

An open letter to the Mayor, City Council and the citizens of the Town of Amesbury,

This letter is meant to be informative only. This is in regards to proposed budget cuts by the Town that will lead to reductions in public safety staffing. This information is provided to you by your Amesbury Firefighters.

The Town of Amesbury Fire Department has been providing the citizens of the Town of Amesbury with its ambulance service for over 50 years. Your Amesbury Firefighters are staffing the ambulance today at a level of care that rivals that of the Emergency Room. Well over 80% of the time that your Amesbury Fire Department ambulance is responding to your medical emergency it is staffed at the Advanced Life Support Level and can provide any number of advanced life saving interventions.

The Amesbury Fire Department has one of the best run, and most respected municipal ambulances in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The receipts brought in from ambulance billing cover 100% of the cost for replacement manpower, equipment, training and new ambulances. This amounts to a cost of zero taxpayer dollars to the operating expenses of the Fire Department ambulance.

To replace the Fire Department ambulance with a private, for-profit ambulance service as has been hinted at of recent would be a mistake. These for-profit services would lead to an increase in response times, as the ambulance may or may not be responding from Amesbury and the crew may or may not be familiar with the town, adding more precious time to their response. In a medical emergency, these seconds or minutes are critical, and may be the difference between life and death. Your Amesbury Firefighters that staff your Amesbury Fire Department ambulance are professionals. Professionals dedicated to the life and property of the citizens of the Town of Amesbury, professionals that everyone in Amesbury benefits from.

The same dedicated professionals that protect you in a medical emergency also protect your homes and businesses from the ravages of fire. The Amesbury Fire Department already staffs their apparatus below the accepted national standards set by no fewer than three agencies. Most recognizably, the National Fire Protection Agency has set forth a standard that calls for a minimum staffing of 4 firefighters per piece of apparatus. Amesbury Firefighters currently respond with a minimum of **ONE** man on its ladder, and **TWO** or **THREE** on a given engine.

Research has shown that it takes five or even six firefighters on each apparatus to operate at 100% efficiency. As the number of crewmembers is reduced, the efficiency of the crew is reduced. You simply **CANNOT** accomplish all the necessary tasks at a fire with 4-5 people. The first task that firefighters have at a house fire is to identify if there are people in need of being rescued, and therefore we conduct an initial search. Ask yourself that if it was you or your family trapped in a fire, how many firefighters would you want searching?

Your Amesbury Firefighters are already working short-handed according to numerous studies and national standards set forth by a variety of agencies. We accomplish our given mission with a highly trained and dedicated staff and extensive mutual-aid agreements with our local fire departments. By having our staffing cut by 4-6 firefighters, this leaves us that much more understaffed. If it were your house, knowing the many different tasks that needs to be performed in order to save lives and protect property, would you want 8 firefighters (our current full-shift manning) or 6 (staffing with proposed cuts) performing those tasks?

The benefits of not reducing staffing in public safety are well documented. Not only does it help ensure the safety of your Amesbury Firefighters; it allows us to deliver a higher level of service to you, the citizens we protect.

Your Amesbury Firefighters encourage you to contact your municipal councilor today and attend Tuesday nights City Council meeting to voice your opinion on the important issue of staffing for all of your public safety departments.

This information has been provided to you by the Amesbury Firefighters of IAFF Local 1783