

AGENDA

**FORT SMITH BOARD OF DIRECTORS
STUDY SESSION
JANUARY 11, 2005 - 12:00 NOON
FORT SMITH PUBLIC LIBRARY
COMMUNITY ROOM**

1. Review Fire Department staff request for 2005
2. Review Parks Department staff request for 2005
3. Review preliminary agenda for January 18, 2005 regular meeting

M E M O R A N D U M

To: Ray Gosack, Deputy City Administrator
From: Jerry Tomlin, Fire Chief
Date: December 20, 2004
Subject: **ADDITIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF POSITION**

Ray, attached to this memo is information for you and the Board of Directors to review. It explains the Fire Department's reasons for requesting one additional staff position. The information will show this Department has been doing a lot with less for some time. Even with the additional staff position, we will still be under staffed compared to other cities. I am requesting that this additional position be allowed in the Budget for 2005 as presented.

Fort Smith Fire Department
200 North 5th Street
Fort Smith, AR 72901

Memo

To: Ray Gosack, Deputy City Administrator
From: Mike Richards, Battalion Chief
Date: December 19, 2004
Re: Additional Administrative Staff Position

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Fort Smith Fire Department is requesting one (1) additional administrative staff personnel to help support our growing responsibility to the public safety of our citizens and our firefighters. National and world events, along with the growth of our city, have required this department to expand and adopt new public safety roles to meet current threats and hazards. The productivity of the fire department in relation to current staffing and the adoption of these new roles has been excellent when compared to other cities surveyed in our region. However, many critical elements within the fire department are beginning to suffer due to the shortage of administrative personnel. We have reached a point that we have to choose which important tasks to be completed and which important tasks must wait. The result is an increasing health and safety issue to our fire personnel as well as a public safety concern to our citizens.

INTRODUCTION

In the last few years, and specifically since the September 11, 2001 tragedy, the Fort Smith Fire Department, like many fire departments across the United States, has undergone dramatic changes. This is due to numerous role changes the Department of Homeland Security has mandated to the local emergency responders and the evolution of the nation's fire service in general. These circumstances have created a serious need for additional staff to provide administrative support in all areas of this department. To date, these new responsibilities and programs have been implemented by our department without any additional staffing. We do not currently have an assistant or administrative chief to assist the fire chief in the operation of this department. The size and scope of this department, along with our new roles, have required the fire chief to delegate many administrative duties to other divisions within the fire department. Most of the additional administrative duties have been assigned to the training division of the fire department. Although the development and implementation of the new programs have been quite successful, they have not come without serious consequences. A substantial decrease in firefighter training in basic fire and emergency response operations has been the result due to the amount of time the staff in the training division has dedicated to these new roles. The importance of training cannot be overemphasized. A well-developed and exercised training program has the following benefits:

- Increased firefighter safety
- Enhanced public safety
- Reduction in property damage and dollar loss at incidents because of increased efficiency
- Increased environmental protection
- Better preparedness
- Familiarization of equipment

This department has also taken on a much greater role in the public safety of the citizens of Fort Smith within the last ten years. Some of the significant changes are:

- Increased our run volume from approximately 1500-1600 calls per year to approximately 7,000 in 2004.
- Improved our ISO rating from a Class 4 to a Class 2 saving property owners of Fort Smith hundreds of thousands of dollars each year in insurance premiums.
- Successfully applied for and received over \$1,000,000.00 in federal grants.
- Implemented the First Responder program and are now working with Fort Smith EMS in a new partnership.
- Taken on the responsibility of forming a Hazardous Materials Response Team that is responsible for responding to industrial, transportation, and terrorism events involving hazardous materials or weapons of mass destruction to not only Fort Smith, but also a six (6) county area in western Arkansas.
- Received accreditation from the Federal Bureau of Investigation as a recognized bomb squad to serve Fort Smith as well as the western Arkansas area.

These additional responsibilities are extremely important and must continue. However, they have put a tremendous burden on our ability to prepare for fire, rescue, and EMS response in Fort Smith.

