



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

375 MAIN STREET • NEW LONDON, NH 03257

Budget Committee FY 2027 Motion: Fire Department

Assumption:

The proposed 2027 Fire Department budget includes \$32,300 for conferences and training, with \$25,000 designated for financial incentives established by the Board of Selectmen to address declining volunteer turnout and recruit new volunteers.

Motion:

This motion proposes reducing the Fire Department Conferences and Training line item (01-4220-500-540-00) by \$20,000, resulting in a total appropriation of \$12,200.

Rationale:

The Board of Selectmen introduced the \$25,000 incentive program to offset its removal of a new firefighter position from the Fire Department's initial budget request. The program increases volunteer pay rates and covers \$200 for Firefighter Level I certification and \$1,000 for EMT certification. This motion retains \$5,000 in the budget for these certifications.

The Board of Firewards opposes the Board of Selectmen's decision, stating that declining volunteer participation is primarily due to demographic and non-monetary factors, not compensation. And implementing these incentives is unlikely to resolve the issue and may permanently increase costs without achieving the intended results. This difference in approach requires further review by the Budget Committee.

Maintaining the current proposed budget or adding a new firefighter position will have long-term effects on the Fire Department's service level and the Town's finances. The Budget Committee recognizes the critical public safety service provided by New London's volunteer and professional firefighters, values the expertise of the Board of Firewards, and respects the governance role of the Board of Selectmen. As an independently elected body responsible for the prudent appropriation of public funds, the Budget Committee should take additional time to study this matter thoroughly.

Areas for further study include trends in the Fire Department's pay structure. See the chart below. This decision has significant implications and requires consideration of complex factors, such as the Department's response capacity, changing service demands, mutual aid, and potential regionalization. Due to time constraints, the Budget Committee has not fully evaluated these issues in the context of this budget decision.

The proposed motion maintains the current approach for the Fire Department, allows targeted certification incentives, and provides time for a thorough analysis in anticipation of FY 2028.

Fire Department Budget						CURRENT
Account	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Budget	2027 Budget
115 - F/T Wages	110,387.40	119,495.00	129,388.00	139,718.36	211,585.00	234,607.00
120 - P/T Wages	72,192.88	86,729.00	88,600.00	83,047.06	111,500.00	111,500.00
125 - On Call Pay	18,616.86	16,480.00	19,525.00	15,080.00	25,920.00	25,920.00
128 - Per Diem					20,800.00	20,800.00
140 - Overtime Wages	7,788.36	9,540.00	22,445.00	13,983.48	23,690.00	48,083.00
540 - Conferences & Training						25,000.00 *
	208,985.50	232,244.00	259,958.00	251,828.90	393,495.00	465,910.00
* Incentives Only						