



Easton Fire Department



Fire Department

**2025 Fall STM Select Board
Presentation**

Fire Chief

Justin Alexander

Deputy Fire Chief

Jonathan Carroll



Easton Fire Department

The Last Four Years FY23

- In FY23, the department operated with four shifts of nine firefighters each, though the original budget called for ten per shift.
- This was done to maintain operations amid a challenging hiring market and paramedic shortage
- Vacant salaries were converted to overtime funds
- While this model worked day-to-day, the heavy overtime burden took a toll on members
- Through discussions with union leadership, it became clear that a new staffing model was needed.



Easton Fire Department

The Last Four Years FY24

- A detailed budget analysis led to a revised staffing model
- By reallocating overtime funds, we implemented four shifts of eleven firefighters
- This was done without the need for additional funding by dropping Staffing to eight when members used time off, such as vacation time
- This model reduced burnout, stabilized costs, and improved overall morale and efficiency within the department



Easton Fire Department

The Last Four Years FY25

- With new equipment, the promise of new stations, and a strengthened staffing plan, Easton became a sought-after destination
- Several firefighters transferred from other communities to join our team
- For the first time in years, Easton Fire was seen as a model for mid-sized departments across the Commonwealth
- Morale and outlook were high.



Easton Fire Department

The Last Four Years FY25

- Despite modest budget cuts, the department remained stable and productive
- However, by midyear, it became clear that FY26 would bring serious financial challenges
- After a December retirement, a town directive froze hiring before we could reach our goal of 11 firefighters per shift.



Easton Fire Department

The Last Four Years FY25

- Initial FY26 projections were bleak, with potential layoffs on the horizon
- This news spread quickly, shaking morale and creating uncertainty among newer members who had just transferred to Easton
- These new members felt that their jobs were on the line and feared for their livelihood
- An announced retirement further ensured that no active firefighter would lose their job, but the damage was done



Easton Fire Department

The Last Four Years FY26

- The override failure accelerated departures
- Younger members saw the instability as a multi-year issue likely extending into FY27 and FY28
- Combined with retirements, long-term injuries, and promotions, we entered FY26 projected to be nine firefighters short
- Post override failure, the department quickly lost its morale and forward progress



Easton Fire Department

The Last Four Years FY26

- FY26 began with two positions cut and nine vacancies unfilled
- Forced overtime became the new norm
- Despite recruitment efforts, Easton's uncertain fiscal outlook made hiring nearly impossible in an already competitive market
- Easton is now faced with job openings we cannot fill, and firefighters are being overworked, which is a recipe for disaster



Easton Fire Department

The Last Four Years FY26

- By September 2025, another firefighter left, bringing our total vacancies to ten. This equates to 23% of the department being vacant
- With another significant budget cut expected in FY27, our options are Limited
- Although the town is considering another override attempt for FY27, July 2026 and the lack of certainty of success until then is too far away to address operational severity today
- We began exploring alternative, long-term solutions to stabilize operations



Easton Fire Department

The Last Four Years FY26

- Our firefighters are our most valuable asset
- We must ensure their safety and sustainability
- With current staffing, we cannot safely operate two ambulances and two engines while maintaining proper incident command
- After extensive analysis, we determined that the safest, most stable staffing model is to privatize ambulance transports to the hospital



Easton Fire Department Current Operational Model

Not Available



Easton Ambulance



Easton Ambulance



Easton Fire Department Private Ambulance Model

Eight Firefighters Working (All Assigned Firefighters Working)



Private Ambulance 1



Private Ambulance 2



Easton Fire Department Private Ambulance Model

Seven Firefighters Working (Minimum Staffing Level)



Private Ambulance 1



Private Ambulance 2



Easton Fire Department

Moving Forward

Late FY26 into FY27

- In the private ambulance model, our fire trucks will be more consistently and safely staffed than any other model tried to date
- The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), which provides the guidance on safe operations, calls for four firefighters per fire truck to be properly staffed
- Under this model, Easton will achieve
 - A fully staffed engine company and a staffed ladder truck
 - Lieutenants assigned to every apparatus
 - A dedicated command officer ensuring clear oversight and incident safety



Easton Fire Department

Moving Forward

Late FY26 into FY27

Residents will see no reduction in response times and may, in fact, experience improvements

- Easton Firefighter/Paramedics will continue responding to all medical emergencies
- EMS service will remain at the Advanced Life Support (ALS) level currently provided
- Two private ALS ambulances will be based in Easton and dedicated to Easton to ensure no reduction in ambulance availability to our residents
- Easton Firefighter/Paramedics will often be first on scene, delivering ALS care using fully medically equipped fire engines



Easton Fire Department Moving Forward Late FY26 into FY27

- Easton Firefighter/Paramedics will also assist private ambulances as needed to ensure the highest standard of patient care
- Fire protection will be improved by increasing the minimum number of firefighters available when both ambulances are out by 75-100%

This model balances operational stability, fiscal responsibility, and the continued delivery of exceptional emergency services during a very challenging time for Easton



Easton Fire Department

Moving Forward

Summary

- Not our first choice, but the only stable path forward given fiscal constraints and job market challenges
- Resident services will remain consistent, with no noticeable decrease in quality or response
- Firefighter safety, morale, and job stability will improve through predictable staffing
- Fire suppression capacity will be stronger, with more firefighters per apparatus
- ALS-level emergency medical care will continue to be delivered by Easton Firefighter/Paramedics.
- The Easton Fire Department will oversee the private ambulance service to ensure accountability and professionalism.



Easton Fire Department

2025 Special Town Meeting and Beyond

- Article five is a request for funds to assist with the transition to the private ambulance response model
- The funds will assist in providing a third-party implementation analysis to guide us during the transition, as well as provide public outreach related to the transition
- Additionally, the article will provide stabilization funds for the department to handle expenses related to the transition, and for unforeseen items that may arise
- As we approach the transition, more information will be provided to residents



Easton Fire Department

Thank You For Your Continued
Support!

Questions?