



Fire Advisory Subcommittee
Meeting Minutes
July 11, 2023
4:00 PM

Roll Call of Attendees

The meeting was called to order by Fire Chief Mike Heiland at 4pm. Please note members in attendance:

Long Lake

Scott Weske
Mike Heiland
Charlie Miner
Jahn Dyvik

Orono

Richard Crosby
Ron Olson
Maria Veach
James VanEyll (arrived partway through.)

Medina

Jason Nelson
Scott Johnson

Minnetonka Beach

Jennifer Halverson

[Audio Recording Link](#)

Copy and Paste in Browser if link doesn't work

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Topics

2023 Budget Report as of June 30, 2023

Fire Chief Heiland stated that all in all the Department is in pretty good shape with just a few places of concern, such as worker's compensation, professional services, and auditing, but noted that those items had been paid in full for the year. He referenced the 'cost of doing business' these days with elevated medical expenses because they are going on more calls and using more supplies. He noted that for the first six months of the year, the call volume is up about 16%. He referenced the line item for turn out gear and explained that they bought 6 new sets for the year and came partially from Station #1 budget and partially out of the Station #2 budget. He referenced fund 3280 for pagers and radios and explained that for the new automated system, they needed to have a 5 channel pager which they did not have, so they had to purchase about 20 new pagers. He noted that they were able to sell their old ones to an outlying fire department to help offset some of the costs. He mentioned line item 3350 for conferences, but noted that since he was new, he would need someone else to explain the details for this item.

Weske noted that he can double check if that indicated that it was already purchased or if it was just planning for conferences that they will be going to.

Ms. Veach asked if it could have anything to do with the blue card training change now that it isn't in house anymore.

Weske explained that it would not be that and noted that it is more likely to be travel to the conference up in Duluth.

Fire Chief Heiland reiterated that he was not sure where the number came from.

Weske reiterated that he would double check and asked if the Department had sent anyone to FDIC.

Fire Chief Heiland stated that they had not sent anyone for FDIC. He noted the light truck maintenance and repair line item and stated that the vehicles have had a lot of work done on them this year, but believes that they have gotten through the issues with them.

Mr. Miner stated that when the Orono Public Works does this type of work he asked if it was charged at an hourly rate.

Weske confirmed that this was accurate.

Fire Chief Heiland highlighted the natural gas expense that was bumped up for 2024.

Ms. Veach asked for details regarding this expense.

Weske explained that it was for heating the building.

Fire Chief Heiland stated that, just like during Covid, the price for heating and cooling of homes went through the roof and the same has happened for the stations.

Mr. Olson noted that both Excel and Centerpoint both have increases proposed in front of the PUC. He stated that they could also be using more natural gas, but suspects it is just related to an increase in fees.

Ms. Veach asked if there were programmable thermostats or things like motion sensors for light.

Weske clarified that this line item was only related to heating/cooling.

Fire Chief Heiland clarified that the thermostats are programmable.

Mr. Crosby asked what percentage was used as a proposed increase because it appears to be a fairly large jump.

Weske explained that he had increased the budgeted expense by 30% for 2024.

Mr. Crosby stated that he thinks that is too much and recommended that they increase this amount by 8-10%.

Weske stated that 2022 was over budget by quite a bit, so he can go back and take a look at 2022, 2023 and the projection for 2024 and then adjust accordingly.

Ms. Veach asked if usage had remained the same.

Weske stated that the increase was definitely related to the rates and explained that in 2020 they put a Covid fee in, then added another percentage increase, and then did an additional

percentage increase. He stated that he believes that they have raised the rates by about 22% over the last 3 years. He noted that he could pull the bills and see how many therms they have used per month to see if the usage had changed significantly.

Mr. Olson asked why there were two different med supply lines in the budget.

Fire Chief Heiland stated that they are broken out by stations along with turn out gear and pagers/radios.

Ms. Veach asked how much was recovered from the sale of the old pagers/radios.

Weske stated that he does not yet have a dollar amount but believes that they got about \$100/unit, so it should be around \$2,000, but explained that he had not gotten the final confirmation.

Mr. Dyvik asked how many more calls they had gotten, to date, as compared to last year.

Weske stated that the number of calls is 16% higher than it was last year at this time and noted that last year was the highest it had been for about 10 years prior.

Mr. Dyvik asked if it was medical or fire calls that were causing this increase.

Fire Chief Heiland stated that he believes they are medical, but doesn't know if it can be attributed to the aging population. He stated that many of the medical calls are able to be handled by the police and noted that he does not get called to as many as he did when he worked for the Excelsior Fire District. He stated that if you look at the data, it is very clear that the increase in calls are related to medical calls as opposed to fire.

Mr. Crosby asked about the auto starts.

Weske asked if he was referring to things that the Fire Department has to do to such as hearts, baby, and anything that is time sensitive.

Ms. Veach asked if the auto-starts had changed over the last year.

Fire Chief Heiland stated that he had not changed anything since he came on board.

Weske stated that he did not think anything had changed in auto-starts. He stated that for a long time they were doing a lot more things like lift assists, but believes that police have stepped up and been able to handle more of those type of calls. He noted that he believes the list assist shift happened back around 2019 and reiterated that nothing had changed in the last year.

Mr. Miner noted that many of the medical calls come from senior living facilities.

Ms. Veach noted that she thought something had changed where the senior living facilities were required to have personnel on site and they could not just call 911.

Mr. Dyvik asked how the cities could see if those facilities are complying with that requirement.

Weske clarified that he did not think it was actually a 'requirement' and was more of an unwritten rule.

