

Department – Fire Department

General Information

Code	031	Department Name	Fire Department	BFRB Member(s)	Cris Conti and Ken Sousa
-------------	-----	------------------------	-----------------	-----------------------	--------------------------

Account Number Information

Number		Name	
---------------	--	-------------	--

Statement: On March 24, Cris and Ken have provided the Interim Fire Chief with an Excel template of a series of numbers for various previous fiscal years, FY2025 (actual and estimated for four months) as well as FY2026 projected.

BFRB – Question 1

- Awaiting metrics from the FD to compile questions.
- The Fire Department received an 11% increase from 11.2 mil to 12.5 from FY 2022-2023 to FY 2023-2024. For FY 2025 to 2026 an 8.7% increase from 12.2 mil to 13.2 mil is requested. Being new on the Board, my concerns focus on new hires and salary increases. The following questions refer to the need and justification of these items. If we want to control our budget to an increase of 2-3% these are my items to address. New hires involve more costs each year than a base salary. Some salary increases are very high above the norm.

BFRB – Question 2

- Overtime for FY 23, FY24, and FY25, had a range from \$256,000 to \$1,216,152. For FY 26 the department requested \$220,000 and was reduced by TM to \$125,000. Regarding personnel lines 69 to 73, five new positions were added as Probationary Pvt-Safer to reduce the overage of overtime. What measures have been put in place not to exceed this line item again? How was \$125,000 determined

BFRB – Question 3

- Staffing is a major expense to the town with regard to all the departments. More staffing equates to more expenditures including medical, pensions, vehicles and more. 5 new hires are being requested with 3 being part of the safer grant. 12 new employees were added to the department; 8 in the last 2 years and 4 in the last 3 years. What is the justification

for adding 5 more employees to this year's request. Have any employees retired? A total of 22 new employees would be added in the last 3 years per this request?

- With the new hires that are being requested, it will add \$400,000 not including overhead for these hires in one year. More expenditures to follow each year. I understand a safer grant is being used for some of these positions, but not all of them.

BFRB – Question 4

- Staffing is a major expense to the town with regard to all the departments. 3 dispatchers are on the payroll and one Probationary. A request for another new hire is being requested. 2 new dispatchers in 2 years increases the payroll and the budget. What justifications warrant 2 new hires in 2 years? What is the justification for a new hire this year? I always like to ask how our staffing compares to neighboring towns that have the same population and # of calls
- Also, a new hire is being requested on line number 79. New employees bring new salaries and overhead for each full-time position. What is the justification and need for this position whether it is full time or part time?

BFRB – Question 5

- A new hire is being requested on line number 79. New employees, bring new salaries and overhead for each full-time position. It adds more expenditures with benefits and increases each year. What is the justification and need for this position whether it is full time or part time?
- Salary increases should be justified and compared to the cost of living. It is a way to keep our budget at a reasonable level. Lines 80 to 84 show salaries of a 10% increase. Are these union or nonunion jobs. A 10% raise is a substantial increase. Seems to be an outlier above the 3-5% cost of living. Doing some investigation, neighboring towns have a pay grade of \$55,000 for this occupation with a raise of 3.8%. What's the justification of a steep increase?

BFRB – Question 7

- Under Capital Submission, A new Rescue is requested. 1st payment of 5 at \$70,000. A total cost of \$350,000 over 5 years. Is this rescue replacing an existing one or is it being added new to the fleet? What is the justification and need for this item?

BFRB – Question 8

- Schedule A is very difficult to read. It is also very unclear which positions are filled, vacant as well as how many people (probational, new hires) were hired under the SAFER grant. Understand that the salaries are in Schedule A as objective payroll/accounting data. And the revenue from the SAFER grant is under another place in the budget.