



WEARE BOARD OF FIRE WARDS  
MEETING MINUTES  
August 29, 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, LEAH CUSHMAN- NON-MEMBER.

**ABSENT:** DAVID HEWEY SR.-MEMBER

Chairman Roberts called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

**Strategic Plan Discussion:** Interim Chief Olsen presented the Strategic Plan to the Board of Fire Wards. The only things that have changed since they last met were the dates and the due dates. There were twelve topics that he had come up with. Within the topics, it has sections of details of tasks and activities to accomplish. The Fire Chief will oversee that the officers the Chief accomplish the tasks. The Board needs to decide who will take ownership of the plan. The most this plan should be pushed out is three years at the most. The officers are excited to work with the plan. This plan is to help the Fire Department to get on a schedule. Erf asked about 1E maintaining a high quality of service and asked if this was already a task for Captain Houde because she had seen it throughout the plan. Interim Chief Olsen said yes. Interim Chief Olsen said that the tasks that are within the plan were brought to him by the personnel. Board Member Erf said she is concerned with the incentive days. She stated that she does not disagree that physical fitness is important but incentivizing it adds to the issue they currently have with overtime and believes that if it is a requirement of the job, it should be incentive enough to maintain it. Board Member Cushman said that she is concerned about task 1G equipping appropriate fitness equipment because they just purchased around twelve thousand dollars worth of fitness equipment a few years ago and having that completed by next June is an affront to everyone who voted for brand new equipment last June. Chairman Roberts stated on both concerns the Board is the one who controls the budget, and they have talked about the incentive program and it did not go forward. Chairman Roberts asked if it is possible that the goal be to purchase additional equipment on top of what they already have purchased. Board Member Cushman said the new equipment should be easy to identify the need and then bring it to Town Meeting as a warrant article. Board Member Cushman said since the Board decided not to move forward with the incentive it should be taken out of the strategic plan. Interim Chief Olsen said it can be removed from the plan, but he would suggest to the new Chief that it should be brought up again because it is important and the firefighters need to be CPAP certified through the State of New Hampshire.

Board Member Cushman spoke about task 4E and seeking to hire a grant writer. Board Member Erf asked if it truly meant to hire a grant writer. Interim Chief Olsen said no, he had written grants before the academy has a class in writing grants. It would entail sending one or two officers to take a class at a couple of hundred dollars a piece to be able to write grants for the department in the future. Board Member Cushman said that she does not feel comfortable voting to implement the Strategic Plan today without having time to reflect and ask people in town how they feel about the plan. She said at the end of the day someone is

47 putting the bill for all they do. Interim Chief Olsen asked the Board to remember they must stay within a  
48 budget. This is not going above and beyond a budget. Board Member Cushman stated that many things  
49 have been moved around in the approved budget since Interim Chief Olsen started. Interim Chief Olsen  
50 said he has not moved money around. Board Member Cushman said she believed that Interim Chief Olsen  
51 said that he moved money around for extra pay while Assistant Chief Roarick was training. Interim Chief  
52 Olsen said it is all within the budget. Board Member Cushman said she understands that it is within the  
53 budget but the taxpayers expect that dollar amount for each line to be used for the line. Interim Chief Olsen  
54 said if he goes over the 1.1-million-dollar budget then he would understand Board Member Cushman's  
55 concerns but it is a bottom-line budget so there is the ability to move things around. Board Member  
56 Cushman said she does not believe it is a good practice and that it should be used for exactly what it is  
57 asked for. Interim Chief Olsen said what if an emergency happens and the money needs to be spent. They  
58 can not say no to an emergency because they do not have a specific line item in the budget for that  
59 emergency. Board Member Cushman said she does not agree with Interim Chief Olsen. Chairman Roberts  
60 said he feels as though the Board has done exactly what they have intended to do since bringing on Interim  
61 Chief Olsen and it is within the budget. Chairman Roberts said when the Board brought on the company  
62 to do the hiring process, no one from the Board had asked where the money was coming from when it was  
63 approved. Board Member Cushman said it was coming from the Chief's Salary. Chairman Roberts said no  
64 one had discussed that and was not sure where the bait and switch was coming from. Board Member  
65 Cushman said for Assistant Chief Roarick's increase. Chairman Roberts said it that was not discussed.  
66 Board Member Cushman said she remembers asking because she was concerned and if given more  
67 responsibilities, she would expect there would be a pay increase. Board Member Cushman said that she  
68 was assured by multiple people on the Board that would not be the case. Interim Chief Olsen said he is not  
69 switching things around. If you look at the budget and see there is a minus in a line item, that is what it is.  
70 It is not a scenario of taking this to put it that. If the Board has questions, they can go to Finance Director  
71 Rouse about the financial reports that are provided to the Board.  
72

73 Board Member Cushman said she has concerns with task 6G and expects additional staffing needs as  
74 neighborhoods and businesses grow. She understands that planning for expansion is good but the growth  
75 within the Town has dropped. Expecting the calls are going to keep increasing and to plan on a union  
76 department is concerning. Chairman Roberts asked what it meant to plan for a union department. Board  
77 Member Erf said that the population growth has gone down by 3% between 2010 and 2020. Therefore, the  
78 Town is not increasing at a large rate. Interim Chief Olsen said the numbers have increased. Chairman  
79 Roberts said they do not want to be where they were in 2009 when the department had collapsed because  
80 we did not keep up with the growth of the Town. Board Member Cushman asked how the call force was  
81 back then. Chairman Roberts said it collapsed because of the increase in business. Board Member Cushman  
82 asked what Chairman Roberts meant by collapsed. Chairman Roberts said they were not providing  
83 adequate service. Interim Chief Olsen said there are not many call forces out there. Board Member  
84 Cushman said it has been disincentivized by adding more full-time staff. Board Member Cushman said she  
85 thinks that always having two full-timers or two members of the department, and not allowing for the call  
86 force to fill in during peak hours, took away the community involvement of the call force. She said she is  
87 concerned with the speed of growth in the department and does not think that it goes hand and hand with  
88 the growth of the Town. Chairman Roberts said that at the last meeting, he read the percentages and  
89 numbers at the last four town meetings and they proposed a plan in the 2019 budget year to put two people  
90 on full-time and the voters have supported the Board. In 2010 the per diem program was created to help  
91 the call department because they could not keep up with the calls. Chairman Roberts said from that time  
92 forward until they started the full-time program it began to get harder for the on-call people when they are  
93 receiving over 500 calls a year. Assistant Chief Roarick said that times have changed and many places  
94 now are looking for full-time firefighters. Discussion ensued.  
95