The fire, rescue, and EMS field have also become much more technical. Technology is changing the way we do our job and the equipment we use daily. Constant research and training is required to keep up with these changing technologies.

NEW FIRE DEPARTMENT ROLES

Bomb Squad

The Fort Smith Fire Department has been recently accredited by the Federal Bureau of Investigation as a Bomb Squad. We were approached by the FBI to form a bomb squad to fill a serious void in coverage in western Arkansas. Fort Smith and the surrounding area currently rely on John Miller with the Arkansas State Police and/or the Springdale Police Department Bomb Squad to respond to any bomb related incident in our area. Mr. Miller lives in Greenwood and has been instrumental in bomb response coverage in our area. However, Mr. Miller has statewide responsibility and is likely to retire in the near future. Upon his retirement, it is likely that support from the Arkansas State Police bomb squad to our area would be dispatched from the Little Rock area.

After careful evaluation we determined our department had the necessary expertise and qualification within our personnel to form a bomb squad. There were several challenges we overcame to meet the high standards required by the FBI. The first requirement was to have administrative personnel from the Fort Smith Fire Department complete the FBI Executive Management course for bomb squads. Chief Richards and Chief Bigler have both completed this course. Upon the completion of this course we then went through a selection process to determine which fire department personnel would be selected to become certified bomb technicians. Four (4) Fort Smith Firefighters were selected to become the first members of our bomb squad team. Two of those, Skip Mathews and Keith Jones have since completed the FBI Hazardous Devices School in Huntsville, Alabama and have been nationally certified as bomb technicians.

We still have many challenges managing the bomb squad. To be an accredited bomb squad, we are required by the FBI to provide mutual aid upon request to any bomb incident within the state of Arkansas. Regular monthly training and yearly specialized training is mandatory. Funding will be one of our most difficult challenges. Before the formation of our bomb squad, the State of Arkansas, through the Arkansas Department of Emergency Management, awarded 1.2 million dollars each of Homeland Security grants to the then current four (4) bomb squads in Arkansas. We have also requested funding for our bomb squad from the state's share of Homeland Security grants but have been denied due to the state's plan to use all of the funding for the next three years in the Arkansas Wireless Information Network (AWIN) project. The AWIN project was created to design and deliver a single, reliable, shared-use wireless voice and data system that provides statewide coverage and interoperability to public safety and public service entities. However, there is considerable statewide opposition to the funding of the AWIN system and we are still lobbying for the release of funds to be used at our discretion.

Grant Writing

Since 2001, the fire department has applied for and received over \$1,000,000.00 in Homeland Security and Fire Act grants. Approximately \$700,000.00 of this money was a series of 100% grants used to purchase equipment for WMD and hazmat response. The purchase of this equipment has made a tremendous positive impact on the Fort Smith Fire Department's ability to respond to and mitigate WMD and hazmat incidents. Before the receipt of these grants, we mostly had old used equipment given to us by the Fort Chaffee Fire Department at the closure of the base. The new modernized equipment purchased from this grant money has given our department the capability to respond more effectively to most WMD and hazmat threats. However, more training is needed in the operation and maintenance of this new equipment.

We have also received over \$350,000.00 in Fire Act grants since 2001. With this money, we have purchased personal protective equipment for all of our firefighters and installed vehicle exhaust systems in each of our fire stations. This equipment has greatly improved the health and safety of our firefighters and helped our department comply with NFPA standards that would have otherwise been difficult to obtain.

The future of these particular grants is uncertain. Many outside sources are leveraging to get their share of this available money. There are also indications the total funding amounts will be lowered in the future. Because of this, we must work harder to effectively have a chance at any future grants.

