

Stoneham Override Study Committee

Date:	August 5, 2025
Time:	7p
Location:	Stoneham Town Hall Hearing Room
Present:	Joe Joffe – Chair Stephen Ternullo – Vice Chair Nick Stavre, Jackie Mahoney, Brendan Dowdle, Eric Scruggs, Cory Mashburn
Absent:	Heidi Bilbo
Guests:	Dennis Sheehan – Town Administrator, Matt Grafton – Stoneham Fire Department Chief

	<p><u>AGENDA</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approval of Minutes from previous meetings - Vote Required 2. Stoneham Fire Department Presentation and discussion 3. Structure of the Report – working groups for Writing 4. Upcoming meetings 5. Other business – Non-Deliberative 6. Adjournment - Vote Required

	<p>Public Comment Period</p> <p>Mr. Joffe opened the floor to public comment.</p>	<p>Mr. Ternullo then introduced a motion to close public comment; Mr. Stavre seconded; all in favor.</p>
1.	<p>Approval of Minutes from previous meeting - Vote Required</p> <p>The committee discussed and approved the 7/29 meeting minutes.</p>	<p>Mr. Stavre then introduced a motion to approve the meeting minutes as amended for the 7/29 meeting; Mr. Mashburn seconded; all in favor.</p>
2.	<p>Stoneham Fire Department Presentation and discussion</p> <p>Mr. Ternullo recused himself from this discussion as his son is a member of Stoneham Fire Department.</p>	<p>No votes needed</p>

Chief Grafton presented information about departmental staffing, demand for services, and budgetary data.

Some highlights were:

- Call volume has increased over 40% between 2000 and 2024 (from 3,087 to 4,344 alarms).
 - The 2024 calls resulted in 7,747 responses from the department, noting that 1 call can result in multiple companies responding.
 - While calls have increased, the size of the department has been relatively unchanged. In 2001, SFD had a complement of 39 including a Deputy Chief position and, in 2024, the department complement was 42.
- SFD's current minimum staffing is 8 firefighters per shift 76% of the year. In 2024, average staffing was 8.27 per shift; for comparison, average staffing in 1987 was 10.5 and, in 1990, it was 9.44.
 - National staffing standards would be 16 people responding to a fire in a 2,000 square foot home.
 - Stoneham does have access to mutual aid with certain calls to increase the number of firefighters responding.
- National staffing standards (NFPA 1710) would be 3 firefighters and 1 officer per company. Stoneham currently has 2 firefighters per company with no officer (exception is Engine-1).
- Comparing Stoneham to nearby communities, our budget, overtime, and staffing levels are near the bottom in each category despite our call volume being near the middle of the group.
- The Chief's goal would be to add 4 additional staff, promote 4 current roles to officer positions, and add 1 Deputy Chief to better oversee the department.
 - This would mean that we could move to a 9-person response on average vs the current 8-person response.
 - It currently takes 9 months to train a new hire.
- The Chief reviewed sample response time and staffing from a fire in 2024. SFD was able to respond rapidly and successfully rescued a trapped victim; however, this could be seen as a cautionary tale since there would not have been enough firefighters on the ladder truck if the victim had needed to be carried.
- The committee reviewed recent overtime spending vs budget along with the causes of overtime and the impact it can have on the staff of the department.
- There was a discussion of senior housing and fire prevention.
- The department does apply for staffing grants each year. Our most recent award was for 2018. This grant would help partially offset new hiring costs for the first three years.
- There was a review of the current fire station issues including inadequate space to store trucks and equipment and the need to pay for storage.
 - Stoneham is one of the only communities in the area that has 1 fire station.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Trucks cost \$1.2M+ and take approximately 4 years to get delivery, so keeping trucks well-maintained and properly stored is important. ○ Renovations of the current fire station are estimated to be \$30M, and adding a new substation would be \$20M. ● There was a discussion of potentially bringing EMS services in-house, including the challenges of doing this, the investments required, and the potential benefits. 	
<p>3.</p>	<p>Structure of the Report – working groups for Writing</p> <p>The committee discussed the overall structure of the report along with how to initiate the writing process.</p> <p>Some highlights were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The committee discussed breaking into smaller working groups to help write the report outside of full committee meetings. ● There was a conversation about writing summaries for each department. Mr. Joffe agreed to start by working on a departmental summary draft for the committee to review and use as a starting point. ● The committee discussed that the report would include space for dissenting opinions including on the question of whether there should be an override vote and regarding the amount of the potential override. 	<p>No votes needed</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Upcoming meetings</p> <p>The committee discussed agenda items, speakers, and topics for upcoming meetings.</p> <p>Some highlights were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The committee agreed to reach out to state elected officials that represent the citizens of Stoneham to have those officials present to the committee on state funding for the town and its departments. ● There was discussion of having conversations with the Planning Board at some point pending future meetings with the Assessor's Office and the Planning & Community Development Office. 	<p>Mr. Ternullo introduced a motion to reach out to our state Senator and Representative to invite them to present at a future committee meeting; Mr. Stavre seconded; all in favor.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Other business – Non-Deliberative</p>	<p>No votes needed</p>

6.	Adjournment - Vote Required	Mr. Mashburn then introduced a motion to adjourn; Mr. Ternullo seconded; all in favor.