



RINDGE FIREFIGHTER'S ASSOCIATION
P.O. BOX 531 – RINDGE, NEW HAMPSHIRE – 03461

The Rindge Firefighter's Association, a 501(c)(3) organization, dedicated to supporting the members and families of the Rindge Fire Department, submits this letter to the Rindge Board of Selectmen following a unanimous vote at our July 8, 2025, meeting. This response is prompted by ongoing public misstatements made by Selectman Tom Coneys and aims to:

1. Advocate for the fire department and inform the public about its structure.
2. Defend the department's staffing model, which is based on call volume and response data.
3. Support members who have been misrepresented.

The spread of misinformation is both irresponsible and dangerous. Efforts to dismantle our current staffing model, which is already behind where it should be, will place lives, property, and the environment of Rindge at greater risk.

The Rindge Fire Department operates as a combination full-time/on-call department consisting of:

- One full-time Fire Chief (also the Emergency Management Director and Building Inspector)
- One full-time Deputy Chief of EMS (also the Building Department Administrator)
- One full-time Captain of Fire Prevention/Firefighter/EMT (a currently vacant position)
- One part-time Advanced EMT/Data Entry Clerk
- Several per-diem firefighter/EMTs
- Approximately fifteen on-call members

At the May 28, 2025 Board of Selectmen meeting, Selectman Tom Coneys made inaccurate claims regarding the Rindge Fire Department's staffing, alleging that three or more per diem personnel are "sitting in the station" daily, in addition to the Fire Chief, Deputy Chief of EMS, and full time firefighter/EMT. This statement is false. The department's actual staffing model is detailed at the end of this letter.

Daytime per-diem or full-time staffing is standard for towns of Rindge's size and call volume. Comparable departments in similar communities support this model. Despite this, Selectman Coneys has advocated for a rollback to a fully on-call department with only one full-time position—the Fire Chief. This would severely degrade service, put the town further out of compliance with NFPA 1720 standards, and jeopardize public safety.

In 2024, the department responded to 906 emergency calls, with 45% of those occurring between 6:00 AM and 6:00 PM—when nearly 100% of our on-call staff are unavailable due to other full-time employment. These changes would mean there is nearly a 50% chance that when you call 911 only one person from the Rindge Fire Department may show up, assuming they are not already tied up on another emergency, out of town for miscellaneous administrative duties or on vacation/sick/personal time off.

This proposed reduction in staffing comes amid declining on-call membership and rising demand. In 2015, the department answered 688 calls for service with thirty-one certified on-call members; in 2025, we anticipate over 900 calls for service for the fourth consecutive year, now with only seventeen on-call members. Increased workload with fewer personnel creates an elevated risk of burnout, decreased level of service and further attrition.

Selectman Coneys also proposed eliminating the full-time Deputy Chief of EMS and Building Department Administrator role, replacing it with a part-time position outside the fire department. This would weaken response capabilities and ignore the overlap in fire and building code responsibilities governed by the NH Fire Marshal's Office. As Selectman Cleveland correctly noted, this position is likely self-sustaining through department revenue—downgrading it would reduce income and harm the town.

With Fire Chief Rickard Donovan retiring on December 31 after 28 years of service, the Rindge Firefighter's Association urges the town to conduct a serious and competitive search for a qualified successor that is prepared to successfully lead our department and its growing needs into the future. While a local residency requirement, as requested by Selectman Coneys, is understandable, the town must offer a salary that makes living in Rindge feasible. As of December 2024, the average home price in Rindge was \$445,000 (Source: Zillow.com).

Finally, we are deeply concerned by Selectman Coneys' disrespectful and inaccurate characterizations of two highly respected female employees during the May 28, 2025, Board of Selectmen meeting. These women are the department's most and fourth most tenured members, with a combined 47 years of service. One was wrongly referred to as a "secretary," despite being an Advanced-EMT who also assists with wildland and exterior firefighting, data entry, inventory tracking, permits, CPR training, and key administrative tasks. The other was diminished as "just an EMT" with alleged "mobility issues," though she is a Senior Officer responsible for licensing, training, and emergency response, including command roles at a wide range of incidents.

Selectman Coneys' comments are not only inappropriate and inaccurate, but they also appear to violate the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), putting both the town and himself at risk of legal action. The responsibility to protect sensitive information about town employees is one that should be taken seriously by any Selectboard member. Selectman Coneys' irresponsible remarks suggest otherwise, and his statements are unbecoming of an elected official.

Rindge firefighters and EMT's respond to assist residents in their time of need 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, backing up why all our trucks have the slogan "Whenever the need" on them. We are a dedicated group of service minded community members who regularly leave our families at the dinner table, our beds at night, or our kids looking for mom and dad in the stands at their sports game to support the communities emergency response needs. We are now asking for the support of the Board of Selectmen and the community in return and invite all taxpayers to stand with us in support of our fire department and call for an end to the inaccurate information that is being spread about us during public meetings.

We, the undersigned members of the Rindge Firefighter's Association, support and respectfully submit this letter to the Rindge Board of Selectmen on July 16, 2025:

Joseph Bevilacqua	Secretary RFFA
Brittany Fahy	treasurer RFFA
Roger Seppala	VICE-President RFFA
Declan Fluharty	
Gabrielle Poole	
Bradley Roberts	
Brian Dillon	
Heley Hannon	
Homer Davis	President RFFA
Debra Douglas	
Jeremy Shaw	
Maurice Mahon	
Andy Leger	
Taylor Seppala	
Noah Spade	
David Cloutier	

Rindge Fire Department Staffing Model:

- Monday – Friday 6:00AM – 6:00PM: FT Fire Chief (4 - 10-hour days), FT Deputy Chief EMS/Building Department Administrator, FT FF/EMT, one (1) Per-Diem FF/EMT in station
- Monday – Friday 6:00PM – 6:00AM: On-Call staff responding from home
- Friday 6:00PM – Saturday 8:00AM: On Call staff responding from home
- Saturday 8:00AM – 6:00PM: Two (2) Per-Diem in station
- Saturday 6:00PM – Monday 6:00AM: On Call staff responding from home

Departments with Similar Population/Call Volume & their Staffing Models:

Jaffrey, NH

- Population 5,345
- 684 calls in 2024
- FT Chief, two (2) per diem 8:00am - 4:00pm Monday-Saturday

Ashburnham, MA

- Population 6,315
- 1,085 calls in 2024
- Full Time Deputy Chief, Full Time Lieutenant, 2-3 FF/Medic 24/7

New Boston, NH

- Population: 6,108
- 752 calls in 2024
- FT Chief, PT Asst Chief, Two (2) per diem 24/7

Loudon, NH

- Population: 5,656
- 1,020 calls in 2024
- FT Chief, FT Deputy Chief/Fire Inspector, FT Administrative Assistant, two (2) FT FF/EMT 24/7.

Kingston, NH

- Population 6,202
- 1114 calls in 2024
- FT Chief, two (2) FT FF/AEMT 24/7

Nottingham, NH

- Population 5,229
- 570 calls in 2024
- Two (2) FT FF/EMT 24/7