Mr. Miner stated that he knows some cities have created ordinances, but does not think that had been done locally.

Mr. Crosby stated that those facilities are basically pushing an expense off onto the fire and police departments.

Ms. Veach suggested that perhaps they can charge a fee after a certain number of calls.

Mr. Johnson stated that in Medina they looked into this issue. He stated that he pulled all the data from their facilities and found that certain facilities were understaffed or were transitional facilities.

Ms. Veach stated that she felt that they were using this as a loophole and believes the cities may need to step in.

Mr. Johnson explained that they had stepped in, but have found that there are staffing issues, for example, one week the facility is fine and the next week, 5 people call in sick so they need to make those 911 calls again.

Mr. Crosby suggested that there be a certain number allowed per facility for each month. He stated that sometimes the patients are too big for staff to safely pick up and they need additional manpower. He gave the example of giving each facility 1-2 calls per month and if they surpass that amount then it becomes a billing opportunity.

Ms. Veach asked if that was something this group does or if they stuck to budgets and not policy.

Mr. Olson stated that he thinks this is something that each city would have to do on their own.

Mr. Dyvik asked about a situation where someone is at home where there are multiple medical type calls. He asked if the idea would be to start charging in those situations as well.

Mr. Miner stated that would be difficult.

Mr. Crosby stated that he believes it would just be done for care facilities and not the general public.

Mr. Johnson stated that when he talked to the facility managers in Medina, they in turn looked into their staffing situation. He stated that they found that certain staff members would call because they were uncomfortable, even if there were other staff members that could help. He stated that just by making those phone calls and having those conversations, they have been able to decrease those types of calls for service because they have been able to handle them in-house. He noted that he had threatened that they may need to begin charging for this assistance.

Mr. Miner stated that it may be a staffing or training issue and noted that he liked the idea of looking into having some of those conversations with the facilities, especially for the ones that have a higher call volumes.

Implementing Duty Crews – August 1, 2023

Fire Chief Heiland stated that the Department was planning on implementing duty crews beginning August 1, 2023. He explained that they will implement duty crews Monday through Friday, in two shifts – one in the morning and one in the afternoon. He noted that this is just the starting point and may take a while to grow because it is also a huge culture shift on the Department. He stated that they will ease into the duty crew model but noted that the shifts are starting to fill up already. He explained that they discussed it at the business meeting last night and noted that he thinks a majority of the firefighters are excited about it.

Mr. Johnson asked what the plan was if the firefighters do not sign up for these shifts.

Fire Chief Heiland explained that was why they were planning to ease into it and noted that even if they only have one person sign up, that is still one person that is already at the station, which means they can get a truck out faster.

Mr. Miner asked if there were plans to force them to sign up for the duty crew shifts.

Fire Chief Heiland stated that right now it is completely volunteer based

Ms. Veach asked about the purpose of duty crews, where the idea had come from, and why it was being done right now.

Mr. Crosby stated that he would also like to know what data was used to implement a duty crew at Station #1.

Fire Chief Heiland stated that for Station #1, they figured that since he was already there, it meant that they would already have one other crew member there, which would be an inexpensive way to form a crew. He stated that the Department has been proposing to move to a duty crew model since as early as 2018. He stated that it was proposed again in 2019 and 2020. He noted that at his interview, that was one of the things he was asked about because he had started the duty crew program in the Excelsior Fire District which took a few years to develop. He stated that one thing a duty crew can do is give the people who live in the outlying areas the opportunity to come in and work on the crews so they can have more 'at bats' and the opportunity for more cross training. He stated that, in the long run, he feels it will be better for everybody and noted that he had been having conversations with the neighboring departments who are also very excited about this program. He stated that all the fire departments in the metro area are trending towards a duty crew model.

Ms. Veach asked why the Department had not moved ahead with a duty crew in 2018, 2019, or 2020.

Weske explained that in 2018 they had a bit of change in their membership and noted that Station #1 had a lot more than Station #2 so they had to start going to 'all calls' so both were going to every type of call. He noted that in 2019 the duty crew model was presented and included a part-time admin, full-time fire inspector training officer, and the duty crew. He explained that he found this information in the presentation that was given by former Chief Van Eyll at that time, and noted that it was not included in today's packet. He reviewed details from the presentation from 2019 and outlined the monetary proposal for a cost of \$320,000 for the personnel, duty crews, and the uniform allowance. He explained that the cost just for the duty crew that was presented in 2019 was \$208,000. He noted that he can make copies of this presentation for anyone on the Fire Advisory Board that would like to see it. He explained that this had been presented to the Orono City Council and the minutes show that the council had

approved changing the 2.5 LDH on the valves to a 3 valve and redoing the door access. He stated that all of those items were supported, but council and staff at the time suggested that they thought current staff was able to handle the duty crew situation with Orono staffing. He stated that the wording in the minutes was, 'Walsh and staff agree in regard to considering the improvements for the security system, values, and uniforms. Walsh would prefer staff and the fire chief explore what more city could do to support some of these things with the resources we currently have.'

Mr. Crosby asked when those minutes were from.

Weske stated that this meeting was held on July 22, 2019.

Mr. Miner stated that was the proposal for Navarre to see if the business owners from Navarre would allow their employees to become firefighters.

Ms. Veach asked if anybody was against the idea of duty crews.

Mr. Miner stated that Orono was against the idea of duty crews.

Weske explained that it never went past approval because of Orono having the 85% control.

Ms. Veach stated that minutes said 'explore' options, but did not say 'no'.

