

Town of Farmington
Board of Selectmen Public Meeting Minutes
Monday, July 19, 2021

Board Members Present:

Paula Proulx, Chairman
Neil Johnson, Vice Chairman
Ken Dickie
Gerry Vachon
Doug Staples

Others Present:

Arthur Capello, Town Administrator
James Reinert, Fire Chief
Royal Edgerly, Asst. Fire Chief
Tim Moody, resident

1). Call to Order:

Chairman Proulx called the meeting to order at 6 p.m.

2). Pledge of Allegiance:

All present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

3). Public Input: None

4). Review of Minutes:

July 12, 2021- Public Session- No errors or omissions

Motion: (Johnson, second Staples) to accept the minutes as written passed 5-0.

July 12, 2021- Non-Public Sessions A, B, C – No errors or omissions

Motion: (Johnson, second Dickie) to accept the minutes as written passed 5-0.

Motion: (Johnson, second Staples) to unseal Non-Public Sessions B and C passed 5-0.

5). Fire Dept. Pay Scale:

Chief Reinert said he had a couple of discussions with Mr. Capello over the past few weeks regarding recruitment and retention issues within the Fire Dept. He said they have been dealing with this for quite a period of time even pre-COVID and it is a national issue.

He said during the last 12 months they have seen a dramatic issue with it and they aren't getting as many applicants as they typically do and the ones they do get when they find out where our pay scale is it ends there but they do get some people in to sign on with them.

Retaining some of the senior members of the dept. has been dropping off primarily due to the current wage scale he said.

He said he was looking to the board to see how they can mitigate this and retain some people and make it more attractive to applicants that are looking to get into the fire service or may be looking for more part time hours as a Firefighter/EMT. He said it is competitive and there is an average of 25-30 different depts. on the Fire Academy's website looking for people. The majority of those are full time positions and people are by-passing the part time call experience and are able to get right into a full time position with another agency he said.

Chief Reinert said he included some statistics in his memo on how they operate so the board would be aware. He said everybody that works for the Fire Dept. also works a full time job except for Doug (Houston) who is technically retired and works part time. A large portion of those people work for another emergency service and sometimes that affects how we work because they might be coming off shift and they are scheduled to work in Farmington but get held over for some reason at their primary job and that puts a wrinkle in our coverage. About one quarter of them work for 2 or more other emergency services within the state and that also affects how we schedule and are able to get people to sign up for shifts because we are at the lower end of the other depts. they work for he said.

The Chief said they average about 500 hours a week to cover all shifts and the majority of the callbacks. He said in 2019 and 2020 there was a 5% increase in call volume and year-to-date from 2020 to last week when this memo was compiled there was approx. 12% increase in call volume. We typically have 33 spots on the roster and currently have 22 Firefighter/EMT's with between 1 year and 27 years of service with the dept. and they just hired 4 new people with varying degrees of certification leaving 6 open positions he said.

He said when they are fully staffed the minimum for each person to work is about 15 hours and because of the vacancies some people have been stepping up to the plate and working 40-60 hours on top of what they do on their other full time jobs, family, etc. I'm appreciative of that sacrifice they are making to the dept. and the Town he said.

He said he put the average pay for Firefighters, company officers, Asst. and Deputy Chiefs and did a wage study similar to the one that was done several years back utilizing the same towns that were approved by the board then but there was no response from Epping and Gilmanton. He said the spreadsheet outlines where they are in comparison to Farmington and includes the average amounts in the last column.

Mr. Dickie said the Chief said this was over the last 12 months and they went through a budget season and the Chief put his budget together and asked when this started setting in as an issue prior to the budget season or after.

Chief Reinert said it was prior to the budget season and with the discussion with the Town Administrator at that time knowing what was going on COVID and the unknowns about the potential loss in revenues there was no request for any increase in monies to try to get through that period of time because it was unknown what the Rooms and Meals Tax, etc. would be so we didn't feel it was prudent at that time. He said they were maintaining and staying afloat and trying to get through the year but within the last couple of months they have had several resignations because people were going elsewhere for positions that are paying more.

Mr. Dickie commended the Chief for bringing it to the board's attention that they need to look at this. He said we go through a budget season you lock into your budget and it's hard to start justifying increases when we have to lock into that budget. We can take this under advisement and look at it as we come into the next budget season to try to go through and adjust it but to

try to adjust it out of budget season when we are limited to overall cash value because we have a similar situation with the Police Dept., with the Fire Dept. and I assume we will have with the Highway Dept. and will probably have it with every dept. so we have to be very cognizant of what we're deciding to do he said.

He then asked the Chief what he is looking at trying to do.

Chief Reinert said on the second page of the memo there are some ideas on how they could combat this for the rest of this budget season and then pick up for the operating budget for next year.

Chairman Proulx said his request for Firefighters as they come in is they have at least their first level EMT so everybody would have at least that. She asked how many people on the per diem payroll have anything further than that such as the advanced EMT.

Chief Reinert said 14 people out of the list of 22 people are advanced EMT's or Paramedics but they don't have Paramedic protocol.

Chairman Proulx asked how many have Paramedic status.

Chief Reinert said they have 2 Paramedics and one person finishing up Paramedic school.

Chairman Proulx commended them on that and said that is substantial for a small town especially with a part time staff. She asked if the advanced EMT's and the Paramedics are the ones who get more hours than the basic EMT's and to describe how that works.

Asst. Chief Edgerly said that it is really 50/50 and the ones that have gone on to become advanced EMT's are usually the ones that want to further their careers a little bit more so they probably put in a little more effort picking up shifts. He said he felt bad even saying that out loud because the "basics" do a lot too and there's more times when there is a double basic ambulance covering the town.