Weapons of Mass Destruction and Hazmat Response

The national tragedy of September 11, 2001, has brought a real sense of urgency and many challenges to the local emergency responders across the nation. The Fort Smith Fire Department has accepted the challenge and has worked very hard to become capable to respond to these new threats. Prior to the attack on America on 9/11, very few local emergency responders, including our own, had sufficient knowledge and equipment to respond to WMD type incidents. Until that time, most WMD and terrorist incidents were handled on the federal level. The aftermath of 9/11 has changed the reality of the immediate response needs of the local community following such events. The actions of the local emergency responders immediately following these type events are critical in saving lives, protecting property, and protecting the environment. We have had to learn new skills and become educated about the very complicated nature of WMD.

To meet our local response needs, we have since formed a 43-member regional hazmat response team consisting solely of Fort Smith Firefighters. We have stepped up our training program in WMD and hazmat response by sponsoring many federally recognized programs in Fort Smith. Our firefighters regularly attend several specialized training programs given by the Office of Domestic Preparedness across the United States.

Meeting the needs of domestic preparedness has taken a toll on our ability to train and prepare for our everyday responsibilities. The training division has had to spend a considerable amount of time in WMD and hazmat training to bring our department to the current level of operation. The time needed for training in these areas will probably continue into the future to keep up with new threats as they develop. Meanwhile, we still need to train for our traditional services.

EMS

The new partnership with Fort Smith EMS has also brought on new responsibilities to the Fort Smith Fire Department. In order for all Fort Smith EMS personnel to meet national standards for incident command and hazmat awareness, they must each complete the required training classes for each of these courses. Our training staff has certified instructors and has agreed to hold classes for EMS personnel to help bring them up to national standards. The benefits of this training will help responders from both agencies work together, communicate with each other, and understand how the Incident Command System operates. By following the Incident Command System, Fort Smith EMS will improve their capabilities to assist other emergency responders in incidents involving casualties. Without additional staffing to relieve the training division of some of their outside responsibilities, the time required to train Fort Smith EMS personnel will further take away fire department training time.

National Incident Management System (NIMS)

The National Incident Management System (NIMS) is a federally mandated emergency management system scheduled to be in place by October 2005. This system requires that all government agencies implement one national emergency management system as outlined by the Office of Homeland Security. All municipalities will have to adopt and train all of their personnel in the NIMS system by the specified deadline. All federal funding related to Homeland Security grants, Fire Act grants, and possibly others, will be directly tied to each municipality's compliance. Those who do not comply will not be eligible for these federal grants. The training division of the fire department will be responsible for seeing that we are compliant by the October 2005 deadline.

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program educates people about disaster preparedness for hazards that may impact their area and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations. Using the training learned in the classroom and during exercises, CERT members can assist others in their neighborhood or workplace following an event when professional responders are not immediately available to help. CERT members also are encouraged to support emergency response agencies by taking a more active role in emergency preparedness projects in their community.

The Sebastian County Office of Emergency Management currently oversees this program in Sebastian County. The program is expanding and it is planned to be delivered to the Fort Smith School System and Arkansas Best Corporation employees in 2005. The Fort Smith Fire Department has been asked to help in the training of CERT personnel. It is important that we assist all government agencies in disaster preparedness for our citizens.

New Fire Station

A new fire station is scheduled to begin construction in southeast Fort Smith sometime in 2006. This station will provide coverage to Chaffee Crossing as well as areas in southeast Fort Smith that lie outside ISO mandated perimeters. Administrative personnel from the Fort Smith Fire Department will be taking an active role in the development of plans and construction of the new station.

TRAINING DIVISION ISSUES

Training Officer Requirements

These circumstances have resulted in the training division not being able to keep up with the necessary academic and practical training programs to ensure the proper training of our firefighters. The amount of time we have had to actually go into the field to observe or instruct fire ground, rescue, or other training has greatly diminished in the last few years.

It is the responsibility of the training division to train all 125 personnel in all aspects of fire, rescue, and EMS. This responsibility has been placed on a division that has only one (1) full-time and one (1) part-time Training Officer.