Weske stated that it said to explore options of resources they currently had, which was done. He stated that he believes that was when Mr. Miner and Mr. Walsh went and knocked on doors in Navarre.

Mr. Miner noted that was just a proposal that never came to fruition.

Mr. Dyvik asked how the cost for a duty crew would have been \$208,000 at that time.

Weske explained that former Chief Van Eyll was proposing to pay the firefighters \$25/hour rather than a shift stipend which is what is being proposed now. He stated that in 2020, Covid happened, which changed all the momentum moving forward. He explained that they had to do separate shift work in order to keep exposures at a minimum and once the restrictions were lifted, they moved back to status quo in 2021.

Ms. Veach stated that he had said 'had to' and asked if the State had mandated it or if it was a choice made by the Department.

Weske explained that was done by former Chief Van Eyll and was related to the Department of Health and CDC.

Ms. Crosby stated that he thinks everyone got together and tried to figure out the best solution to keep opportunities for cross contamination at a minimum. He stated that the police department for example, work 15 days on and 15 days off and kept the teams completely separate.

Weske stated that the shift work ended up working well and explained that how they are back to what it was prior to 2020 with status quo of 'all calls'.

Mr. Dyvik stated that the duty crew model now was being presented with a lower budget amount as well.

Fire Chief Heiland explained that each 4 hour shift would have a \$50 stipend, plus 2 call credit points. He stated that a probationary firefighter would be paid \$25 for a 4 hour shift. He noted that they have also encouraged the people that work from home to come down to the station and work from there, and they would also pay them \$25 per shift and would also get 2 calls credits also.

Ms. Veach asked if that meant that somebody scrolling social media while sitting at the station would be getting \$50 and someone sitting there doing work for their career would get a \$25 stipend.

Fire Chief Heiland clarified that they would not be scrolling social media and would be doing fire department business such as checking knox boxes and other duties.

Weske noted that there may be work they can do for additional pre-plans for businesses, for example, knowing where the entrances/exits, knox box locations, and inspections.

Ms. Veach asked if that meant the firefighters would not actually be at the station and would be doing walk-throughs at area businesses.

Fire Chief Heiland stated that they would be in their trucks in the community.

Ms. Veach expressed concern about a scenario when they would be at a business on one side of the community and would need to go to a call on the other side of the community.

Weske stated that the Station #2 duty crew would not be over at Station #1, and would be located in their own area. He explained that there would be two people on each duty crew and the calls would be separated again and not be 'all calls'.

Fire Chief Heiland explained that one of the first things he wants to take care of on the duty crews was to go out to the knox boxes because they have not been gone through in a long time. He stated that he wants to make sure that they are all gone through and that all the keys are sorted out correctly, so they will not have to smash doors open if they need to respond to a call.

Ms. Veach gave the example of Fire Chief Heiland and one other person being located at Station #1 and they go to Woodhill which has a maze of a parking lot to go do a walk-through. She asked how response times from Station #1 would improve.

Mr. Miner noted that it would be like a police officer on patrol being in the right place at the right time. He stated that they will also be out in the community and be mobile.

Ms. Veach asked if they would be tracking this right away and saying that response times are impacted by this service. She asked what kind of metrics they were setting up to ensure that this is doing the right thing. She agreed that it might work out, but it may not and asked if they had plans to measure it.

Fire Chief Heiland explained that he had done this for years and it works fantastic.

Mr. Miner stated that he does think that the Department can measure this including taking a look at call times before and after.

Mr. Crosby stated that he did not think the Station #1 area was as much of a concern as Station #2.

Weske stated that this goes back a bit to the lift assist conversation and whether they need 20 guys showing up at the station for that kind of call. He stated that with this duty crew model, it would save 18 firefighters at \$15/hour from having to show up at the station for those kinds of calls. He stated that having two firefighters that are able to go into service almost immediately will help for whatever is happening.

Fire Chief Heiland explained that it was the difference between laying on the couch eating a bag of chips when the page comes in and already having two guys in the vehicle ready to go which will make a huge difference.

Ms. Veach asked how many needed to respond to a call.

Fire Chief Heiland stated that for a medical call, a two person crew.

Ms. Veach asked if the idea was to roll with two now and explained that she thought it was the most senior officers choice.

Fire Chief Heiland reiterated that this is something they are working towards and this will not change on day 1. He stated that in Excelsior they ran with crews of 2 for years and never looked back. He reiterated that he has experience with this and it has worked fantastic.

Ms. Veach stated that her questions were more on the timeline in order to get things buttoned up and asked how the Department was going to 'roll'.

Fire Chief Heiland explained that was something that would need to evolve and noted that it was not something that he could say that in 6 months that they will be ready. He stated that each crew will need to have a driver and an officer which is why they will be working on cross training in order to get everybody at least checked off on being able to drive the light trucks. He stated that if they have fire crews during this time, they will wait for the other people to show up in order to take an engine.

Ms. Veach asked how much that would be in training costs because they just talked about the training budget amounts were already way over.

Fire Chief Heiland stated that was not the training budget and was the conference budget. He explained that training the drivers was just another part of their regular training and done in-house. He explained that there were Fire Apparatus Officers and Engineers that have different qualifications.

Mr. Dyvik stated that he thought the Excelsior Fire District Chief had said that they had a goal of reducing the number of responders so there were not 15 guys showing up a medical call when they aren't actually needed. He stated that he did not think the Department was going to limit that right away.

Fire Chief Heiland asked if the Department had switched to 'all calls' during the day at the beginning of Covid.

