

**BOF CORRESPONDENCE – 10/07/2020 Meeting**

**From:**James McNair <jmcnair3@comcast.net>  
**Sent:**Friday, September 25, 2020 2:05 PM  
**To:**Robert Tarlov <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>  
**Subject:**refresh my memory

Rob,

Good day. I'd like to refresh my memory in light of the recent OSHA citations. I'm trying to recall the full arc of this story. I recall getting apparatus through grants. I remember wondering how they were going to get replaced.

I saw this posted.

As a member of the Colchester Hayward Fire department the only concern I have is the constant budget cuts that prohibit us from buying the equipment we need to do our jobs to OSHA standards.

I never recalled hearing "hey look BOF we need funding to properly maintain and replace PPE." Then when budget cuts were needed the BOF took out funding to properly maintain and replace FD PPE.

What is your recollection on the history of PPE funding during your tenure?

Thanks,

James McNair

**From:**Robert Tarlov <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>  
**Sent:**Friday, September 25, 2020 5:41 PM  
**To:**James McNair <jmcnair3@comcast.net>  
**Subject:**Re: refresh my memory

James.

No matter what goes wrong in the fire department, seems it's either my fault or the Board of Finance.

First, most of the OSHA findings had to do with process and procedures, not availability of PPE. In my opinion, the problems with the fire department are not because of lack of funding.

Over the years, BoF has asked questions and requested additional information and data, but I don't think we have ever turned down requests for apparatus or budget items.

At a BOF budget meeting this year, Don Lee said they had to beg for an ambulance. I recall they made a presentation asking for two, we asked a few questions and before we voted, they withdrew the request for one, and we approved the one without debate. We were going to fund in through a lease, but we

began to prefund it, and when it was finally ready for delivery, we voted to appropriate money from fund balance to add to the money we had already reserved, and bought it outright.

The public turned down fire apparatus at a special referendum circa 2014. The BoF had to approve that equipment to get it to referendum. That equipment was not requested again until this year.

About 5 years ago, the department requested money to refurbish the heavy rescue vehicle, it was approved, and then they came back and asked to replace it instead, we approved it and funded it with a lease.

Most of their equipment and lighter apparatus is funded through equipment reserve, vehicle reserve, and capital reserve, and not through the budgets. These accounts were unfunded prior to 2010. Over the years I can recall adding department requests to the reserve plan for a plan to continuously replace a certain number SCBA units each year, thermal imaging cameras, lifepak monitors for the ALS program.

A subcommittee consisting of Mary, Rosemary, Bernie and I have had several meetings this year to review a 4.5 million request to replace fire apparatus. Part of the request was spending an extra 300K on a tower ladder truck rather a straight rear mounted stick ladder like we'll be replacing. The subcommittee attended a demonstration of both vehicles. The four of us will be recommending to the full boards that we send the request, including the tower ladder to referendum to be bonded, 100% of what was asked including their additional request on the ladder.

It has been said that BoF, or more specifically, Rob Tarlov, killed the ALS program. I asked questions and requested data as a result of their multiple presentations. Rather than answering the questions or supplying the information, the program kept getting changed with each new presentation. The request to fund the full program never came to the BoF. The Chief went before the BOS and asked for a delay in the program start, after which BOS approved the ALS program with the delay, and as a result, the request to BoF was a much smaller amount to begin the program. The BoF approved the budget with the request intact. This year Mary removed the funding from the budget before it came to Board of Finance. Her reasons were the same issues I was questioning the year before.

On the budget, I cannot recall a time when the BOF asked the First Selectman to reduce the fire department budget. We have never specifically asked the FS to reduce any department, but to come back with proposals to reduce the overall budget. When involving the Fire Department, the Chief had always presented and supported those reductions for his department.

The fire department is noted for not spending their budget. Every year the department has left money on the table. This year 78K, and that with 39K of over-budgeted overtime to replace the volunteers. Last year 121K (almost 10% of the budget). In 2018, 138K was left over, over 10% of the budget. And in 2017, 142K was left over (over 11% of the budget). If PPE was not purchased it wasn't because there was no funding.

Rob

Rob Tarlov, Chairman, Board of Finance  
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