

Selectmen's Meeting June 21, 2021

CALL VOLUME –	March 1st – June 16th
EMS – total	133
EMS – advanced life support	15
Fire – total	33
Motor vehicle accidents	6
Mutual aid given- Fire	10
Mutual aid given - EMS	15
Mutual aid EMS transports	2
Total Fire Department responses	199

Fire Department Responses

The fire department responded to on average two emergency calls per day during the above period. Most of the calls continue to be EMS calls both in town and mutual aid to Worcester and West Boylston. The department responded to several small brush fires in town during open air burning season, most of which were either out of control permit fires or unattended permit fires after hours. The fire department also responded mutual aid to building fires in Lancaster and West Boylston and provided station coverage several times to Clinton and Lancaster. In addition to emergency responses, the fire department inspected over 300 permit fires between March and May.

COVID-19 RELATED ACTIONS

The MA Department of Public Health Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS) has rescinded most of the emergency orders put in place because of the pandemic and EMS operations are for the most part back to pre-pandemic state with some modifications. All EMTs who respond to emergency calls for service are still required to wear appropriate personal protective equipment including face masks. Based on the nature of the call and potential COVID exposure, disposable gowns are also required when necessary. All but two active EMTs on the department have been vaccinated but the PPE requirement remains in place regardless of vaccination status. In addition, OEMS has lifted the restrictions on in-person classroom training, so the department has resumed in-person training as of June 2nd. The department continues to conduct regional EMS training in conjunction with the West Boylston Fire Department.

As the Board of Selectmen is aware, Boylston has been participating in a regional vaccination clinic held at the DoubleTree Hotel in Westborough. The clinic has been in operation for the past nine weeks and is being run in cooperation with Ashland, Holliston,

Hopkinton, Northborough, Southborough, and Westborough. Members of the Boylston Fire Department have staffed the clinic each day of operation; members have administered vaccines and worked in the observation area of the clinic. The final date of the clinic is Tuesday, June 22nd. There have been sixteen different Boylston Fire Department employees who staffed the vaccine clinic in the past nine weeks, allowing the clinic to deliver almost 20,000 doses of Moderna, Pfizer, and Johnson and Johnson vaccine. This was an extremely rewarding experience for all those who worked the clinic and the level of participation from the fire department was a key to the clinic's success. Between this clinic, and the work of the Board of Selectmen, Board of Health, Boylston Lion's Club and other volunteers have done, the percent of vaccinated people in the community is very high. The early work done by the Lion's Club and other volunteers made a huge impact on the community's response to the pandemic. As the fire chief, I would like to personally thank all of these people for the work they did to obtain vaccines for members of the community.

FY 2021/FY 2022 GRANTS

Two FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grants are in the review process. One grant, in the amount of \$190,112.00 is to replace out of compliance self-contained breathing apparatus, and a second grant, in the amount of \$650,000 is to replace a 1989 engine and a 1981 rescue truck with a combination rescue/pumper. These grants require a small matching portion from the town, if awarded. The SCBA grant match of \$9052.95 was approved two weeks ago at the Annual Town Meeting. The engine grant will require a \$30,952.38 match; typical lead time to purchase a fire engine is one year, so if the grant were to be awarded, the money would not have to be allocated until next year.

The department received a \$10,000 equipment grant through the MA Department of Fire Services to replace updated forceable entry equipment, battery-powered saws, and lighting equipment. This grant that does not require any match from the community. Equipment awarded through this grant has been ordered, and some has been received already. There is a backlog on most of this equipment as most departments are ordering this time of year. We have filed for an extension on this grant since we do not anticipate all the equipment will be delivered by the end of the fiscal year.

The department obtained two MEMA Emergency Management Planning Grants in 2020 totaling approximately \$5400 for the purchase of EMS supplies and equipment to upgrade equipment currently in use, along with some additional computer monitors for the station. The department also received a SAFE and Senior SAFE grant to continue our fire education program along with renewing our smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector program for our seniors. We were unable to do any in-person training in the schools this year but hope to get back into the schools next year.

FY 2022 Budget

As requested by the Town Administrator, the FY 22 budget was submitted with no changes from FY21 and was approved at the Town Meeting. We would also like to thank the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee for their support of the increase salary for the on-call firefighter/EMTs based on their experience, level of training, and years of service with the department. It is our hope that this increase will make the per diem shifts more attractive to the on-call personnel. We also want to thank the Board for their support with the annual stipend for EMS staff who cover the ambulance overnight. The department members are very thankful for the Board's support with this increase.

Capital Items

On a capital improvement wish list, if we are unsuccessful with our federal grants, we will need to look at replacing our self-contained breathing apparatus very soon. Our current SCBA are fourteen years old, and as of next year our air cylinders will be out of compliance as they only have a 15-year lifespan. This should be a contributing factor to have them replaced through the federal grant, but if not, we will need to take other actions moving forward for next fiscal year. The replacements costs for the SCBA is currently \$190,000 but this number will most likely increase next year.

As we discussed previously, the build-out on the new fire apparatus is currently about a year, so we decided we did not need to approach the town for capital funding in this fiscal year to replace the engine. The replacement cost for the engine is approximately \$650,000, with \$100,000 of that being paid through mitigation funds obtained from the developer of the proposed apartment complex on Rt. 140. We had previously discussed a lease/purchase arrangement for this vehicle, like what we have done for the ladder truck and new ambulance. Perhaps there may be further mitigation money available from the additional projects before the town.

Staffing

Firefighter/EMT Ryan Schloerb recently completed the Firefighter I/II program at the MA Firefighting Academy and will graduate on June 29th. Firefighter/EMT Schloerb has passed is national certification exam and is now certified at the FF I/II level. Ryan performed very well while at the academy and we want to congratulate him for his accomplishments. Firefighter Tim Ciampaglia recently completed the certification course to become an emergency medical technician. Firefighter Ciampaglia has been with the department for several years as an on-call firefighter but now he will be serve the department as a firefighter/EMT; we applaud Tim for his work to obtain his EMT certification.

The fire department is back to full staff with all its full-time employees; Lt. Bradford is back to work after being out with an injury. Other full-time and on-call employees covered his shifts while he was out.

The announcement regarding the full-time staff organizing a union was posted at the station as directed by the Town Administrator; no one came forward to contest the union.

We have been struggling to fill the weeknight and weekend per diem positions at the station without the availability of college students and it is our hope that the pay increases that go into effect July 1st will help get some interest in the shifts. We do have two new EMTs currently going through their orientation program so hopefully they will want to work some of the shifts.

Other Activities

Shrewsbury Homes has donated a house at 61 Mill Rd. for the fire department to use for practical training. The house is slated for demolition, so Ron Aspero offered the house to the department to use for training. The department has set up several practical scenarios in the house using artificial smoke to simulate fireground conditions for firefighters to train. Department members have used the house to practice hose line advancement, search and rescue, salvage and overhaul, and ventilation skills. We want to thank Mr. Aspero for his generosity.

The fire department participated in Field Day at the Boylston Elementary School last Thursday. Department members set up hose targets and students had relay races to use fire hoses to knock down the targets. It was great to see all the students and teachers have a chance to get outside and have some fun during a difficult school year.

The Wachusett Muster League announced that they would be holding the annual muster in September in Harvard. The muster was not held last year due to the pandemic.