



Fire Department

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Date: October 7, 2011

To: John Szerlag, City Manager

From: William S. Nelson, Fire Chief

Subject: Status of ICMA Recommendations

The following is a status report on the fire department efforts to implement the recommendations contained in the ICMA report.

1. Conduct community risk assessment and hazard analysis based on RHAVE model developed by Commission on Fire Accreditation International.

The department has acquired the software program from FEMA and is exploring the ability to integrate the software with the CLEMIS Fire Records Management System. Implementing the RHAVE program as a standalone application would require duplication of approximately 4000 structure records and considerable staff time for redundant data entry.

2. Implement lessons learned from nonprofit organizations in developing strategies to recruit and retain volunteers.

Staff has begun researching recruitment and retention strategies utilized by non-governmental organizations. The fire department, however, already maintains a five year average of 172.6 volunteer firefighters or 96% of its authorized number of volunteer firefighters.

3. Reorganize, starting with a three-tier command. There should be a chief, captains and lieutenants (or some similar titles), which would allow for more command at a similar price. It would also provide a transition for firefighters who move from volunteer ranks into the paid command with associated training and testing.

Over the past 4 years the fire career staff has transitioned from:

1 Chief

2 Division Assistant Chiefs

10 Staff Lieutenants

13 Total sworn staff

To

1 Chief

1 Division Assistant Chief

5 Staff Lieutenants

3 Fire staff Technicians

10 Total Sworn staff

We have eliminated 1 Division Assistant Chief position and 5 Staff Lieutenant positions and will continue to transition Staff Lieutenant positions to fire staff technician positions as we continue to evaluate the career staffing component of the fire department.

- 4. Chief Officers of the volunteers should be appointed, not elected. This avoids popularity contests that dilute management effectiveness.**

Assistant Chief Roberts and I have been meeting with the station Assistant Chiefs and Captains for the past three months to address this issue. To date we have validated the number and ranks of volunteer officers in the department, updated and revised the position descriptions for all station officers, created an officer selection process and methodology. Our objective is to have the program in place in January 2012.

- 5. Proposed cuts in the future come largely from prevention; research from outside the U.S. that is slowly finding its way into the U.S. Fire Service shows this is the last place that cuts should take place. Prevention efforts should be strengthened, using a multi-tier approach. The City should look at charges for inspections, particularly in the area of sprinkler systems, which are mandated by insurance companies and that can be provided as part of a regular program.**

The Fire Department currently charges for fire protection system permits which are issued for the installation or modification of sprinkler, fire alarm and similar systems. The department also charges for hazardous materials permits which are issued to businesses that use, produce or store hazardous materials and occupancy permits which are required for new business occupancies in the city. The Fire Department also charges fee for fireworks permits, special event permits, and fire alarm user registrations. The fees charged for these permits are reviewed periodically and reflect the costs incurred in processing, plan review, and inspections as well of administrative overhead required to manage the program. The department does not charge for routine fire inspections due to the variety of occupancies that are inspected as well as the difficulty in setting standard fees when the amount of time required per inspection may vary greatly.

- 6. The incentive program for volunteers should be amended to preclude lump sum payouts, which have swelled the annual contributions required from the City. The cost of this program is less than what the average fire department pays “volunteers” but, by allowing lump sums, the fund requires larger yearly payments to remain solvent.**

The City Manager and finance staff has met with the actuary staff to discuss the current impact of the lump sum payout option and its impact on the Incentive Plan fund. This item will be discussed further with the Incentive Committee that represents the volunteer firefighters.

- 7. Develop quantitative performance measures for all program areas that link goals to specific target rates or percentages.**

The department staff is reviewing the data currently collected in the CLEMIS Fire Records Management System and the reports available to determine the most efficient method of collecting and displaying performance data.