

Town of Rye Fire Rescue *Memorandum*

To: Select Board, Budget Committee
Cc: Becky Bergeron, Matt Scruton
From: Mark Cotreau
Date: October 30, 2024
RE: 2025 Fire, EMS, Lifeguard and Building Budget submission

This supplemental budget narrative is being sent to the selectboard and budget committee. Rye Fire Rescue is an active, progressive department and we hope this supplemental information will help to better illustrate the good works done with the budget entrusted to us and, of course the challenges we face as an organization. We have also attached our '2024 Staffing assessment and Needs Strategic Plan Update'. This document is an update to our 2020 staffing study found on our website.

FIRE/EMS General Information

We appreciate your support and work hard to be good stewards of our budgets. Below are some highlights since last year's budget submission:

- Cardiac Arrest saves: We had several cardiac arrest saves last year! Most notable was an adult surfer at Jenness Beach who had a heart attack. Due to the actions of several bystanders and lifeguards who gave initial CPR, we were able to provide the patient timely cardiac intervention and transport to the hospital. He is doing well today!

Portsmouth Hospital also honored Summer Sessions owner Ryan McGill, Rye Fire Rescue, and members of the PRH team for the successful resuscitation of a bicyclist at Summer Sessions in 2022!



- Structure Fires: On receiving any report of a possible structure fire in Rye, we respond immediately while simultaneously calling in off-duty firefighters and surrounding mutual aid communities. This system approach enables us to have sufficient on-scene resources quickly to begin life safety and extinguishment operations efficiently. In the past 12 months we have experienced an unusually high 9 challenging structure fires. Among them are:
 - January 13-House fire at 731 Ocean Boulevard. This fire occurred on the day of the large coastal storm at high tide, making access to the scene and operations very challenging.
 - April 3- Building fire at Webster at Rye in a patient's room. Significant damage to patients' room, one patient transported.
 - April 3-Structure fire at 1585 Ocean Boulevard during a high wind event. Fully involved windswept fire.
 - July 3 – Structure fire at 65 Big Rock-House under construction.
 - September 16-Barn fire with house exposed @ 496 Wallis Road. Barn was lost however house was saved.

- Other Notable Incidents:
 - We also have responded on mutual aid for structure fires 17 times in the past 12 months to Portsmouth (3), Hampton (2), Kittery, Newmarket (2), Greenland (2), Stratham, North Hampton (2), Newcastle, Lee, Newington, Epping and Seabrook.
 - Hazmat Incidents:
 - We responded to Epping with the regional hazmat team for a large fuel spill.
 - We responded to Durham with the regional hazmat team for an ammonia leak in the UNH ice rink.
 - Flooding: During the January Coastal flooding events we responded to over 40 flooding related emergencies over a two-day period.
 - Water Rescue calls: In the past 12 months we have responded to 10 calls for water rescue.

- Personnel: Rye Fire Rescue had many staffing changes this year.
 - Tragically, on December 14th our long-time Lieutenant, Chuck Gallant, passed away at home after working a day shift at the fire department. As a department we continue to deal with this loss. Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with Chuck's wife, Kelley and all his family.
 - On December 3rd Lieutenant Jake MacGlashing resigned to become Deputy Fire Chief in North Hampton. We wish him well in his new position!
 - Our long-time senior Firefighter John Cots retired April 1st. We wish him and his family a long and healthy retirement!
 - This year Firefighter/Paramedic Kaitlyn Pidgeon and Firefighter /AEMT Becca O'Brien resigned. We wish them both well in their future endeavors!

