

CITY OF McMinnville  
MINUTES OF CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION  
of the McMinnville City Council  
Held at the Kent L. Taylor Civic Hall on Gormley Plaza  
McMinnville, Oregon

Wednesday, September 19, 2018 at 5:30 p.m.

Presiding: Scott Hill, Mayor

Recording Secretary: Erica Thomas, Administrative Specialist

Councilors:	<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>
	Adam Garvin	Remy Drabkin
	Kellie Menke, Council President	
	Sal Peralta	
	Wendy Stassens	
	Alan Ruden	

Also present were Finance Director Marcia Baragary, City Attorney David Koch, Fire Chief Rich Leipfert, Parks and Recreation Director Susan Muir.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Hill called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and welcomed all in attendance.
2. PRESENTATION: FIRE DEPARTMENT/AMBULANCE 101

Fire Chief Leipfert presented information on the Fire Department programs. The Department was responsible for fire and EMS/ambulance services and he gave a recent Fire Department history. The cost of service study in 1996 identified the budgetary split between ambulance and fire, the current budget allocated personnel costs according to this study, and the study identified the work load when there was 1 FTE per shift and all other positions were filled by volunteers. The Fire Department Strategic Plan in 2005-07 indicated there needed to be increased access to funding, the facilities needed to meet the changing needs of the community, staffing was not adequate for the workload requirements, daytime volunteer response needed improvement, and turnover was perceived as a detriment to organizational stability. Since then they had completed a community risk assessment and developed and adopted deployment standards. The long range fire station analysis done in 2007-08 indicated that cross staffing an engine reduced fire response time, there was no response time standard adopted, the volunteer engine response was overtaxed with call volume increases, two additional stations needed to be planned for, one in the northeast area of the City and one at the airport, and there was not enough staffing to address concurrent calls. They had adopted standards for risk assessment and response times in 2009. The response times were 6 minutes for urban areas, 7 minutes for suburban areas, 15 minutes for rural areas, and 30 minutes for frontier areas. The first alarm

standard was within 12 minutes there should be firefighters on scene in residential areas. For commercial areas the standard was 21 minutes. EMS response time standards were: 6 minutes for urban, 8 minutes for suburban, 15 minutes for rural, 15 minutes for rural incorporated, and 120 minutes for frontier. In 2009, the volunteer staffing of an engine had an average response time of 14 minutes. The swing staffing prior to staffing changes had an average response time of 9 minutes, and dedicated paid engine staffing had an average response time of 5 minutes. He then shared the history of the ambulance service and EMS challenges. In 2012, three options were considered to enhance EMS service delivery. They were: all EMS services would be provided by McMinnville Fire Department (MFD) staff, 9-1-1 advanced life support services would be provided by MFD staff and ambulance services would be contracted out, or EMS services would primarily be provided by contract ambulance services with MFD oversight. The Council made the decision to keep the EMS service and expand services internally and they rented Station 12, added an EMS Chief, and converted six part time employees to full time to staff a 24 hour ambulance. The improvements made since 2012 were in 2016-17 three staff members were added to reduce mandatory overtime, the Amity contract added a day car Monday to Friday, the Battalion Chief position was restructured, and in 2018-19 they added one 24 hour firefighter to cover vacancies and one full time admin to reduce afterhours work by operations staff.

Fire Chief Leipfert then discussed the Fire Department budget. Ambulance revenues covered approximately 52% of the operating costs. He compared the revenue percentage to other fire based EMS services and revenues for in City and out of City calls. For the fire only budget, costs were increasing due to the loss of ambulance revenue. General Fund allocation with ambulance was \$3,895,126 and without ambulance was \$5,013,352. An increase of \$1,118,026 was required to operate the Fire Department.

There was discussion regarding increasing the reimbursements by Medicaid for these services.

