

# **HEBRON FIRE DEPARTMENT 2026-2027 BUDGET PRESENTATION**

**CHIEF PETER J. STARKEL 3/10/26**



# OBJECTIVES

- Review of operational data
- Staffing challenges
- HFD's proposed wage and staffing improvements
- CIP & Capital Project Requests
- Operational budget line changes
- Conclusion

# OPERATIONAL DATA

- 1188 total calls for service in calendar year 2025
  - 2024 – 1059, 2023 – 1193, 2022 – 1113, 2021 – 1141, 2020 – 1012, 2019 – 941, 2018 – 944, 2017 – 808, 2016 – 837, 2015 – 791
  - 50% increase in calls from 2015 to 2025
  - 140 instances of overlapping occurrences/345 overlapping incidents in 2025
- 883 EMS related (74.3%)
- 4 reported commercial structure fires
- 22 residential structure fires
  - 4 in Hebron
  - 18 in Mutual Aid towns

# OPERATIONAL DATA

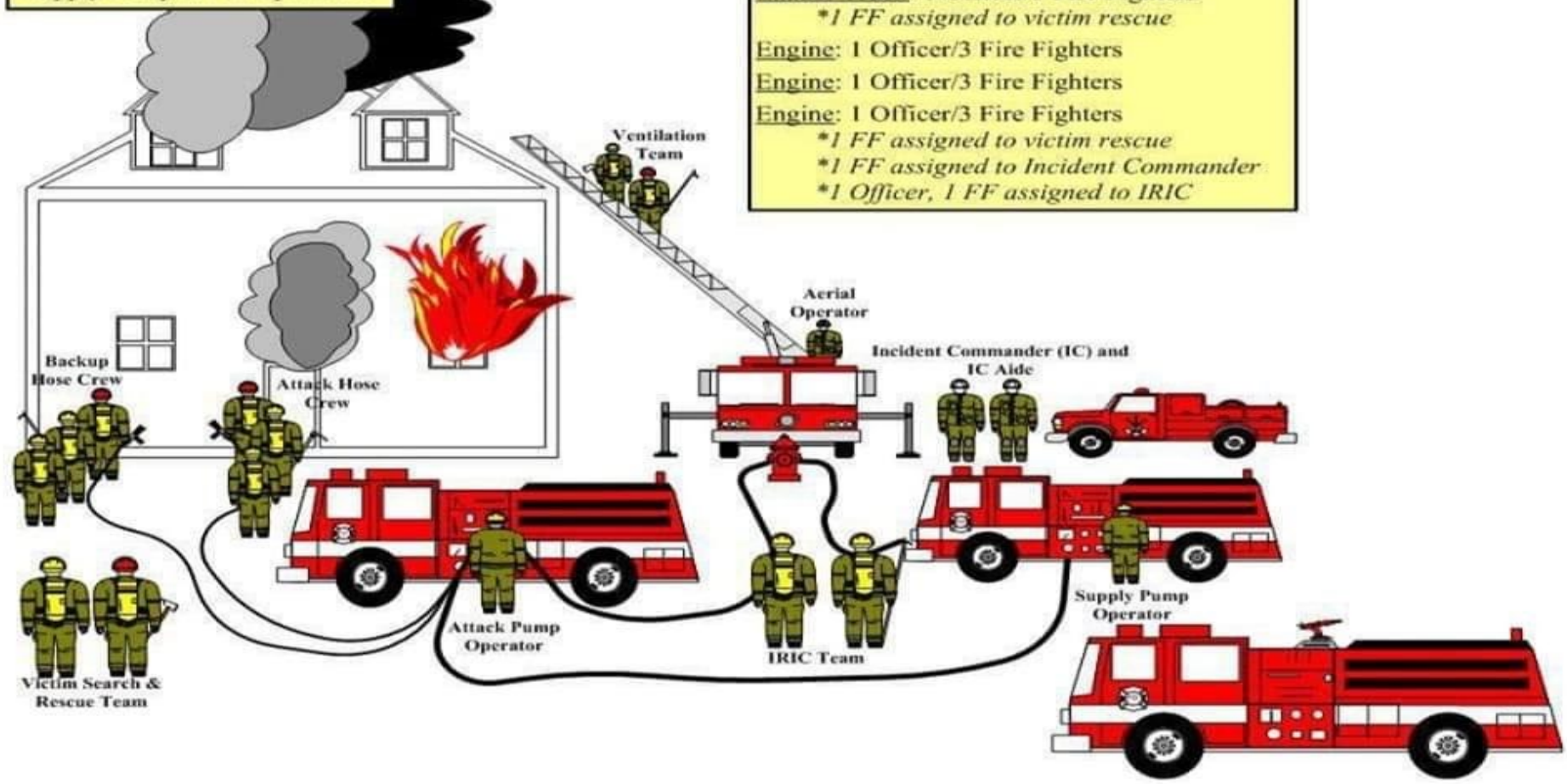
- Personnel
  - Three full-time certified FF/EMT
  - Full time Fire Chief (certified FF/EMT)
  - Full time Administrative Assistant
  - One part-time EV Mechanic (certified FF/EMT)
  - Thirteen (-6) per-diem staff responsible for covering 144 hours per week
    - One currently off-line for extended period of time/medical leave
    - Two moved back to Volunteer status
    - Two left for full time careers elsewhere
    - One resigned due to inability to meet minimum required hours
  - Twenty One Volunteer Staff (+5)
    - Two moved from per-diem to volunteer status
    - Three new members
    - Eight interior (-1), Seven exterior Firefighters, Six Support (fireground support, EMS only, & probationary members)
    - Ten (+3) have a medical certification (seven EMTs, three EMRs)
      - One additional member currently in EMT class
  - Four Cadets/Junior Firefighters
    - RHAM EMT Program
    - Proposed RHAM FF Program