Weske stated that they went to 'all calls' in 2018 and clarified that Covid was when they started running the shift duty work.

Fire Chief Heiland gave the example of having a 2 person crew at Station #2 and a call came in at Casco Point. He explained that there would be no need to page out Station #1 but reiterated that this would not happen right away.

Mr. Dyvik stated that once they start seeing how this goes they will be able to start seeing efficiencies. He stated that they will be paying for the duty crews, but will probably be paying less for the paid on-call hours because they will not need as many all calls.

Fire Chief Heiland stated that was correct because, right now, if there is a call on Casco Point, both stations get paged out and filled during the day.

Mr. Crosby asked about the \$25 stipend and 2 credits for somebody who is working from home, but doing it at the station. He asked if that had also been done in Excelsior.

Fire Chief Heiland stated that they did and even included overnight and other shifts at Excelsior also. He stated that they actually had work stations for people to be able to work from the station while on duty crew. He stated that they encouraged those people that worked at home to come down to the station and do it from there.

Mr. Crosby stated that he can see how this would be a benefit to the public but wonders about things like the IRS and other regulations about letting someone have an office that you are not charging them for and asked if those types of things ever arose in Excelsior.

Fire Chief Heiland stated that it did not and noted that there is a line for a number of shifts before they cross over into being considered a regular employee as opposed to a stipend. He stated that they will have to limit this a bit and keep an eye on the hours, but other than that, it is wide open.

Mr. Crosby stated that he thought he heard that Plymouth had run into problems with the 2 credits that they were giving out for duty crews because they could get enough credits to meet their obligation and then would not have to show up for fire calls.

Fire Chief Heiland stated that the drill percentage requirements are different than the call percentage requirements. He stated that right now they require 30% of the calls and explained that it was never a problem with the Excelsior Department. He stated that he can see where it could potentially be a problem and agreed that it would need to be closely monitored.

Ms. Veach stated that if 100% of people were at their call percentage she asked why they wouldn't just pay and if a call comes then they get credit. She asked why the idea would be to do both things right away.

Mr. Dyvik stated that he thinks it will serve as an incentive.

Ms. Veach stated that there may be enough buy-in without it. She stated that in 2019 they were told to 'explore more options' and now they have essentially cut the budget in half by exploring

more options and explained that she did not understand why they would just start at the top again. She asked why they couldn't just try her idea and see what happens first.

Fire Chief Heiland stated that he believes that they will just have to let things unfold for a while and if it does become an issue, with the points, then they can make an adjustment.

Mr. Miner stated that this cost is still significantly less than what the proposal was in 2019.

Fire Chief Heiland noted that it may take a few years to fully flesh out the duty crew and noted that people would not be penalized if there is a duty crew during the day because they can still respond to calls.

Weske stated that there are a handful of people that live so close to the station that they end up getting 100% of the calls.

Ms. Veach noted that they still get call credit even if you never make truck, so it does not matter how close they live to the station. She stated that if someone reports 30 minutes later, they still get call credit.

Fire Chief Heiland explained that he believes Mr. Weske was saying that there are people who live close that make trucks a lot.

Ms. Veach stated that she would like to be more creative and not just start at the top including the call credits.

Mr. Dyvik asked what percentage of the time of the duty crew would be spent at the station versus doing the commercial business site visits.

Fire Chief Heiland stated that he would like the firefighters to also have the opportunity to work out and eat, but the rest of the time he would like to have them out in the field.

Mr. Dyvik asked if they would also be doing any maintenance on the trucks.

Fire Chief Heiland stated that there are a lot of things for them to do related to maintenance and training. He stated that he would expect them to be in the station about half the time and the rest doing things like pre-plans for buildings.

Ms. Veach stated that she was just handed this information right before the meeting and asked why the Department would not choose to walk before they run. She stated that she feels the target start date of August 1, 2023 gives them a very tight timeline and does not think they will be able to education and communicate this change adequately to their community. She stated that she does not like the tight timeline and also does not like the idea of having duty crews at both stations and questioned why they would not just try it at one station first. She stated that she would also suggest that they just start with the money incentive to encourage signing up for the duty crew and add the credits later, if they are needed.

Fire Chief Heiland stated that was a fair concern and lined up with Mr. Crosby was suggesting just to start out with duty crews at Station #2.

Weske stated that the firefighters have talked about this and explained that 'duty crew' was included in their goals for 2023. He stated that the firefighters started thinking about this

program before Fire Chief Heiland was even hired. He reviewed other items included within the firefighter's goals such as team building and noted that they have been working on what they want to do so when they are sitting here.

Ms. Veach stated that she understood that and would like to see it more clearly defined in order to make use of this time. She stated that she would like them to be able to say to the firefighters 'this is what you will be doing while you are on duty crew', but that is not yet defined.

Weske asked if the Fire Advisory Board should be the ones that tell the firefighters what to do.

Ms. Veach stated that she thinks so because that is how leadership works.

Weske noted that there is leadership on the Fire Department including 6 leaders in the Department. He noted that most of the people in the room right now having this discussion have never been to a fire outside of Fire Chief Heiland. He stated that he did not think this group should be telling the firefighters how to set up their duty crew program or how to handle their team building events.

Ms. Veach stated that she was just questioning what they are doing because if they come in she feels there should be a list, for example of the organizations that they want to hit up within the first month.

Mr. Dyvik stated that he feels that would fall under the job description and duties of Fire Chief Heiland, not the Fire Advisory Board.

Ms. Veach stated that she would like to know why they were pushing this forward with a start date of August 1, 2023 because that is only 3 weeks away. She asked why it needed to happen so soon if this is such a big job.

