

Special Meeting
Council Committee Public Safety/Public Works

Wednesday January 28, 2026 7:00PM Room C-10

Call to Order @ 7:00PM

Present

Chair Ambroise

Councilor Piazza

Chief Tompkins

Battalion Chief Gilmour (Union Rep)

Firefighter Matt Parizo (Union Rep)

Absent

Councilor Norris

Quorum Declared

Approval of Minutes for January 6th and January 20th approved as written by unanimous consent

Referral Item

Fire Department Staffing

Discussion topics included how long it would take to onboard new firefighters. Fire academy class happens twice a year (February-May) & (August-December). The academy usually has an estimated 40 enrolled per session. Chief Tompkins noted that if CoG needed a spot in an academy class he would communicate that to the academy to reserve a spot(s).

If CoG planned on utilizing the Safer Grant to hire 3 new firefighter positions, the estimated timeline for them to be on active duty in the City would be June or July 2027. This would include them in the August 2026 class (if not already fire certified). Academy graduates would need 30-60 days of training on the floor with other firefighters after completion of academy with these new hires being able to be fully online by June-July 2027.

Councilor Piazza asked about the success rate of recruits in the academy. Chief Tompkins stated it had a very high success rate. The physical training (PT) component was the one portion of the training that recruits fail. The academy has a PT module/plan to ensure candidates succeed in this component.

Union Rep Gilmour noted that if this is the direction the city council is planning to take it still would leave the firefighting staff levels at the 4 person minimum. Mr. Gilmour discussed the options of hiring 1 full time firefighter in the interim and once the safer grant accepts

applications request 3 additional staff. Mr. Gilmour also brought up the option of increasing the minimum staffing to 5 in the meantime by using the OT budget.

Chair Ambrose stated he will add that discussion as a new business agenda item at our next meeting.

Discussion continued on recruitment which would involve CoG HR for posting and hiring in coordination with the Chief and Mayor. Chief Tompkins noted past hirings involved a civil service test and oral interviews. Chief Tompkins also spoke about Lift Serve which is a fire fighter specific website that can be utilized to recruit potential candidates. Chief Tompkins noted there might be some upcoming vacancies due to retirements in the near future. There is a potential to promote from within which will lead to recruitment for line level firefighters. This could then create a potential pool of recruits that could be used in the future if creating new firefighter positions is approved by city council.

Council Piazza asked if a resident wanted to donate specifically to fund firefighter staff would that be possible. Director Yuhas would need to be consulted for clarification.

Further discussion related to including additional 1-3 firefighter staff positions in this upcoming year's budget. The Mayor, Chief, and Finance Director would need to discuss this approach.

New Business

~Consideration to Establish a fee for Fire Marshal Inspection Fees

Discussion on this topic included a focus on permit side of inspections that could be processed in concert with the building department. The approach recommended could show the public an approach to offset the expense of adding new fire personnel to ease the cost to taxpayers.

Motion made by Councilor Piazza

Recommend to City Council to create an ordinance to establish Fire Marshal fees in the City of Groton.

2nd Ambrose

Motion Passes 2-0-0

~Consideration to establish a special revenue fund for Fire Marshal fees

Motion made by Councilor Piazza

Recommend to City Council to create a special revenue fund for Fire Marshal fees.

2nd Ambrose

Discussion on this motion related to if creating this fund is possible. Mayor and Director Yuhas would need to be a part of this conversation. The rationale for creating this fund would be to use it to offset the cost to the taxpayer for fire personnel in future budgets if/when the safer grant

expires after year three and full cost of 3 new firefighter positions would be the responsibility of the CoG. This could keep the mil rate lower by using a portion of this special revenue fund yearly in future budget requests. It would also show the residents in the city a concerted effort to keep taxes low.

Motion passes 2-0-0

~Review of West Pleasant Valley Fire Protection Agreement

Original document still being searched for by CoG in order to look for legal language.

Discussion in the meeting clarified the purpose for looking for this document is to determine if there could be fees for CoG Fire Marshal services. The Chief and Deputy Chief provide fire inspection services for West Pleasant Valley. Instituting this fee could assist in creating a revenue stream to offset expenses for adding 3 new firefighter positions.

Discussion on this topic will continue at a future meeting.

~ Discussion of Fairview Homes Fire Protection

Fairview Homes does not pay anything for CoG fire protection or Fire Marshall inspections.

They are a part of West Pleasant Valley Fire Protection Services and the rest of that area pays an estimated \$450,000 this year. New homes are being built and will need fire inspections.

Discussion to continue at a future meeting.

New Business for a future meeting.

~Consideration of adding 1 new firefighter before applying for 3 with the Safer Grant

~Consideration for changing firefighter minimum from 4 to 5 utilizing overtime account until new firefighter positions are hired and online.

Next meeting scheduled for February 4th @ 7PM Room C-10

Motion to Adjourn by Councilor Piazza

2nd Ambrose

Motion Passes 2-0-0