

Board of Firewards
Town of New London – Meeting Minutes
May 13, 2024

The meeting was called to order at 4:27PM with the following members in attendance: John Ryan, Bill Degnan, Pete Lauridsen, Karen Hoglund, and Steve Ensign. Selectboard representative Janet Kidder and New London Fire Chief Jay Lyon were also in attendance. There was a recommendation to accept the Draft Minutes of the April meeting and they were accepted as posted. Motion made by John Ryan and seconded by Pete Lauridsen.

General Updates regarding NLFD calls and mutual aid:

NLFD has responded to 315 calls with 55 of those calls being general alarms. The NLFD recently responded to Newport with the Cascade (fills air bottles) for a trailer fire. In the state of NH there have been four (4) fatalities. The Fire Marshal stated that he could not remember a time with so many fatal fires, especially at this time of year. Take away, early notification, interconnected detectors and once of the building stay out. There was a bomb scare at Colby Sawyer College, it was unusual as school was out of session. The individual who called in had an accent. New London Police Officer Joe Waltz used the thermal drone and verified that nothing on the roof. EMS personnel and fire personnel staged at the New London Fire Department. The last bomb scare was about a year and a half ago.

Owl rescue: The day crew along with New London Police rescued an owl that was hit by a car. NLFD transferred the owl to Wings of the Dawn and the owl will make a full recovery.

Company drills: The NLFD will have a water supply water supply drill consisting of tanker shuttles. They will be filling a cistern of Lighthouse View Road.

Last month's training consisted of wildland firefighting on Burnt Hill Road at the Crowell residence. Flow pumps and stand-alone pumps were utilized, along with drafting from a dry hydrant located on the property. Chief Lyon stated that back pack blowers work very well in removing fuel at wildfire. Fast burning fires are common at this time of year.

At a recently at a CSC event Chief Lyon was made aware of a perception by some that, "the fire department gets everything they/we want." Although we are very grateful for all the support of the taxpayers, the NLFD's requests are true needs not wants. People do not necessarily understand how the FD works and we have a tendency to not advocate/ draw attention to ourselves. There was a discussion of how do we better educate the general public and the importance of the fire dept. During the last Budget Committee meeting, there were members that wanted to make sure that the Department Heads weren't "bothered", however Chief Lyon feels that we need to do a better job in educating the taxpayers and that is our job. There are some significant purchases coming up in 2026. Chief encourages people to visit the station to ask questions anytime. Steve stated that the town is very supportive for setting money aside for future acquisitions.

Bill Degnan, talked about smoke detectors, and the recent activations, especially false alarms and using that as marketing tool. Steve, reminded people to change batteries and check the expiration date. John marks is with the installation date on tape, as it's hard to see. Checking fire extinguishers should also be done. Chief gave the example of a recent stove fire at Hilltop and again the importance of fire extinguishers. Capt. Matthy would like to purchase an indoor fire extinguisher prop to better educate those older residents in town as well as business.

Current budget: The Chief talked about the current budget and all line items have a sufficient amount in them with the exception of overtime for the career personal. This overrun will be covered in other line items. Jay typically waits to order equipment at the end of the fiscal year and this will be done in the next few weeks.

2026 FY 2027 Items:

SCBA: The cost of the SCBA is between \$10,000 and \$13,000 per air pack and there are 25 packs on the apparatus to be replaced.

Tanker 1: Jay has met with Larry Dingey (who manufactures Fire Apparatus) and is in talks with Jeff Reed for a new chassis. Larry evaluated the current tanker and does thing that it would be a great body to transfer over to a new truck. He also spoke with Scott Reed, and Scott is concerned about the new federal emission standards and recommended that we will try to move it up from 2027 to 2026. It will take at least a year before the cab and chassis is available. We will have sufficient funding for a new cab and chassis. The new truck would replace standard transmission with an automatic. The pump is also transferable. A recommendation was made that we start this process a year earlier and no additional funds would be needed. By re-chasing the body it would save the town \$250,000-ish. A discussion followed about EOV firetrucks, but the technology for the fire service in the NE isn't there yet.

Main Street water started today and will be completed in 3 phases:

- 1: Homan Ct to Parkside 2nd,
2. Parkside to Seamans 3rd,
- & 3. Seamans to Squires 1st

There will be Fire Department connections, and these will be marked on our Active 911 app. This will be a significate disruption but there isn't another time of year that it could be done. The fire department responded has to 2 water main breaks in one year so this project needs to be done. Firefighters were used in those occasions for traffic control. Chief Cobb has made the decision to use her department officers as well as surrounding police community officers to cover traffic control. Chief Lyon did reach out to Chief Cobb to let her we have members available to assist with traffic control if needed. Main Street will always be open to at least one lane from 7am to 5pm and there will be some night work.

New London Ambulance Contract: Chief has meet twice with hospital officials. Selectboard has not received the most recent draft. They are working on it and will have a contract soon. Some of the concerns were the time frame for cancelation of service and planning ahead for coverage.

The hospital was not willing to distribute other Towns call information and Jay will be compiling that data of the next few months.

Dispatch: The new software seems to be working well, although there are still some kinks to be worked out. The software company is working on some intricacies regarding mapping with Active 911 and getting the Active 911 out in a timely manner. It was noted that if a call goes through 911 it takes some additional time as gathering info for medical calls or assisting with CPR. Chief Lyon has shared this info with Chief Cobb, and thinks we should be looking at benchmarking and dispatch standards. Selectmen Kidder inquired if the delays were due to the new software, and John Ryan thought that it was also training. It is extremely important to have good people who are all well trained. Updates to follow.

Health of the Department: Call coverage: Chief Lyon talked about how we have been very fortunate in the past to have some very dedicated members covering nights and weekend, however we have had some shortages and participation have dropped. It is becoming increasingly difficult to get On-call Officer coverage for nights and weekends. We are paying \$50 to cover from 7pm to 7am to be on-call and \$250 for a weekend shift. This is one reason the overtime line is over expended and we are now using credentialed members to cover shortages. In general, when departments are requested to respond to more and more calls, the membership participation numbers drop, we are now facing a similar situation. Society has changed, when looking at membership today. Employees are not driven by monetary incentive and other things are more important than making money. This is a trend across the fire service and the future does not look great. Jay talked about attracting more members in their 30s and 40s.

Chair Ensign expressed the concern that we don't have the same support from businesses that allowed firefighters leaving their jobs as in the past. John Ryan concurred and said that his old department faced the same situations and eventually moved towards hiring more full time staff and this might be the same for New London. Jay talked about how in important time and service are, and how do we pass along the institutional knowledge. Jay just wanted to give a heads up about the challenges that we are facing. The NLFD is reviewing our by-Laws and we might have to change the percentage the members need to attend, or we might not have to complement of firefighters that we currently do, which is down to 35 from 45. The Board then discussed how the fire service is always changing and it is important to take care of the membership. Steve thought is important to pay them adequately, but no one joins the Fire Department for the money, but to help out their community. Jay talked about affordable housing for firefighters and his dream about the NLFFA acquiring a duplex

Selectmen's Update: Janet Kidder talked about the police department, and an advisory board has been meeting. The Committee is still reviewing all options and the Selectboard is still waiting to see what proposal they will go with.

Other business: Bill Degnan inquired about attracting high school students and the CRTC program in Concord for attracting additional membership. Jay's response was in the affirmative

and Connor Heath went through the program and was our current live-in student. We also have Jake Heath and another prospective trainee that we will be voting on tonight.

Next Meeting: July 15th Motion to adjourned was made by John Ryan and seconded by Bill Degan at 5:45