According to the *Fire Chief's Handbook*, a fire department with less than 400 personnel should have one (1) full time Training Officer for every fifty (50) firefighters on the job. At this ratio, it would require the Fort Smith Fire Department to have 2 ½ full time Training Officers. Although it would seem that we are only one (1) person short of the standard requirements, this is not the case. We use one person out of the training division to work as a shift supervisor when they are on vacation or sick leave (That is where the ½ comes from on this report). The training division should be tasked with mainly the duties related to training. Only when necessary should outside duties interrupt important training activities.

In Policy #6 of the Fort Smith Fire Department's Rule and Regulations, there are twelve (12) sections outlining the duties and responsibilities of the Training Officer. In referencing the *Fire Chief's Handbook*, we should have 2 ½ Training Officers to handle just these duties and responsibilities. However, these are some of the other duties that have been delegated to the training office in recent years.

Apparatus Specifications	Hazardous Materials Response Coordination
Uniform Appropriations	Grant Writing
Hydrant Testing/Maintenance	Response Guides/Districts
Health/Shot Record Tracking	Computer Technician/Training
Major Station Projects	Purchasing all Firefighting Equipment
Some Shift Work	I D's
Health and Safety Officer	Standard Operating Guidelines
Rules and Regulations Review	Station Safety (MSDS, Dept of Labor, etc)
NFPA Guideline Review	Higher Education
Apparatus Inventory	Equipment Repair (Breathing Apparatus, Cascade, Hose)
Hose Testing	Apparatus Testing
ISO Compliance	Safety Surveys (Scheduling & Completion)
Other Duties as Assigned	

Many of these assignments require a tremendous amount of research to ensure the quality of the completed task. Without thorough and complete research, the project is subject to safety concerns or cost ineffectiveness.

These duties are extremely important to the Fort Smith Fire Department and have to be done. This department could not function without the completion of these responsibilities. Since we have no one specifically assigned to oversee these tasks, they are mostly assigned to the training division. However, these duties take the Training Officers away from their primary responsibility of training our firefighters in a systematic and consistent manner.

Regional Fire Department Training Staffing

In surveying the eleven (11) regional fire departments the City of Fort Smith has used in comparison in the last few years, the following training divisions are staffed as follows:

FULL TIME TRAINING OFFICERS			
CITY	# OF TRAINING OFFICERS	# OF PERSONNEL	RATIO
Edmond, OK	3	96	32 to 1
North Little Rock	4	148	37 to 1
Fayetteville, AR	2	80	40 to 1
Norman, OK	3	131	44 to 1
Broken Arrow, OK	2	100	50 to 1
Springfield, MO	3	190	63 to 1
Hot Springs, AR	1	76	76 to 1
Oklahoma City *	13	1000	77 to 1*
Little Rock*	5	391	78 to 1*
Tulsa, OK*	9	700	78 to 1*
Shreveport, LA*	7	550	79 to 1*
Fort Smith	1 ½	125	83 to 1
* According to the <i>Fire Chief's Handbook</i> , the acceptable ratio of departments with over 400 personnel is 75 to 1. Little Rock was within the acceptable range to be considered a large department.			

The Fort Smith Fire Department ranks last in Training Officer-to-Firefighter ratio in department training. The addition of the other responsibilities and tasks compounds the difficulties in trying to accomplish our training goals. Even if the training division is relieved of the shift responsibilities, our training officer to firefighter ratio will still be 63 to 1, which ranks FSFD tied for next to last place with Springfield, MO., for fire departments with less than 400 firefighters. And with the addition of up to 10 personnel when the Chaffee area begins to develop in the near future, our ratio would be 90 to 1 for 1 ½ Training Officers or 68 to 1 for 2 full time Training Officers. This is well beyond the recommended average of Training Officer-to-Firefighter ratio.

The Fort Smith Fire Department does follow NFPA 1201, Chapter 8-6, regarding the responsibility of the company officers to conduct the ongoing, in-service training of company members. However, this does not change the training division's position in the overall program. We still need to increase our capability to design and implement training programs so our company officers can continue this training with department wide consistency needed for the overall efficiency and safety of our firefighters and the public. It is imperative we have more contact with our firefighters to train them on modern techniques.

