discussion and the information will be out there for the voters. The former Fire Chief said that
149 the department needs a full-time Chief eventually. Chair Roberts said he spoke with two other Chiefs who

do not have the call volume as Weare and have no full-time employees and both said on a part-time basis and can not keep up with the work that they are required to do.

Interim Chief Olsen said thank you to Ms. Matthews and Mr. Kurk for their feedback and would encourage them to come speak with the Fire Department and he has an open-door policy. Interim Chief Olsen said the Fire Chief should not be part-time running a 1.1 million dollar business. There is a lot to manage in a 24/7 facility. If this continues there is no accountability for the actions if it was a part-time position. Interim Chief Olsen said in his professional opinion the Town does need a full-time Fire Chief. Donnel suggested having one or two of the Selectmen start attending the Board of Fire Wards meeting so it is a smoother transition. Vice Chair Meattey said they discuss a full-time Chief and there was disagreement and it got shot down and would say that the Board is not trying to ram things through or pull one over on the townspeople. Chair Roberts said they would like to work together with the Board of Selectmen on the warrant articles. He thinks that they should give people the opportunity to vote on the budget. Vice Chair Meattey said a while back he was against a full-time Chief and now sees the need for a full-time Chief and would agree that the voters are the way to go.

Chair Roberts motioned to appoint assistant Chief Mark Roarick to Acting Chief of the Weare Fire Department effective October 1st, 2023, and support a 2024 warrant article asking the voters for funds to transition to a full-time Chief. Chief Roarick will stay on his current shift until the town vote with the flexibility to cover his shift as needed within the current budget. Seconded by Board Member Donnelly with discussion.

Board Member Donnelly asked what Assistant Chief Roarick's thoughts were on the position. Assistant Chief Roarick said he believed that the town does need to have a full-time Chief, He has worked per diem for 12 years. The town has grown so much over time. There are a lot more things that need to be done during the day. He would like to stay as a working Chief and operate as a Fire Fighter. If he goes to a part-time position, he would have to retire because of the NH retirement system and be separated from the town for 28 days to come back as a part-time employee. He would only be able to work a certain amount of time and there is a lot of work that needs to be done every week. Erf asked in what is being proposed is that the Assistant Chief become the new acting Chief, then if the voters say yes to the full-time Chief, they would be shifting the position. Chair Roberts said he is a full-time Chief in the department and would have to retire to become the acting part-time Chief. Erf asked if this changed the original plan. Chair Roberts said no he would just be the Interim Chief until the vote is moved before the voters. Vice Chair Meattey said he understands what Chair Roberts is proposing but it is not adding up in his head. Assistant Chief Roarick said for him there was a lot of talk prior and the position at the time did not require a full-time Fire Chief. This would be a patch to get through for four to five months until the townspeople can vote.

Motion carries by a 3-1-1 vote. (In favor Roberts, Donnelly, Olsen. Opposed Erf. Abstention Meattey.)

Interim Chief Olsen will work with TA Bolton before asking the Board of Selectmen to attend the Board of Fire Ward meetings.

Motion to adjourn made by Board Member Donnelly. Seconded by Interim Fire Chief Olsen. Motion passes 5-0-0.

ADJOURNMENT

A True Record.

Kearsten O'Brien

Kearsten O'Brien, Minute Taker