Chairman Proulx said she just trying to get a ball park idea of the overall hours not that she thinks less of anybody who can't put in as much time as other people.

Asst. Chief Edgerly said an advanced EMT has a lot more responsibility for the patient care and total control over everything that's going on and that stops us from calling in the Frisbie Paramedics. If we have two basics on a call on something we can handle as a town our advanced people can handle that so in a sense they are doing a little more work. Our basics do wonderful stuff too and I'm very thankful to have them he said.

Chief Reinert said he met with Mr. Capello to discuss some ideas about how to get to the end of the year without losing anyone else and how to attract more people into the Fire Dept. to fill those open positions. He said the first thing is to hire the full time positions and he applied for a grant last year and they should be hearing about it at the end of July or beginning of August. He said the cost for 6 Firefighter EMT positions is about \$450,000 at about \$75,000 per position for wages and benefits which is based on last year's figures for the grant and he compared the cost to that of what a Patrolman was making to bring that same pay scale into the full time positions if they do get the grant. It doesn't include the retirement increases and is a rough

ballpark of what it would cost to give us 6 full timers which would be 3 shifts of 2 people 24 hours a day in two shifts of a 48 hour work week and we would supplement with the per diem members for the other open shifts. If we had 3 shifts that's 6 days and we would try to cover the 7th day with 3 people on per shift so we still have the need for the per diems he said.

Chairman Proulx asked the Chief if he recalled what the Patrolman's hourly pay was.

Chief Reinert said he recalled it was about \$17.89 an hour.

He said the next thing would be to institute a two hour minimum callback. He said right now if they come in and get released they get 15 minutes and this would make it more attractive for people in town or nearby to come in when they are getting multiple calls back to back or when they have a large incident such as a structure fire or a major accident on Route 11. It's hard to gage what that would cost because it's subjective to who's available, when they're available and how many people come back. In reality it's only a handful of people on the dept. that are in the immediate area that would be affected he said.

Mr. Johnson asked if there is no minimum currently.

Chief Reinert said there is no minimum currently and he does it in 15 minute blocks so if someone comes in and they get released early or it's a false call they sign the roster sheet and they get 15 minutes unless they're there for duration.

He said the next item on the list is to increase the salary base for any new dual certified FF/EMT to at least \$15.50 an hour which is still below the average on the wage scale but it puts them more competitive with the towns in the immediate area depending on their certifications.

The Chief said he would like to see incentives for certifications on top of the starting wages. He said Alton's pay scale has a base rate plus "x" amount more for whatever certification they have and if you have an advanced EMT certificate they pay another \$1.50 an hour on top of that.

He said holiday pay should be paid for all 11 approved holidays that are currently in the employee handbook if they're worked. He said currently they only pay 4 holidays- New Year's, Independence Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Chief Reinert said they should implement a pro-rated accrual of vacation time for per diem employees following how it's outlined in the employee handbook for part time employees. He said currently they don't get any benefits whatsoever and he would model it after how the longevity pay was implemented where you have to have an average of 24 hours a year to get that incentive for vacation time.

He said the weekend differential should be increased from \$2 to \$4 an hour and these have been the hardest shifts for them to fill. He said if this was implemented on Sunday, August 1 to the end of the year the cost is about \$8,500 and the estimated cost for next year is approx. \$20,000.

He said the next item is to increase current employees' hourly wages (not the new hires) \$3 to \$5 an hour to bring people closer to the averages in the wage study. He said if they started this on August 1 through the end of the year the estimated cost would be approx. \$34,000 to

\$56,000 or institute an end of the year bonus of \$1,000 for current employees if they average 24 hours a week between Aug. 1 and the end of the year when they pay out the longevity pay. He said that cost is almost \$24,000 and then on 01/01/2022 with their new operating budget they would institute the hourly wage increase.

He said if you divide it out by 24 hours it would be about a \$2 wage increase for the bonus. He said there is about a \$10,000 difference between if they just institute the increase effective immediately vs. the bonus and the promise of an hourly increase in the new operating budget. Chairman Proulx asked for the amount of the SAFER grant.

Chief Reinert said there are two federal grants, the Assistance to Firefighters Grant which has a total of \$300 million available a year and the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response grant which is strictly for personnel and is also around \$300 million. He said there is no cap on the amount they can apply for and they might get some of it, the whole thing (the amount applied for) or nothing. He said he modeled their SAFER application on the NFPA's standards for what our community size dictates for how many people they should have on per shift which would be a minimum of 6 full time people during the week.

Mr. Dickie asked if it is a binding grant where once the grant runs out the town would have to continue to pay that level.

Chief Reinert said it used to be that way and the old way the grant worked was they paid 100% of the amount the first year, the second year was 75% and the third year was 50% and you had to retain them for the fourth year. Now they pay 100% for 3 years and there's no obligation to retain those Firefighters. We can reapply every year to get more staffing the only caveat being if they get the grant again it can't be utilized on the same people currently on staff he said.

Mr. Dickie said then the taxpayers have to step up to cover it or they would have to eliminate the positions and then go back and re-staff with the new grant.

Mr. Johnson said they couldn't eliminate the positions they would have to eliminate the people. Asst. Chief Edgerly said the SAFER grant is very competitive and with the CARES Act this year they put \$20 million more into it.

Chief Reinert said for 2022 they are adding \$120 million to the SAFER grant and \$150 million to the AFG grant and he did not know if that amount would stay on after that.

