

2024 Update

Rye Fire Rescue Staffing Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan



Mark Cotreau, EFO, CFO

Rye Fire Rescue

2024 Update

MESSAGE FROM CHIEF OF DEPARTMENT MARK COTREAU

I write today to propose adding a minimum of one full-time firefighter/EMT (preferably a paramedic) to the Rye Fire Rescue roster. I do not make this proposal lightly but rather to ensure we fully close the critical service gaps identified in the 2020 strategic plan by maintaining three (3) members per shift staffing. The data and operational concerns compel me to make this proposal. Research and documentation have shown this staffing level as a compelling need and critical to providing care/services to our residents and visitors. We currently have authorized hours to fill three shifts with a third per diem member, however, we are unable to provide the staffing to fill all authorized per-diem shifts.

This Document is divided into the following sections:

1. Recent history leading up to this document-While we have tried to provide historical context in this document, the original 2020 Staffing Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan is available on our website.
2. Current related issues leading to this proposal-In this section we will provide data-driven updates to our 2020 SWOT Analysis. We will also provide updates assessing how well we have closed the critical service gaps noted in the report.
3. Proposal/recommendations for fully closing the critical service gaps- In this section we will propose some options to deal with the existing service gaps. We will also identify which option we recommend.
4. Funding of proposal -We will illustrate the funding required to fund our recommendation.

Based on the documented findings discovered in the 2020 Community Driven, Staffing Needs Assessment Strategic Planning process, Rye Fire Rescue must continue the on-going process of self-assessment to identify future operational changes to ensure that it continues to meet and exceed community customer service expectations at a reasonable cost. We have done that. This update and proposal is a result of this on-going process.

Finally, I would like to make two acknowledgements:

- First, thank you to the town residents for their support of our 2020 recommendations. The operational improvements have been significant! When staffed with our per-diem coverage, we can better serve our residents whether we are on an EMS emergency in a resident's living room or on another rescue/fire emergency! We just simply need to close the remaining gap, so all residents and visitors benefit from the increased quality of service.
- Finally, thank you to the town staff, Local 4411 and our firefighter/EMT's. Your countless hours of input made this document a better product!

Please contact me personally if you have any suggestions or questions.

Mark Cotreau, EFO, CFO

Recent history leading up to this document.

In November 2020, we published the Rye Fire Rescue Staffing Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan. This document described how our 2017 initial needs assessment revealed how our department had fallen well behind in quality apparatus and equipment a fire department our size should have. It took several years but, with the support of our residents, we are back on track in terms of apparatus capital plan and equipment! The 2020 plan focused more on the remaining issue, which is adequate staffing for a community such as ours. This document can be found on our website at:

https://www.town.rye.nh.us/sites/g/files/vyhlif3751/f/uploads/rye_fire_rescue_final_draft_strategic_plan_november_2020_edtion-june_7_2021.pdf

In our 2020 SWOT analysis we identified several concerning operational weaknesses which affect the care and services we provide for our residents and visitors.

This document confirmed that Rye Fire Rescue should have a minimum of three (3) qualified firefighter/EMT's (EMT/EMTA or Paramedic) on duty 24/7 to deliver optimal care/services to our residents and visitors. 5 implementation options were offered:

1. Hire three (3) full-time firefighter/EMT's.
 - This was the best option but also the most expensive.
2. Hire enough part-time 'per-diem' firefighter/EMT's to fill the third position on the three two-person shifts.
 - Hiring part-time 'per-diem' firefighter EMT's has advantages and disadvantages. The disadvantage is that the retention of a per-diem employee will vary more than a full-time employee. The per-diem may be there for a longer duration or until they find a full-time position elsewhere. There will have to be more effort placed into recruiting per-diem employees. Using per-diem employees will help to retain some of our call force members as they are obvious candidates for that position.
3. Hire enough part-time 'per-diem' firefighter/EMT's to fill the third position on the three two-person shifts, Two-year phase in.
4. **Hire enough part-time 'per-diem' firefighter/EMT's to fill the third position on the three two-person shifts, Three-year phase in.**
5. Do not fund this recommendation. All service gaps remain.

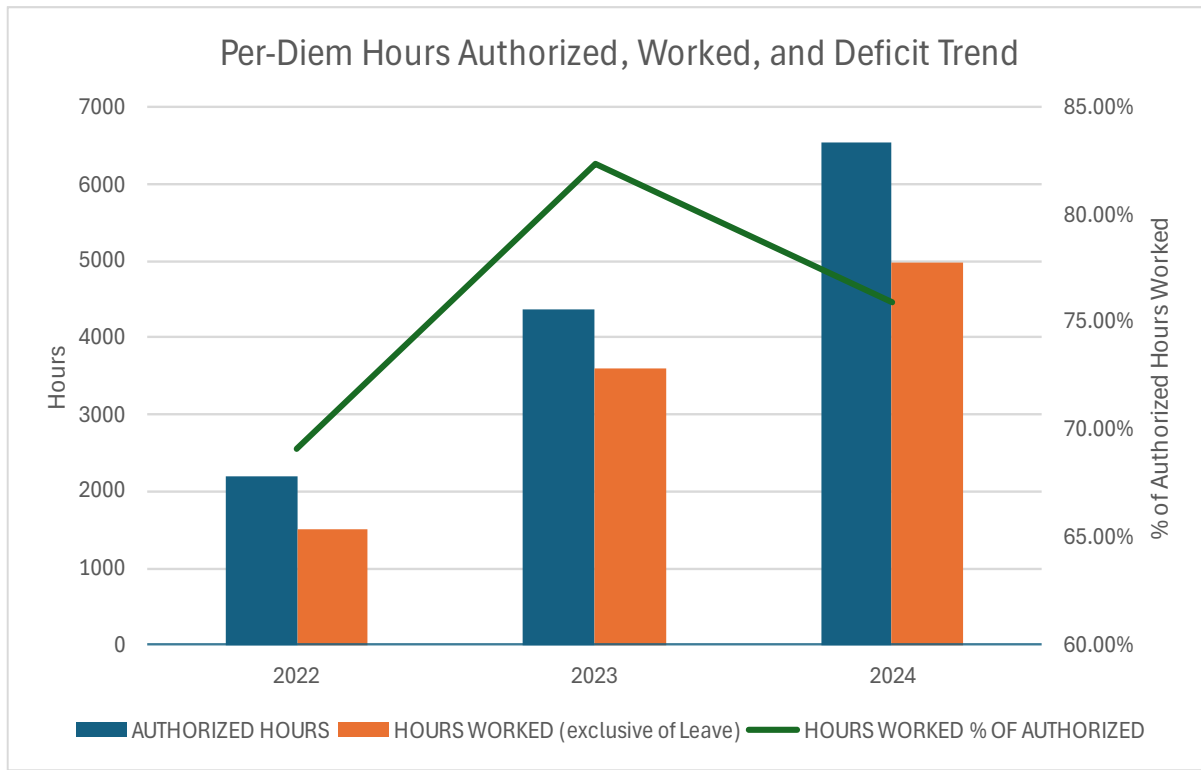
Option 4 was chosen to minimize the budgeting challenges. Part-time, Per-Diem coverage was also chosen to give this option an honest try prior to proposing any full-time positions. The residents voted at three subsequent meetings to fund each year of this projects phase-in. Recruitment began immediately and has been ongoing.

