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Chief of Department



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**TOWN OF GEORGETOWN**  
Fire Department Headquarters  
47 Central Street  
Georgetown, Massachusetts 01833-2408

8 March 2025

Finance and Advisory Committee

Subject: FinCom FY26 Budget Request Priorities & Justification

Dear Members of the Finance and Advisory Committee,

Below please find the requested increases to the Fire Department's General Fund Budget along with the reasoning for the requests. Additional data is included as an appendix following this letter. The total request amounts to **\$297,710.01**, the majority of which would go to the Wages line item to fund (3) additional full-time firefighters.

**Requested FY2026 Funding:**

Salaries & Wages (Fire): Net Increase of \$282,248.00

This request is to fund adding three (3) full-time Firefighter/EMT positions resulting in an additional 84 hours of staffing per week, with the third position coming from 42 hours of already scheduled Per Diem shift hours. These positions will result in the Fire Department having three (3) Firefighter/EMT's on duty 24 hours per day, 7 days a week. This staffing is imperative for a fire engine to make it out the door meeting minimum standards. This assumes no other calls, including EMS, which takes two (2) firefighters out of town transporting on the ambulance. But, at a minimum, leaves a firefighter in the station to begin make emergency operations decisions. It also shifts the balance of full-time employee hours worked from 38% to 66%, creating more consistency with shifts being filled.

This request also includes Call/Per Diem wage increases to retain and maintain a critical and economical part of the Georgetown Fire Department staffing model. Currently, Georgetown Call/Per Diem firefighters have one of, if not the, lowest hourly wage rates in Essex County at an average of \$20.80/hr. The funding would increase the hourly rate to an average of \$24/hour, at what is believed to be the lowest rate of North Shore communities.

1. Three (3) New Full-Time Firefighter/EMT Positions
  - a. Cost: \$232,248.00
    - i. Funds 84 new hours per week and three (3) new Full-Time Firefighter/EMT Positions
    - ii. This does NOT include benefits which is estimated anywhere between \$17,000 - \$39,000 each
    - iii. Includes projected OT for holds, callback, training and Holiday
    - iv. Includes Per Diem hour switch to full-time of 42 hours/week
  - b. Why are these new positions important?
    - i. Shifts the balance of total hours scheduled by Full-Time employees from 38% to 66%
      1. 14% of total shift hours go unfilled, leaving critical staffing voids

GEORGETOWN FIRE DEPARTMENT

2. Based on call volume and model, the station is understaffed 62.5% of the time and unmanned (no one in the station) 12.5% of the time
  - ii. Three firefighters on an engine is the minimum operational standard for staffing
  - iii. OSHA regulations require 4 firefighters on scene to operate in an Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health (IDLH) environment
  - iv. The department has seen a 78% increase in emergency call volume over the past 15 years
    1. This does not include Smoke/CO inspections for home sale, commercial safety inspections, permitting and inspections for commercial construction or other day to day operational duties
  - v. A 2018 third party management review recommended 6 Full-Time firefighters beginning FY 2019
2. \$50,000 for Call/Per Diem Wage Increases
  - a. Hourly wage increase \$2.00/hr
  - b. Step increases based on Certifications & Years of Service
  - c. Call force has experienced 30% loss in Part-Time employees over last 3 years
  - d. In town Call Firefighter labor force has experienced a 50% reduction in 10 years due to
  - e. 44% increase vs YA in overnight calls makes Call/Per Diem work difficult to nearly impossible
  - f. Currently, Part-Time FF with 25 years of experience has same Hourly Rate as FF with 6 months experience
  - g. Even with more full-time help, 34% of scheduled hours would come from Per Diem help

Fire Expenses: Net increase of \$15,462.01

1. UTV Lease to Purchase: \$12,500
  - a. UTV equipped for wildland firefighting and rescue
2. RMS Software Increases: \$2,962.01
  - a. RMS Software increases