96 Board Member Erf asked about task 9D reviewing all available dispatch because they signed the agreement  
97 with Capital Area. Interim Chief Olsen said they did sign that agreement and it is working out great, but  
98 they need to continue to visit it because there may be something better out there. Board Member Cushman

99 agreed with Interim Chief Olsen that it is good stewardship to review the agreement. Board Member  
100 Cushman asked if 10C fire prevention officer will need to regularly schedule inspections of buildings.  
101 Board Member Cushman asked what buildings get inspected annually. Interim Chief Olsen said schools,  
102 childcare centers, occupancy permits, restaurants, sprinkler systems, and new businesses. Board Member  
103 Cushman asked if private residences that have sprinkler systems needed to be inspected. Interim Chief  
104 Olsen said yes, the initial, and if they ask them. Board Member Cushman asked about task 10D and what  
105 the programs would entail. Interim Chief Olsen said the programs would be like blood pressure clinics, car  
106 seat installation, stop the bleed, things that cost little money and can be done on duty. Interim Chief Olsen  
107 said that he marked down the concerns and noted the concerns about money. He said he could not do  
108 anything without the board's approval. Board Member Cushman asked about cisterns and looking for dry  
109 areas around town and asked if it was going to make everyone must put in a cistern. Interim Chief Olsen  
110 said no, this would be for preventative maintenance on the cisterns. The program is to establish a  
111 relationship with the builders and get the plans ahead of time. Board Member Cushman asked if the Board  
112 needed to approve this and then the Board of Selectmen for the Town Administrator to sign. Interim Chief  
113 Olsen said he wanted to bring it to personnel first to accept and then the Board because the personnel has  
114 taken a lot of ownership of the plan. Once the Board approves it then he would like to bring it to the Town  
115 Administrator to get the Selectmen's approval.

116

117 **Chairman Roberts motioned to approve the Strategic Plan as presented. Vice Chair Meattley**  
118 **seconded. Motion passes 4-1-1. Cushman-No, Erf- Abstain.**

119

120 Board Member Cushman said that she cannot support the strategic plan because she has not had enough  
121 time to deliberate. There are some concerns and understands this is not static and she does not feel  
122 comfortable voting in the affirmative currently.

123

124 **SOG Discussion:** Interim Chief Olsen clarified that the employees earn ten hours for holiday pay and do  
125 not get any extra. Vice Chairman Meattley said it is in the personnel policy. Board Member Erf clarified if  
126 you work the holiday, you get time and a half for the 24-hour shift and then 10 hours of holiday pay. Interim  
127 Chief Olsen said yes. Board Member Erf said if you do not work you get ten hours. Interim Chief Olsen  
128 said yes.

129

130 **Board Member Donnelly motioned to approve the SOG as presented. Seconded by Board Member**  
131 **Erf. Motion passes 5-0-1. Abstain Meattley.**

132

133 Chief Interim Olsen said there is a military personnel policy within the Town Policy. Interim Chief Olsen  
134 read what is currently in the Town Policy. He said he would like to add fifteen days of military days because  
135 it's roughly fifteen days a year that they go away. He asked the Board if they would like a policy brought  
136 to them. The Board agreed and Interim Chief Olsen said that he would bring the policy to the next meeting.

137

138 **SCBA:** Interim Chief Olsen said the air packs are not compliant. Fire Tech has provided them with used  
139 air packs for free and wrote thank you letters to them. They now have ten compliant packs. They now need  
140 to buy ten new air bottles. Another company offered to loan some packs. Now 20 packs are compliant  
141 without bottles. Interim Chief Olsen asked the Board if they could take out \$11,000 from the CRF to be  
142 compliant for ten bottles. Interim Chief Olsen said he would help Assistant Chief Roarick write a grant.  
143 Chairman Roberts asked about the life span of the bottles. Interim Chief Olsen said five years. Interim  
144 Chief Olsen said it is \$55 per firefighter to get a mask fit test and it has not been done in at least three years  
145 and needs to be done yearly.

146

147 **Board Member Donnelly motioned to allow Interim Chief Olsen to go to the Board of Selectmen to**  
148 **ask for ten Scott Carbon Cylinders 4,500 thirty-minute bottles in the amount of \$11,00 to be**  
149 **expended Air Pack Replacement CRF. Seconded Erf. Motion passes 6-0-0.**

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151 Board Member Cushman stated that the minutes from November to June have not been posted to the Town  
152 Website and they are supposed to be posted within five days. She would like to see them posted as soon as  
153 possible.

154

155 **Motion to adjourn made by Board Member Donnelly at 7:22 pm. Seconded by Interim Fire Chief**  
156 **Olsen. Motion passes 5-0-0.**

157

158 **ADJOURNMENT**

159 A True Record.

160 *Kearsten O'Brien*

161 Kearsten O'Brien, Minute Taker