# OPERATIONAL DATA

- Response Times
  - Department continues to work on continually improving response times; response times are often the difference between life and death, or a total or a partial loss
  - Standard for paid staff is to be responding, on average, within two minutes of time of dispatch
    - Call for possible stroke - Ambulance responded in under 2 minutes, on scene in under 6 minutes, patient in the hospital receiving stroke meds within 35 minutes of ambulance arrival.
    - Call for working structure fire – Engine responded and was on scene in under 5 minutes from time of call, hose line immediately deployed, water on fire within minutes. Home saved, occupants were able to reoccupy dwelling the following day.
    - Call for working structure fire where had to escape from a 2<sup>nd</sup> floor window - Engine responded and was on scene in under 5 minutes from time of call, hose line immediately deployed, water on advanced fire within minutes. bulk of fire knocked down before mutual aid arrived, home saved.
    - Call for working structure fire with one occupant possibly still inside – Engine responded and was on scene in under 6 minutes from time of call, hose line immediately deployed, water on fire within minutes. Home saved, occupants able to reoccupy dwelling immediately
  - Success is directly attributed to having minimum staff on duty supplemented by our volunteers and mutual aid companies
  - Our minimum staff of two Firefighter/EMTs is well below minimum national standards, so quite often these two individuals and I are doing the work of six to eight people before reinforcements arrive.

**15 PERSONNEL REQUIRED**  
*17 if Aerial Device and  
Supply Pump are in Operation*

**TOTAL ON SCENE: 17**  
Incident Command Vehicle: 1 Chief Officer  
Ladder Truck: 1 Officer/3 Fire Fighters  
*\*1 FF assigned to victim rescue*  
Engine: 1 Officer/3 Fire Fighters  
Engine: 1 Officer/3 Fire Fighters  
Engine: 1 Officer/3 Fire Fighters  
*\*1 FF assigned to victim rescue*  
*\*1 FF assigned to Incident Commander*  
*\*1 Officer, 1 FF assigned to IRIC*



# STAFFING CHALLENGES

- Time commitment
  - 150+ hours for initial EMT (two nights a week, weekends), 40 hours continuing ed every two years
  - 170+ hours for initial Firefighter 1 (Saturday & Sunday, every other weekend, for four months)
  - 88+ hours for Firefighter 2 (Saturday & Sunday, every other weekend, for two and a half months)
  - Monthly training
  - Calls for Service
  - Family time; many are working multiple jobs, childcare, kids sports & extra curricular activities
- Lack of housing/affordable housing
  - Hebron 2<sup>nd</sup> on list of most expensive home prices in Tolland County
  - Starter homes and affordable apartments are non-existent
- Per-Diem staffing model (Per-Diem staff work at their leisure)
  - uncovered shifts/potential coverage gaps
  - increased overtime
- No interest in EMS (75% of our call Volume)
- Work ethic/lack of interest/decline in traditional volunteerism
  - # of volunteer FF in State is down 62.5% since 2016-2017 (State Comptroller Sean Scanlon's report)