Chairman Proulx asked if the 6 positions the Chief is talking about at \$450,000 a year at \$75,000 per person would cover them for 6 days.

Chief Reinert said the way he would schedule it would be to keep their 24 hour shift and the 6 Firefighters would be in 3 different shifts such as shift 1 would be Sunday-Thursday, shift 2 would be Monday-Friday and shift 3 Wednesday-Saturday and then use the per diem members on Sunday and for any open spots.

Mr. Dickie asked about the number of hours for each shift.

Chief Reinert said it depends on their availability and most people prefer the 24 hour shifts because that is what they are working in their other jobs in other Fire Depts. and it's easier to

transition that but typically they schedule 12 or 24 hour blocks.

Mr. Johnson said the discussion of this is really premature because there is nothing they can do with this at this point. This is going to be a separate presentation outside of this entire issue so I would prefer to have that as a separate discussion and have more workup done on what the actual numbers are before we even decide if we're going to pursue full time employees whether we get the grant or not. There is nothing we can do about addressing the manpower issue for the rest of this year he said.

Mr. Dickie said that's why he asked the Chief what his intent was and with the Police Dept. they were looking at enhancing new hires and his is enhancing new hires and retention is another issue and he didn't know if they could accommodate everything.

Chairman Proulx said they should at least hear them out as they did with the Police Dept.

Mr. Johnson said hiring full time employees is beyond the scope of what they are discussing. He said the grant isn't going to be approved until August and would be a next year budget item so why bother discussing it now.

Chief Reinert said initially he didn't include anything about the grant and then put it in there as an idea to combat what they would be issuing today and in the future and ultimately at some point they're going to have to hire full time people as eventually our model is going to fade out.

Mr. Johnson said that's not something they can do anything with this budget season.

Mr. Capello said the discussion they should be having now is the retention of the current staff and bringing in new staff. He said the discussion of full time staff is a future discussion so if you crossed the full time line out of there the other stuff is what the intention is.

Mr. Johnson said he was not suggesting they eliminate that bullet point but that it is nothing they can address at this meeting. He said he didn't want to get bogged down with the full time issue and wanted to get to the more pressing issues they could possibly address this year.

Chairman Proulx said she wanted to fully understand the position they are in and that warrants having that part of the discussion because if they don't, they don't understand where they are at because of scheduling and attractiveness.

Chief Reinert said with the last few people they hired they bumped the bottom line up to make it more attractive and there are several positions in Town where that has happened. He said his concern is they have people who have been here and are dedicated good employees and they are making less than what the new people are making who are making what some people are making after being here for 12 years. It's a morale issue he said.

Mr. Dickie asked if the new employees came to the table with more skills than the existing employees have and that is how he justified bringing them in at the higher rate.

Chief Reinert said no and it's because of the competitive nature now. He said he had the ideal candidate in front of him and asked what he could do to make sure they sign the agreement to work for the Town. They have the minimum qualifications- they have to be at least a Firefighter 1 with an EMT basic certification. Some say they need at least this amount to come here and

we are trying to make some concessions to try to keep those people from leaving my office once an offer is made or the Asst. Chief's office after he tells them what we can pay he said. Mr. Capello noted that they stayed within the approved pay scale.

Chief Reinert said they are willing to take on uncertified people but the issue with that is that it takes time to get them trained and it is expensive. He said it is usually about a 2 year process for someone with no certifications to get into the fire service in NH, get their Fire 1/EMT basic and be off and running. A lot of the time smaller towns like Farmington eat that cost and they use us as a training ground and then go off to somewhere else. Now that's even a shorter period of time because a lot of the bigger depts. are hurting for manpower as well and are hiring green people he said.

Asst. Chief Edgerly said training is a selling point where they don't have the highest starting salary and the Chief doesn't say no unless they want to be an airport Firefighter. If they want to be an instructor, inspector or Advanced EMT we will pay for that because that benefits us and with the call volume they have and the various types of calls it's a great town for experience. We train excellent candidates for full time depts. so we're proud of what we do and we want them to succeed and be full time people but we're hurting he said.

Chief Reinert said he is also concerned about the burn out of the people who have stepped up to take extra shifts and make sure they are covered and they can only do that for so long.

Mr. Johnson said most of the things the Chief listed under the "Ideas" section he was open to discussing although he may not agree with the numbers shown. He said he was not aware of the issue with the holiday pay and just assumed they were getting all 11 holidays.

Chief Reinert said at one point they weren't getting anything and he brought it to the board and they settled on the 4 major holidays. He said most of the Town employees are not working those holidays except for them.

Mr. Dickie asked if they do it for one dept. do they have to do it for all the depts.

Mr. Johnson said to his knowledge all the other Town depts. get paid for the holidays.

Chief Reinert said the caveat to that is all of his staff are considered per diem and are not listed as an employee status within their own handbook.

Mr. Johnson said that may have been the difference and is something that can be discussed. He said he would like to see what the impact would be with the other bullet points and asked the Chief to come up with a recommendation of how he would like to see the salary levels with a range for the certifications and map out what the budget impact of these items is. When you add this up it is in the neighborhood of \$150,000 to \$200,000 he said.

The Chief said the hardest item would be to figure out the callbacks which would be minimal and trying to work out those numbers by looking at what the averages are.

