

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

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**SPECIAL BUDGET ANALYSIS COMMITTEE MINUTES**

**April 3, 2014**

**3:00 p.m.**

**City Hall**

**117 W. Duval St., 1st Floor**

**Committee Room B**

**Attendance:** Council Members Clay Yarborough (Chair), Reggie Brown, Warren Jones (arr. 3:17p), Robin Lumb, Don Redman, Matt Schellenberg (arr. 3:17p)

**Excused:** Council Member Richard Clark

**Also**: Kirk Sherman – Council Auditor’s Office;Paige Johnston – General Counsel Office; Paula Shoup– Legislative Services Division; Yvonne Mitchell – Council Research

See attached sign-in sheet for additional attendees.

Council Member Yarborough called the meeting to order at 3:10 p.m.

**JACKSONVILLE FIRE RESCUE DEPARTMENT**

Director Senterfitt commented that each division chief would provide a ten minute summary. Committee members were provided a manual of the power point. The presentation covered various topics including FY14 budget challenges, five year strategy, efficiency and service improvements, technology and resources. He reported that in August 2013, the department’s budget was significantly impacted by uncontrollable cost (pension, workers comp) and overtime costs (necessary to meet daily staffing due to large number of vacancies) would place a strain on current service levels. Since that time, $12.5 million has be restored to the budget for FY14 leaving a $3 to $4 million dollar deficient in personnel and overtime, a compounding problem. Director Senterfitt stated that he didn’t believe this to be a current issue due to progress with revenue increase and cost efficiencies through grant awards and innovation. The revenue cost efficiency successes are based upon the first four months of FY14:

* EMS revenues and fire safety inspections have increased slightly
* Overtime is decreasing due to hiring new recruits and SAFER grant award
* Reduction of maintenance cost due to purchase of cost efficient vehicles in Rescue Division

JFRD five-year strategic plan focuses on three elements: service levels (where we are), enhancements (what would be added if budget increases) and reductions (what would be cut if budget was reduced). The strategy plan is to ensure JFRD’s service levels keep pace with the growing demand for emergency services. The strategic goals are:

* Improve ISO/PPC rating - increase rating to a 1/3 which will lower property insurance premiums (current rating 3/8B/10)
* Expedite emergency response times – lower average response time to 8 minutes with maximum of 12 minutes (current times 9+ minutes to 20+ minutes)
* Practice/promote prevention & preparedness – focus on preparedness and prevention to reduce the strain on resources
* Efficient & effective operations – identify efficiencies and savings at every opportunity
* Foster Sustainability – maintain service levels while standardizing replacement/retirement requirements

**Fire Operations Division**

Chief Kurt Wilson reported a renewed focus on firefighter safety. Changes in the W4 policy which manages the 2nd half of a fire, implementation of a squad initiative, receipt of a no-match federal grant, acquiring personal escape systems and other new policies are a few innovations being utilized to increase safety. There is significant cost savings through pumpers (approximately $60,000 savings from apparatus redesigns); prepayment discount on fire apparatus purchases ($18,000 savings on 10 new rescue units); and in-house production on vehicle stabilization struts ($36,007 savings by building struts at TSF). Service improvements include Fire Stations 46 Baldwin and 62 Bartram Springs staffed full time; PPC rating changed from 10 to 3; combined 2,400 households affected and $3,275,000 savings in insurance premium to the community. The fire hydrant database reconciliation project has shown immediate savings to homeowners with merging of JFRD/JEA databases and identification of nearly 300 hydrants unknown to ISO.

The operational, fiscal and other challenges comprise of fleet replacement; adding new fire stations in four growth areas with PPC rating of 10 (Argyle Forest/Oakleaf Planation; Lannie Rd/US National Cemetery Rd; Normandy Blvd, Gate Parkway West); alternative water supply solutions; and replacement of capital items (self-contained breathing apparatuses, thermal imaging cameras, battery operated extrication equipment, etc.). Chief Wilson listed the gaps in technology and commented that ITD has been informed of their needs.