Current related issues leading to this proposal.

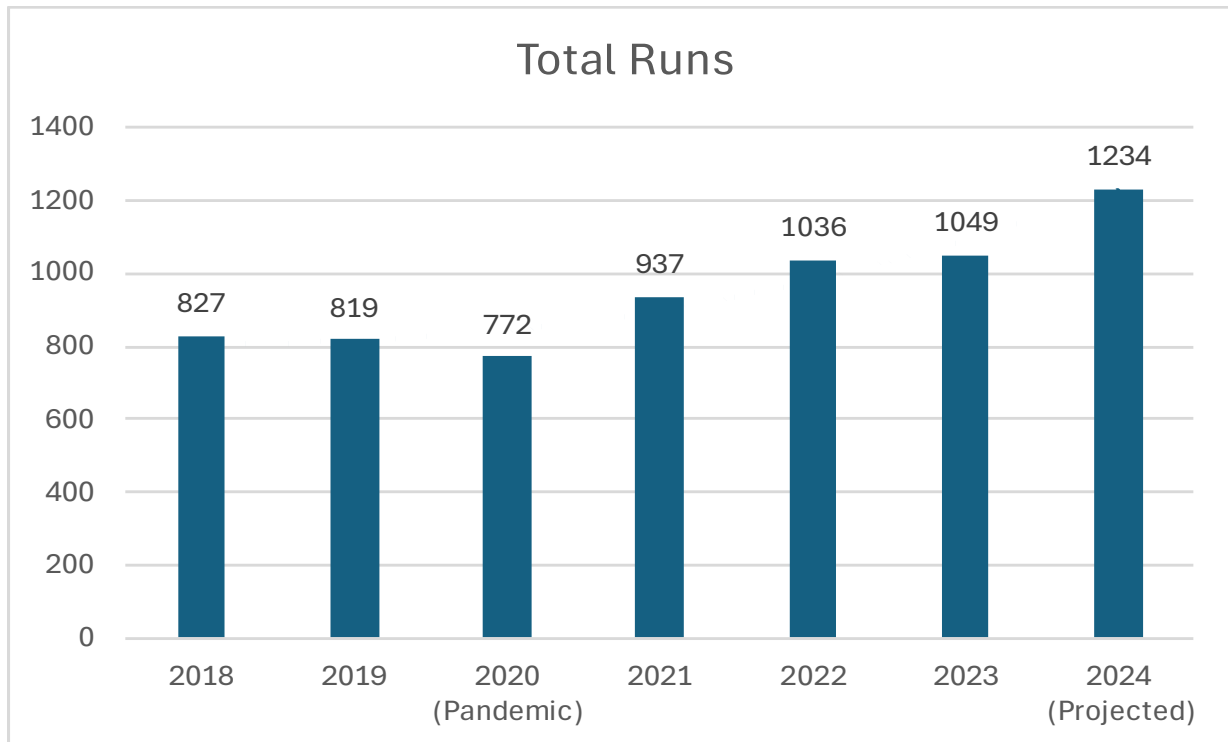
There are several issues and service trends which are pertinent to this proposal:

- Emergency responses are trending up:
 - In 2018 Rye Fire Rescue responded to 827 emergencies. Last year, 2023 our runs had trended up to 1047 emergencies. This is a 26% increase over the 2017 responses.
 - First half of 2024 we responded to 617 emergencies for a 2024 projected response activity of over 1200 emergencies.
 - Each ambulance transport (we did 423 last year) takes the ambulance out of service for 1-2 hours depending on the type of call and which hospital the patient is transported to.
 - With the Benchmark at Rye addition of assisted living, our medical responses to that facility will increase proportionately.
- Simultaneous/overlapping calls continue to be significant:
 - This occurs when an emergency response request comes in while we are occupied with another existing emergency response.
 - Since 2018 every year between 13.66% and 22.95% of our emergency calls overlap with an existing call with which we are already involved. In the first 6 months of 2024, 19.45% of our calls were overlapping calls.
 - Overlapping calls result in delayed access to our patients and require mutual aid response from further away.
- Tough recruiting/retention environment for per-diem help:
 - Per-Diem members are hard to find and their tenure with us is often brief.
 - We recruit via the State fire academy, social media and especially word of mouth. Even with these efforts these are the results over the past 3 years:
 - 2021-2022 FY of 2184 hours authorized, we covered 69% of available shifts.
 - 2022-2023 FY of 4368 hours authorized, we covered 82% of available shifts.
 - 2023-2024 FY of 6552 hours authorized, we covered 76% of available shifts.
 - Many per-diem members are looking for full-time employment. Rye Fire Rescue has hired several of our per-diems as full-time employees to fill existing vacancies, however that is also a further obstacle to maintaining our per-diem workforce.
 - Many, if not most, full-time departments are hiring because of the worker shortage, further hindering our efforts to recruit and retain our per-diem force.
 - Administratively, managing this program has proved to be labor intensive. This is not to say it is not worth it, but it does take additional time commitment.