# STAFFING CHALLENGES

- Lack of economic benefits/incentives – local, state, federal
  - Improved tax abatement
  - Pay-Per-Call for all personnel?
  - Meaningful Education tuition waivers
  - No taxation on stipends
  - Mortgage assistance similar to VA
- Minimum training requirements
  - Internal/external
  - Proposed OSHA changes/mandates
- Regulatory compliance (OSHA, NFPA, DOL)
  - Mandatory annual training (OSHA)
  - Medical screening (OSHA, NFPA)
  - DOL challenges (cadet program)
  - Minimum staffing (NFPA 1710), Two In/Two Out

# STAFFING CHALLENGES

- Health issues faced by Firefighters and EMS personnel
  - Cancer - #1 killer
    - Occupational exposure to toxins
    - Exposure to PFAS from firefighting foam, and our protective equipment
  - Sleep disorders
    - Insomnia
    - Work shift disorder (chronic fatigue, impaired cognitive function)
    - Sleep Apnea
    - Also contribute to increased cancer risk
  - Mental Health
    - First responders are more likely to die by suicide than in the line of duty...
    - It is estimated that the average person might see 1-3 traumatic events in their lifetime, first responders are estimated to encounter 400 – 600 over their career...
    - 20% to 35% of firefighters suffer from PTSD, compared to 3.5% to 6.8% of the general public

# PROPOSED 2026-2027 CIP

- Requesting \$700,000 to replace two pieces of apparatus with one combination Rescue-Pumper
  - The Department proposes replacing both our 2005 Heavy Rescue Truck and a 1998 Fire Engine with a combination Rescue Pumper. This would enable limited staffing to respond with a vehicle that provides both fire suppression and rescue capabilities. The Heavy Rescue and an Engine were both scheduled to be replaced in fiscal year 2024-2025, the Rescue is used on a very limited basis, and the majority of the extrication equipment carried on this piece is either obsolete or out of service due to failure. The Engine is one of the oldest in our fleet, and over the past three years we have incurred over \$54,000 in repairs, including a new motor.
  - The Department was fortunate to receive a \$500,000 grant during fiscal year 2025-2026 from the State of Connecticut that will be used to offset the total cost of this project. These grant funds will be controlled by the State of Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection.
  - Due to a recent generous donation from the Hebron Lions, we received a very well-kept used Engine from a neighboring Department, which has allowed us to remove our 1996 Engine that was in dire shape from service. While a few years older, this used Engine will buy us and the Town some time and hold us over for a few years until the new Rescue Pumper arrives (**two to four year build time**)

# PROPOSED 2026-2027 CIP

- **So why do we need to start updating our fleet now?**
  - National standards recommend replacement or substantial refurbishment at 20 years of age
  - Existing portions of our fleet are unreliable and unsafe
  - Apparatus costs are up almost 40% in four years; cost of waiting
    - Apparatus we are looking for was \$825,000 four years ago when we started asking for assistance, it is now \$1,000,000 to \$1,200,000
    - Fiscal year 22-23 requested \$850,000 (truck & equipment); **Denied**
    - Fiscal year 23-24 requested \$300,000 be set aside each year for three years; **Denied**
    - Fiscal year 24-25 requested \$350,000 be set aside each year for three years; **Denied**
    - Fiscal year 25-26 requested \$550,000 be set aside each year for two years; **Denied**
  - Two to Four-year build time from the time an order is placed
  - Spending significant amounts annually in maintenance costs on current apparatus
  - Increased calls for service, significant increase in exposures
    - +129 calls for service this past year
    - Church Street Commons - 50 Unit housing complex with subterranean parking & EV charging, domestic sprinklers supplied by wells(?), no dedicated water supply
    - Lakewood Estates - 32 home subdivision; one way in and one way out, no dedicated water supply, large houses in close proximity to each other

# PROPOSED 2025-2026 CAPITAL PROJECTS

- State Digital Radio System Portable Radios - \$10,280
  - The Department wishes to continue the process of replacing portable radios issued to our line officers with radios compatible with the State of Connecticut's digital radio system. Two radios were purchased during fiscal year 2025-2026.
- Fire Hose Replacement - \$17,591
  - The Department wishes to continue the hose replacement project that we started a few years ago. We currently have hose in service that is between 25-37 years old. While most of this hose passed its annual required NFPA hose testing, NFPA recommends that it be replaced at 20 years of age due to safety and reliability concerns. We would propose replacing all of the hose in this age bracket over the next two fiscal years.