- On October 1, 2023, LT Kevin Wunderly was promoted to Deputy Fire Chief.
- Longtime Rye Firefighter/EMT John Klanchesser has been promoted to Lieutenant.
- This year we were fortunate to hire the following individuals as full-time Firefighters to fill existing vacancies:
 - Firefighter/ AEMT Ryan Jarosz, who comes to us from the Newmarket Fire Department.
 - Firefighter/ AEMT Sean Lamontagne, who comes to us from the Greenland Fire Department.
 - Firefighter/EMT Chris Pearl, who was one of our call force members.
 - Firefighter/ EMT Mark Weathersby, who was one of our Per-Diem firefighters.
 - Firefighter/AEMT Matthew Polasek, who comes to us from the Brentwood Fire Department.
- Per-Diem Firefighters EMT's: The national shortage of candidates continues to make recruiting very challenging. I am pleased to announce we have 3 additional per-diem firefighters/ EMT's. They are Adam Brackett, John Pataki, and Mark Weathersby (now hired full-time). Congratulations to our new per-diem firefighters!
- Training: Rye Fire Rescue conducts regular in-service training of various sorts to maintain our basic skills. We also have members who maintain membership in the Seacoast START (hazmat) response team. Below are a few of this year's training highlights:
 - On October 21st, Deputy Chief Wunderly traveled to the National Fire Academy (NFA) in Emmitsburg MD to take a 6-day course entitled 'Command and Control of Multiple Alarm Incidents'
 - In May, all line members took part in annual pump training, provided by a contracted company. This annual training is very effective while conserving water use by recycling the training water.
 - The department again took part in the Seabrook Station radiological drills.
 - Leadership Series-The department is conducting regular leadership training for our folks. Subjects include Operational tactics and strategy, Interpersonal skills, Leadership styles, day to day operations and more.
 - FF. Ryan Jarosz has completed his Fire Instructor 1 certification.
 - FF. Chris Bohling has completed his Fire Instructor 1 and Fire Officer 1 certification
 - LT Peter Anania has completed his Fire Officer 2 certification.

Fire/EMS Staffing Assessment

Fire/EMS Staffing Assessment: In 2023 we completed the 3-year phase in of our per-diem firefighter coverage bringing our shift staffing to three via additional per-diem firefighter/EMT's. This additional staffing has dramatically improved our operational efficiency, safety margins and availability to the community, especially during critical medical and simultaneous responses. We have consistently been able to fill a substantial portion of the authorized hours but still we leave a significant gap, currently 24%, remaining. Despite our best efforts, we just haven't been able to maintain an adequate amount of per-diem firefighter/EMT's. In 2020 we published our Staffing Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan (found on our website). Using and SWOT analysis, this document assessed our operational capabilities and liabilities at the time. Attached to this email is our 2024 Staffing assessment and Needs Strategic Plan Update. This update takes a current look at our SWOT analysis to confirm our improvement and identify remaining service gaps. Please peruse this document to gain a full perspective of our operational capabilities and service gaps. You will notice that the vast majority of our current remaining operational service gaps can be substantially closed by this proposal. We implemented the per-diem program because we had a compelling need to better care for our residents and visitors, we must finish the job by closing the remaining critical service gaps. Adding one Full-time firefighter position will close this gap! Here is a snapshot of the proposed funding:

We propose to repurpose 33% (the equivalent of one per-diem authorized annual shift coverage) of our per-diem wage line item to go towards hiring one additional full-time firefighter. This will leave two shifts needing per-diem coverage. Below is the breakdown of funds needed:

Salary – Grade 9 (Firefighter/Paramedic only – we assumed a 1% education allowance as well) 30.28 starting pay – 66,131.52 base salary.

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|---|----------------------|
| Salary | \$66,131.52 |
| Medicare | \$958.90 |
| Retirement (30.35%) | \$20,070.91 |
| Health Insurance * | <u>\$32,011.68</u> |
| Total for full-time Firefighter | \$119,173.01 |
| Decrease in Part-Time Per Diem Staff | <u>(\$40,071.29)</u> |
| Net Impact on Fire Dept. Operational Budget | \$79,101.72 |

*AB10 Family plan (Town pays 80%)

Advanced life support critical service gap.

There are 3 types of EMT's in NH. They are:

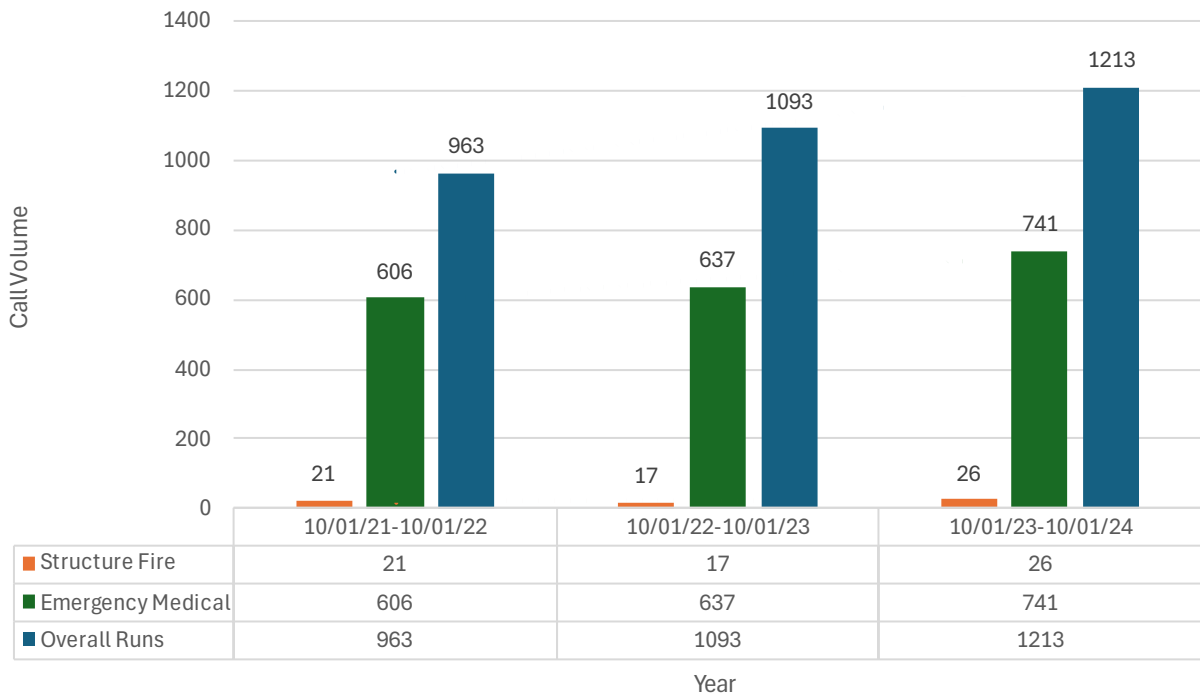
- Basic EMT's-These EMT's are trained in basic life support and can lend support to advanced life support providers.
- Advanced EMT's- These EMT's are trained to administer much of the skills provided in advanced life support. There are key skills however that they cannot provide such as narcotic interventions etc. Most of Rye's EMT's are at this level as a minimum. All new Rye fulltime EMT's must attain this level of training within one year.
- Paramedic EMT's- These EMT's have the highest training and can administer the full spectrum of advanced life support state protocols. Rye needs a minimum of 4 paramedic providers to be able to have one per shift. Rye's 2020 staffing plan calls for a minimum of six (6) paramedic level providers. This provides a cushion should we lose a medic or two through retirements or resignations. This actually occurred this year as we currently have two-line paramedics and one as Deputy Chief. To make matters more challenging, there is a region wide shortage of paramedics. They are very hard to find and recruit.

Because of the above paramedic shortage and its effect on our operational response to our residents, it is very important for us to do the following (not currently in the 2025 proposed EMS Budget):

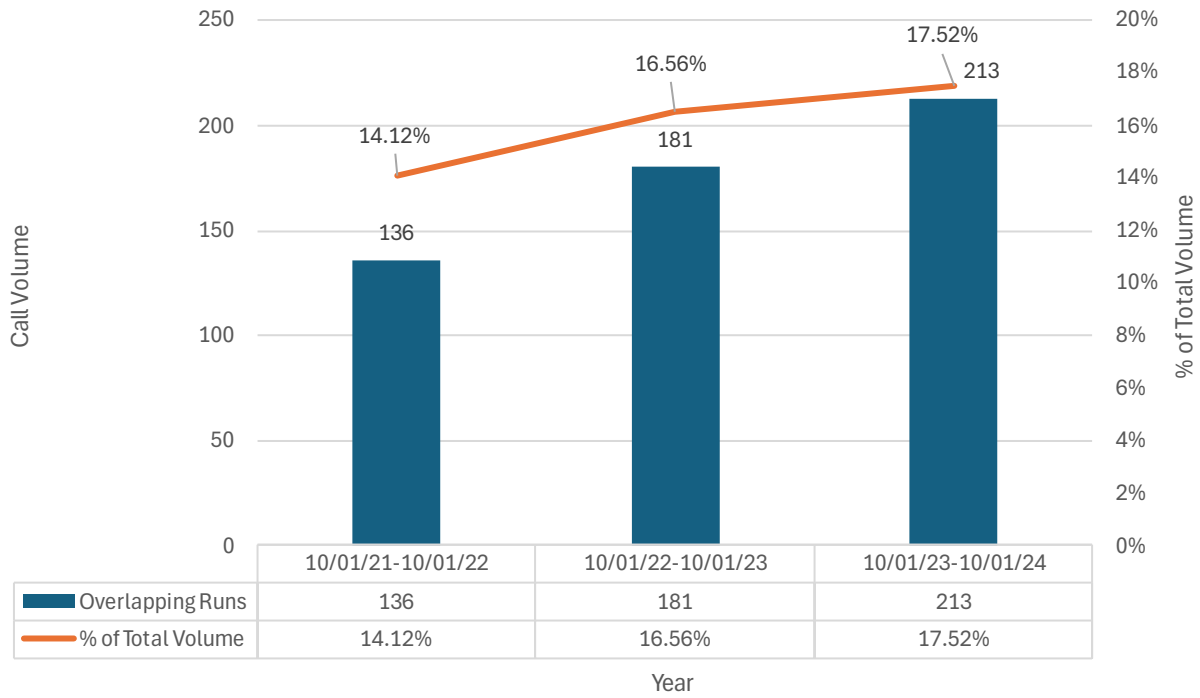
- Paramedic School tuition (\$15,000) for one student to go through paramedic school. This is a 12-18 month course depending on the type of delivery chosen.
- Nitrous Oxide (\$4,000) for our front-line ambulance. A large portion of our requests for mutual aid paramedics is for management of extreme pain. Nitrous oxide is a pain management skill the state makes available to our non-paramedics. This will provide the needed pain management to our residents even if there is not a medic available. Assuming this works well for us, we will put in for another set for the second line ambulance in 2026.