Mr. Johnson suggested he map out the current employee roster or the roster he wants to have, where each position is, what certifications they have, what they are currently getting and what he would like to see them get to address the issues he is bringing before the board now and the

impact of the holiday and vacation pay across the board and the weekend differential. Chief Reinert said he was looking into the pro-rated vacation pay and how that works with the part time employees with assistance from the Finance Administrator. He said they have to work at least 20 hours per the handbook but he did not know how much time they accrue for that. Mr. Johnson said the board will not need this information in the next few weeks because most of this they can't address until next year's budget so this will be a good work up for his next budget and there is not much they can do with the money that is left. He said there may be some minor changes they could make like they did with the Police Dept. and he wanted to make it across the board fair but they have to keep an eye on the bottom line. He agreed that a lot of this stuff has to be addressed and if he put it together for next year he didn't think anyone would have a problem going over it with him to help refine it before budget season. Some of it we may be able to change but I don't know what the costs will be he said. Chief Reinert asked about the end of the year bonus. Mr. Johnson said he is leaning toward that at this point. The Chief said Mr. Capello told him more revenues would be coming in than expected so he was more in favor of that because it would be less expensive up front but would give those people an incentive to stay on. Mr. Johnson said he was agreeable to that as a way to buy more time like they did with the Police. Without knowing the impact of the other stuff they can't make a decision on that tonight anyway he said. Mr. Dickie asked for the cost of the 6 positions versus the cost of mutual aid as he assumed they have to call in another dept. to backfill the dept. if they have to go out to handle an accident or a fire. Chief Reinert said there is no cost associated with mutual aid and they "scratch each other's backs" unless they had issues with neighboring depts. that were supplementing their services through mutual aid. He said the board had instituted that when he submits his monthly report it includes the number of times they respond for mutual aid and they determine whether they are approaching the line of being abused. He said they haven't had to do that since they implemented that and Farmington is not at point. He said he didn't want to get to the point where they are not staffing or having to call in mutual aid because the same thing will happen where they can't continue to supplement us because we don't have the staff to do it. Mr. Dickie asked what that number would be. Chief Reinert said he didn't know as they have never been in that situation and no matter what they have handled their business. He said 15 years ago they were at that point where Frisbie was coming in multiple times they started with the per diem shifts they have now. Mr. Johnson said when there were other communities taking advantage of our staffing they were finding they weren't staffing the third shift to save money because they knew we were staffed and they were calling on us to supplement them.

Mr. Dickie asked if we ended up sending them a bill or if we ate it because we were part of mutual aid.

Mr. Johnson said we were part of mutual aid but we sent them a notice that we intended to start billing them if this continued.

Mr. Dickie asked about the cost for that versus us staffing.

Mr. Johnson said there is no set fee and they could have charged them anything they wanted.

Chief Reinert said they came up with a fee based on the FEMA rates for what it cost for an ambulance and the average turnaround time.

Mr. Dickie asked if the FEMA rates are typically higher than what we pay our Firefighters. He said he was trying to inform the public it would be a benefit to staff our Fire Dept. so when they come into Town Meeting where we have to convince them to pass our budget we want to make sure they thoroughly understand the difference between staffing our Fire Dept. with our wages and benefits versus straining their mutual aid and the potential cost of that.

Mr. Johnson said the potential cost of that is other agencies would stop responding.

Mr. Dickie said it's not the board he has to convince it's the public that has to understand it.

Chief Reinert said there is a transition going on with Frisbie Hospital and they don't know if they are going to maintain Paramedic services and there was talk of the way they are contracted with their billing that they would get out of that contract and they would charge us \$500 per Paramedic intercept. He said sometimes it's covered by insurance and sometimes it's not so if they have a Medicaid/Medicare patient they cover \$382 and the Town would be on the hook for the remainder of that bill and a lot of people don't have insurance.

He said they get about 200 Paramedic intercepts into town and that's \$100,000 at \$500 a whack if they go to that model. Currently Frisbie pays us every time we call them for an intercept and they get on our ambulances they cut us a check and sometimes we benefit because they pay us at the higher rate than what they receive he said.

Mr. Dickie said they are in a town where we came from volunteer Firefighters that resided in town and could be onsite in a matter of seconds. He said it's that mindset that sometimes they have to try to convince to get the vote and that's why he is stressing they need to have their numbers on the table to convince those people that remember the volunteer Firefighters.

Mr. Capello said it's also a potential loss of revenue if they have to have a mutual aid dept. come in to do the transfer they do the billing and get whatever revenue there is.

Asst. Chief Edgerly said if they got Paramedics with a little bit of funding they could easily make their ambulances capable of increasing their revenue.

Chairman Proulx said she would like to see that number.

Chief Reinert said they discussed that 2 years ago and they weren't sure where Frisbie was going to end up so it got put off and then COVID hit.

Mr. Johnson asked where the requirement to work an average of 24 hours a week in the \$1,000 bonus came from.

Chief Reinert said their policy reads that in order to maintain your employment the per diem members have to give at least 24 hours of availability per week and that doesn't mean they will get scheduled but they have to at least give that availability to help them fill those shifts. He said it is getting tougher to do that and they are chasing people who aren't doing that. We're caught between a rock and a hard place of whether to get rid of them because they're not maintaining the standard operating procedure or take what we can get what we can from them at the time. If we're more attractive we can be more selective moving forward he said.

Mr. Johnson asked if the 24 hours is availability or 24 hours of duty.

Chief Reinert said if this was approved starting August 1 it would be 24 hours of availability moving forward given the number of current employees they have to maintain their schedule.

Mr. Capello said this mirrors the 24 hours required for the longevity pay.

The Chief said the bonus would be a one-time thing and wouldn't carry over to next year.

Hopefully through the budget process we come up with a number we can realistically bump those people up to keep them here in Farmington giving the great service that they do he said.

Chairman Proulx said looking at the average across NH at the Firefighter/EMT the average is about \$16 an hour and looking at trying to attract people if we're paying as low as \$12.50 an hour and everybody around us is at least \$15 or higher that tells her something needs to be done with the bottom end (of the pay scale). She said they just had this discussion with the Police Dept. as far as trying to get people in and it's a weird time where the economy and decisions made by the nation has taken us in a direction where you could apply to Wal Mart and make more than someone who is putting their life on the line or saving lives.

She said she would look at what they have for a bottom number and try to bring that up to where it's at least competitive.

Mr. Johnson suggested they address the lower end where increasing the hiring rate is going to bump some of the longer veterans up a little.

Chief Reinert said he didn't want the new hire coming in where they increase it and they are making more than the person who has been here 12 years.

Chairman Proulx asked if the pay rates shown for other towns are their current rates.

Chief Reinert said that is correct with the exception of Newington (currently negotiating) and Pittsfield where the new rates take effect on Jan. 1, 2022. He asked if the board was more inclined to a flat rate across the board or to specific rates depending on their certifications like Alton does. The more certifications they have it does benefit the town in the end because they have more education and knowledge. I'm not opposed to either way and most of the staff has a majority of these certifications anyway he said.

Mr. Johnson said he liked Alton's method of increases for certifications and it would match what they are doing with the DPW which has worked fairly well.

Mr. Dickie said bonuses are typically to reward outstanding performance and preferred using "lump sum" or some other wording.

Mr. Capello said it can be an incentive for the 24 hours a week average.

Chairman Proulx asked if they were more inclined to make those adjustments to the salaries to try to bring them up to a range that makes more sense if it was possible to bring the bonus down and still make the retention. She said instead of the \$1,000 bonus at the end of the year by not doing anything if they brought the lower end from \$12.50 up to \$15.50 using the Chief's number and incrementally brought everybody up like they are supposed to be within right wage if they could do with less of a bonus at the end of the year.

Chief Reinert said they could potentially do away with the bonus depending on what those numbers are. He said he put down a \$3 to \$5 increase but if everyone worked the 24 hour average it worked out to a \$2 an hour pay increase for those hours worked for the remainder of the year. They would be happy with either scenario he said.

Mr. Johnson said for any of the ones they end up adjusting their pay rate on they could reduce the bonus by some set amount and anybody they put off until next year would get the \$1,000 bonus similar to what they did with the Police Dept.

Mr. Capello suggested if they increase the weekend stipend by \$1.50 and did the \$1,000 bonus they would be looking at roughly \$40,000 this year. He said he took the \$3 figure, divided it in half which comes out to \$16,955 and then added the \$24,000 in bonuses to it. He said weekend coverage is one of the toughest so this would give an incentive to work the weekends.

Chairman Proulx asked if they adjusted the salaries up by what they are thinking if that would help negate some of the bonus and the weekend differential, help them retain people and get more people in here if they are paying them more money to get us into the next budget season.

Chief Reinert said it is very plausible but weekends are downtime for most people and when they initiated the \$2 it was a little bump so if someone was making \$13.50 they would be making \$15.50 an hour to work weekends and that's kind of even to working at a retail job that doesn't require these skill sets. He said it could help but he didn't want to say yes definitively.

Mr. Dickie asked if they do shift differentials for the various shifts.

Chief Reinert said from 6 p.m. on Friday to 6 a.m. on Monday morning for any scheduled hours worked they get a \$2 an hour shift differential.

Chairman Proulx said if they shift some of the salaries around it might make a difference because they are going to get the bump in the extra salary plus the weekend differential.

Mr. Capello asked if the task for him and the Chief is to look at each person individually, see what they feel they should be at and give the board that bottom line number.

Mr. Johnson said he wanted to see what he is proposing for each position, how much the increases based on certifications would be, the impact on the budget and the cost for everything else the Chief is proposing even if it's only a ball park figure for the call backs.

Chairman Proulx said that might be part of the bigger discussion come budget time.

Mr. Johnson then asked them to get the high points of the new hire positions he wants to raise up, those positions that it bumps, those that are going to get the \$1,000 bonus or some

potential increment of the bonus.

Chairman Proulx asked to have the items calculated separately so it's not just if we do this for everybody its \$40,000.

Chief Reienert said that was the worst case scenario for the bonus because there are going to be some people who don't meet the minimum standard.

Mr. Johnson said for example if he increased somebody from \$14.50 to \$15.50 for the 400 hours that are left in the year he would probably want to give them a percentage of that \$1,000 because otherwise they're losing and they would be better off not getting an increase and just take the bonus. He said for those people they don't address this year, potentially the higher paid staff they would be eligible for the full bonus so the Chief would have to figure out what the total bonus is going to be. He asked what impact would be for the weekend differential based on the new numbers and then the board could decide on those 3 items for this year.

Chairman Proulx said depending on what they raise the salaries to she may not be so inclined to pay the \$1,000 bonus if she can give it to them in salaries.

The Chief said he didn't mind the bottom end (\$12.50) being where it is for anybody they bring on with no certifications and he didn't want them making the same rate as someone who is dual certified.

Chairman Proulx said she wanted to see that number higher.

Mr. Dickie said they need to take a look at that number and we have librarians making more. When we have people putting their lives on the line this number is way too low he said.

Chairman Proulx asked when the Chief got the numbers from the surrounding towns if they were for starting salaries with no experience or starting salaries at the Firefighter/EMT level.

Chief Reinert said some of them didn't specify, some gave their base mount with no certification and some of them were broken down by the specific certification level. He said he took it from no certification base line for Milton to what their Firefighter 2 Advanced EMT was making on the high end.

