

Preston Emergency Services Advisory Committee

January, 21th 2019
Special Meeting Minutes
@Preston City Fire Station

1. *Roll Call:*

Co-Chairman Dave Paige called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

Members Present: Jim Bell, Tom Casey, Dave Paige, Russ Holland, and Jarred Harris.

Members Absent: None

2. *Fire and Emergency Services Discussion*

Members of both department offered opinions on why the fire departments are experiencing a decline in active members. These reasons include:

- Increased call volume
- More certifications necessary and required to respond
- Certification and training classes are getting longer and more demanding
- More family obligations now compared to previous generations
- Fire departments used to be a larger source of social interaction (Fairs, Water battles, Parades, bowling leagues, Baseball teams, dances, etc.)
- Decreased numbers of responders are resulting in faster burnout rates
- Fear of increased liabilities
- Decreased numbers of experienced members due to an aging membership
- Members reluctance to be on scene without adequate help

Chief Casey reported that he would be requesting additional fire fighter/EMT staffing hours in next year's budget.

Members of both departments gave the committee many reasons why they support additional paid staff hours being covered.

- Peace of mind knowing with certainty that a qualified person will always be responding to a fire, car crash, EMS or any other emergency call that happens in town
- Having paid staff assist with ambulance services generates funding which in turn helps pay for new ambulances, many supplies, and helps offset cost of their own salaries
- Having paid staff in the stations ensures a quicker response time to all emergencies
- Assistance with the prevention of volunteer burn out
- Responsibility of the town to provide emergency services to its residents

A show of hands displayed 100% support from the members present of Preston City and Poquetanuck fire departments to cover all remaining uncovered hours with paid staffing.

3. Public Comment

Andy Depta stated the departments should be responsible to present a long-term plan for future emergency services. Chief Casey responded he has presented to the BOS a long-term plan. Casey also added that any strategy would need to be fluid with many contingency plans giving the unknown requirement that will be a direct result from the Preston Riverwalk development.

Andy Depta expressed an interest in having a third party investigate cost vs. benefits.

Andrew Bilodeau stated the volunteers should be paid somehow through incentives or tax abatements or any other options that might be available.

4. Adjourned

The motion to adjourn was made by Tom Casey, seconded by Russ Holland, and approved by the members at 7:46pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jarred J. Harris

Jarred J. Harris
PESAC Secretary