

Selectmen's Meeting March 8, 2021

CALL VOLUME – January-February 2021

EMS – basic life support	83
EMS – advanced life support	9
Fire – total	15
Motor vehicle accidents	9
Mutual aid given- Fire	7
Mutual aid given - EMS	23
Mutual aid EMS transports	2
Total Fire Department responses	147

Fire Department Responses

2021 has started out to be quite busy for both fire and EMS response, along with a significant increase in mutual aid response. In the first two months of the year, the department responded to a total of 147 calls, with 30 of those calls being mutual aid. Most of the EMS mutual aid has been to Worcester and Shrewsbury, as Boylston has become a backup for 911 coverage to the Lincoln St. area. In addition, the fire department responded mutual aid to cover the Worcester Fire Department headquarters during a fatal 5 alarm fire, as well as responding to building fires in Clinton, Lancaster, and West Boylston. We have been able to provide adequate staffing for just about all of the calls; we did require the West Boylston Fire Department to respond to one EMS call, and Worcester EMS responded to a second call when our staff was tied up with other calls.

COVID-19 RELATED ACTIONS

All fire department staff members who were interested in obtaining the COVID-19 vaccine have done so; all second dose vaccinations were received three weeks ago. There were a few staff members who decided not to get the vaccine, but a vast majority of the department is now vaccinated.

Department staff members are still required to wear personal protective equipment at all times when responding to calls, and the fire station still remains closed to the public. In person training is scheduled to resume this week on a limited basis, with social distance requirements, masks, and self-contained breathing apparatus being used to protect all members from exposure. A large, acquired structure has been obtained by the West Boylston Fire Department, and training will be done at that structure in conjunction with

WBFD. All personnel will work in small groups with proper personal protective equipment to ensure their safety.

Several EMTs from the fire department have taken part in vaccination administration training and will be available to assist with any local or regional clinics if those clinics get approval from the Department of Public Health.

FY 2021/FY 2022 GRANTS

Chief Flanagan has submitted two grants to FEMA as part of the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program. 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 will require a \$9052.95 match, the engine grant will require a \$30,952.38 match. The 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 has applied for a \$10,000 equipment grant through the MA Department of Fire Services. This is a competitive grant that does not require any match from the community. Equipment requested through this grant includes updated forceable entry equipment, battery-powered saws, and lighting equipment.

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.

FY 2022 Budget/Warrant Articles for Town Meeting

As requested by the Town Administrator, the FY 22 budget was submitted with no changes from FY21. On a capital improvement wish list for FY 2022, if we are unsuccessful with our federal grants, we will need to look at replacing an engine and 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. We would also like to look at some increase salary for the on-call firefighter/EMTs to make per diem shifts a bit more attractive to the on-call staff members. We are currently on the low-end of the pay scale as compared to area departments.

Three warrant articles were submitted to the Town Administrator for consideration at the Annual Town Meeting. The first article is a transfer of funds, amount to be determined, from the ambulance receipts reserved account to supplement the operating budget. A second article is to request the 5% match of the FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant

program for the purchase of new self-contained breathing apparatus. A total of \$190,112 was requested through this grant; the town's matching portion would be \$9053.

A third warrant article was written to request a transfer of \$15,000.00 from the ambulance receipts reserved account to provide EMTs who staff the station on an on-call overnight group a \$1000 stipend, paid in two \$500 increments. In researching how our neighboring departments handle overnight, on-call coverage, it appears that most departments pay anywhere from \$25-\$100 per night for EMTs to cover the ambulance. We currently do not pay our EMTs anything to be on call one night per week; EMTs only get paid if there is a call, and then they get paid an hourly rate of \$16.37 per hour. At this rate, we are having a hard time attracting and keeping EMTs who are willing to stay at the station and cover the ambulance. We no longer have a lot of EMTs who live in town, so most EMTs who are assigned to an on-call group sleep at the station. As of now, we have six groups made up of a minimum of two EMTs who are responsible for covering any calls between the hours of 11:00 pm and 6:30 am. I think by providing these EMTs with a little bit of an incentive, we might be able to keep them longer. The \$15,000 isn't really a lot of money, that revenue is generated in about 20-25 EMS calls. I think this will be a way to compensate the EMTs for the time they are giving up to provide ambulance coverage for the community.