Chief Wilson provided a brief explanation on the purpose and rating scale of ISO which included how the score impacts the county. He stated theoretically there are only three fire stations (#11, 12 & 14) that could be considered for consolidation without changing the ISO score because of being within the 5 road miles. The major disadvantage is the 200 calls per month each station receives that would impact other stations. He shared that JFRD applies for grants to assist with offsetting some expenses. Emergency Preparedness Division handles preparation and submissions of grants. Chief Wilson confirmed that all his equipment is safe and if there are issues it is immediately addressed.

Chief Mote reported that JFRD vehicles transport to emergency rooms only and do not participate in inter-facility transportation. Chief Wilson commented that the safety plan for additional hydrants in older communities is the responsibility of JEA. ISO policy changes no longer allow JFRD to inspect fire hydrants for JEA. Mr. Cleve Ferguson agreed to follow up with JEA about the safety plan and report back to the committee.

There was some discussion about volunteer firemen. There are currently 34 volunteer firemen. State standards require specific criteria for volunteers that impose a financial expense to the department. Once the volunteers have met the required standards and available to certain stations, it will impact the PPC 10 rating in those areas. The collective bargaining unit prohibits sharing of personal protection safety equipment (fitted clothing and hygiene items). Director Senterfitt stated that revising the volunteer plan is within the five year strategy plan. CM Brown requested to be a part of the discussions.

**Rescue Division**

Chief Ivan Mote reported that rescue has 300 personnel. The division includes special events and logistics. The division processes approximately 100,000 EMS call a year with 75,000 being transports to a hospital. The most impact in innovations has been with rescue billing process. The process included proper training of personnel to obtain all signatures in transfer of care. This improvement increased revenue through customer service and patient outcomes. A medical director has been contracted at no expense to the City to enhance the quality of emergency medical services. Chief Mote explained improvements have been made in the communication center to address high employee turnover and reduce stress and burnout. The call center has been divided into four (4) complexes which provide consistency, evenly distribute workload in center, streamlines operations and increase situational awareness.

Chief Mote reported that the newer and smaller style rescues have provided significant savings in purchase cost, maintenance based in cost per mile and miles per gallon. The division has a 100% consistency rate with completion of all rescue transport reports which is transferred to the billing company on a daily reconciliation process and monthly review of patients billed. The efficiency in billing process from 2012 to 2014 is projected to be an increase in revenue of approximately $5,000,000. Reduction of overtime costs and increased level of service during peak times with 911 communications included adding new shift. He stated that the 911 peak hours are 8am – 9pm. Chief Mote provided details about the service improvements for outlying area rescue units. The number of full-time rescue units has increased from 34 to 41. Elizabeth Henderson reported that FRCC has 21 trained dispatchers, 9 in training and 6 vacancies. She stated the turnover rate is 30–40% after start date due to intensity of work and salary. Training takes 4-6 months after being hired. The FRCC does not have a bilingual dispatcher at this time. JSO Communication Center is the primary dispatch. They connect the translation line prior to forwarding call to JFRD to receive service without interruption.

There is a rescue unit in every fire station. The suburban/urban area has rescue response time average of 8 minutes. The outlying areas rescue response time average is 12 minutes. It should be noted that response time for rescue units has improved an average of 2 minutes since 2012 with the addition of more FTE personnel and part-time units in the system.

**Fire Prevention Division**

Chief Kevin Jones reported that commercial fire inspections have improved through reorganization. The focus has been on periodic fulfillment of inspections to ensure approximately 23,000 eligible properties are in compliance with fire codes and ISO annual inspection requirements. Inspections are conducted yearly instead of bi-annually which provides consistency, improve completion of inspections and increased gross billing. Chief Jones reported that innovations and efficiencies allotted for fire inspections to double since 2011. