



2019 Annual Town Meeting – Overview of Fire Department-related Warrant Articles (Articles 11 & 12)

March 16, 2019



Introduction

- We all deeply value past and present volunteers of the Fire and Ambulance departments
- If Article 11 is approved, the importance of call/volunteer members of the Fire Department will not change
- The Board of Selectmen and Town Administration remain committed to operating a (cost) effective call/volunteer fire service for the long-term.



Fire Department Overview – Current State

- Fire Department operates under the fireward system, a separate governing entity from the Selectboard/Town Manager.
- Firewards - elected by the voters; they appoint the fire chief.
- Fire chief - appoints all firefighters.
- Current roster - 29 call members (command staff + firefighters)
Members receive hourly wages for time worked
- Dispatch - Hanover Communications Center
- Regional Mutual Aid - neighboring towns respond to Enfield calls and Enfield responds to theirs.
- Facilities - fire equipment is currently housed in 3 locations
 - Union Street Station (Primary Station)
 - Enfield Center Station (Satellite Station)
 - Shedd Street Garages (Auxiliary Equipment Storage)



Strategic Planning (1 of 2)

Spring of 2018: Enfield town officials & leaders began working with the Center for Strategic Governance to help develop strategies for achieving outcomes that benefit Enfield residents.

Operating Departments/Functional Areas

- Governance, Finance and Administration
- Public Works
- Police
- Fire
- Ambulance
- Library
- Recreation
- Community & Economic Development



Strategic Planning (2 of 2)

Municipal departments developed their strategic thinking and 5-year plans (2019-2023) over a 5-month period in close coordination with Town administration.

Collaborating Parties:

- Departments
- Town Manager
- Center for Strategic Governance

Each plan includes the following elements:

- **Mission** – Why the organization exists (enduring purpose).
- **Vision** – How the mission will be achieved over time.
- **Outcomes** – Constituent-centered results to be achieved.
- **Investments** – Initiatives/resources to achieve outcomes.
- **Structures and Staffing** – How to organize to do work.
- **Operations and Procedures** – Best practices.
- **Schedule** – Timeline to achieve planned outcomes.



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Challenges Facing the Fire Dept. (2 of 3)

- Areas lacking data collection/monitoring:
 - Call types (i.e., structure fire, motor vehicle crash, wires down, alarm activation, public assist, etc.)
 - Average call response time
 - Levels of non-response
 - Levels/types of mutual aid response (Lebanon, Canaan, Grafton, Hanover, Grantham, etc.)
 - ISO fire ratings (influences homeowners insurance rates; helpful for comparative analysis with other FDs)
 - Levels of (non)compliance with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards

Resources:

- Hanover Dispatch service logs
- NFPA

In order to self-identify/correct issues and effectively promote public safety, high-functioning fire departments collect and analyze these types of data as a standard practice to establish a baseline and ultimately evaluate progress.

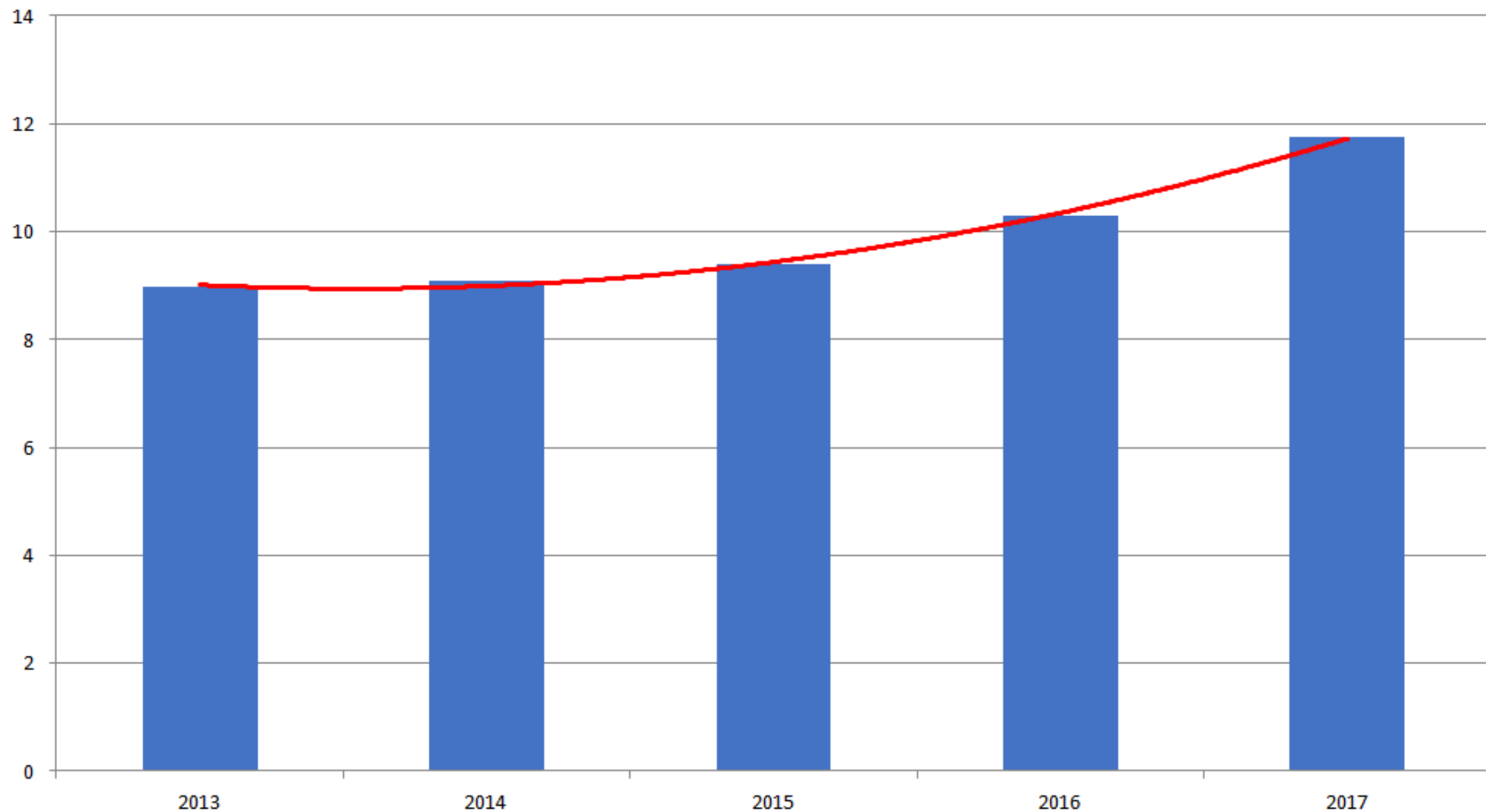


Challenges Facing the Fire Dept. (3 of 3)

- Both Fire and Ambulance face significant issues with maintaining adequate numbers of active volunteers.
- Declining levels of volunteerism is partially the result of forces beyond our control
 - Residents holding multiple jobs or commuting long distances
 - Aging population (decreasing pool of volunteers)
- Declining levels of volunteer participation negatively impacts response times and service effectiveness if not addressed.
- Cross-training Fire & EMS has proven effective in other communities at reversing declining volunteerism (the Enfield FD had not previously pursued this)
- A large proportion of the Fire Department's membership lacks formal certification



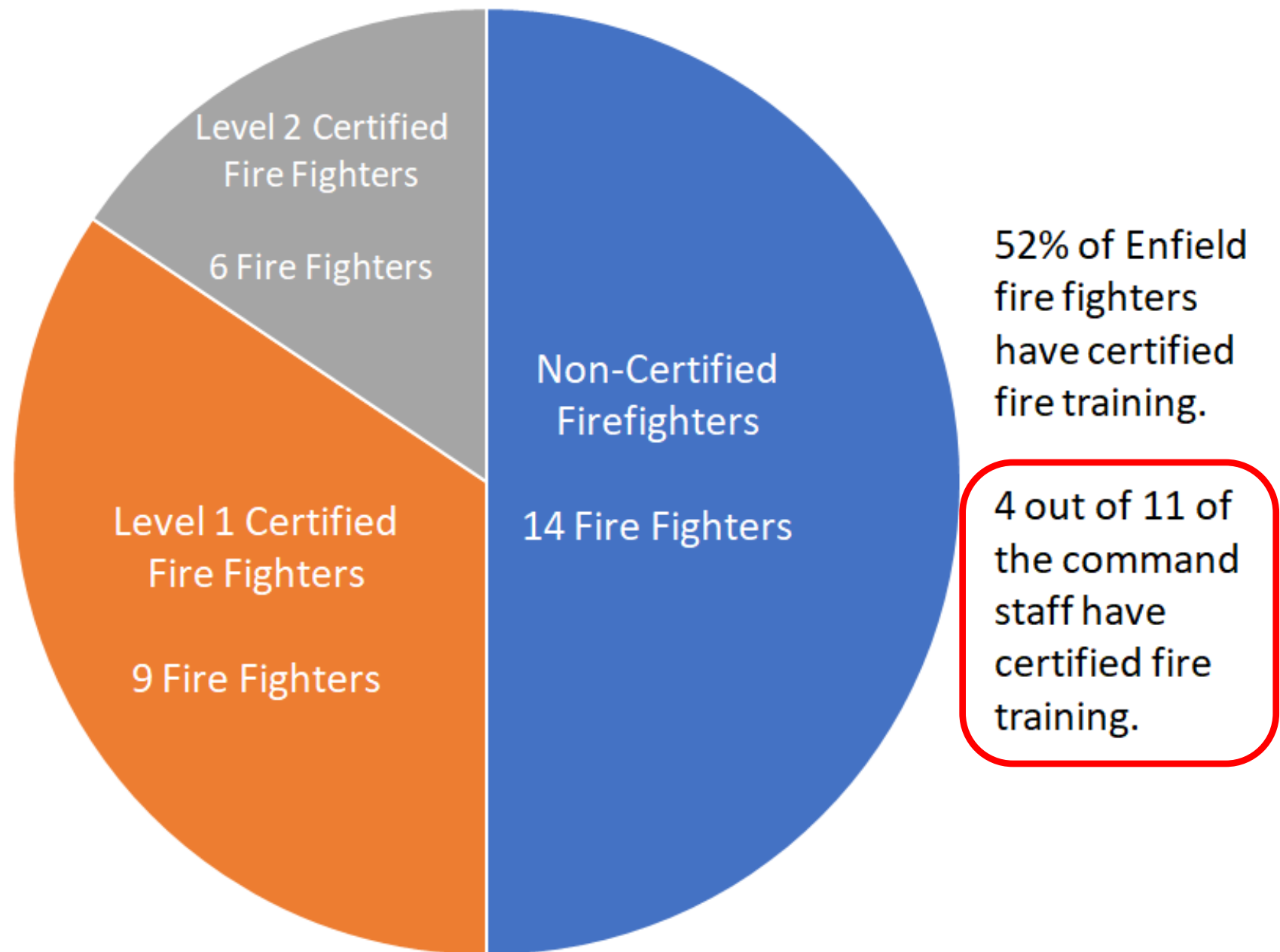
Average Call Response Time (Minutes)



This data reflects the time it takes for the first responder to appear on scene, but does not cover how long it takes for the full complement of responders recommended by NFPA to arrive on scene

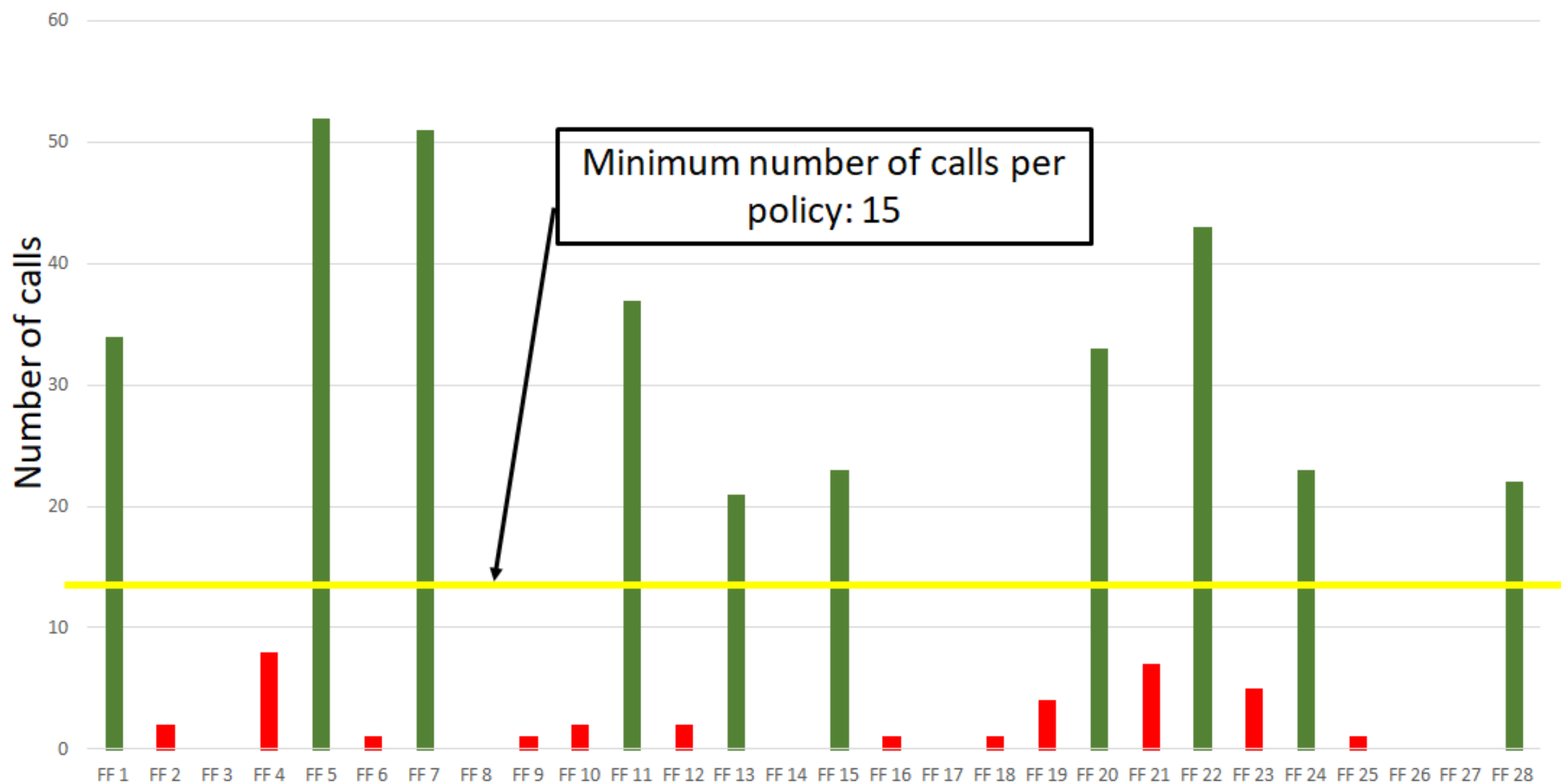


Current Fire Fighter Training Levels





2017 FF Response to 154 Total Calls



In 2017, 18 of 28 fire fighters (64%) would not have met the minimum call requirement. And, 6 fire fighters (21%) did not respond to any calls.



Priorities Emerging From Strategic Planning

The Fire Department collaborated with municipal administration and prepared a strategic plan

The department acknowledges previously unaddressed, pressing needs that were identified with assistance from the Center for Strategic Governance:

Resources:

- FD Command Staff
- Town Manager
- Center for Strategic Governance
- NFPA

- To expand the number of active volunteers in the fire force and to require that all members respond to at least a preset number of calls per year;
- To improve the response times and adhere to the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) recommended minimum number of fire personnel responding to calls;
- To strengthen the level of certified training across all levels of the Fire Department, which is especially critical as the complexity and range of a fire force's functions continue to increase.



How Best to Achieve Goals

Investments

Time

Talents

Strategic
Goals

- The Department, with help from the Center for Strategic Governance, identified and considered alternative organizational structures that might meet the Town's needs.
- They identified 5 possibilities





Structural Alternatives Considered

1. Continue the current fireward system (no change)
2. Make Fire a municipal government department
3. Make Fire a municipal government department and integrate it with the Ambulance Department to create a new cross-trained Fire-EMS force
4. Regionalize fire service with neighboring towns (i.e., the towns comprising MVRSD) to create a regional fire district
5. Outsource all fire service to Lebanon



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Important note: neither Option #2 nor Option #3 move the Town toward a full-time department



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- ~~5.~~ Outsource all fire service to Lebanon

Options #4 & #5 were not deemed to be advantageous/feasible at this time



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Options #2 or #3 were perceived to be the most advantageous options at this time



Article 11



Article 11

(Fire Department Governance)

To see if the Town will vote to change the form of organization of the fire department by eliminating the board of fire wards (RSA 154:1(d)), and having the fire chief appointed by the town manager, and the firefighters being recommended by the fire chief and appointed by the town manager pursuant to RSA 154:1(b).



TITLE XII PUBLIC SAFETY AND WELFARE CHAPTER 154

FIREWARDS, FIREFIGHTERS, AND FIRE HAZARDS

Firewards, Fire Chiefs and Fire Departments; Organization, Powers and Duties Section 154:1

154:1 Organization. –

I. All town and city fire departments, and fire departments of village districts or precincts organized pursuant to RSA 52:1, I(a), shall be organized according to one of the following forms, chosen by vote of the local legislative body:

(a) A fire chief appointed by the local governing body, or by the town or city manager, if any, with firefighters appointed by the fire chief;

(b) A fire chief appointed by the local governing body, or by the town or city manager, if any, with firefighters appointed by the local governing body or manager, upon recommendation of the chief;

(c) A fire chief elected by the local legislative body pursuant to RSA 669:17, with firefighters appointed by the fire chief;

(d) Firewards of any number, as determined by the local legislative body, either elected pursuant to RSA 669:17 or appointed by the local governing body, with a fire chief appointed by the firewards and firefighters appointed by the fire chief; or

(e) Firewards of any number, as determined by the local legislative body, either elected pursuant to RSA 669:17 or appointed by the local governing body, with a fire chief and firefighters appointed by the firewards.



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Independent Assessment - Overview



- The Town retained the services of Municipal Resources, Inc. (MRI) to provide an external, practitioner-based perspective relative to the following overarching questions:
 - 1) Should the Town of Enfield transition from the current governance model where firewards elected at large, appoint the Fire Chief and provide some level of oversight to the Enfield Fire Department?
 - 2) Should the Town merge Enfield Fire and Enfield Emergency Medical services into a single fire rescue organization?
- Brian Duggan, Director of MRI's Fire Services Group, was assigned to the project.
 - Has led many assessments of Fire/EMS departments nationwide
 - Long-tenured former Fire Chief (Northampton & Northborough, MA)
 - Developed and previously directed the Graduate and Undergraduate Fire Science Programs at Anna Maria College in Paxton, MA
 - Designated as a Chief Fire Officer by the Commission on Fire Accreditation International
 - Authored portions of the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) Fire Protection Handbook



Independent Assessment - Methods

To provide an appropriate evaluation of the core issues, MRI employed the following methods:

- Industry based research on the issues presented;
- Comparative analysis with seven other communities;
- Reviewed the most recent NFPA Fire Department Profile;
- Met with the Town Manager;
- Met with the Police Chief/Emergency Manager;
- Met with the fire wards (two of the three accepted the invitation)
- Toured the community of Enfield;
- Toured each fire facility;
- Reviewed fire apparatus;
- Developed a series of questions and provided an opportunity for members of the Enfield Fire Department and FAST Squad to provide written responses;
- Conducted individual interviews with command staff, fire officers and firefighters.





Independent Assessment - Findings

Members of the Department expressed many concerns, including:

- Lack of response and frequency of missed calls
- Lack of intra-department communication from Firewards
- Lack of training and perceived low quality of training
- Relationship-based decision-making
 - Personnel are often selected for advancement based on relationships rather than by qualification
- Turmoil within the department higher than ever before
- Department divided by multiple factions
 - Trained/certified members vs. the untrained/uncertified members
- Some members expressed concern over integrating the Fire and Ambulance services if all members would be required to be cross-trained in both functions ***(it is important to note this is not the case)***





Independent Assessment - Recommendations

- Transition from fire service governance by firewards to a municipal governance model where the department reports to the Town Manager
- The interim Fire Chief and command staff should continue to openly address conflict and build internal teamwork
- The interim Fire Chief and command staff should develop high quality, well structured monthly training programs
- The Town should utilize a paced and planned transition to create a single fire/rescue organization
- Fire Chief, EMS Chief and Town Manager encourage cross training of personnel and support cross training
- Fire Chief, EMS Chief and Town Manager should clarify that cross training is not required and provide reassurance that members wishing to retain a singular focus will continue to be valued and supported





Article 11 – Key Considerations (1 of 2)

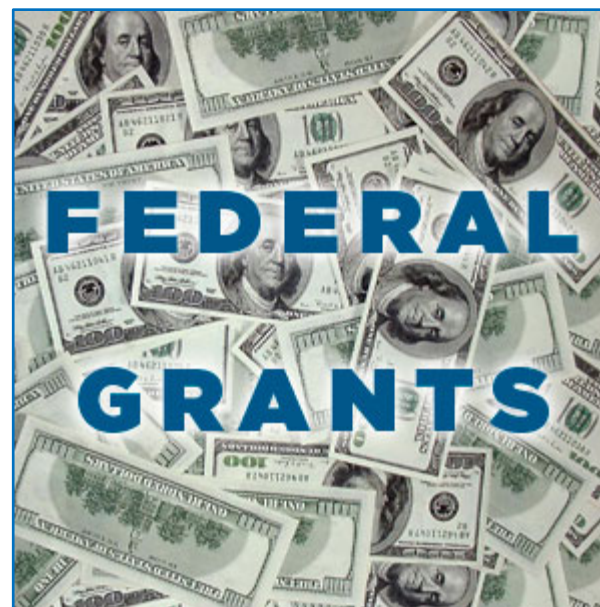
- Bringing Fire under municipal government permits greater flexibility in cross training and scheduling with the Ambulance, and deployment of on-call personnel
- It is increasingly accepted and understood that the primary functions and purposes of a “fire force” have changed dramatically over the past 30+ years.
- Fire departments have become “all hazards” departments that are integrating more closely with emergency medical services provided by municipal ambulance departments.
- A key way of boosting the volunteer force is to recruit and cross-train personnel to serve in both Fire and EMS.
- The ideal way to promote cross-training as well as to improve scheduling and service coverage would be to house both departments under municipal government.

(but, to reiterate, members will NOT be required to become certified in both functions)



Article 11 – Key Considerations (2 of 2)

- There is a need for more consistent and rigorous operational oversight and management, and moving the Fire Department under municipal administration would immediately provide the necessary level of leadership support and help promote training, transparency, accountability, and budgetary controls.
- The Town is currently uncompetitive for many federal and state grants as a result of relatively low levels of certification and infrequent training. These grants range from funding support for replacement equipment, offsetting certain staffing/operating expenses, and the cost of future facility (re)construction.