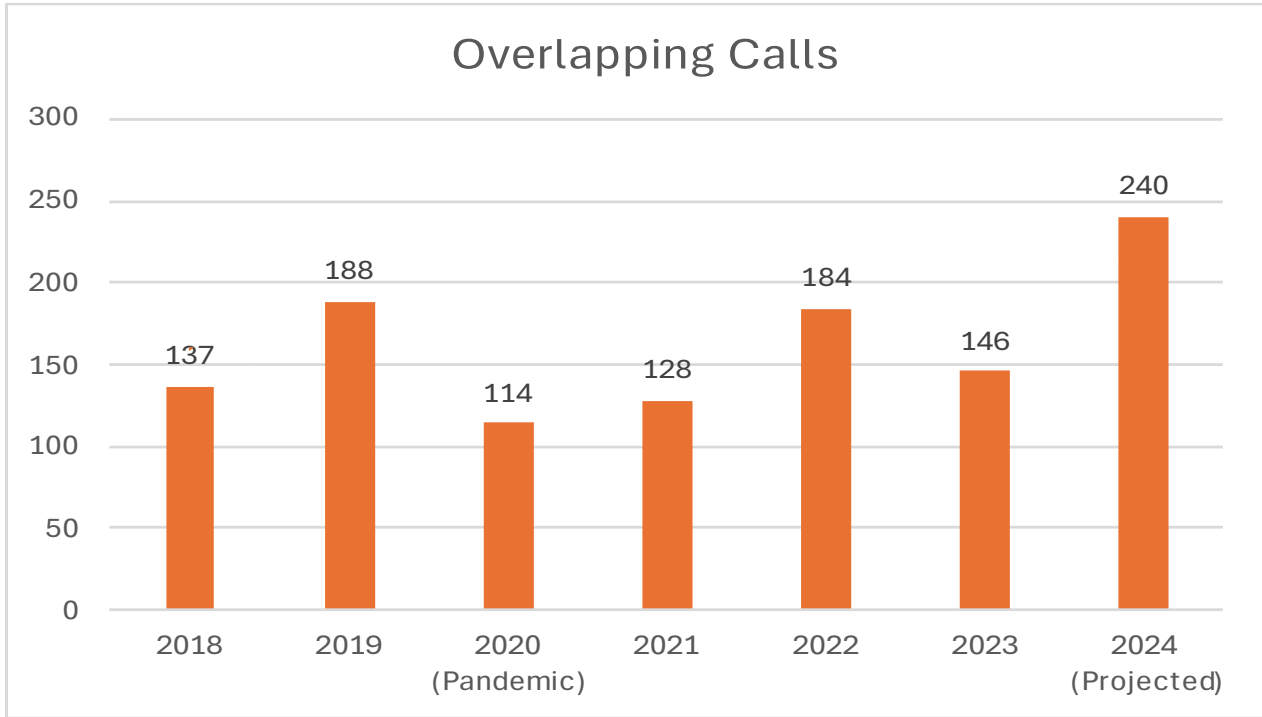
The below tables will help illustrate the challenges noted above:



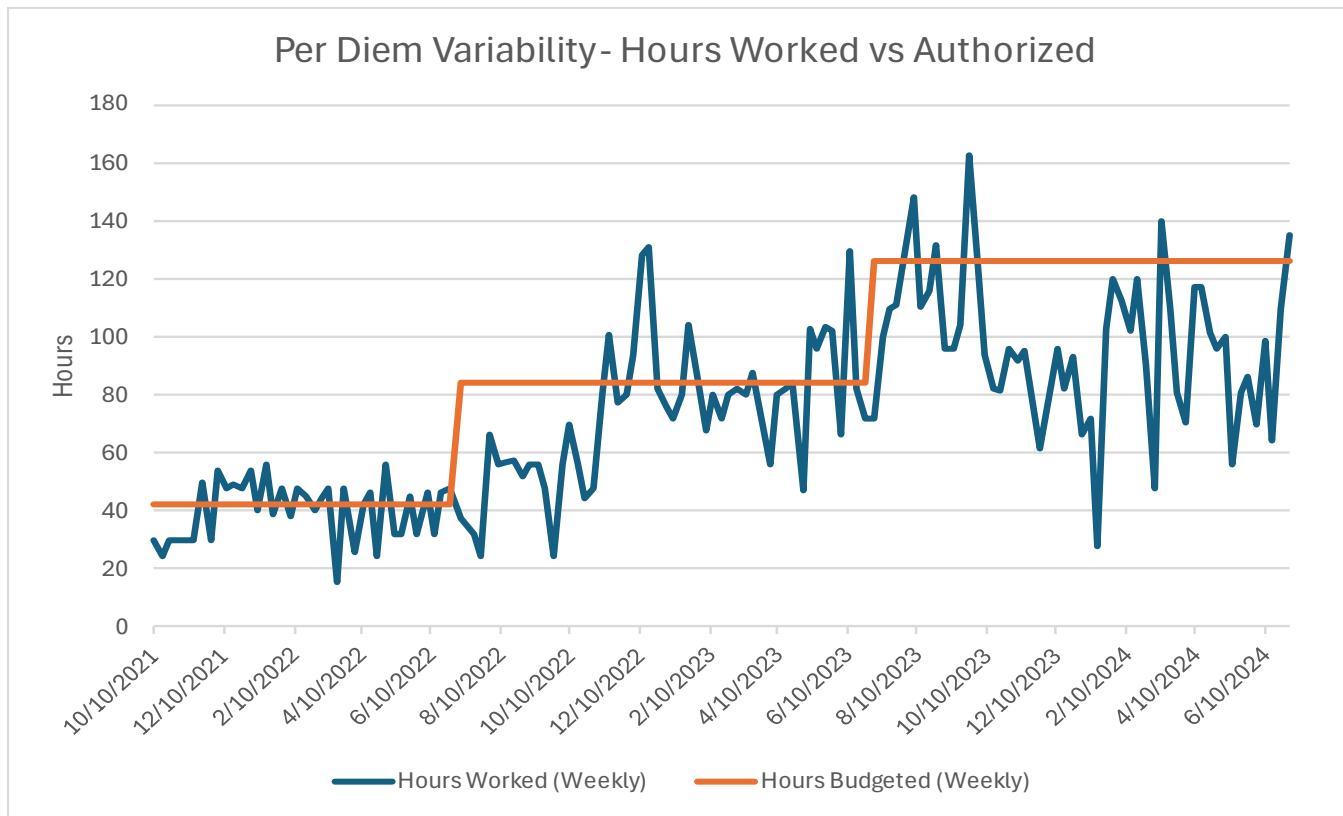
NOTE: DESPITE RECRUITING ACTIVITIES, RYE FIRE RESCUE IS CONSISTENTLY UNABLE TO FILL THE NUMBER OF AUTHORIZED HOURS AVAILABLE. THE VACANT SHIFT POSITIONS HAVE A SIGNIFICANT NEGATIVE IMPACT ON OUR OPERATIONAL ABILITY AT BOTH MEDICAL EMERGENCIES AND FIRE EMERGENCIES. THIS IS SIGNIFICANT GIVEN 29% OF OUR RESIDENTS ARE OVER AGE 65.



