

Fire Department Town Meeting Update

3/7/2023

Good evening,

I appreciate your time tonight to provide you with an update on the Fire Department.

The Waterford Fire Department plays a vital role in ensuring the safety and well-being of our community. Our volunteer firefighters are trained and equipped to respond to various emergencies.

Because of the time committed to training, and the equipment we have, we can respond quickly and efficiently to emergencies, which is crucial in saving lives, protecting property, and minimizing damages.

In addition to emergency response, our members are involved in community outreach and education. We participate in events such as safety fairs, fire prevention at the Waterford School and other community events.

We also work closely with several local organizations, such as our mutual aid fire department partners, law enforcement agencies and Calex ambulance, to aid when needed. These mutual aid partners are vital to our town and our department.

The department currently has 30 members.

Our members range in years of service to the department, from one founding member of the Department who is still active, Howard Jones, who has been on the department since the Department was founded in 1985, 38 years ago to 3 high school students that have recently, or will very soon be, moving up from our cadet program to Probationary Member status.

Many of our members have families and often one or more jobs, yet they dedicate almost every Tuesday night to making sure they have the training to be able to respond to calls, perform maintenance so that our equipment is ready to operate when needed and that our department is prepared when called upon. In addition to "Tuesday nights", members respond 24/7/365 to all types of calls in all types of weather.

In 2022, the department responded to 127 calls, ranging from home structure fires to Carbon Monoxide calls, to brush fires and power lines down to motor vehicle accidents, hazardous material responses, extrications with the Jaws of Life, citizens assist, medical calls and fatalities.

The department had over 780 hours in response time to these calls.

In addition, there were over 685 hours in training hours logged for fire and EMS training and an additional 420 hours in routine maintenance, business meeting, grant meetings, budget meetings and other general operational business functions for the department.

These hours of dedication equaled over 1885 hours of volunteer commitment.

To put that in terms of a full time 40-hour work week, that is the equivalent of over 47 full-time - 40-hour work weeks of volunteer hours put into the protection and safety of our community by the members of the WFD in 2022. I am sure there are many more hours that were put in that we are not aware of as well.

In 2022 we had 5 members celebrate years of service milestones. On February 25th, we recognized these members for their continued service to the department. We presented 10 years of service awards to Taran Gillander, Roy Ash, Betty Ann Ryan and Kevin Colby and a 15 years of service award to Colleen Kozlowski.

The end of 2022 also brought us two other milestones that we celebrated on February 25th.

First, I would like to recognize thank our outgoing Fire Chief, Jeff Gingue. Jeff has been the Fire Chief for the last 5 years and has led the department through what I believe has been one of the most challenging times for all of us, COVID 19. During his time as chief, Jeff has worked tirelessly to make sure that the department was represented professionally and that our members were safe.

Jeff's wife Vanessa recently gave birth to their daughter Elaina and Jeff has stepped out of the Chief's role to have more time with his family. He has remained on the department and has transitioned into the role of a Fire Ground Captain.

Second, I would like to recognize and thank Bill Willis. Bill has been a member of the department since 1986, that's 37 years of service to the Waterford Community!

Bill has held many roles within the Department over the years and leaves some big boots to fill. Bill has been a very close friend and mentor to many of us on the Department, he is one heck of a human being and will be missed.

In addition to our current members, there are those retired members that have all contributed to making the WFD the great organization that it is to the community today. As a matter of fact, some of those members are with us here tonight as well. It is their commitment to our community that is so special.

Please, take a moment with me to show our appreciation for all the members, current or retired, that are with us tonight. Thank you to each of you for your service to the Waterford Community.

Above and beyond the financial support of the Waterford residents, we rely heavily on fundraising efforts and grants to purchase necessary equipment and to maintain our facilities to help offset the costs to the community.

Our most recent fundraiser event was on Sunday morning, February 26th. The members of the department hosted a Pancake Breakfast event right here in this gym. While setting up for the event we were called to a car accident. The team did not miss a beat, we responded to the incident, and we still served nearly 125 people breakfast that morning. It was a time filled with stories being shared, some wonderful smiles, hugs and handshakes being had and children playing. Our community spirit was on display in full force. It was a beautiful thing to see.

As far as grants, we currently have 4 grants submitted, with the hopes of being recipients so that we can replace some of our aged turnout gear, purchase new SCBA air packs, put in new or upgrade some hydrants, and for updated safety and communications equipment.

These are all items that will continue to allow us to maintain our community Public Protection Classification (PPC) for insurance purposes and to meet NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) and OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) standards for the safety of our membership.

The Waterford Fire Department is an essential asset to our town. We are grateful for the opportunity to serve our community and appreciate your continued support.

We are always looking to expand the number of volunteers on the Department.

If you would like to become an active member as a firefighter or EMT on the Department, please let us know.

We also have supporting membership opportunities to help fill a variety of roles on the department. Please don't hesitate to reach out. You can call me, email me, or stop by the fire house.

On behalf of the WFD, Thank You.

Colin Fucci, Fire Chief