Mr. Crosby stated that he felt it wouldn't be a bad idea to have an analysis of the budget impact which he does not know if they have one yet.

Mr. Miner asked if Orono had a different proposal for a start date.

Mr. Crosby stated that he would think they would want a little bit more time and a little more analysis on the impact to the budget. He stated that he understands that Fire Chief Heiland is already on site, but he would think it would be addressed based more on response time than that which he sees coming out of Station #2 more than he can see for Station #1.

Ms. Veach reiterated her question about why this was being done right now. She asked if it was because they were worried about response times or call percentages because she thinks they are doing fine on both.

Mr. Crosby stated that he would also like to make sure that the membership has a good agreement and there is not dissension amongst the firefighters. He stated that he did not think it would hurt to spend more time analyzing this to ensure it goes smoothly. He reiterated that he personally feels this should be directed more to Station #2. He stated that their goal is obviously to watch costs, but to serve people in the best possible way which he feels is about efficiency and quality.

Weske noted that the Long Lake City Council plans to use their Public Safety money from the State to pay for the duty crew costs in 2023 for the pilot program. He stated that he feels they should do the next 4 months, include it in the budget, and if it doesn't work in 2024 they can do an adjustment. He stated that having this pilot program will help them have the data that they have been looking for. He suggested that members of the Board send him a list of what they would like to see included in the analysis and they can move forward.

Mr. Crosby stated that he would like to see a cost analysis of what it costs with and without a duty crew. He stated that he would also like to see response times and whether faster times ended up costing them more money. He stated that he would also like to make sure that membership is okay with this program.

Weske stated that they could also take a look at call times.

Mr. Dyvik stated that this has always been talked about as a pilot program in order for them to find out if it is effective, they will need to look at whether there were things that needed to be improved, and how much it will cost.

Mr. Crosby stated that his point is that if there isn't any actual data to compare it to for what is going on right now.

Mr. Dyvik stated that they have all kinds of data from the first half of the year that can be used for what is going on right now.

Weske joked that anything less than 16 minutes for a response times should be good.

Ms. Veach noted that she felt that outlines an important point and explained that the objective is no more than 2 minutes and asked if they should establish how they are measuring that. She asked if that should perhaps be a priority over the next 3 weeks.

Fire Chief Heiland stated that it is certainly a goal and noted that he feels it would definitely be achievable if they had a duty crew at the station.

Ms. Veach stated that they should establish in service times and decide how they would measure that.

Mr. Dyvik stated that they will have that data just like they have had the data for the past 20 years.

Mr. Crosby stated that data will be important for them to show the rest of their council as a comparison tool.

Mr. Dyvik stated that they have all kinds of data and can filter and categorize it in any way they would like.

Mr. Crosby stated that they just want some hard numbers to look at for that particular time frame during the week. He stated that they would not run a duty crew of 2 on a fire, so they will end up hitting an 'all call'.

Mr. Dyvik stated that was true, but the duty crew would be first on the scene.

Fire Chief Heiland stated that the duty crew can be doing things like location the fire hydrants and setting up the scene in preparation before the truck gets there.

Ms. Veach stated that she did not have experience as a firefighter and asked if Fire Chief Heiland could outline when 2 people responding would be enough so they can adjust their expectations accordingly. She stated that she was not comfortable making a decision based on parts of information and would not be comfortable without more information.

Mr. Crosby stated that he understands how getting on the scene and setting things up is helpful, but felt the most important thing was getting the engine out the door as soon as possible.

Ms. Veach asked whether a probationary firefighter could go on a medical call with Fire Chief Heiland.

Fire Chief Heiland stated that would not be enough.

Ms. Veach questioned why it was worded as 'and/or' and should just be 'and'.

Fire Chief Heiland explained that they let the probationary firefighter come along because it is excellent experience for them to get their feet wet but noted that they would not be counted as a crew member.

Ms. Veach reiterated that she would like to see this buttoned up better before it moves forward. She asked how much money was available to start this program and what would happen if the money ran out. She asked how much money Long Lake had available from the Public Safety funds.

Mr. Miner stated that perhaps they can start the trial program at Station #1 with Long Lake funding it and if Orono was interested in doing it at Station #2, they could take a look at other funding. He stated that that if they were not interested in doing a trial period at this point even at Station #1, they can just leave it at that.

Mr. Crosby asked if Long Lake would just take care of all the funding of what happens out of Station #1 going forward.

Mr. Miner stated that it could be for this trial period and then take a look at what the data shows. He stated that he was just proposing that as an option if Orono was not comfortable with start duty crews at Station #2 as part of this trial period.

Mr. Crosby stated he was comfortable with it but just wanted to see more information first and the breakdown so there is an ample comparison.

Mr. Dyvik asked if Mr. Crosby felt the need was more for Station #2 than Station #1.

Mr. Crosby stated that he does believe there is more need at Station #2.

Mr. Van Eyll suggested that Orono could start a duty crew and run it themselves and can just join forces with Long Lake when they needed to.

Mr. Miner asked if he meant July 1, 2024.

Mr. Van Eyll stated that they could then or when Long Lake starts theirs next month. He stated that they would have to discuss it with their council and also figure out who they would have to do it, but then there would be an Orono response and a Long Lake response.

Ms. Veach stated that she would need more than 3 weeks to make that kind of decision. She reiterated that she would like to have more than 3 weeks to examine this situation. She stated that she just got this information and noted that she is happy to help with whatever she can. She stated that she would like to know about the Public Safety budget and what Long Lake will bring to the table.