NOTE: EMERGENCY RESPONSES ONLY. PANDEMIC YEAR IS AN OUTLIER BECAUSE THE PUBLIC WAS RELUCTANT TO VISIT THE HOSPITAL. 26% INCREASE 2018 THROUGH 2023 (EXCLUDING 2024 PROJECTED WHICH WOULD BRING THE INCREASE TO 69%)



NOTE: THESE ARE EMERGENCY CALLS THAT COME IN WHILE WE ARE OUT AT OTHER CALLS, OFTEN WHEN THE AMBULANCE IS TRANSPORTING TO THE HOSPITAL. AS A PERCENTAGE THEY RANGE FROM A LOW OF OVER 13% TO A HIGH OF NEARLY 23%. WHILE THE NUMBERS VARY OVER THE YEARS; THEY ARE ALL SIGNIFICANT.



Note: The graph above illustrates one of the impacts of per-diem recruitment and retention issues is the inconsistency of shift coverage.

SWOT Analysis Updated August 2024

Updates in blue: non-critical items.

Updates in Red: critical service gaps remain.

SWOT Analysis

Defined: A **S.W.O.T. analysis** is a strategic planning method used to evaluate the **Strengths**, **Weaknesses**, **Opportunities**, and **Threats** involved in a project or in a business venture. It involves specifying the objective of the business venture or project and identifying the internal and external factors that are favorable and unfavorable to achieve that objective.

- **Strengths:** characteristics of the department that give it an advantage over others in the industry. These are assets that can be capitalized or built upon.
- **Weaknesses:** characteristics that place the department at a disadvantage relative to others. These are components that must be re-evaluated for effectiveness, need, and unanticipated consequences.
- **Opportunities:** *internal & external* chances to increase the capacity of the department. This involves the evaluation of utilizing what currently exists, or what is anticipated to surface that can bring the department closer to accomplishing its strategic challenges.
- **Threats:** *internal & external* challenges that form barriers the department seeks to overcome. Threats can be attitudinal, budgetary, environmental, or contextual; they can be perceived, or they can be real.

Strengths:

- Rye Fire Rescue enjoys good community support:
 - Apparatus replacement: Our capital improvement plan (CIP) is well received and is updated annually. The community has been very supportive. (Remains a Strength).
 - Water rescue/Jet Ski program: This program, supported by the community, has made a significant improvement to our ability to respond to water rescue incidents. Several successful rescue calls have proved the programs worth. (Remains a Strength).
 - Our CIP is now working and fiscally viable. (Remains a Strength).
 - Equipment replacement/upgrades: We have upgraded critical equipment long needing attention. Examples include our 'Jaws of Life' replacement and Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) upgrade. There were also smaller but just as critical equipment upgraded such as monitoring meters, rescue tools etc. (Remains a Strength).
- Third Party 100% Patient Satisfaction Surveys: Each transported patient is asked to fill out a satisfaction survey Rye Fire Rescue consistently outperforms the national benchmark of

participating agencies. Our vendor who conducts the surveys has restructured their processes, which has temporarily delayed our quarterly reports. Still, all indications are that this strength remains.

- Dedicated Rye Fire Rescue members. (Remains a Strength).
- Paramedic level EMS provider on each shift, providing the community with rapid response top notch medical care. Rye won the PRH EMS agency of the year award in 2017! Yes and no...we continue to have successful outcomes but have fallen below the 4-paramedic minimum for coverage. Please see the first operational weakness.
- Robust mutual aid system: Rye is one of forty-two communities actively participating in Seacoast Chief Fire Officers mutual aid system. This allows us to augment our resources when we have a significant event. Examples of our involvement in this system include:
 - We receive additional EMS and Fire staffed apparatus for those events we do not have the resources to manage ourselves. This system, however, is for augmenting a community's response to events not taking the place of an adequate first due response. We are also expected to offer service to other communities in kind. (Remains a Strength).
 - We have agreements in place with our surrounding communities to start into reported fires in Rye. This does not replace the first-due response but does start the needed back-up towards Rye early in the event. (Remains a Strength).
 - We have access to the districts SWAT Team, HazMat Team, regional Air supply trailers, command truck. Rye houses one of the regional air supply trailers. We also have members on the HazMat Team. (Remains a Strength).
 - As of last year, Rye, Greenland and North Hampton are training together at Bethany Church twice monthly. This allows more training participants which is needed for certain types of training. This also allows firefighters who respond together to early phases of incidents to train together before hand. (Remains a Strength although the scheduling has varied a bit).

