

# FIRE BOAT SET TO BECOME GILFORD'S

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By GAIL OBER, LACONIA DAILY SUN

GILFORD — Gilford may soon be patrolling the waters of Lake Winnepesaukee in a fire boat the the city of Portsmouth no longer needs.

Should the Portsmouth City Council give its blessing, a 30-foot fire boat they procured in 2006 with a with a Homeland Security grant will eliminate a major item from Gilford's Capital Improvement list.

Last week, Gilford selectmen were made aware of the potential gift of the fire boat from Portsmouth and Chief Steve Carrier said Monday the Gilford Fire Commissioners had authorized him to work with Portsmouth for the newer boat.

The city of Portsmouth cannot sell the boat because of Homeland Security grant restrictions.

"Our boat is 40 years old," said Carrier, adding it was on the department's 2017 CIP plan but he had to keep moving it out because of other needs.

The Portsmouth Herald reported the possible gift on April 15, noting that the boat did not meet the needs of the city and that it cost about \$50,000 annually in maintenance and training.

According to Carrier and Portsmouth Fire Chief Steve Achilles, the annual maintenance cost comes largely from the boat being in the salt water for the entire year and only coming out of the water for a two-week annual service.

Carrier said he spoke at length with the maintenance team who told him that this year there is \$12,000 in repairs — most of which involves zinc anodes, which according to a marine parts specialist John Irwin at Irwin Marine are corrosion protection for the metal parts on a boat. The rest is some work in a bearing on the jet drive. The work will be completed by Portsmouth before the town gets the boat.

With the boat coming out of the water for five months and being put in dry dock behind the Gilford Department of Public Works Department, neither Carrier nor Irwin felt the zinc anodes would continue to be the problem they are for salt-water-bound Portsmouth.

Carrier said this new fire boat has some features the existing boats do not have. For instance, it has an in-line fire pump that can pump at 1,750 gallons per minute while the boat Gilford uses now pumps at 500 gallons per minute. In addition, he said it has a jet drive and not a propeller and a significant swim platform on the back that means a person being rescued won't have to be pulled up and over the side of the hull.

It also has a larger heated cabin and a Flir navigation system.

"This boat was built for fire and EMS services," Carrier said, who said Gilford is called onto the water about 17 to 20 times a year.

When asked why he was giving up the fire boat, Achilles said that with the increasing presence of the U.S. Coast Guard and the New Hampshire Marine Patrol in Portsmouth Harbor, his department doesn't respond as frequently as it used to and most of the time one of those agencies is there when his boat arrives.

"It's incumbent for our department to look as how often we use a piece of equipment and whether it is appropriate

for our department to have it," Achilles said.

He said this boat is perfect for Lake Winnepesaukee and the people on the lake.

Carrier agreed, saying this offer from Portsmouth comes at a very good time in the town's CIP long-range planning and that it is a good boat for Gilford's needs.

Achilles said the Portsmouth Fire Commission already gave the OK to give the fire boat to Gilford. He said the City Council would vote on the gift at the April 18 meeting, and he sees no reason why the council wouldn't agree with the commission.

In a similar move, last week Gilford selectmen voted unanimously to give an obsolete "V" plow to the town of Seabrook. The plow was declared surplus and Public Works Director Peter Nourse said there were no bids for it.

Town Administrator Scott Dunn said Gilford took another old "V" plow and use it as a DPW sign. From what he's been told, Seabrook's plans are similar to Gilford's.



The Portsmouth Fire Department is looking to give its fire boat to the town of Gilford. (Courtesy photo by Rich Beauchesne/Seacoastonline)