Weske stated that he believes Long Lake would be getting \$85,000 and Orono would be getting around \$385,000.

Ms. Veach asked if the \$85,000, if it was fully funded, would cover one year of duty crew.

Weske stated that it would cover those costs.

Mr. Crosby reiterated that he felt it was important to compile data first before they make a move to go back to the council and tell them they should go ahead with this. He stated that he was not saying there was not a need but feels it is important to have the comparison data.

Mr. Van Eyll noted that over the last 9 years, they were average 14 people at medicals, which they do not need.

Mr. Crosby stated that he would just like to look at some hard data and compare this information and look at Monday through Friday and say running a 2 person crew out of each station will cost this much money.

Mr. Dyvik stated that it should not just be cost that is considered and explained that even if it wasn't less expensive, it may still be the right thing to do.

Mr. Crosby admitted that it would also be the quality of service and the response times.

Ms. Veach asked if response times were an issue.

Mr. Crosby stated that he agreed that it was not just about money and should be the overall quality of service and the whole picture. It's not just about dollars. Trust me, I wasn't working for the \$10 bucks an hour that I got paid. You know, right Mike? You've seen my car, a little better than \$10 bucks an hour.

He stated that he would also like to see how the firefighters react to the call credit issue and noted that he had heard that was a problem.

Fire Chief Heiland asked when the 'all call' situation had begun.

Mr. Van Eyll stated that it began somewhere around 2013 -2015. He referenced some of the past firefighters that were able to respond during the day was when they started looking at this.

Fire Chief Heiland stated that was something that they can look towards eliminating and get back to station paging if the stations were staffed with duty crews.

Ms. Crosby asked if Long Lake had already approved the duty crew pilot.

Weske stated that they had not yet approved it for the pilot program but noted that it is currently included in the draft 2024 budget. ‘

Mr. Van Eyll apologized if this question was asked before he arrived at the meeting. He asked what problem the Department was trying to solve by moving to a duty crew program.

Weske explained that Station #1 has had more responders available, but for Station #2, they are still having to do ‘all calls’ based on availability. He stated that the idea of a duty crew has been brought forward for consideration since 2018. He gave a brief review of past proposals and the changes that happened due to Covid protocols.

Mr. Dyvik stated that this was being picked up from 2018/2019 along with the experience that Fire Chief Heiland has had from working with the Excelsior Fire District and the success of that program.

Ms. Veach stated that she does not think the discussion was around people not liking duty crews, but she felt everyone supported them.

Mr. Crosby reiterated that he would like to see more financial analysis for comparison purposes.

Ms. Veach noted that it is always easier to add than to go backwards, for example, if they overbudgeted. She stated that back in 2019 the request was to ‘explore more options’ which appears to have been heard as a ‘no’. She stated that she thinks ‘explore motion options’ just meant to keep talking about it. She noted that she wanted to be clear that she thinks this is a great idea and a great start.

Weske stated that the reason that he feels it was a ‘no’ from Orono was because of the statement that followed it about what the city could do to ‘support it with the resources they have’, which, to him, meant Orono staff.

Ms. Veach stated that she was not there at the time but asked if, following the meeting, he picked up the phone and called Adam to find out exactly what was meant.

Weske explained that Mr. Van Eyll was the one who had presented that information to Orono at the time.

Ms. Veach stated that if there is ever a time at a meeting where someone isn’t sure about a statement she has made she hopes that they will call her to get clarification.

Mr. Crosby asked if the Fire Advisory Board meetings were recorded.

Weske explained that they had started recording then in 2023.

Ms. Veach stated that she understands that this notice had already been sent out to the crew and asked if that it was normal for an operational change to be sent to the Department without discussion by the Board.

Mr. Miner stated that there was nothing that dictates that this Board is involved in that kind of operational decision as long as it is covered financially and in the budget. He stated that to

touch on the budget for a moment, there had been some talk about using some areas are under budget for some of the accounts to help fund it as well.

Weske stated that he did not want to 'hang his hat' on that because he does not want to be put in a position where they are over budget if the math did not work out and was not ready to commit to that yet.

Ms. Veach asked if her understanding was correct that, if the Department decided that they wanted to have a full-time staff of 10 that they could, in theory, just do it as long as the budget allowed for it.

Weske stated that the budget is approved by August 15th, then the preliminary levy is brought to the council level and is either accepted or rejected through that process.

Mr. Van Eyll stated that when they made the change to 'all calls' which was a functional change, they took a look at the numbers and simply told the cities that they were making that change.

Ms. Veach stated that she understands it was done that way in the past but asked if that was the best way to go about it. She stated that she was very confused about what held this up in 2019, if everyone wanted it.

Mr. Van Eyll stated that it was discussed at the Fire Advisory Board and was brought back to the councils. He noted that it had also included some additional staff and salaries in addition to the duty crew.

Weske stated that it starts with the Board but then every city can either accept or reject the budget. He stated that there is stuff in the contract that says if one city rejects a CIP expense, the other two cities can pick up the full tab. He stated that if it is the budget that everyone rejects, then it can only increase by the amount of the General Fund increase for the percentage of the following year.

Mr. Dyvik noted that because this has a lower cost impact, they were going to try to do this within the current budget along with the Public Safety money.

Weske stated that, worst case scenario, they can get all the shifts covered using the Public Safety money from Long Lake and still have operations run through the contract but the duty crew pilot program would be financially covered.

Mr. Crosby suggested that it may make sense for Fire Chief Heiland to have a conversation with Mr. Van Eyll. He stated that if they are going to do this, perhaps, as was suggested by Mr. Van Eyll, that they do it at the same time, but give them some time to look at data first.