Weaknesses:

Operational Weaknesses:

- Rye Fire rescue currently has 4 paramedics each assigned to 1 of 4 shifts. Although every shift member is an EMT or EMT-Advanced, there are certain critical advanced skills only paramedics are licensed to perform. If any of the paramedics resign or retire, we will not be able to staff 1 paramedic per shift. This concern has occurred. Rye Fire Rescue is down to three paramedics, one of which is the Deputy Chief. This results in calling for mutual aid paramedics in some cases. The 2025 budget proposal will include funding to send two of our AEMT's to paramedic school. This will bring us back up to one paramedic per shift. This situation reaffirms the reason our strategic plan endorses a minimum of 6 paramedics in our organization.
- Staff recall:
 - Off-duty and call force recall for an emergency incident is not predictable. 2019 data indicates an average of 1.74 off duty or call members responded to the station for station coverage. The call force represents approx. 40% of the members coming back on recall. Unlike the full-time members, the qualifications of our recalled call force vary widely. (Weakness Remains)
 - Basic Medical Emergencies:
 - Currently there is no additional clinical help at the scene quickly to help the ambulance

- personnel. (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
 - o Challenging stairways etc. often must be navigated without additional help (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
 - o 2 off duty or qualified call members are required to staff the second ambulance. (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
 - o Must wait for off duty or qualified call members to arrive at the station before a second emergency gets a quick local response. (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
 - o nearly 11% of our emergency calls overlap an ongoing incident. (actually, overlapping calls first six months of 2024 increased to 19.45%-see chart)
- o Critical ALS Level Medical Emergencies:
 - o These challenging medical emergencies often require an additional attendant in the ambulance with the patient. (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
 - o The ambulance crew of 2 typically is required to wait until off-duty members arrive at the scene for help with a multitude of urgent procedures such as:
 - Providing medications (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
 - Managing patient's airway (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
 - IV access issues (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
- o Motor Vehicle Accidents:
 - o We typically are lacking first due Engine response to MVA's
 - Nobody is available to start initial patient treatment on that second or third patient. (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
 - Delays use of extrication tools such as Jaws of Life and air bags. (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
 - Delays fuel spill control (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
 - Delays vehicle fire precautions such as disconnecting batteries and hose line placement. (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
- o Fire Alarms and Fire Responses:
 - o No pump operator: (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
 - o We are typically not able to staff the 3 critical positions on a fire truck:
 - someone to run the pump on the fire truck. This ensures a predictable water supply for the inside firefighters. Pump operators are also critical in observing changing conditions from the outside. This is a critical position on both Fire alarm and actual fire calls. (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
 - Someone to operate the water nozzle.
 - Someone to back-up the nozzle person and pull the needed fire hose as they advance. (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
 - o Water supply that is interrupted while the two firefighters are in the fire building is a life-threatening event for the firefighters. (still valid)

- We know of zero national benchmarks that allow our current practice. (still valid)
- Most mutual aid departments in our system do not call for our fire trucks due to our staffing of less than 3. (Still valid)
- Huge safety issue (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
- Liability issue for firefighters, residents, and town. (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
- Jetski 1 and water operations: Rye Fire Rescues water rescue program has quickly proven its worth. Several significant rescues have illustrated how challenging managing the necessary response to these critical incidents is.
 - We can staff the jet ski but lack someone to initiate the initial land-based coordination needed to:
 - Coordinate with Coast Guard, Marine Patrol, and rescue boats such as Portsmouth and Hampton. (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
 - Coordinate with land-based mutual aid such as ambulances, ocean rescue swimmers heading into the scene. (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
 - Coordinate search of shore for a victim. (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
 - Stay connected with Jet ski 1 crew to provide additional needed resources and as a safety should the crew need help. (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
- Ambulance VS Engine availability: Necessarily the shift firefighters are required to take the ambulance out on routine errands such as inspections, burning site inspections, district familiarization etc. This means that if a call comes in for a fire call of some sort, the ambulance must return to the station to respond with the appropriate vehicle. This is not a rare occurrence and creates a substantial delay in response. (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
 - for example: Ambulance is out at Wentworth Road doing an inspection when a fire alarm came in for one of our assisted Living Communities. The ambulance had to respond back to the fire station and switch to staffing the fire engine, then respond in the engine to the scene.

Administrative Weaknesses:

- Wear and Tear on the ambulance: Because the ambulance must be used for virtually all inspections and other routine travel there are additional maintenance costs. This impacts the long-term serviceability of the vehicle. (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
- Our ambulance has a replacement cost of over \$400,000. It was placed in service in July 2017 and already has over 109,000 miles. (Still Valid)
- Additional miles require more fuel cost, more tires, more brake replacements etc. (Still Valid)
- Call force recruitment and retention: (Still Valid)
 - This is a national issue. A National Fire administration whitepaper titled 'Retention and Recruitment for the Volunteer Emergency Services' offers root causes for this national decline in volunteerism. The reasons include:
 - Increasing time demands
 - Increasing training requirements

- Increasing call volume
- Changes in suburban sociological climate
- Leadership problems-internal conflict
- Higher cost of housing
- Aging communities
- Federal Legislation

Full report: <https://www.nvfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/2007retentionandrecruitmentguide.pdf>

- Training expense. New call force members must be trained to national and state standards. This has been occurring at the expense of Rye Fire rescue. Many, although not all, call members aspire to be a full-time firefighter and thus leave for job opportunities. To some extent this has been an accepted role of call forces, and one hopes there is a payback on training dollars spent before the member leaves. A troubling trend we are seeing here in Rye are call force members who leave active status in Rye for part-time shift work commonly called 'per-diems' in other towns. Rye does not currently offer 'per-diem' shifts. We have had 3 members recently go inactive for this reason. [This situation has improved somewhat due to the availability of per-diem shifts, however continuous recruiting has not resulted in enough per-diem members to provide the needed coverage.](#)
- Not all call force members have the same qualifications. Some are an EMT at some level, some are certified as a firefighter, some are both. There are also a few who are support only. **Still valid**
 - Currently in the rye call force of 12 members:
 - 2 are EMT only-no fire certification.
 - 4 have fire certification-no EMT license.
 - 4 are both EMT and fire certified.
 - 2 are support members.
- Organizational structure policies and training needs to be addressed. Structure, policies and training in the call force were concerns we had before embarking on this study. The need for improvement was consistently brought up in internal interviews and is a common issue nationally [\(improving with the addition of our Deputy Fire Chief\).](#)
- Inadequate administrative capacity to support the departments mission:
 - In-station projects and responsibilities: Each member of Rye fire Rescue is assigned additional duties and responsibilities (Table 13). Although the responsibilities listed in Table 13 are comprehensive the work must get done during the operational shift rotation. This is challenging from both a workload and project continuity perspective. [\(workload issue but is improving with the addition of our Deputy Fire Chief\).](#)
 - The Fire Chief is the only administrative staff. There is no administrative assistant and no Deputy Chief Position. [\(Deputy Chief funded and appointed\)](#)
- The ambulance must be taken to even routine business that could be done with one member to remain available. **(24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)**
- Availability to the public at the station: Our customer service suffers when there are no staff at the station. [\(improved with the addition of our Deputy Fire Chief\).](#)
 - This occurs when we are out on non-emergency duties
 - While out on routine business there is no staff to answer the door or field telephone calls for the reasons outlined below; this is a source of customer complaints.
 - Request for permits
 - Plans review.
 - Requests for site inspections

- Of particular concern is those emergency calls that get called in on our business line. We receive calls that are sometimes left on voice mail!