Chairman Proulx said looking at that it goes back to that \$15.50 would be the starting point and rest of his people would be adjusted with the certification from there.

Chief Reinert said he was trying to be sympathetic to the taxpayers without a giant increase and if it's little bites of the apple to get them from here to there within whatever timeframe they're okay with that. He said they would be appreciative if they are able to go from "0 to 100" but then asked if that would be realistic in the grand scheme of things.

Chairman Proulx said the board has been faced with the fact that everything has gone haywire in the world and they know that and are going to try to make some adjustments within the budget for this year. She said the 2 biggest basic things we have that the taxpayers depend on are the Police and Fire/EMT. She said the DPW also has a role as a supporting dept. as do the other Town depts. but when you're in trouble and everything is going wrong the 2 people you want to see would be a Policeman or a Firefighter/EMT. Looking at the low side it's extremely

low and you have to be as competitive as you can because we have to tell everybody that they're safe she said.

Mr. Johnson suggested Chief Reinert get together with Chief Drury and use his spreadsheet to get started. He asked him to set the ranges he thinks are fitting and what the financial impacts are and they will make the final adjustments like they did with the Police and see how much money they have and do what they can. The main caveat is that whatever we put off until next year's budget is still going to be dependent upon the town vote. We can commit what we can for this year because of our authority to do that but some of these other changes you want that will have budgetary impact will go into your budget and that will be up to the vote at Town Meeting he said.

Mr. Capello asked the Chief if he was available to come back to the board on August 16.

Chief Reinert said he was available to meet with the board that night.

Chairman Proulx asked the Chief when he comes back to have the individual positions with some kind of a structure for the certifications with the suggested increases that each one qualifies for.

Mr. Capello said that he and Chief Reinert would talk this week. He asked him to "steal" Chief Drury's spreadsheet and then they would just have to fill in new names and numbers because it should have everything in there.

Asst. Chief Edgerly said he wanted the board to be aware that they try to retain Farmington residents that want to come on the Fire Dept. He said usually those are the ones that they say if they don't have any certifications and they are a Farmington resident the dept. will pay for that.

Mr. Johnson suggested they publicize that as there may be people who aren't aware of that. He said this is their chance to rewrite the entire pay structure of the dept. where in previous years they couldn't even discuss it. Give it a shot, we realize the predicament everyone's in he said.

Mr. Vachon asked when the new fire truck would be delivered.

Chief Reinert said it is supposed to arrive next week. He said it is in Bangor and they had an issue getting the radio in due to supply chain issues and the salesman said it would be here the last week of July.

Mr. Capello said once the new fire truck is in he would like to do a "christening" for it and the new plow truck to show the taxpayers what they spent their money on last year.

6). COVID-19 Update:

a). GOFERR Notice- Mr. Capello said he received official notification that the Town was accepted into the **Governor's Office for Emergency Relief and Recovery** online reporting portal for the funding. There is still no word as to when we will receive the money and the first report is due in October but they may not have the money before the report is done he said.

He said the Finance Administrator will attend a state GOFERR update on Monday.

Mr. Johnson asked if they have received any clarification on what the money can be spent on.

Mr. Capello said no but it appears that unlike the school district the Town will only be able to

spend it on water and sewer projects.

Mr. Dickie said that is contrary to what was posted on Face book that the Town would be receiving a subsidy they could use to offset expenses.

Mr. Capello said he saw that post and it is extremely contrary to that. He said the school has more freedom on how they spend the funds but Town has 4 specific ways to spend the funds- revenue loss, water and sewer, infrastructure (broadband) and as a one-time payment for non-essential personnel where they must prove that COVID was more than half of their job. So basically we're going to use it for water, sewer and lost revenue he said.

Mr. Johnson asked about using it cover some of the one-time payments to the Fire Dept.

Mr. Capello said it is a possibility and he could make the case that the Fire Dept. dealt with COVID more than 50% of their time.

Live Stream Status- Mr. Vachon asked if they are still on track to start live-streaming the meetings during the first week of August.

Mr. Capello said he spoke with Cable TV Coordinator Robert Hall today and the equipment is in and is being installed and the company rep will be coming here in August to finalize everything.

7). Town Administrator's Business:

a). Town Conservation Land (Tax Map R-3, Lot 17-3; 12.76 acres on Rte. 11) – Mr. Capello said the board received a memo and a draft deed from Town Att. Keriann Roman regarding the Town owned conservation land that the board voted to give to the **Conservation Commission** and asked if the board had any questions.

Chairman Proulx said the language seemed like typical boiler plate.

Mr. Capello said he didn't want to go any further with it and bring it to the Con Com until the Selectmen had proofread it and given their feedback on it.

Mr. Johnson asked if he knew if the Con Com wants this additional language inserted into the deed.

Mr. Capello said he did not know and that he wanted to check with this board first.

Chairman Proulx asked if there is anything in this that goes above and beyond what they have done with other conservation lands.

Mr. Capello said there is nothing out of the ordinary in the draft deed.

Mr. Johnson said this language isn't inserted in the quit claim deed and it would be a good idea to add this language.

Mr. Capello said they were trying to get them to agree on the language and then he can get it to the Con Com.

Chairman Proulx asked if there was any other language they wanted in there.

Mr. Johnson said no and that he didn't object to any of the language in there.

Mr. Capello asked if it was okay for him to take this to the Con Com after this language is added in there or if the board wanted to see it one more time.

Mr. Vachon asked if they are talking about adding everything (from Sections A-K from Attorney

Roman's memo on typical Con Com restriction language).