**FY25 Level Funding Impacts (or worse, cuts):**

A level funded budget in FY26 will have the following impacts:

- Continued increasing unfilled shifts due to less Call/Per Diem firefighters and lacking wages (no wage increases)
- Longer response times due to relying more on mutual aid
- Longer permit/inspection processing, unavailability (Smoke/CO, Building, etc)
- Lack of Community Resiliency in Response in large scale emergencies due to lack of responders (weather events, wildfires, mass casualty, etc.
- Any cuts to the fire department budget will add further risk to inadequate responses

Respectfully submitted,







Chief Matthew G. McKay

Enc. Appendix

		FY2023 Budget	FY 2024 Budget	FY2025 Budget	FY2026 Level Service	FY2026 (ASK)	Comments
<b>Fire Department</b>							
	PURCHASE OF SERVICES	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
	R&M - OTHER	\$32,376.45	\$28,500.00	\$28,500.00	\$29,000.00	\$29,000.00	
	RENTAL/LEASE				\$6,530.00	\$19,000.00	\$12,500 UTV Lease; Remaining reclassification
	OTHER PROFESSIONAL SERVICES				\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	RMS Cost increases;Reclassification from Other Supplies
	TUITION	\$3,428.18	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00	
	COMMUNICATION	\$6,816.10	\$6,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$6,000.00	
	TELEPHONE	\$0.00	\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00	
	POSTAGE	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$150.00	
	OFFICE SUPPLIES	\$2,571.14	\$2,800.00	\$2,800.00	\$2,800.00	\$2,800.00	
	CUSTODIAL SUPPLIES	\$2,571.14	\$2,500.00	\$2,500.00	\$2,500.00	\$2,500.00	
	VEHICLE SUPPLIES	\$30,853.63	\$30,600.00	\$30,600.00	\$30,600.00	\$30,600.00	
	EDUCATIONAL SUPPLIES	\$7,713.41	\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	
	OTHER SUPPLIES	\$26,775.81	\$41,066.00	\$41,066.00	\$28,000.00	\$28,000.00	Reclassification to Other Professional Services
	INTERGOV- OTHER	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
	IN-STATE TRAVEL	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
	DUES AND MEMBERSHIPS	\$5,142.28	\$8,500.00	\$9,027.46	\$4,905.47	\$4,905.47	Erie Lease Agreement Reclassification to Rental/Lease
	OTHER UNCLASSIFIED ITEMS	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
	COVID 19	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
	PURCHASE OF SERVICES	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Total Expenditures		\$118,248.14	\$129,466.00	\$129,993.46	\$132,935.47	\$145,455.47	
	SALARIES & WAGES - PERMANENT	\$522,554.78	\$533,005.88	\$576,925.88	\$596,977.81	\$859,173.88	Additional 3 Full-Time Employees, Per Diem/Call Rate Increases
<b>Total Budget</b>		<b>\$640,802.91</b>	<b>\$662,471.88</b>	<b>\$706,919.34</b>	<b>\$729,913.28</b>	<b>\$1,004,629.35</b>	



## Georgetown Fire Department Staffing Strategic Plan

	<u>Current</u>	<u>Request</u> FY26	<u>5-10 Years</u>	<u>10-15 Years</u>
	5 Full-time FF's	8 Full-time FF's (+3)	10 Full-time FF's (+2)	12 Full-time FF's (+2)
				
<u>Scheduled</u> <u>Shift Hours</u> <u>FT and PT</u>	421 hrs/week 160/261 hrs	504 hrs/week (+83hrs) 334/170 hrs	504 hrs/week 418/86 hrs	544 hrs/week (+40 hrs) 458/86 hrs
<u>Ratio</u> <u>FT to PT Hrs.</u>	38% FT / 62% PT	66% FT/ 34% PT	83% FT/ 17% PT	64% FT/ 36% PT
<u>FF's on shift</u> <u>(24/7)</u>	Avg. 2.5 FF's/shift	Avg. 3.0 FF's/shift	Avg. 3.0 FF's/shift	Avg. 3.5 FF's/shift
<u>Other</u>		Convert 42 hrs existing PT hours	Convert 84 hrs existing PT hours	Add 40 hrs for Fire Prevention