Opportunities:

Operational opportunities: The operational weaknesses listed above were examined for root causal factors. What reasonable value-driven solutions can make a significant positive impact for the future. Rye Fire Rescue now has modern dependable equipment. With the addition of our newly purchased pumper-ladder, our apparatus replacement plan is on track. The root cause of the significant operational weaknesses above comes down to staffing. Below are the improvements that transitioning our present shift staffing (3 shifts of 2 and 1 shift of 3) to 3 members per shift would yield. They are dramatic:

- Basic Medical Emergencies:
 - One member can remain in town after helping at the scene while 2 members transport the patient to the hospital. This will allow the remaining member to provide quick response to a simultaneous emergency call. This would be a significant improvement as nearly 11% (19.45% currently) of our emergency calls overlap with another emergency. (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
 - Only 1 recall member would be needed to staff the second ambulance. (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
- Critical ALS Level Medical Emergencies:
 - These are the serious calls such as heart attacks, strokes, and cardiac arrests. In these types of cases the third shift member is critical to speeding up the on-boarding of medications, establishing and maintaining an airway, IV access and other needed procedures. These procedures often need to be done simultaneously. This will enable quicker transport to the hospital. (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
 - Below this SWOT analysis you will find a memo comparing our staffing and the staffing used by the Portsmouth Hospital ER to perform these same functions at a cardiac arrest at one of our scenes versus the KR`SB ` emergency room. (still valid)
- Motor Vehicle Accidents:
 - The third shift member can begin the evaluation of the second or third patient begins quickly. (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
 - Environmental preventative measures such as fuel spill protective measures begin quickly (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
 - With the third member we can have rescue tools such as jaws and airbags in play sooner. (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
- Fire Alarms and Fire Responses:
 - This is an area where a third shift member dramatically increases the effectiveness and safety of the first due fire truck at the scene. A three-person shift allows the first arriving fire truck to have someone pumping water through the hose lines while the other 2 members advance lines into the building. Three person staffing for structure fires are not a luxury but rather the minimum national standard possible. The following link is to a public education video produced by the Belmont MA Fire Department. This contains an excellent illustration of the resources involved in mitigating a structure fire. While we have additional mutual aid coming into reported fires, we

need to arrive at the scene prepared to take quick action that will positively affect the outcome of the fire. This video can be found at https://www.firefighternation.com/2020/10/23/belmont-ma-mock-house-fire-lessons/?fbclid=IwAR2ziGL54aa7gImH79PAWbcleHYH4YDXgonalJfoXdxKHMJEDRlcDW_OnqU (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)

- Jet ski 1 and water operations:
 - In addition to simply staffing the jet ski, the three-person shift allows the capability to establish coordination on land. This allows quick coordination of incoming land mutual aid such as ambulances, additional rescue swimmers etc. and the water-based agencies such as the Coast Guard, Marine Patrol, and fire rescue boats. (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
 - Perhaps most importantly, a three-person shift allows a person on land to stay connected with Jet ski 1 crew to provide additional needed resources and as a safety should the crew need help. (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
 - Ambulance VS Engine availability: The staffing of both the ambulance and a fire truck is much more possible with a three-person shift. This dramatically reduces the occasions when the on-duty shift must return to the station for the correct apparatus when the call comes in while they are not in quarters. (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)

Administrative Opportunities:

- Wear and Tear on the ambulance:
 - A three-person shift allows most non-emergent travel to be done with our pickup truck instead of an expensive ambulance. This improves long-term serviceability of the vehicle and limits wear and tear on the more expensive ambulance.
- Call force retention and recruitment:
 - Allowing qualified Call force members to work part-time per-diem shifts would eliminate the need for call force members to transfer to shift work at other area fire departments. This could also count towards three- member shift operational improvements. Members who recently went elsewhere for per-diem shifts all noted that they would have stayed in Rye if there was an opportunity for shift work. (per-diem shifts funded but not enough per-diem recruits to provide coverage)
- Allowing call force members to work per-diem shifts would enhance on-duty training. Still Valid
 - Organizational improvements in terms of structure, policies and training clearly need to happen. This will take the necessary administrative capacity in an immediate and on-going effort. (improving with the addition of our Deputy Fire Chief).
 - In-station projects and responsibilities:
 - Less staff on non-emergent business outside the fire station means lacking in-station projects and responsibilities get more attention. (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
 - Availability to public at station: (24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
 - A three-person shift increases the availability during routine business to answer the door or field a telephone call for:
 - Request for permits
 - Plans review.
 - Requests for site inspections

- Fewer customer complaints

Threats:

Left unimproved, the organizational weaknesses discussed threatens Rye Fire Rescue in the following ways:

- Call force recruitment and retention will continue to be a challenge in the future. (still valid)
- Recruiting/training paramedic level EMS responders continue to be a priority. (still valid)
- Dropping below the current level of 4 paramedics (1 paramedic for each shift) would make covering each shift with a paramedic impractical.
- Operational weaknesses left unaddressed will compound as call volume increases. (still valid)

End of SWOT Analysis

Current Status of Findings August 2024

Updates in blue: non-critical items.

Updates in Red: critical service gaps remain.