Mr. Capello said yes unless the board tells him otherwise.

Mr. Vachon asked if Section F (no outdoor advertising structures such as signs...) would prohibit trailhead signs or postings on the property.

Mr. Capello said it would not as that is a low impact use that accomplishes conservation.

Mr. Johnson said they have those types of signs on the other conservation properties in town.

Mr. Capello said there's language that says "except as desirable or necessary in the accomplishment of conservation".

Mr. Vachon said he was just making sure it doesn't restrict them from putting up a sign saying its Town conservation land or maps for the trails on the property and he was okay with the rest of the language.

Mr. Staples said in Section G (no mining, excavation or removal of materials from the property) he didn't see where it says anything about logging or preventive maintenance of wooded areas.

Mr. Johnson said logging is permitted on conservation property and they hire a forester to come in and thin it when necessary.

Mr. Capello said they have a Forest Management Plan.

Mr. Staples said he wanted to make sure they would also be able to cut and maintain trails.

Consensus of the board was to add the language as proposed and then have Mr. Capello forward the deed to the Con Com.

b). Conservation Land Donation – Mr. Capello said someone is looking to donate approx. 120 acres to the Town for conservation land that borders Spring Street and Bay Road. He showed the board a map of the area and said the board has to agree that they want the land for conservation before the Con Com can approach it. There would be no cost involved and it would be a straight transfer to the Con Com he said.

Mr. Vachon said another map shows the land in lots and asked which one was correct. He said there are houses there across from Waldron Road and that he knew some of the people there. He said he thought that is the correct map of the land to be donated not the one that shows the property before the subdivision.

Mr. Capello said he would ask the Town Attorney to work with the donor's attorney on that but the board first has to say they want to move forward with it.

Chairman Proulx asked what it abuts at the back end of it and about access to the property.

Mr. Capello said there are 2 access points on Bay Road and Spring Street.

Mr. Vachon said there may be as many as 6 or 7 access points so there is plenty of room for parking, trails, etc.

Consensus of the board was to have Mr. Capello proceed with the land donation to the Town.

c). 2021 MS-535- Mr. Capello said the form (Financial Report of the Budget for the period ending 12/31/20) is ready to be submitted to the state and that the numbers have been verified. He noted that the undesignated fund balance is \$1.5 million and asked the board to

sign the form.

He said the auditors are scheduled to meet with the board at their August 30 meeting.

c). Resignations- Mr. Capello said he received a resignation letter from a Town employee and one from a committee member.

Motion: (Johnson, second Vachon) to accept the resignation of Alicia Giovannelli as DPW Secretary effective July 28, 2021 with regret passed 5-0.

Motion: (Johnson, second Vachon) to accept the resignation of Blanche Tanner from the Economic Development Committee with regret passed 5-0.

d). Heating Oil – Mr. Capello said he received quotes from Irving Energy for \$2.48.1 a gallon and from Eastern Oil and Propane at \$2.89 a gallon for heating oil and asked the board if they wanted to lock in the price for next year. He said he e-mailed the school district a couple of times to see if they wanted to go in on the purchase with the Town but he never heard back from them and given everything happening right now he would like to lock in the price so they know what they are paying. He added this includes the library but they get billed separately. Mr. Johnson asked how many gallons the quote was for.

Mr. Capello said it is for 14,560 gallons and there is no penalty if they don't use it all.

Mr. Staples asked if he called the SAU Superintendent.

Mr. Capello said he sent e-mails to Mrs. Vaughn. He said this price is good until midnight tonight and any time he brings a price to the board he gets the updated price as the price of oil changes daily.

Chairman Proulx asked for the price last year.

Mr. Capello said the price last year was \$1.69.9 a gallon.

Mr. Dickie asked how many attempts were made by Mr. Capello to reach out to the school.

Mr. Capello said when he initially e-mailed them asking if they wanted to go in on it with the Town he was told yes and was told it was not going to go out that week (June 28) and would possibly go out the following week. He said he e-mailed again on July 12 and hasn't had a reply.

Mr. Johnson said he didn't think the price would go down any if they waited another 2 weeks.

Motion: (Johnson, second Staples) to accept the oil quote for \$2.48.1 a gallon for 14,560 gallons of heating oil from Irving for the next heating season and to authorize the Town Administrator to sign the contract passed 4-0-1 (Proulx abstained).

8). Additional Board Business:

a). State Budget- The board received copies of what's included in the final state budget from the NH Municipal Assoc. Mr. Johnson said it says \$14. 6 million has been added to the state aid grants for water pollution control projects and asked if we have any of those projects.

Mr. Capello said they do not and that is for new projects.

Mr. Johnson said there is \$34.3 million for highway block grants in 2022 and a comparable amount for 2023 which is \$2.8 million or 8.6% less than in the current budget. He said they figured a 30% reduction so they are 21.8% better off (than they projected).

He said the bridge aid is equal the current amount of \$6.8 million each year and whether they will actually release the funds (is unknown).

Mr. Johnson said there is \$1 million for matching grants to local law enforcement agencies to assist with the purchase, maintenance and replacement of body and dashboard cameras and that may be something the Police Chief could use.

Mr. Capello said he planned to talk to Chief Drury about that.

Mr. Johnson said some other good news is the \$1 million reduction to the state education property tax remains in the budget and that is about a 50 cent reduction which brings the state education tax down to \$1.33 per \$1,000 valuation.

