

**Future of the  
Fire  
Department  
Committee  
Report  
on  
Department  
Staffing**



# Committee Members

- Ald. Dale Mayr (Chair)
- Melissa Bleidorn
- Kirsten Hildebrand
- Rick Lemke (Mequon Fire/EMS Association)
- Ald. Kathleen Schneider
- Lynn Streeter
- Deputy Chief Kurt Zellmann



# Committee Mission

The committee was charged by Mayor Wirth to examining ways to optimize the future viability of Mequon's paid-on-call fire and ambulance services.



Mequon has maintained a paid-on-call fire department with dedicated fire and ambulance personnel. However, considering the difficulties Mequon and many paid-on-call and volunteer departments have in attracting and retaining members, it is imperative to be proactive in planning for continued success.

# Summary of Committee Activities

14 months of meetings, discussion and study

- Studied existing documents
  - Matrix staffing study
  - Annual reports
- Researched available department related data
  - Response times
  - Pay structures
  - Demographics
- Conducted in person interviews & Toured MFD Stations
  - Interviewed command staff
  - Interviewed rank and file members



# Current Department Staffing Model

2 Full-time chiefs

Approximately 50 paid-on-call members

- Both community members and non-residents

6 members needed for EMS schedule (24/7)

- 2 first responders (East & West)
- 1 paid-on-premise paramedic at Station 2
- 1 paid-on-call EMT to respond to Station 2
- 2 paid-on-call EMT's to respond to Station 1

Available members respond to fire calls – **No schedule**

# Fire Department Staffing Issues

## Insufficient EMS and Fire staffing

- Unfilled shifts in the ambulance and first responder schedule

## Fragile system

- Small number of people taking majority of shifts

Summer 2019 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) temporarily raised pay as an attempt to fill empty shifts

Additional 2020 MOU temporarily raised weekend pay

# Are Challenges Unique to Mequon? NO!

**Nationwide  
shortage of  
volunteer  
firefighters and  
EMTs**

Changing nature of Fire departments to EMS  
Significantly increased call volume both day and night  
Increased initial training requirements & continuing education required  
Employers releasing employees to respond is no longer common  
Low, no or insufficient wages by Fire & EMS departments

**Mequon has  
added  
challenges**

Fewer residents in the 20-35-year-old age demographic  
Higher incomes correlate to more hours worked  
• Results in less time to volunteer  
High housing costs  
Readily available full and part time Fire & EMS jobs elsewhere

# Actionable Options Available to Council

## Maintain

Maintain The  
Status Quo

## Consolidate

Consolidate with  
other local  
departments

## Convert

Convert to a full-  
time all career  
staffed department

## Strengthen

Strengthen the  
current  
combination  
structure



# Maintain The Status Quo

- This is a very short-term do-nothing option
  - Currently suffering from uncovered/understaffed EMS shifts
  - Multiple uses of emergency MOU's as stop gaps to shore up staffing
- Long term the current structure is not seen as operationally viable
  - The organization is fragile
  - Too few people doing too much

# Consolidation With Other Departments

- City will continue to investigate
  - The Public Policy Forum is currently engaged
- Consolidation may have long term benefits
  - Fewer apparatus needed
  - Sharing of resources – Fleet Mechanics – Fire Inspectors
- Consolidation option has a long implementation time
  - This option will not solve current staffing problems

# Implementing a Full Time Fire Department

- Switching to a Full Time Department solves staffing problems
  - All responding personnel in stations will improve response times\* 1<sup>st</sup> call
  - City mandates responder work schedule and fully controls staffing
- A Full Time Fire Department comes at a significant cost
  - At minimum, this would be a \$2.5 million increase over current budget
  - Smaller group of initial responders / Only those currently on duty respond
  - Difficult to handle multiple calls
  - \*Increase in reliance on mutual aid for 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> calls – Long response times

# Strengthen Current Structure

*This is the recommendation of the citizen committee*

- **Strengthen the current department structure with three actions**
- Hiring three additional paramedic Deputy Chiefs
  - D.C. of Emergency Medical Services
  - D.C. of Training
  - D.C. of Community Risk Reduction
- Add one paid-on-premise EMT position to staff Station 1 continuously
- Permanently increase pay of members to current emergency MOU levels