V. FINDINGS

What we learned from our research was that while we provide high quality on-scene fire and EMS delivery, resulting in high customer satisfaction, there are substantial service gaps in our response model that need to be addressed. The results of this research and report reveal that we need to take some immediate corrective action to ensure we are providing the best fire/EMS service possible to the citizens and guests of the town of Rye. (still valid)

ANSWERS TO OUR RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this section we will answer each primary research question. We will draw conclusions as to what is working and where there are service gaps. A service gap is the difference between the intended service level an organization plans to deliver, and the actual level of services delivered. In our context the service gap is service below the intended service level.

FINDING #1: Adequacy of Rye Fire Rescue Resources

Question: Does Rye Fire Rescue have adequate resources to provide effective, responsive, high-quality fire and EMS delivery to all residents and customers within the town of Rye?

Finding: Yes and no. Our apparatus and equipment are in good shape. We cannot, however, provide first due adequate minimum staffing at many incident scenes. First the good news:

- Rye fire Rescue's apparatus now follow a 20-year replacement plan. The plan is well thought out and, except for 2 purchase leases, will be self-funding (given existing funding sources). Our newly acquired pumper-ladder has modernized our response from an apparatus perspective. It is now very important to follow the replacement plan as laid out. (still valid)
- Rye Fire rescue equipment has the quality modern equipment a smaller fire EMS agency like Rye's should have. (still valid)
- Rye Fire rescue employs talented, community-oriented members in both our regular and call force rosters. The overall satisfaction noted in our patient surveys attests to this. (still valid)
- SERVICE GAP: Rye fire rescue does not have the ability to fully handle all the tasks required of a first due response agency. These tasks are outlined below in finding#2. (24% of service gap remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
- SERVICE GAP: Rye Fire rescue cannot maintain quick initial response to overlapping calls when out on an emergency response. Our turnaround time for a typical medical call transporting to the hospital is 60-90 minutes. Nearly 11% (currently 19.45%) of our emergency calls overlap with another call. (24% of service gap remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)

FINDING #2: Operational Benefits and Liabilities

Question: What are the benefits and liabilities contained within our current fire and EMS service delivery model?

Finding:

- Third Party 100% Patient Satisfaction Surveys: Each transported patient is asked to fill out a satisfaction survey (appendix A). Rye Fire Rescue consistently outperforms the national benchmark of participating agencies. Our vendor who conducts the surveys has restructured their processes, which has temporarily delayed our quarterly reports. Still, all indications are that this strength remains.
- Dedicated Rye Fire Rescue members (still valid)
- Paramedic level EMS provider on each shift, providing the community with rapid response top notch medical care. Rye won the PRH EMS agency of the year award in 2017! We continue to have successful outcomes but have fallen below the 4 paramedic minimum for coverage. This concern has occurred. Rye Fire Rescue is down to three paramedics, one of which is the Deputy Chief. This results in calling for mutual aid paramedics in some cases (delayed response). The 2025 budget proposal will include funding to send two of our AEMT's to paramedic school. This will bring us back up to one paramedic per shift. This situation reaffirms the reason our strategic plan endorses a minimum of 6 paramedics in our organization.

- Robust mutual aid system: Rye is one of 42 communities actively participating in Seacoast Chief Fire Officers mutual aid system. This allows us to augment our resources when we have a significant event. (still valid)
- CRITICAL SERVICE GAP: We are typically not able to staff the 3 critical positions on a fire truck-
 1. someone to run the pump on the fire truck. This ensures a predictable water supply for the inside firefighters. Pump operators are also critical in observing changing conditions from the outside. This is a critical position on both Fire alarm and actual fire calls. (24% of service gap remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
 2. Someone to operate the water nozzle.
 3. Someone to back-up the nozzle person and pull the needed fire hose as they advance. (24% of service gap remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)
- SERVICE GAP: Off-duty and call force recall for an emergency incident is not predictable. 2019 data indicates an average of 1.74 off duty or call members responded to the station for station coverage. (still valid)
- SERVICE GAP: The ambulance crew of 2 typically is required to wait until off-duty members arrive at the scene for additional help completing a multitude of urgent procedures such as providing medications, managing patient's airway, and IV access issues. (24% of service gap remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%):
- SERVICE GAP: We typically are lacking first due engine response to motor vehicle accidents (24% of service gap remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%):
 - Nobody is available to start initial patient treatment on that second or third patient.
 - Delays use of extrication tools such as Jaws of Life and air bags.
 - Delays fuel spill control.
 - Delays vehicle fire precautions such as disconnecting batteries and hose line placement.
- SERVICE GAP: We can staff the jet ski but lack someone to initiate the initial land-based coordination needed to- (24% of service gap remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%):
 - Coordinate with Coast Guard, Marine Patrol, and rescue boats such as Portsmouth and Hampton.
 - Coordinate with land based mutual aid such as ambulances, Ocean rescue swimmers heading into the scene.
 - Coordinate search on shore for a victim.
- SERVICE GAP: There is a delay in the response of a fire truck should the ambulance be out of quarters for some other business. This scenario requires the ambulance to respond not to the incident scene but back to the station to first get the fire truck and then respond to the incident scene. (24% of service gap remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%):
- SERVICE GAP: Our customer service suffers when there is no staff at the station. This occurs when we are out on non-emergency duties (This has greatly improved with the addition of the Deputy Fire Chief)
- While out on routine business there is no staff to answer the door or field telephone calls

for (This has greatly improved with the addition of the Deputy Fire Chief):

- Request for permits
- Plans review.
- Requests for site inspections
- This is a source of customer complaints.

FINDING #3: Call Force Benefits and Liabilities

Question: What are the benefits and liabilities contained within our current call force? What can be done to increase recruitment and retention of our call members?

