



BRANFORD FIRE DEPARTMENT
45 NORTH MAIN STREET
BRANFORD, CONNECTICUT 06405
OFFICE OF FIRE CHIEF/EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIRECTOR



March 22, 2023

Honorable Board of Finance
Town of Branford
1019 Main Street
Branford, CT 06405

Dear Honorable Board,

Thank you for hearing our budget request Monday evening. Unfortunately, during the regular budget hearing, there was no time to take a deep dive into our need for additional personnel. We realize that adding staff has the greatest impact on the budget, and we intend to provide you with a comprehensive plan by late May. I intended to ask for additional personnel once we could complete and share our plan, but the last several months have convinced me that we are indeed in crisis.

The fire department has traditionally relied on volunteers for most of our staffing. Four of our five engine companies are volunteer. Despite recruitment and retention efforts that include following recommended best practices, we continue to lose volunteers faster than we can replace them. In fact, we have closed three whole volunteer companies and the volunteer rescue squad due to a lack of membership since 1996. Branford is not alone in this trend; it is a statewide and national problem. Membership has dropped so significantly that in most instances, we can only rely on a single volunteer company by combining the available members of all four. We have added automatic mutual aid from East Haven to compensate for our lack of resources. However, this comes with the quid pro quo of providing the same service to East Haven. Two issues exacerbate our problem along with the decline in volunteer membership. First, we have a steadily increasing call volume that will only worsen with the building projects and development already on the books. The second is a deployment problem: our resources are strategically deployed at multiple stations to reduce time. As outlined in NFPA 1710, the standard is to have an engine/ EMS response within four minutes. It takes eight minutes to get from headquarters to Lenny's and twelve minutes from headquarters to Stony Creek dock. This creates an equity of service issue for a substantial portion of the town.

We've asked for a \$250,000 dollar allocation to our overtime account to address the immediate need. This request was moved to contingency until the issue can be discussed appropriately. We intend to use the additional money to staff the Indian Neck station M-F 0800-1800 until such time that we can fund a full-time engine company there. The plan we are writing intends to provide decision-makers and the public with the information needed to make informed decisions regarding the future of their fire and emergency services. It will give historical background, current status, and future plans based on actual data, the standard of care, and the public expectations.

I humbly request that you approve the contingent amount, and I look forward to sharing our plan for the Board's consideration.

Respectfully,

Thomas F. Mahoney, Jr.
Fire Chief/ Emergency Management Director