Here are a few illustrations that should help you in putting our operations in perspective:

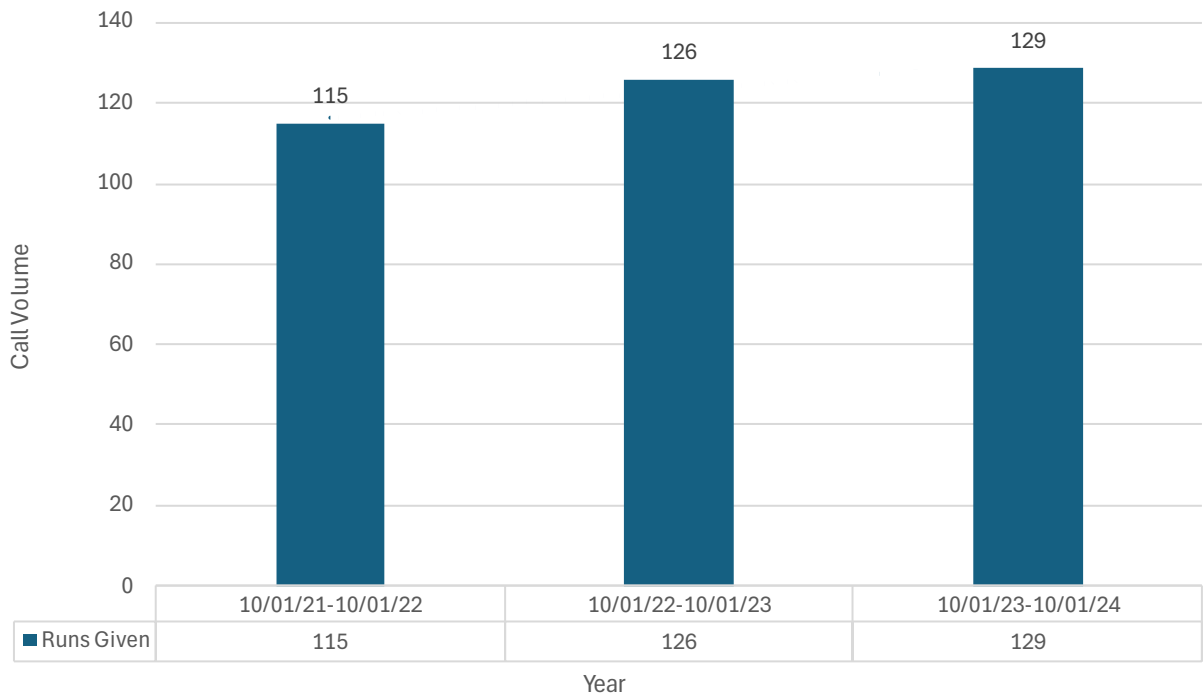
Overall Call Volume Trend



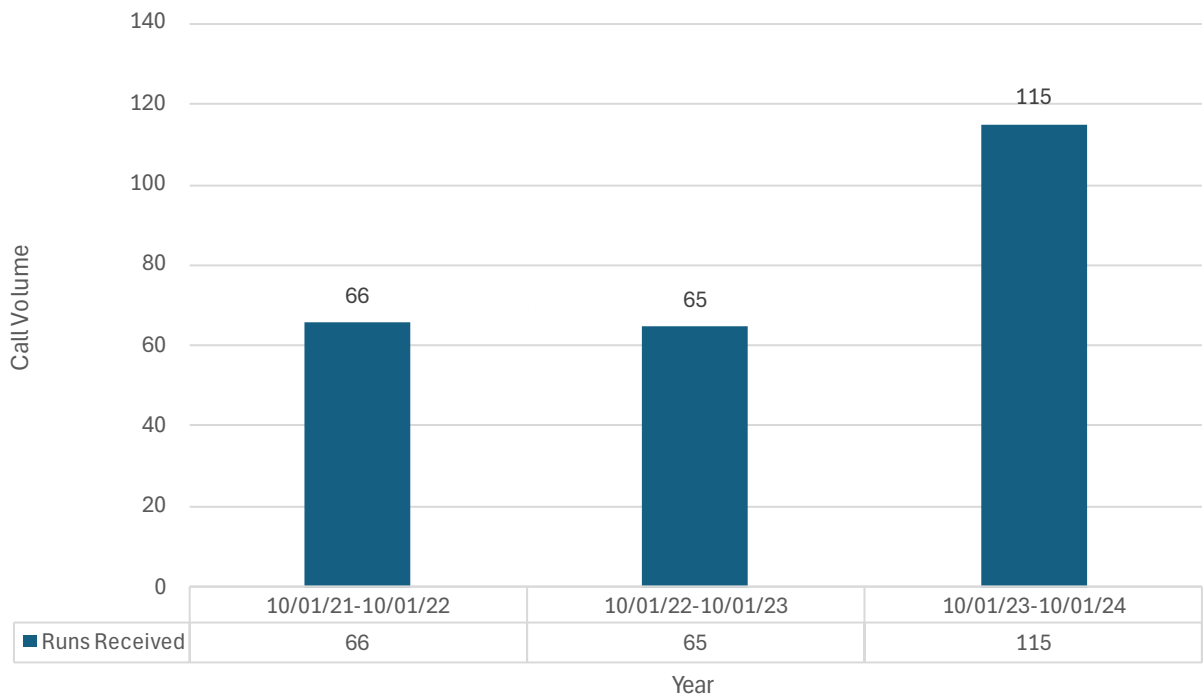
Overlapping Incidents



Mutual Aid Given



Mutual Aid Received



Lifeguard Budget

- Lifeguard budget: 2024 was the first season in which the town of Rye implemented the updated recruitment and retention plan. The lifeguard classes and wage increases seemed to work well as we were able to maintain a full roster for most of the season. Many of the guards indicate they will be returning next season! The good news is that we were fully staffed! The challenge of course was that it was a super sunny and warm summer with minimal rain days. This, coupled with some necessary equipment purchases resulted in a 13% deficit.

Below are a few notes as you peruse our budget requests:

FIRE (4220)

- Wages (401) have been decreased by \$9480, from \$796475 to \$786995:
 - We had a large turnover with new firefighter/EMTs coming in at a lower wage than the more senior firefighter/EMTs.
 - Proposed addition of 1 full-time firefighter/EMT:
 - Redirected 1/3 of the per-diem wage line (equivalent of 1 shift coverage) to this line item.
 - Net impact of proposed Full time Firefighter/EMTs \$79101(incl. benefits).
- Uniforms (432) were increased from \$12,000 to \$13200 to account for initial issue for proposed firefighter.
- Protective Gear (433) was increased by \$1209, from \$20,154 to \$21,363 to reflect a 6% cost increase. In 2012 the town purchased a substantial quantity of turnout gear via a warrant article. Turnout gear has a national standard lifespan of 10 years. For the last few years, we have been buying several sets per year to guard against another large purchase. These purchases are part of that effort.
- Vehicle Fuel and Oil (635) increased by \$2032 from \$8270 to \$10,302.
 - Projected fuel cost of \$3.50/gallon for diesel and \$3.00/gallon for gasoline.
 - Increased response activity
- Vehicle Repairs (639) is level funded. Worth a mention: 2024 spending of \$40717 includes well over \$20,000 in insurance claims due to apparatus saltwater damage from the high tide fire on Ocean Boulevard.
- Professional training (434) increased by \$2400 from \$5325 to \$7725 for mental health education/wellness checks. Very important item.
- Radio Maintenance (450) increased by \$500 from \$1500 to \$2000 due to historical increases in costs.
- Equipment Maintenance (490) increased by \$500 due to historical increase in costs.
- Software licensing (474) increased \$5,000 from \$11480 to 16480:
 - Dispatch Software (emergency Reporting) no longer supported. New software is more expensive but will consolidate some of our existing software.