# Three New Deputy Chiefs Provide

- 24-hour supervision of volunteer responders and results in
  - Improved support, direction and coordination of responders
  - Improved retention of current members & ability to seamlessly on-board new
- Consistently staffs the all the organizations operationally critical roles
  - EMS supervisor – Reports – Supplies – Ensures EMS operational readiness
  - Training supervisor – Coordinates all Fire and EMS training – On duty & Drills
  - Community risk reduction – Fire prevention and Inspection – EMS prevention

# Permanently Increase Member Pay

- **Make current Emergency MOU pay rates permanent**
  - Raises stand-by pay on weekends only to \$7 per hour from \$3
    - 2020 MOU
  - Raises P.O.C. compensation by \$10 per hour (when at an emergency)
    - Covid Hazard Pay MOU
  - Raises Paramedic P.O.P. compensation by \$10 per hour (continuous)
    - Covid Hazard Pay MOU
  - Weekday stand-by pay remains at \$3 per hour
- Implementing the current emergency pay increases will
  - Improve recruitment in the city and from surrounding areas
  - Provide greater incentive for retention of current members

# New Paid-On-Premise Position

- Staffing Station 1 with 1 P.O.P. EMT/Firefighter (24/7) will
  - Provide stable staffing coverage of the West half of the City
  - Provide a stable pay opportunity and incentive for current members
  - Improve recruiting by offering a stable pay opportunity out of town members
  - Improve Station 1 operational readiness & response times
  - Allow for scheduled completion of Station duties
  - Allow for expanded public service and access to Fire Department resources

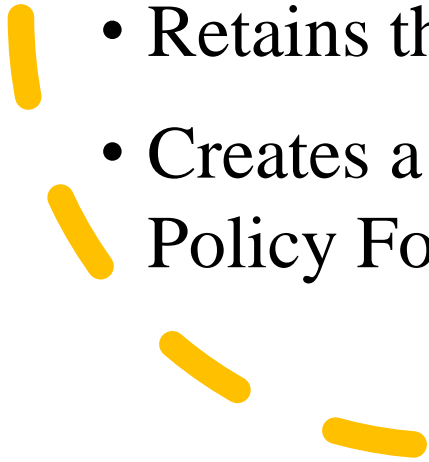
# Costs of Committees Recommendations

	<b>Chiefs</b>	<b>POP- Station 1</b>	<b>Pay Increase</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>3 Chiefs, Pay Increase, POP Station 1</b>	<b>\$360,000.00</b>	<b>\$ 79,012.00</b>	<b>\$311,820.00</b>	<b>\$750,832.00</b>
<b>2 Chiefs, Pay Increase, POP Station 1</b>	<b>\$240,000.00</b>	<b>\$ 79,012.00</b>	<b>\$311,820.00</b>	<b>\$630,832.00</b>
<b>3 Chiefs, Pay Increase, No POP Station 1</b>	<b>\$360,000.00</b>		<b>\$341,800.00</b>	<b>\$701,800.00</b>
<b>2 Chiefs, Pay Increase, No POP Station 1</b>	<b>\$240,000.00</b>		<b>\$341,800.00</b>	<b>\$581,800.00</b>





# Committee's Rational For Recommendation

- A full-time fire department may be inevitable long term
    - P.O.C. Staffing model is increasingly difficult to sustain
  - Budget conscious recommendation
    - \$750,000 budget increase vs \$2.5 M budget increase for full time department
  - Retains the current members and significant operational knowledge
  - Creates a viable interim solution to many current issues as the Public Policy Forum phase 1 joint Fire/EMT feasibility analysis progresses
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# Future Committee Reports Forthcoming

- The Future of the Fire Department Committee will continue to meet
- Will continue to analyze the long-term needs of the fire department
- The committee will issue a second report addressing
  - The state of the existing facilities
    - Fire Station 1 - 11300 N. Buntrock Ave
    - Fire Station 2 – 11800 N. Port Washington Rd
  - Fire Department Equipment & Apparatus

# Questions

