

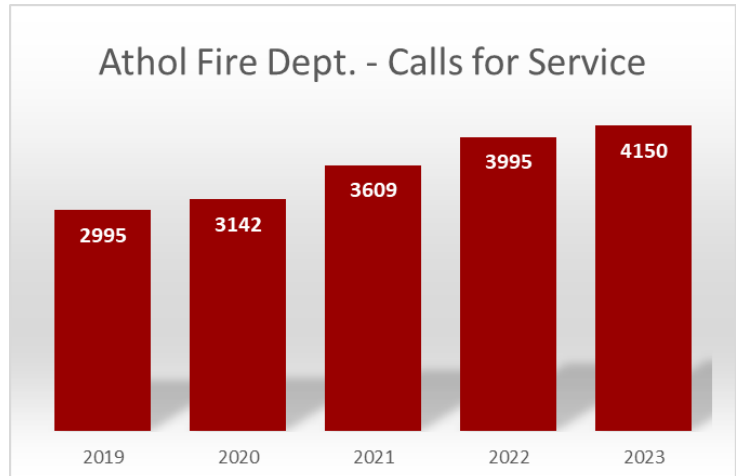
## Fire Department Staffing Increase: By the Numbers

### Athol EMS/ Fire Department Staffing Snapshot

- ✧ Fire department and advanced life support (ALS) ambulance service
- ✧ First-response staffed by 16 full-time firefighter/EMTs or firefighter/Paramedics
- ✧ Town provides 24/7 coverage through four duty shifts (four persons per shift)
- ✧ Supported by two ALS ambulance units and associated fire apparatus and equipment

### Growing Requests for Service Strain Staffing Model

- ✧ Athol's population and commercial base is growing
- ✧ Call volume grew to 3,995 in 2022 and to 4,150 in 2023
- ✧ Calls increased 38.6% since 2019; and 262% since 1980
- ✧ Staffing decreased 16.7% from 1988
- ✧ Avg. 15 calls/month missed by AFD for lack of staff or ambulance (2022 analysis)
- ✧ Insufficient staffing levels require more forced overtime and result in fewer personnel for call-backs



### Staffing Plan and Costs

- ✧ Although the eventual goal is to add eight full-time staff, the town has heard from voters that an override for that amount was unacceptable. A Fire Dept. Advisory Committee was formed and after review of all options, a plan was made to move forward with one staff built into the annual town budget and three additional staff to be paid for through an override.
- ✧ Increase staff by four full-time firefighter/EMT/Para (one additional staff per shift x (4) shifts)
- ✧ Total cost for this override is \$286,000, or funding for three full-time staff, together with an increase for one additional staff built into the fiscal 2025 budget from available funds
- ✧ Tax rate impact is \$0.22 per thousand valuation
- ✧ Avg. single-family home (SFH) valued at \$288,000 cost is \$62 a year or approximately \$5 per month.
- ✧ One-time transitional costs funded through transfer from free cash

### Outcomes and benefit

- ✧ Increase staff on each shift from four to five first-responders
- ✧ Maintain safety for the community by providing minimal necessary staffing of trained first-responders to maintain the current level of EMS / ambulance services
- ✧ Relieves stress currently impacting the department
- ✧ Improves availability of personnel to respond to multiple calls



### Next steps

- ✧ Multiple public information meetings, including the Athol Library on March 20 at 7 pm, Athol Senior Center Lunch group (TBA), brief overview at the Select Board meeting at Town Hall on March 19 at 7 pm, and an "Ask the Chief" at the Fire Station on March 25 at 6 pm.
- ✧ Vote is on April 1, 2024 as part of the annual town election. Polls are open from 10 am to 8 pm in Town Hall. If question passes, the additional staffing will be included as part of the annual Town budget to be presented for Town Meeting approval on June 10

**Questions encouraged:** Contact Fire Chief Joe Guarnera at [jguarnera@townofathol.org](mailto:jguarnera@townofathol.org) or Town Manager Shaun Suhoski at [ssuhoski@townofathol.org](mailto:ssuhoski@townofathol.org).