



DRAFT

Approved: July 25, 2022

**CITY OF ARDEN HILLS, MINNESOTA
SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
JULY 11, 2022
5:15 P.M. - ARDEN HILLS CITY HALL**

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, Mayor Grant called to order the City Council Work Session at 5:15 p.m.

Present: Mayor David Grant, Councilmembers Brenda Holden, Fran Holmes, Steve Scott. Councilmember David Radziej arrived at 6:25 pm

Absent: None

Also present: City Administrator Dave Perrault, Finance Director Gayle Bauman, , City Clerk Julie Hanson, Lake Johanna Fire Department Assistant Chief Eric Nordeen, Deputy Chief/Emergency Manager Matt Sather and Deputy Chief/Fire Marshal Kris Rewald

1. AGENDA ITEMS

A. Lake Johanna Fire Department Long Range Planning Discussion

Deputy Chief Sather stated that Lake Johanna Fire covers approximately 31 square miles and 42,000 residents between the three cities that they contract services with, and have three stations. They responded to just over 4,000 calls last year and calls for service are on pace to surpass 6,000 calls by 2026. He noted that a staffing needs presentation was recently given to the Board of Directors. It was reported at that meeting that there were 580 times in 2021 where they had multiple calls going on at the same time, 113 times when there were three or more calls at the same time. They currently have a need to staff the third station on County Road I/Lexington where the administrative office is located, as there are no responding firefighters scheduled at that location.

Deputy Chief Sather explained that day shifts are 6:30 am – noon, and noon – 5:00 pm, the evening shifts are 5:00 pm – 10:00 pm, and overnight from 10:00 pm – 6:30 am. Most daytime firefighters will work 2 shifts from 6:30 am – 5:00 pm. Some firefighters only work on the weekends.

Deputy Chief Sather said in 2021 4.5% of the available shifts went unfilled, which translates to one or two positions left open for the day. March – May 2022 they averaged about 9% of shifts unfilled. Currently there are 5 full time positions and approximately 80 part time firefighters. The

office manager position handles HR, payroll, etc. and there is a need for additional help in that area.

Deputy Chief Sather stated that four staffing options were presented to the Board of Directors, with Option #2 being the recommendation from the Fire Department:

Option #1 - Hire 40-50 Additional Part-Time Firefighters

Option #2 - Hire 6 Full-Time Captains/3 Full-Time Shift Commanders

Option #3 - Transition to an All-Career Fire Department

Option #4 - Maintain current model

Further discussion ensued regarding specifics of the options.

Deputy Chief Sather noted the Fire Board supported Option #2, which would need support from the member cities and be broken into phases. Option #2, Phase 1 includes applying for a SAFER grant through FEMA and hiring six full-time captains.

Discussion continued regarding the SAFER grant, and how the grant would apply to staffing.

Assistant Chief Nordeen explained the differences between Captains and other staff.

Deputy Chief Sather stated that once they add nine additional full-time positions they won't need part-time Lieutenant positions, but that could be years from now. He noted that the cities will have 30 days from the date of the grant being awarded to accept the award or lose the funding.

Councilmember Holmes suggested that the fire department not come to all medical emergencies, and only go to life threatening ones.

Deputy Chief Sather responded that often times when they get to a call the emergency is more severe than what the dispatcher classified it as based on the information the caller gave.

Councilmember Holmes stated the City can't afford the 14% increase.

Councilmember Holden asked what happens if they are at a non-emergency call (Alpha) and they get a call for a medical emergency (Echo for example). She stated that according to the annual report 40% of the medical calls were A and B's.

Deputy Chief Sather said once they make patient contact they can't leave until someone of equal or higher training gets there. If they don't make patient contact they are free to leave and go to a different call. As soon as an ambulance comes they can leave.

Assistant Chief Nordeen added they have a response agreement with Vadnais Heights and Roseville where if both of their crews are tied up on non-emergency calls and they get an emergency call, they can ask Roseville to take care of the more emergent call.

Mayor Grant asked if a six-minute response is typical.

Deputy Chief Sather said their average response time for Arden Hills is 5:54, the median time is 5:51. The new location will change the coverage area response time to be more equal and will get

them on the south side of the railroad tracks faster. The Board has never set an official target for response time.

Councilmember Holden asked if there was anywhere in the budget they could cut back on like money spent on morale building activities.

Deputy Chief Sather said things like that are also used for recruitment and retention. They have up to \$300 reimbursement for gym memberships, a Christmas breakfast for staff and families, a steak fry once a year and an appreciation/awards dinner.

Further discussion ensued regarding costs for the new fire station and staffing.

Mayor Grant asked what other information they have about the FEMA grant.

Deputy Chief Sather responded that it is competitive. Last year they distributed around \$300 million in awards. This cycle there is approximately \$200 million extra over last year due to additional COVID funding. He felt the chances of getting the grant this year are good. He and Chief Boehlke wrote the grant, and sent it out to others to review.

City Administrator Perrault said the question for the City Council is, if they get the SAFER grant is the Council comfortable with them accepting it and hiring the additional six Captains.

Deputy Chief Sather stated the fire department is looking for support from the City of Arden Hills to accept the grant if they are awarded it at the end of August/early September. Which also means they would be willing to support it after the three years and continue with the new staff. He felt the more pressing need was the additional staff versus the new building. Captains will provide direct support for the whole organization.

Mayor Grant felt the Council would need to have additional discussion at a separate meeting. It was directed to bring back for discussion at the August work session.

B. Noise Ordinance Discussion

After a brief discussion it was decided to not update the City's ordinance regarding noise.

2. COUNCIL COMMENTS AND STAFF UPDATES

None.

ADJOURN

Mayor Grant adjourned the Special City Council Work Session at 6:47 p.m.

Jolene Trauba
Deputy City Clerk

David Grant
Mayor