

Tuesday, January 6, 2026 | 7:00 PM
Council Committee
Special PUBLIC SAFETY/PUBLIC WORKS - Minutes

Chair Councilor Jean-Claude Ambroise, Councilor Paul Norris and Councilor Christine Piazza

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Committee Chair Ambroise CTO 7PM

Roll Call:

City Councilors Ambroise, Norris, Piazza

City Mayor Rusk

City of Groton Deputy Fire Chief Ted Sargent

City of Groton Firefighters:

Kevin Price

Jeremiah Gilmour

Matt Parizo

Quorum Declared

II. New Business

Fire Department Staffing Referral

There was a robust discussion from stakeholders. Topics included:

There is no CT Statute establishing fire department staffing standards or recommendations.

National Fire Department Association (NEFPA) has “standards of coverage”. Federal and State have not adopted these recommendations.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guides fire fighting safety standard operating procedures.

City of Groton has two fire houses.

C-1: Eastern Point

1 Engine

1 Supervisor Vehicle

C-2: Broad Street Engine House

1 Ladder
1 Boat
1 Supervisor Vehicle

17 City of Groton Firefighter staff
1 Chief M-F
1 Deputy Chief M-F
3 Battalion Chiefs
12 Firefighters

It was noted by CoG fire that turnover in this department is very low. Most consider working in this department for their entire career.

This staffing has not changed since 2000.

Firefighters are currently under contract that was signed in Fall 2025 for four years.

PTO = 10 Vacation Days
Kelly = 17.3 must be used in 1 calendar year
Sick = 1.25 Days per month with a cap of 125 (These are counted in 8 hours day increments)
PL = 2 full 24 hour days

Further inquiry needed on if Memorandum of Understanding could be created to have time buyback of vacation time. Many firefighters are unable to use their time because they are cognizant of the staffing needs of the fire department.

Firefighter 1 training & EMT training required to be on CoG FD
All Staff are Firefighter 2 trained

Three shifts per day

Minimum Staffing of 4 per Shift per FF contract.

Shifts are 24 hours on duty 48 off duty and each firefighter averages 56 hours per week and paid for 48 hours. The 8 hour difference is counted as "Kelly Time"

Kelly time is considered time off that can be used within one year of earning it. It was stated by the FF union reps that a significant amount of Kelly time goes unused. Deputy Chief will investigate how much time is given back.

4 Firefighters are on per shift 8AM-8PM & 8PM-8AM

This 5 man 4 minimum FF on duty standard has been in effect since 2012 when it was increased from 5 staff 3 FF minimum by former Mayor Galbraith. This requirement can be increased by the CoG Mayor without change in the contract.

It was stated by CoG Fire that the long term goal would be to incrementally increase staffing by 7 over time which would include 6 firefighters and 1 Battalion Chief.

Discussion began on the feasibility to utilize volunteer firefighters which was noted to be down statewide 67%. CoG fire has no volunteers and would be difficult to recruit/retain volunteers.

The demand for firefighters in surrounding SECT is high. Salary and benefits for CoG is comparable to other local fire districts.

To onboard 1 new firefighter who is already trained in CoG the cost with salary and benefits year on would be an estimated \$130,000 on step on of the current CBA and salary would increase year after year.

This cost would increase if a non-qualification person was hired because they would need to go to 16-17 weeks of the fire academy and would also need a few more weeks for EMT training which is separate from the fire academy. Discussion on non-qualified person could have in their hire letter a contingency of paying for fire school and length of time required to work for CoG fire.

Due to current employee out on disability leave, CoG fire has had to maintain the 4 FF minimum coverage by utilizing overtime account. Deputy Chief Sargent noted the OT budgeted amount is \$350,000 for the current fiscal year. He also stated the in past years this account was not exhausted.

Firefighters Price and Gilmour discussed how the CoG firefighters could increase the minimum required compliment of on duty staff to 5 as a short term solution in anticipation of increasing employee staff in the near future. This would have to be paid out by the overtime account. This could expend this year's overtime account and could exceed this account an estimated \$150,000 if this plan initiated. Further discussion needed.

FF staff stated the first 5-10 minutes of a critical incident is when acts made = lives saved. OSHA standard fire protection procedures determine what can be done at a

scene. An example would be before a FF can go into an active fire, there needs to be 2 staff outside the scene for safety and security prior to any FF entering the building.

Discussion continued regarding of recruitment of new firefighters. Human Resources would be in charge of recruitment. Does CT have certification reciprocity? From some states yes. If a veteran was a firefighter would they have the same credential? Some services yes and others no. Councilor Piazza noted she would look into Army Reserve fire safety qualifications.

A request was made to see the # of calls for service for the past 3 years 2023-2025. Some documents will be included with these minutes but more will follow based on this request.

A request was made to ask for the past years overtime usage records which will be provided by the Chief.

Discussion continued on recruitment to market to local high schools and which ones provide EMT trainings, reading out to youth advisory board, and other organizations locally to provide information on a career in firefighting to increase our reach for diverse candidates.

Cost of Adding Firefighters

As noted previously the estimated cost for 1 new hire would be \$130,000 in total package. Discussion on how to pay for new hires.

Federal government a grant called SAFER (Unsure of Acronym) which will provide cost assistance over 3 years with new hires. Over those years the federal government would pay a percentage of the cost of a new firefighter and decrease their contribution over each of the three years and local government would pay full expense.

This grant is usually open for applying in spring. Further investigation needed.

Councilor Norris asked if there may be other grant opportunities through economic development grants dovetailing the safety aspect. Further investigation needed.

Example:

Initial request is to onboard 3 new hires.

Cost would be estimated \$386,000 full package. If SAFER grant was applied for and approved by federal government the year over year cost to CoG would be estimated to be:

Year-1 \$96,000

Year-2 \$106,000

Year-3 \$290,000

Year-4 \$493,000 (Fully Paid by CoG)

These estimates include CBA step increases.

Discussion continued on who could write this grant. Could it be done by CoG fire management and staff, an employee of City of Groton, Southeastern Council of Governments (SCOG), or outside contractor. Further investigation needed.

Revenue Discussion

It was noted that on commercial business and 3 family dwellings, the Fire Marshall must inspect for fire safety compliance. This service currently is done at no charge. Discussion continued of this practice could change moving forward to increase general fund revenues.

Fire protection for West Pleasant Valley was discussed. Due to more housing built could cost for service increase? Need further investigation.

Assistance Fire Grant (AFG) used for updating fire equipment

City taxpayers would pay for all costs otherwise.

Discussion for next meeting

Cost for Grant Writers

How many new hires

True cost per firefighter (total package) Trained v Untrained

Breakdown of OT budget

Consensus was made by the PS/PW Committee to increase staffing of the CoG Fire Department with future meetings to discuss the recommended number desired by the committee.

III. Establishment of Meeting Schedule

Meeting Scheduled January 13, 2026 7PM Room C-10

VI. Adjournment

Moved Piazza, Seconded Norris

Meeting Adjourned 8:49PM