Fire Chief Heiland agreed that data was important, but noted that getting the membership to buy in was something that he felt was equally as important. He stated that was one of the reason that they are rolling it out so they can see what kind of buy in they will actually get from the membership because then they can tweak it, as needed.

Mr. Dyvik noted that the firefighters were already signing up for the duty crew shifts.

Mr. Miner stated that they will take it back to Long Lake and refine and strategize as a city and noted that they would keep the other cities in the loop.

Ms. Veach asked what Orono should do.

Mr. Crosby asked if Long Lake was transcribing all the meetings.

Mr. Miner explained that they recently started using a service to transcribe the meetings.

Mr. Crosby asked to receive copies of the meeting minutes.

Weske stated that he has draft minutes available and will forward those to the cities. He asked that Mr. Crosby and Ms. Veach e-mail him some of their input items and let him know about any items where they still felt they needed clarity, so Long Lake can incorporate that into their discussion and data gathering. He stated that if this is approved as of August 1, 2023, he does not want the membership to get discouraged. He asked about the overall message coming out of this meeting and noted that he did not want to say something like 'Orono said no' but rather they are analyzing data and financials and the Orono Board members want to be able to report back to the Orono city council.

Mr. Dyvik clarified that the role of the Fire Advisory Board was mainly related to budgetary items and operational items are left up to Fire Chief Heiland and City Administrator Weske. He stated that if this falls within the budget or there is a way that this is covered, then this Board really should not be getting too involved in operations.

Ms. Veach thanked Mr. Dyvik for clarifying that and would say that the only thing that is not already in the budget was the worst case scenario of paying for 2 call credits with zero output on top of the stipend amount. She stated that she would like to know what the cost breakdown would be for 2 call credits per shift, per person and noted that she feels that will go over the budget.

Mr. Dyvik asked if the firefighters get paid for the call credits.

Weske stated that they did not get paid and those credits simply go towards their call volume so they hit their percentages for their pension. He explained that if they go to a call during their 4 hour shift, they will get paid for the call, but they will not just get paid for being there.

Ms. Veach stated that she thought they got extra calls.

Fire Chief Heiland explained that they get call credits which goes towards their overall percentage, which is 30% that they need to have to be in good standing in the Department.

Ms. Veach asked if there was money tied to call credits.

Fire Chief Heiland clarified that there was no money tied to call credits.

Weske asked if there was clarity on what Plymouth had gotten in trouble with related to call credits.

Mr. Van Eyll stated that he believes that they had problems with call backs. He stated that they were giving people credits and did not have call back requirements, so if someone had built up enough call credits, then they felt they did not need to respond.

Fire Chief Heiland stated that during discussions with the firefighters, he has gotten more pushback from people worried that they would be missing out on making trucks and not the opposite, of people not wanting to show up.

Mr. Crosby asked if a call goes out during this time frame whether the firefighter would be getting hourly pay on top of the stipend.

Fire Chief Heiland stated that they would and that was why they get a stipend. He explained that if they get a call during that time period, they will get paid for the call, plus an additional call credit.

Ms. Veach reiterated that she would like to see this kind of program started slowly at just one station.

Fire Chief Heiland stated that if Ms. Veach needed any additional clarification, he would be happy to have a conversation with her to explain things in greater detail.

Ms. Veach stated that if the ship has already sailed and this is not a time for input, she was not sure if there is a point in debate or discussion.

Mr. Miner stated that they can discuss their ideas with the Fire Department leadership.

Mr. Crosby suggested delaying the start date for a month in order to give people time to soak it in.

Weske stated that he will plan to put some of these discussion points on the agenda for the upcoming Council work session.

Mr. Miner stated that he did feel a bit as though the 'cat was out of the bag' because the Fire Department is already excited about this and had been told that it will begin as of August 1, 2023. He reiterated that this is just a trial/pilot program and to him, he does not feel that the data will be readily available until after the trial period.

Mr. Crosby stated that they could go retrieve previous data and Chief Heiland could create a report that breaks down the number of calls this week from Station #1 and from Station #2 which would have been the kinds of calls covered by a duty crew.

Weske stated that they can already gather and filter that data.

Mr. Crosby stated that putting that data down will give them a comparison that they can take back to their council.

Weske noted that the only data that they will have a potential hiccup on is number of responders.

Mr. Crosby stated that he feels that will be important data to have.

Ms. Veach stated that her understanding is that, if fully staffed, the cost will be \$200/day per station.

Mr. Dyvik noted that it would be \$300/day per station.

Rough Draft 2024 Operating Expenses

Fire Chief Heiland gave a brief overview of the draft 2024 operating expenses and noted that one that jumps off the page is the duty crew pay, but believes the Board had talked enough about that already. He suggested that they discuss the workmen's compensation issue.

Weske stated that he had raised that one by 9%, and was hopeful that it will be close to the right number but explained that they will not know until later in the year.

Mr. Crosby asked if the officers were getting a 4-5% raise this year.

Weske stated that it was possible and explained that it had been included in the plans. He stated that the Long Lake City Council had talked about a wage increase and noted that he had tried to bake in call volume. He stated that he believes the math came out to about a \$0.50 raise for the call pay for the firefighters and close to 4% for officers.

Mr. Olson noted that, if they do have the duty crew, he would think that by the end of next year they should be seeing decreased call volumes for regular officers.

Weske stated that he double dipped on both of these and with analysis, for 2024, he was not yet sure how much money they would actually save. He explained that the idea is that there would be a reduction, but it was hard to pinpoint at this moment.