# PROPOSED OPERATIONAL BUDGET LINE CHANGES; STAFFING IMPROVEMENT

- Transition per-diem Firefighter/EMT currently covering full time shifts to full time status:
  - We currently have a per-diem Firefighter/EMT who has been working a full-time schedule (48+ hours per week) for per-diem wages. This individual committed himself to assisting the Department and the Town by partnering with one of our full-time personnel to fill a void in mid-week coverage. We would like to transition this individual to full-time status to solidify coverage and scheduling. This individual is retired from the military and would not require any medical benefits; minimal benefits cost.
  - We are not adding another position, we are simply requesting that an existing employee be moved from per-diem to full time status. Funds from our per-diem payroll budget line would be transferred to full time salaries to cover this.

# PROPOSED OPERATIONAL BUDGET LINE CHANGES

- 2010.100.1002 Part Time Payroll – Proposed Budget \$45,000 (-\$4,885). \$3.00 hourly raise for mechanic, decrease in officer stipends.
- 2010.100.1004 Per-Diem Payroll – Proposed Budget \$218,776 (-\$76,224). Reallocating \$76,224 to Full Time Payroll
- 2010.202.2034 Miscellaneous Services - Proposed Budget \$40,000 (+\$733). Additional monthly fees for new copier/printer/scanner/fax for administrative office.
- 2010.208.2120 Points Remuneration – Proposed Budget \$15,000 (-\$15,000). Reduced at the Direction of the Town Council in fiscal year 25-26.
- 2010.210.2059 Vehicle Maintenance – Proposed Budget \$49,500 (+\$4,500). Aging fleet, experiencing more frequent and expensive repairs.
- 2010.210.2060 Heavy Equipment Maintenance – Proposed Budget \$15,000 (+\$1,000). Increased costs of firefighting equipment maintenance, replacement of additional appliances.
- 2010.211.2068 Turnout Gear – Proposed Budget \$30,000 (+\$2,000). Increased cost of turnout gear (coat and pants), boots, gloves, helmets, hoods.

# PROPOSED OPERATIONAL BUDGET LINE CHANGES

- 2010.214.2088 Building Repairs and Maintenance – Proposed budget \$30,000 (+\$2,000). Aging infrastructure, continued HVAC repairs, new outdoor sign for Station 2, Station 2 painting.
- 2010.228.2187 911-Emergency – Proposed Budget \$38,798.93 (+\$4,517.93). This figure is set by our regional dispatch center, Tolland County Mutual Aid Fire Service. Increase is directly attributed to an increase in call volume/number of times the center dispatched our Department.
- 2010.300.3900 Capital Outlay – Proposed Budget \$7,800 (-\$3,979). Advanced cleaning and inspection of 50 sets of Firefighter turnout gear as required by NFPA standards.
- 2010.410.4005 Disability/Accident Insurance – Proposed Budget \$6,200 (+\$200). Premium increase due to increase in benefits.
- 2020.100.1004 EMS Responder Payroll – Proposed Budget \$5,000 (-\$5,000). Reduced at the direction of Town Council in 25-26 fiscal year.
- 2020.200.2002 Medical Supplies – Proposed Budget \$28,000 (+\$4,000). Increased cost of consumable medical supplies, increased call volume, AED replacement.
- 2020.210.2054 Ambulance Maintenance – Proposed Budget \$15,000 (+\$1,500). Aging fleet, experiencing more frequent and expensive repairs.

# SUMMARY

- Excluding the request to transfer per diem payroll, our overall operational budget request is down **\$8,413.07**
- FYI - Department generated \$356,420 in ambulance billing revenue and \$13,500 in special event coverage revenue in calendar year 2025, for a total of \$369,920

# QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?

**“EVEN WHEN YOU HAVE AN ORGANIZATION BRIMMING WITH TALENT, VICTORY IS NOT ALWAYS UNDER YOUR CONTROL... IT ALL COMES DOWN TO INTELLIGENTLY AND RELENTLESSLY SEEKING SOLUTIONS THAT WILL INCREASE YOUR CHANCE OF PREVAILING. WHEN YOU DO THAT, THE SCORE WILL TAKE CARE OF ITSELF”**

**Bill Walsh**

**Hall of Fame Football Coach**

**Thank you!**