CONCLUSION

We respectfully request the addition of one administrative staff position to the Fort Smith Fire Department. We believe this position is extremely important in our efforts to carry out our mission statement, maintain response preparedness, and enhance employee safety. It is also our responsibility to note that additional staffing may be necessary in the future. Even with the approval of this new administrative staff position the training division will still be below the recommended Training Officer-to-Firefighter ratio needed to meet our high standards.

The City of Fort Smith will continue to experience new growth in the next few years. With the growth of our city our responsibilities grow each day. The emergency services we provide will be extremely important to the quality of this growth. The health and safety of the citizens of Fort Smith and our firefighters depend on our ability to provide the very best in preparedness to any emergency that may occur.



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Memo:

January 5, 2005

To: Bill Harding, City Administrator
From: Mike Alsup, Parks and Recreation Director
Re: Staff request

Mike Alsup

The 2005 Budget includes two Full Time Equivalent positions; one in Park Maintenance and the other in Riverfront/Downtown Maintenance. The Department's request included one full time Maintenance Person position that was not funded.

The benefits of implementing the Turf Management Program are improved park and median appearance and maintenance. The staff will be divided into three teams each responsible for a set of parks and medians. With this plan, the parks should be mowed almost weekly with more time spent in each park to make repairs. Each crew will take pride in the parks they are assigned.

Park property, roadways, and medians are added to the Department's responsibilities each year. In 2005 the Riverfront Trail will open creating a minimum of three miles of mowing. Martin Luther King Jr. Park has been enlarged adding several acres. The improved downtown truck route and the Zero Street and Highway 71 median will become the Department's responsibility. These are some of the additions.

The appearance of the parks is an important component in improving the quality of life for our community. In order to keep up with the growing demand for the parks, additional staffing is required.

The attached proposal gives additional information about the plan. I recommend the Board of Directors approve the request.

Please contact me if you have any questions regarding this matter.

City of Fort Smith
Parks and Recreation Department
Staffing Proposal, 2005

Turf Management:

Request: 1 full-time Maintenance Person
1 FTE Seasonal Laborer, two seasonal laborers

A good turf management program includes mowing, fertilization, weed control, irrigation, overseeding, aeration, and erosion control.

Currently it takes seven to ten working days to mow all of the parks and medians. A good turf management plan cannot be accomplished without weekly mowing. The other components of the plan will increase the growth of the turf requiring more care.

The mowing crews will be divided into three teams. Each team will include one full-time Maintenance Person to mow and lead the team; one seasonal employee to mow; and three seasonal laborers to weed eat. This will give us six employees mowing; currently there are four. Currently the weed eater crew works independent of the mower crew. With this plan, parks and medians will be completed in the same day.

Currently we have four full-time staff that mow the majority of the parks and medians, and four seasonal staff that trim. Two of the full-time staff are classified as Equipment Operators the other two as Maintenance Persons.

The two Equipment Operators are capable of performing many tasks that are either contracted out or not done at this time. Some of the projects they could perform are the installation of playground equipment and picnic shelters; preparing sites for parking lots and basketball courts, performing erosion control measures, and making repairs. My recommendation for these employees is to reassign them from mowing duties to equipment operation duties.

Riverfront Park:

Request: 1 FTE, two seasonal laborers

Currently .5 FTE, one seasonal laborer is provided to the Riverfront Maintenance through the Parks Maintenance budget. All of the seasonal laborers are needed for park maintenance.

Two seasonal laborers are needed to work with the two full-time Maintenance Workers. This crew maintains Riverfront Park, Harry E. Kelley Park, Cisterna Park, Ross Pendergraft Park, and the Darby Community Center property. These are high profile parks with many flower beds requiring extra care to maintain them at the expected level. They will also maintain the Riverfront West trail (1.5 miles) when it is completed this year.