Fire Chief Leipfert gave an overview of daily staffing. There was 24 hour staff and eleven employees total per shift. Some of the challenges were employee retention, call volume increasing, mandatory overtime, paid and volunteer staffing, lack of additional stations, fire response times not met, and fire critical staffing not met. There had been 16 vacancies in the past four years and he discussed the costs per new employee which totaled \$77,643. There was also a risk with having so many employees on probation at one time and they all had to be trained in McMinnville's medical protocols. It was a two month time period to hire someone, and a three to four month time to get them trained. The overtime shift coverage for that vacancy was where the significant costs came from.

There was discussion regarding the costs for new employees, retention of current employees, work challenges, and funding sources.

Fire Chief Leipfert discussed overtime shift coverage and how most employees were working double shifts. The overtime was a big cause of the stress they were experiencing in the department. He discussed how the number of calls per year compared to the number of firefighters. The numbers showed that McMinnville had significantly fewer employees than other cities who were getting the same number of calls per year. He did not think the employee challenges were based on salaries, but had to do with the working conditions and workload. He then discussed options for the future which included partnerships with Newberg/Sheridan, Amity/Lafayette, and Dundee/Dayton/Carlton. Some of the partnership options would be IGAs that phased in service, functional consolidation, or creation of a new district. They would need to fund a consultant to assist in developing a consolidation road map and to bridge the gap to a successful district.

There was discussion regarding the process for creating a new district, the advantages of forming a district, and possible partnerships.

Fire Chief Leipfert would ask for the funding for a consultant in the next budget cycle, but it would take three to five years to go to a vote on a new district.

Councilor Peralta said in the meantime there needed to be a specialty business license for senior care facilities, charges for misuse of 9-1-1 calls, and partial Medicaid reimbursement. There was a possible Lafayette expansion and a consultant was needed to facilitate the process. Was there anything else that would help bridge the needs before going to the voters?

Fire Chief Leipfert said the employee retention challenges needed to be addressed. He needed additional revenue support to sustain the department until they got to the vote. He discussed the senior care home population in the City and how they created 37% of the department's call volume. The biggest challenge was that the management and nursing staff at these care homes had a high turnover rate and the information about how to properly use 9-1-1 did not get passed on to the new employees. The national average for a care home was one call per bed per year, and some of the care homes were running over three calls per bed per year. Care homes took advantage of City resources above and beyond other businesses and that was the reason for the specialty license.

Mayor Hill noted that there was a larger aging population in McMinnville that would also have an impact.

Councilor Peralta asked if Chief Leipfert could find out the tax rates for the comparable cities.

Councilor Garvin asked about the cost for a full time paramedic firefighter. Chief Leipfert responded the starting salary with wages and benefits was \$129,000.

Councilor Garvin asked what could be done to get better response times. Chief Leipfert said the primary fire apparatus was taken on EMS calls, which was required by State law, and when it was tied up on an EMS call it delayed the response to another call. Also they had one of the highest traffic corridors in the City and sometimes it was difficult to reach certain areas due to travel time from the station. He would like to have three substations, one in the north, one in the west, and one by the airport and he would not have one in the downtown core on the highest traffic corridor of the City.

Councilor Garvin asked if there was capacity to house more staff. Chief Leipfert said yes, as there were thirteen bunks per shift. There were assistant vehicles that could assist and support the ambulances instead of using a fire engine. They could still meet requirements by doing that. Alternate engines could also be deployed and it would take the primary engine off of EMS calls which could improve fire response. If they moved forward with the Lafayette expansion, there would be a substation with an engine available in the north end of town which would help improve response times as well.

Mayor Hill thought bringing in a consultant was a good idea to help the City through this process.

Councilor Ruden asked about looking into putting a surcharge on care facilities for ambulance service. Chief Leipfert said they were not allowed in Oregon for fire/EMS operational costs and charges. The specialty license and misuse fee were used in Oregon.

There was discussion regarding a possible levy and improving response times.

The Council thanked the Chief for the information.

3. ADJOURNMENT: Mayor Hill adjourned the Work Session of the City Council at 6:46 p.m.

s/s Melissa Grace  
Melissa Grace, City Recorder