Finding:

- Recruitment and retention of call force members is a well-documented national problem. Evidence confirms that seacoast area departments are having these same recruitment and retention issues. The call force is a key component of a small fire department. Quality dedicated call force members are to be valued. The evidence suggests recruitment and retention will continue to be an issue for Rye Fire Rescue in the future. (still valid)
- The number of call firefighters coming back on recall for emergencies is not predictable. Additionally, the qualifications of the call members on recall vary, often restricting their ability to respond to certain types of calls. As discussed, some call members are trained for both EMS and Fire, but many are one or the other. There are also a few that give scene support duties only. (still valid)
- SERVICE GAP: Talented Call force members are being trained by Rye Fire rescue only to leave active service in Rye. Expenses include costly baseline medical examinations, firefighting certification and EMT licensing. The reason given is often to work per-diem shifts in one or more nearby communities. This situation has improved with the addition of the per-diem program; however, we cannot find enough per-diem personnel.
- SERVICE GAP: Talented call force members do not have adequate organizational support such as policies, procedures, and training. This is at least partially due to lack of administrative capacity to address these critical issues on an on-going basis. (This is improving with the addition of the Deputy Fire Chief)

FINDING #4: Advanced Life support (ALS)

Question: What is the current status of our ALS system relative to providing top ± notch ALS delivery now and in the future?

Finding: Rye Fire Rescue clearly delivers high quality Advanced Life support, but the system is at risk.

- The benefits of our system include the ability to quickly place highly trained Advanced Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTA's) as well as Paramedics on the scene of most medical emergencies received and appropriately dispatched in the Town of Rye. (still valid)
- Rye Fire Rescue members are community oriented. Members are also regarded by our patients as

compassionate and capable. Evidence of this is contained within our independent 100% patient satisfaction survey results. (still valid)

- SERVICE RISK: Rye Fire rescue currently has 4 paramedic level members. There is one on each of 4 shifts. Paramedics are also hard to recruit in this area and nationally. It will be important to maintain an optimum level of 6 paramedic level providers. This will allow us to provide a minimum of one per shift even after retirement or resignation. **This concern has occurred. Rye Fire Rescue is down to three paramedics, one of which is the Deputy Chief. This results in calling for mutual aid paramedics in some cases (delayed response). The 2025 budget proposal will include funding to send two of our AEMT's to paramedic school. This will bring us back up to one paramedic per shift. This situation reaffirms the reason our strategic plan endorses a minimum of 6 paramedics in our organization. This service risk continues.**
- SERVICE GAP: Critical procedures for our sickest patients often take longer than necessary due to 2-person shift staffing. A third clinical person quickly on scene would greatly speed up this process and benefit the patient. This was confirmed by our medical director, at the time, Dr. Wallus. **(24% of service gap remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%):**
- SERVICE GAP: There are often no members left in town to respond to a second medical emergency. nearly 11% **(currently 19.45%)** of Rye's calls for emergency response overlap with existing calls. A third clinical person would often be available for quick initial response to the second emergency call. This fast initial response is critical for very sick patients and important whether we can staff our second ambulance for the call or need mutual aid. **(24% of service gap remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%):**

FINDING #5: Adequacy of our Delivery Model

Question: Is our current fire and EMS service delivery model adequate? If not, what should our fire and EMS service delivery model look like?

Finding: No. Our response model needs to change. Rye Fire rescue currently makes good use of the area's mutual aid system. This is good but our INITIAL response to most emergencies is inadequate. A three-person staffing of fire apparatus is the minimum practical standard throughout the country. Arriving at any fire response without being able to fill out all 3 engine company positions keeps us from performing critical evolutions needed to mitigate the emergency and is an unacceptable safety risk. **(still valid, 24% weakness partially remains 2023-2024 Per-Diem coverage was 76%)**

- SERVICE GAP: Rye Fire rescue's current response model is as follows:
 - One station
 - Operational staffing of 2 members per shift
 - Administrative staffing of 1 Fire Chief
 - Call Force of maximum of 15 authorized positions.
- Rye Fire rescues future model should ensure a three-person shift and adequate administrative capacity to provide the needed operational, training and organizational support. This is a customer driven change that will enhance the long-term survivability, treatment and overall delivery care of our patients. **(Deputy Chief has been added along with funding to close the**

gap with per-diem members, however, 24% of per-diem service gap remains 2023-2024
Per-Diem coverage was 76%):

- The future model should look like this:
 - One station
 - Operational staffing of 3 members per shift (the additional member could be full-time or per-diem)
 - Administrative staffing of 1 Fire chief and 1 Deputy Chief
 - Call force of maximum 15 authorized positions

In addition to providing critical help at our emergency scenes, this proposed change to our response model will also allow us to save wear and tear on our more expensive fire apparatus and ambulances because they will no longer need to go out on the routine inspections, fire drills etc. Many, but not all, of the simpler service calls can be completed without the need for recall. (Still Valid)

Proposal/Recommendation to fully close the critical service gaps.

The following are some implementation options to fill the remaining critical service gaps as noted in this document:

- **Option 1:** Hire three full-time firefighters/EMT's and place one on each two-person shift raising the full-time staffing level to three members per shift.
 - While hiring three full-time firefighter/EMT's continues to be the optimal operational answer, the financial implication is substantial due to benefit and retirement costs.
- **Option 2:** Hire one full-time firefighter/EMT and place him/her on a two-person shift.
 - This would essentially close that part of the service gap that we are not able to close with our per-diem program. This would result in per-diem program coverage being used in two shifts instead of three shifts.
 - This option will close the documented service gaps with a minimal impact on the budget.
 - The data suggests that this option will fully close our operational service gaps affected by the lack of sufficient per-diem recruits. This assumes the recruiting atmosphere does not substantially worsen.
- **Option 3:** Do not fund this proposal. This is the least favorable option for our residents. All documented service gaps remain in place. Environmental trending continues to influence service gaps.

Option 2 is our recommendation. The proposal is to add a minimum of one full-time firefighter/EMT (preferably a paramedic) to the Rye Fire Rescue roster. I do not make this proposal lightly but rather to ensure we fully close the critical service gaps affecting our residents as identified in the 2020 strategic plan by maintaining three (3) members per shift staffing.

Funding of proposal

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 – I assumed a 1% education allowance as well) 30.28 starting pay – 66,131.52 base salary.

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%)

We have endeavored to illustrate how our per-diem program has improved but NOT closed many of these critical service gaps. We have consistently been able to fill a substantial portion of the authorized hours but still we leave a significant gap, currently 24%, remaining. Adding one Full-time firefighter position will close this gap! We implemented the per-diem program because we had a compelling need to better care for our residents and visitors. We have seen the improvement this program has provided, and we must finish the job by closing the remaining service gap.

Thank you for your continued support.