Ms. Veach asked if paid on-call qualified for the new PTO system.

Weske stated that it did and was not yet built into this. He noted that they get 8 hours of vacation for every 30 hours that they work. He stated that he was not sure how it would end up working for payroll.

Ms. Veach stated that her understanding was that they will have admin fees increase because they have to accrue it based off of hours worked.

Weske clarified that it was not included in here because he doesn't know how it will be processed and those that will abuse it will not be worth his time to chase.

Mr. Dyvik stated that the budget also did not account for reduced calls because of the service area that Orono is planning to pull out of.

Weske stated that it did not and explained that he and Mr. Olson had chatted about this and will look at this as the full service area and then recalculate mid-year, if necessary.

Mr. Olson stated that with the legal situation and possible injunction, in his opinion, they should move forward with what they know now.

Ms. Veach noted that it is never a bad idea to plan for the biggest budget/worst case scenario.

Mr. Dyvik stated that he just questions whether Orono will approve that budget.

Weske noted that if it fails, then they have to raise the funds through the General Fund.

Mr. Crosby noted that amount may actually be more than the actual increase is set to be.

Fire Chief Heiland referenced the few things that they ended up having to bump up a bit, for example utilities, light and heavy truck repairs/maintenance.

Weske noted that utility expenses were over budget last year and will most likely also be overbudget for this year, so he threw a number at it.

Mr. Dyvik stated that he would like to see these numbers decreased because they are higher than what he would like.

Weske stated that he can cut them in half to about 15%.

Ms. Veach asked if motor fuels was gas for the trucks and asked if there was a contract.

Weske stated that it has increased because of the call volume.

Mr. Dyvik stated that it had to also be related to the actual price of gas. He stated that education/conferences was up 19% and asked if that was planning for something specific.

Weske stated that was a line item that was over last year by quite a bit so they just wanted to make sure that it was covered. He stated that they are still waiting for reimbursement so there will be offset revenues within the current budget.

Mr. Dyvik asked if staff had checked to see if any of this was remnants from the previous year that were being paid this year.

Mr. Van Eyll stated that last year's reimbursements were \$28,000 which was also what the budget was.

Mr. Dyvik stated that the 2023 budget has \$10,000 for education/conferences.

Mr. Van Eyll explained that there are other line items that are included that totaled \$28,000.

Mr. Dyvik stated that for light truck maintenance and repair he believes that much of the 46% that he is showing comes from Utility 11 which was being replaced next year along with Command 1, so those expenses should not be there next year.

Fire Chief Heiland stated that the new rescue will not arrive until next fall, so they will have to limp Utility 11 along until then.

Ms. Veach stated that this budget appears to have an overall 19% increase and asked what a normal budget increase would be.

Weske stated that normally it would probably be 5% or less.

Mr. Dyvik noted that he had sent her the table that showed the budget amounts for the last 20 years. He noted that 2023 showed a 19% increase which was because of salaries and insurance, but prior to that, it was generally around 5% or less.

Weske noted that fire allocations were hard and explained that it was based on the current budget. He stated that he has included Medina's numbers as well as Orono, but still needs to get Long Lake's numeric value in. He stated that this would be if they are maintaining their current status and seeing what happens come July 1, 2024. He noted that there is not CIP plan for 2024.

Rough Draft 2024-2038 15 Year CIP

Mr. Van Eyll stated that he had a question on the CIP. He stated that last month when the Board met, the discussed Engine #21 getting returned to Orono and now it looks like it is staying. He asked why there was a change.

Mr. Dyvik stated that there was a mistake on that table and believes it was Engine #11 that was going to be replaced.

Weske stated that he believe he had it noted as Engine #21 being replaced, then he was told it was Engine #11, then it switched back again.

Mr. Dyvik stated that originally, Engine #11 was the next to be replaced and then in the last Board meeting, they had it on the table as Engine #21. He stated that in the CIP it was Engine #11 that was to be replaced next. He stated that with the former Excelsior engine that the Department will be getting next year, that would be to replace Engine #11. He noted that had been the plan all along because that is the one that is the greatest need of replacing.

Mr. Van Eyll stated that was why he asked the question to make sure it is clarified. He noted that they are not necessarily sure that they would want to purchase Engine #11 from Long Lake.

Mr. Miner stated that his understanding was that Orono would not be approving any future CIPs.

Mr. Van Eyll stated that it does not look like they were planning to spend any money in 2024.

Weske confirmed that he had moved everything out of 2024/2025 because he felt it would be easier. He stated that if nobody would be approving it, he questioned why they would go through the headache of having to mess around with it.

Mr. Van Eyll explained that Orono's standpoint was that they would approve a CIP if they owned 100% of it.

Ms. Veach asked if Long Lake would prefer to wait and purchase items on their own.

Mr. Dyvik clarified that Long Lake would rather purchase it under the terms of the contract, but that is not what Orono wants to do.

Other Topics

Expectation of Budgeting Process

Wrap-Up / Adjourn

There was consensus to hold the Fire Advisory Board meetings at 3:00 p.m., with the next meeting scheduled for August 8, 2023.

Fire Chief Heiland noted that the Department does not use the heavy rescue anymore and asked if there would be heartburn if they put it up for auction and divvy up the proceeds accordingly.

Mr. Van Eyll stated that they would not be interested in it and suggested that they ask Medina to ensure that they were not interested.

Fire Chief Heiland stated that he was planning to auction it off.

The meeting ended at 5:57 p.m.