He said if they keep to their agreement this year they have not cut the meals and rooms tax distribution and it is equal to the 2021 distribution of \$348,000 for Farmington. We had cut that down to \$260,000 figuring there was going to be a 30% reduction so that's \$105,000 in additional income he said.

Mr. Capello said on the local level they had about a \$70,000 increase in the sale of municipal property too.

Mr. Johnson said 2022 and 2023 look even better if they keep their promises.

b). Proofreading Needed- Mr. Vachon said proofreading should be done on letters before being sent from the Municipal Office Building to residents, non-residents, businesses, etc. He said sending out official letters from individuals with titles that have missing words, double words or other errors needs to stop. Someone needs to proofread it themselves and pay attention and not rush through it or someone else needs to proofread this stuff because we have an official document that was an FYI with missing and double words he said.

Mr. Capello said that was a memo to the board not a letter that actually went out.

Mr. Vachon asked why it was "FYI-ed" with an individual's name on it and it actually went out.

Mr. Capello said he would find out.

Mr. Vachon said lack of professionalism, punctuation, proofreading, spelling and grammar checks are big pet peeves of at least one other person on this board especially coming from the municipal offices.

c). Line of Sight-Mr. Vachon said he received some e-mail responses to questions he asked last week and asked if Mr. Capello has it in writing that the state is not going to do anything about this so the Town is not held liable.

Mr. Capello said he would find out.

Mr. Vachon said someone brought up this issue as a safety concern and asked if someone gets "T-boned" there because they can't see if it would be the Town's responsibility because they brought it up and nothing was done about it. It says a phone call was made but it doesn't state anything about having it in writing and a phone call is word of mouth, hearsay and does not stand up. The state can authorize us to do something about it if it's a line of sight issue he said.

Mr. Capello said he would find out.

Mr. Vachon then asked for the method for the Town's line of sight as he is curious to see what measurements, etc. they use for that.

Mr. Staples said he thought the Town didn't have one.

Mr. Capello said they do have one and that was his misunderstanding.

d). Curtis Road- Mr. Vachon said he doesn't have a date and time but the people that had interactions with him should since they knew him by name (he never said the name) and were familiar with the person so they should be familiar with the time and date which should help Mr. Capello find out what he was asking.

Mr. Capello said he would contact that individual and see what he can find out.

e). Recycling – Mr. Staples asked Chairman Proulx if she had found the paperwork so they know where they stand at the Transfer Station and know what can and can't be used for room. Chairman Proulx said she has not found that paperwork.

Mr. Staples asked how hard it would be to get another copy from the NH Dept. of Environmental Services.

Mr. Capello said he didn't know and he would look into it. He said he would ask for the DES permit for the landfill because that should tell us the sites.

Chairman Proulx said that has the actual footprint of what was allowed for that.

Mr. Capello said he would look around the next day and would e-mail Tara Albert at DES and ask her to point him in the right direction.

Mr. Staples said doing what he does for a living he is in 6-7 towns a week and asked the board if they mind if he takes pictures of the better run recycling programs and show them to Transfer Station Manager Pete Spencer to give him a better idea so when they figure it out he can try to set up a recycling program. He said the revenue sheets in some other towns with what they are getting for their recycling could certainly help us with the bottom line being so tight.

Mr. Capello said Mr. Spencer is still recycling and has done a good job selling cardboard and aluminum and he didn't want the misconception out there that they are not doing any recycling.

Mr. Staples said the corrugated cardboard is leaving on a roll-off and if it's baled it's significantly higher.

Mr. Capello agreed and they are trying to get someone to look at the baler and see what it needs for repairs as it hasn't been used in about 10 years. He has it all set up ready to be looked at we just can't get anybody reasonably priced to come look at it he said.

Chairman Proulx asked about the grants the Town has received in the past for the roll-offs and the compactors.

Mr. Capello said the NH the Beautiful grants are only covering about 25% of equipment costs.

Consensus of the board was they were okay with Mr. Staples showing recycling program photos to Mr. Spencer.

9). Non-Public Session A:

Motion: (Johnson, second Vachon) to enter non-public session under RSA 91-A: 3 II (a, b, c) Compensation, Hiring of a Public Employee, Reputation passed 5-0 by a roll call vote (Proulx, Johnson, Dickie, Vachon, Staples-aye) at 7:54 p.m.

Motion: (Johnson, second Vachon) to come out of non-public session passed 5-0 at 8:35 p.m.

Motion: (Johnson, second Dickie) to offer the Executive Administrative Assistant position to Sara Zinn with a starting salary of \$22.50 an hour with a 50 cent an hour increase following successful completion of the probationary period and contingent upon successful completion of the employment requirements passed 5-0.

10). Non-Public Session B:

Motion: (Vachon, second Johnson) to enter non-public session under RSA 91-A: 3 II (l, c) Consideration of Legal Advice, Reputation passed 5-0 by a roll call vote (Proulx, Johnson, Vachon, Dickie, Staples-aye) at 8:35 p.m.

Motion: (Johnson, second Vachon) to come out of non-public session passed 5-0 at 8:50 p.m.

Motion: (Johnson, second Dickie) to seal the minutes as disclosure would render the proposed action ineffective passed 5-0 by a roll call vote (Proulx, Johnson, Dickie, Vachon, Staples-aye).

11). Next Meeting: Monday, August 2, 2021

12). Adjournment:

Motion: (Vachon, second Johnson) to adjourn the meeting passed 5-0 at 8:50 p.m.

Respectively submitted

Kathleen Magoon

Recording Secretary

Paula Proulx, Chairman

Neil Johnson, Vice Chairman

Gerry Vachon

Ken Dickie

Douglas Staples