

Huntersville Fire Department

Staffing Proposal

DRAFT

History

- At Town budget workshop January 2023, Chief Dotoli requested 9 full-time Town employee Firefighters to be hired July 2023 and 9 additional January 2024
- Mayor requested Commissioners Boone, Kovacs and Partee meet with Staff to develop recommendation
 - These meetings occurred Feb/Mar/April 2023
 - Consensus was for staff to continue research how to best integrate Town fire staffing with goal of return to Board consideration prior to January 2024
- Town Board determined that Staff should continue to research options and not incur cost of an external study
- Town Staff and HFD Staff continued to meet July, Aug, Sept regarding specifics
- Town Staff, HFD & Commissioners Boone, Kovacs & Partee reconvened Sept 27 with consensus to bring budget amendment to full Board October 16

Why full-time Firefighters?

- Huntersville Fire Dept has served the Town as a separate non-profit for 100 years with volunteer and eventual part-time staff
- HFD staff vary hours based on individual's desire / availability monthly;
 - Minimum number of shifts must be worked to stay on roster
 - Part-time staff are not compelled to work specific schedule
- This scheduling convention post Covid has resulted in numerous shifts understaffed
- Full-time employment can compel employees to work specific schedule
- Supplementing existing part-time staff with full-time staff provides more consistent shift coverage
- Municipal firefighters are eligible for additional hours before overtime applies

Full-time Employees of Which Organization?

- HFD has limited benefits (social security, Medicare, gap insurance)
- HFD has no dedicated administrative staff (HR/Finance etc)
- Town employees have desirable benefits
 - Retirement, 401k, Paid Holiday Time
 - Medical insurance, Sick and Vacation Accruals

Budget Amendment

- Fund 19 firefighters effective January 1, 2024
 - Chief
 - 6 full-time Firefighter positions
 - 6 full-time Engineer positions
 - 6 full-time Captain positions
- Chief sets consistent rotating schedule for 18 full-time staff
- Chief manages all staff (municipal fire staff and HFD part-time staff)
- Town advertises employee positions Oct/Nov/Dec and initiates selection process to have some employees ready to report as early as January 1

Calculation of Amendment

- Estimated cost to add Chief and 18 positions for half year:
\$1,112,130
- Source of funds:
 - \$200,000 state grant
 - Reduce FY 24 HFD quarterly payments by \$607,178
 - Remaining from General Fund Balance: \$304,952
- Dependent upon amount of new gear purchased, a future budget amendment requesting use of Fire fund balance may be pursued

Comparisons

Municipality	# Stations	FY 24 Budget	Est Full-time Staff
Statesville	4	\$11,111,765	83
Thomasville	4	\$6,439,618	Undetermined
Garner	4	\$6,953,381	Contract
Kannapolis	5	\$11,381,621	99
Mooresville	5	\$15,521,377	124
Apex	5	\$16,640,100	115
Huntersville	4	\$5,876,640	Contract

There is substantial variability in what different municipalities include in their departmental budgets, such as debt, inspection services and nonrecurring capital. And call volume and services provided will cause staffing needs to vary.

Tie Up Loose Ends

- Between October and January 1, 2024:
 - Town HFD agreement needs to be amended
 - HFD bylaws and SOGs need to be amended
 - Update the Town Personnel Policy
- Confirm appropriate insurances in place (workers comp, property, etc)
- Will later FY 24 budget or FY 25 budget include part-time staff converting to Town paid rather than HFD?
- What else?

Employer of Choice

- Maintain relationship with local part-time employees as long as possible
 - Cost savings to Town
 - Schedule flexibility for those who do not seek full-time employment
- Provide some benefits (retirement/401k) without providing all (health & other insurances and time off accruals)
- Gap insurance for those who maintain outside full-time employment, otherwise, part-time employment is a deterrent

Ultimately, Types of Employees

- Salaried Chief (and Command Staff)
- Under 1000 hour employee part-timers – same benefits as now
- 1000-1499 hour employees (retirement, 401k, holiday time)
- 1500 up to full time (retirement, 401k, holiday, health insurance, other?)
- Full-time (same benefits as other Town departments)

Non-profit, Hybrid or Municipal

- Council-Manager form of government renders employees under Manager's supervision & authority (Chief and all departmental staff)
- Having multiple shifts of employees who report to separate organizations is not recommended
- FY 2024 budget funded \$5.876 million in contributions to HFD, \$3.9 million of which is salaries (66%)
- Long-term solution is to determine our preferred mix of full-time and part-time employees

Questions?