Article 11 – Looking Ahead: Process

- If Article 11 is approved, a transition team will be formed to work with the Town Manager and an experienced transition planning firm. We envision this team being comprised of a Fireward, Fire Chief, Ambulance Chief, a member representative from the Fire and Ambulance departments, a representative from the Budget Committee and/or CIP Committee, and a member of the public.
- The merits of integrating the Fire and Ambulance departments will be the focus of additional examination over the ensuing 12-month transition planning period.
- Cross-training should be incentivized regardless of the potential outcome of future organizational restructuring decisions.
- If it is ultimately determined that the departments will be fully integrated in a joint Fire-EMS Department, the timeline for doing so can be relatively quick.



Article 11 – Looking Ahead: Personnel

- At this time, we believe that integrating fire and ambulance will prolong the Town's ability to operate a cost-effective call/volunteer fire service and ultimately avoid needing to hire full-time personnel.
- Approving Article 11 will have no impact on the Fire Department operating budget in 2019, and any modest increases in the 2020 budget would primarily be targeted toward expanded training and recruitment.
- Enfield's Fire and Ambulance chiefs are already being compensated on an hourly basis for administrative duties and responding to calls.
- It may be desirable to expand the part-time hours of the Fire Chief to 20-24 hours/week (no fringe benefits) to perform the combined administrative duties at such time as the Fire and Ambulance departments become fully integrated.
- Enfield currently expends ~\$65,000 annually to Lebanon for contracted ambulance services (6AM-6PM; M-F), and appointing a part-time chief who is certified as an EMT creates an opportunity to have Enfield's ambulance respond to certain daytime calls (creating cost offsets).



Article 11 – Summary

The Enfield Board of Selectmen supports passing Article 11 to:

- Improve public safety by ensuring that critically important life-saving services are provided at the highest level to our residents for a sensible investment;
- Continue Enfield's commitment to operating an effective, low-cost call/volunteer fire service for the long term;
- Facilitate the future integration (and cross training) of Fire Department and Ambulance service;
- Help build the operational capacity, effectiveness, and responsiveness of the Fire Department and Ambulance service;
- Gain a wide range of efficiencies that cannot be achieved without this organizational realignment, and;
- Help make the Town more competitive for a variety of federal and state grants;





Article 12



Article 12

(Fire/Ambulance Transition Planning)

*To see if the Town will vote to appropriate the sum of **\$20,000** from available undesignated general fund balance for fire/ambulance department transition planning. (Majority vote required)*



Article 12 – Explanation (1 of 3)

- Assembling a comprehensive strategy to address the issues that have faced the Fire Department for many years is a significant undertaking.
- It will be necessary to develop a detailed transition plan and begin implementing it over the course of the next year in order to ensure an orderly and smooth transition.
- Planning efforts will incorporate all aspects of the Fire and Ambulance departments, including policies and procedures, governance and management, personnel, training, vehicles/equipment, and facilities.





Article 12 – Explanation (2 of 3)

The proposed transition planning efforts will help the Town:

- Coordinate efforts between Fire and Ambulance;
- Institute more effective and efficient Fire/Ambulance operations and practices;
- Enhance cross training, call response, and certification practices to ensure effective, timely coverage;
- Offer EMS cross-training to police officers to increase the number of qualified first responders,
- Maintain all Fire/Ambulance equipment and vehicles for maximum return on investment;
- Oversee ongoing performance management of all Fire and Ambulance personnel.



Article 12 – Explanation (3 of 3)

- These activities will markedly strengthen the quality and timeliness of public safety that all residents deserve.
- It will be highly advantageous to work with a qualified consulting firm with considerable experience assisting municipalities (and fire/rescue departments in particular) with these sorts of multi-faceted transitions.
- If the Town does not invest in coordinating this transition and utilize independent expertise, it is more likely that conflict within the Fire Department will persist.
- **A private foundation has graciously offered to contribute \$5,000** (must be matched with at least \$15,000 in Town funds) to support the transition.