### Notes:

- Does not include Full-time Chief
- 7 Call/Per Diem employees will "age out" in next 10 years
- Likely to have net loss of additional 3-5 based on historic trends



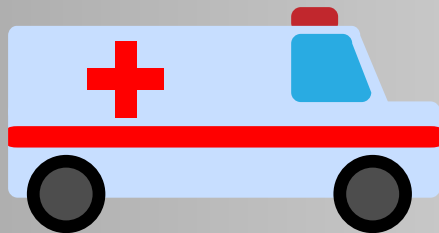
The Fire Department has requested an approx. \$300,000 to fund 3 additional full-time Firefighter/EMTs in the FY26 Budget along with wage increases for Call/Per Diem Firefighter/EMT's. The 3 Firefighter/EMTs would bring the department's full-time staff to 8 Firefighter/EMTs, but more importantly budget for staffing of 3 Firefighter/EMTs 24/7, 365 days a year

The current staffing budget allows for:

3 on duty from 8a to 9p  
2 on duty from 9p to 8a



The current fire department staffing model is inefficient and unsustainable. In 2018, the town commissioned a third party management review of fire department operations. That report called for 6 full-time firefighters beginning Fiscal Year 2019. To date, the department has 5 full-time firefighters, with 1 coming from existing budget re-alignment



The ambulance takes 2 firefighters out of town, which often leaves the station uncovered

78% INCREASE IN CALLS  
OVER PAST 15 YEARS



Increasing run volume, inspections, and permitting along with other community projects has increased workload demand



***Based on average call volume and staffing model, the station is understaffed 62.5% of the time and unmanned 12.5% of the time***

**4**

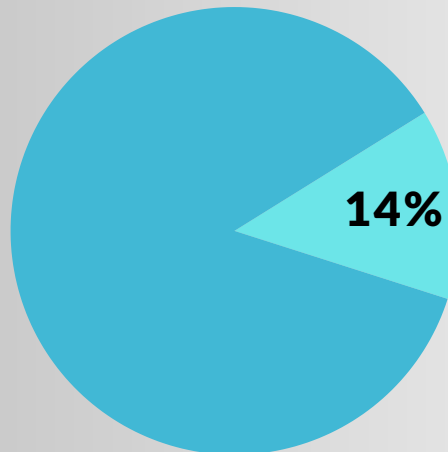
**FIREFIGHTER  
MINIMUM**

**It takes a minimum of 4 firefighters (Incident Commander and 3 Firefighters) on scene to be able to enter a hazardous environment per OSHA 2-in/2-out Rule**

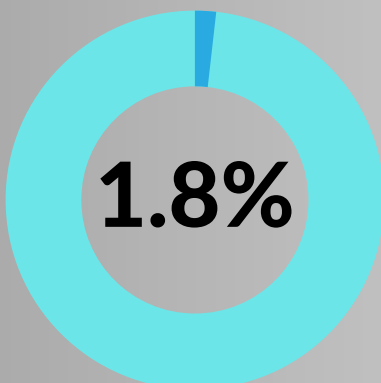


**Only 2 firefighters were on the first arriving engine during June 2024's fatal house fire. They were alone for >5 minutes**

**Increased overtime hours create burnout while both uncovered shift hours and overtime are unsafe and unsustainable**



**avg. uncommitted hours per month (unfilled, Sick, Vacation, etc.)**



**EST. FIRE DEPT.  
SHARE OF  
GENERAL FUND  
(FY25)**

*Not including  
employee benefits*

**The ambulance also generates an avg. of \$350K-\$400K annually, supporting this service through the Enterprise account which also covers cost of staffing for 2 firefighters and expenses**