

To the Residents of Newington:

My name is Ann Hyland Hebert. I ask for your vote for reelection to a third term on the Board of Fire Engineers. I believe myself to be a conservative steward of taxpayer dollars while directly focusing on the long-term value of every decision – financial and operational.

During my most recent term Newington Fire & Rescue budgets saw bottom line increases with the primary driver being the top end budget – salaries and benefits. Increases include 2024 at 4.43%; 2025 at 4.40% and 2026 at 8.76%. The most recent increase was due to adding 4 full-time firefighters so that each shift is staffed with 3 full-time members. This increased staffing directly supports our larger call volume and affords cohesive teamwork as full-time firefighters are consistently working together on shifts to provide the highest quality of emergency response.

Our current budget proposal is approximately \$2.66 million dollars. Over the past three years we have returned unspent funds at the close of each budget cycle. These funds are largely derived from salary and benefit funding that was not needed.

Newington Fire & Rescue raises revenue through ambulance billing, fire permits/inspections, fees, details and permits of assembly. In the past 3 years we have raised \$477,242. From an accounting perspective, unspent budget funds and revenue raised are deposited directly into the Town general fund.

Call volume in the past three years is trending upward. Total calls show 2023 at 1229 calls, 2024 at 1007 calls and 2025 at 1196 calls. 80% of all calls consistently involve the industrial, commercial, business and retail districts of Town. Recalls – which is an alert to off duty firefighters to return for fire station coverage - have increased 23%. It seems that the complexity of current emergency calls requires more time on scene for responding crews and is therefore driving the necessity for recalls.

Firefighters completed more than 2500 hours of staff training and certifications – a continued investment in supporting best practice emergency outcomes. I am most pleased to share with you that Chief EJ Hoyt has received his Bachelor of Science degree with a dual major – Fire Administration and Fire Investigation. Congratulations Chief Hoyt! Assistant Chief Pat Moynihan is currently pursuing his degree, and we are proud of his efforts.

Our new fire engine, approved in 2021, arrived in Fall 2024 at a cost of \$671,572 and was paid for with funds from the Fire Department capital reserve account. This purchase could not be timelier as the same apparatus now costs more than \$1 million.

The Fire Department has received two grants, both of which are joint with the Police Department. The first grant purchased a UTV (utility terrain vehicle) that is shared with the Police and Emergency Management Departments. This vehicle allows access for emergencies on trails or areas where traditional vehicles cannot travel. It is also used for quick transport during large events such as the recent air show. A second grant from the Department of Justice funded radio communication upgrades for the Fire Department, Police Department and Emergency Management Department – a significant improvement that was much needed.

The women and men of Newington Fire & Rescue work as a team. On behalf of myself and the entire Fire Department I welcome you to stop in any time with questions or to just visit over a cup of coffee. We are YOUR fire department. Thank you and I hope I have earned your vote to continue serving Newington.

Ann Hyland Hebert