

## Budget Committee, Fire Department Summary 2014

In 2013, the Fire Dept (NLFD) responded to 682 calls, a slight increase over 637 in 2012, including 99 motor vehicle accidents, 102 false alarms, 164 mutual aid to other towns, and 3 New London fires. The 3 main functions of the NLFD, in addition to putting out fires, are Preparedness, Training, and Code Compliance/Inspection. Also follow-up after fire and vehicle events, cleanups, documentation, dealing with insurance companies, checking hot spots after fires, and legal issues require personnel time.

Chief Lyon is requesting 3 specific increases for the operating budget which was \$314,399 for 2014-15:

- 1) An addition of \$6000 to line item 364 for Vehicle Repair and Maintenance from \$12,700 last year to \$18,700. Since the FD owns about \$2 million in equipment, this line item is necessary to cover contingencies without requiring special Select Board approval. Last year's line item was cut and later over-expended.
- 2) An increase of \$3700 in line item 540 for training funds from \$3500 last year to \$7200 to cover the increased cost of training new volunteers. Currently 2 professional staff work with 40-45 volunteers, including Colby Sawyer students and others who may serve for a limited time as they move, take other jobs or assume more family responsibilities. This high turnover requires regular training.
- 3) An increase of \$11,350 under General Government Buildings in line item 4194-500-430 for Fire Station Maint.and Repair from \$3600 to \$15,000 to refurbish apparatus floors in the main bays of the station by providing as 3-coat epoxy finish, as in Sunapee, which will hold up well under current heavy use. Altogether non personnel operating costs will increase by \$21,050 from \$68,945 to \$90,995.

In addition, a new Capital Reserve Account is requested of \$15,000 for communication equipment that will be needed in several years – mobiles, which are obsolete but still being repaired in house, and portables which still have about 5 years of life. Both replacements will be coordinated with Dispatch at an eventual cost of about \$122,720. The other capital improvements listed in Tables 16 and 18 of the Capital Improvement Program will remain unchanged while Table 17 will be zeroed out.

The major challenge Chief Lyon reports is recruiting and retention of volunteers as many hold more than one job, the population in NH ages, and local workers are less available. Town Meeting in 1999 approved one additional full time professional slot for Fire Prevention and Training, but funds have not been appropriated and are not requested at this time. In general, there is a trend in rural and small towns toward additional full time professional personnel as volunteer availability declines. NLFD hopes to meet immediate needs through call membership or per diem personnel. The Subcommittee did not address the issue of pay increases for personnel pending action by the Firewards and Select Board.

By PTP, for RP and JW, 11/7/20014