AMBULANCE (4215)

- Vehicle Fuel and Oil (635) decreased from \$6300 to \$5300. This is due to the projected fuel cost of \$2.63/gallon for diesel and accounting for a modest rise in emergency responses.

LIFEGUARDS (4520)

- Wages (401) increased by \$26435 from \$91,475 to \$117,910. for the following reasons:
 - We had a full roster of guards this year. First time in many years.
 - We had terrific sunny weather with minimal rainouts.
 - Returning guards will advance in the approved wage scale.
 - Budgeted for 75% of possible staffing days (versus 70% last year.
 - Includes funding for training and recruitment.

PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING

- Heating Fuel (481) increased by \$976 to \$18349. This is due to the projected fuel cost of \$2.94/gallon for blended fuel and a projected usage of 6241 gallons (3-year average).
- Maintenance Supplies (483) has a 3% increase from \$2756 to \$2839 to compensate for inflation.
- Building Maintenance (484) has also increased 5% from \$31500 to \$332445 to compensate for inflation.
- Electricity decreased from \$35,000 to \$27,500. After looking at market data, this amount was recommended by Howard Kalet, Energy committee.

GOALS

2025 will be a busy year for Rye Fire Rescue. In no order, below are a few of our goals:

- Take delivery of our ordered mini pumper. Outfit the truck and train all our members.
- Continue our leadership educational series to educate our newer Lieutenants and upcoming officers.
- Improve our fire and EMS programs, especially where it impacts our newer members.
- Put one firefighter/AEMT through Paramedic School (\$15,000+-)
- Put one firefighter EMT through advanced EMT school (\$4000)
- Purchase a nitrous oxide pain management system (\$4,000)

Capital Plan

Capital Reserve Account Funding:

- The requested warrant article amount this year is \$150,000. We do not do this lightly. While the request has increased, it is important to note:
 - Our funding plan is predicated on the long-standing SB direction that we want to minimize having to bond apparatus and major equipment. The two \$500,000 leases; one executed for the Ladder truck and the one we propose for Engine 3 replacement this year, were planned so that we could make up for the lack of capital funds investment prior to 2016. Assuming our capital plan is funded as requested, there should be no need for future leases or bonding.
 - It is no surprise, given the inflationary period we have been through, that we have had to increase our request.
 - The usual \$100,000 request has not gone up since the town began annually investing in the capital reserve in 2016.
 - You will note we have provided for a modest annual increase in our 6-year plan to account for cost-of-goods increases.

Engine 3 Replacement

- 2025 Engine 3 replacement: Engine 3 has served us well since 2004 but needs replacement. The scheduled replacement of Engine 3, in 2025, comes during a time when fire departments across the country are dealing with manufacturers extended lead times, and increased costs. In 2019 the Town of Rye entered into a 5-year lease-purchase agreement for a new ladder truck for the price of \$992,000 with \$492,000 coming from the fire department capital reserve account as a down payment. Today the price of a new custom fire engine is that of the ladder truck in 2019, and manufacturers have more than doubled their lead times from the time a fire truck is ordered to the time that it is anticipated to be delivered. Rye Fire Rescue has a long-standing, and trusted relationship with the local E-One dealer, Greenwood Emergency Vehicles, who has supplied us with the last two fire trucks the town has purchased and who has already ordered several stock fire engines that very closely mirror our existing Engine 3. They have presented us with a proposal to purchase one of their previously ordered trucks, skipping the extended lead times, and saving nearly \$200,000. Their proposal as presented to the Board of Selectman, includes an escape clause in the event voters should choose not to purchase the vehicle, and was reviewed by the towns legal counsel. The Select Board chose to reserve one of the fire engines for Rye Fire Rescue, subject to an affirmative warrant article vote. The anticipated delivery of the truck is late 2025.

Funding for this project is proposed similarly to that of the new ladder truck. A \$500,000, 5-year lease purchase agreement, with an additional \$289,000 coming from the Fire Department capital reserve account(s). The total purchase price of the vehicle will be \$789,000. The lease purchase agreement on ladder 1 will have come to an end prior to the first lease payment coming due on the new fire engine.

Thank you for your support and please contact me with any questions or concerns!

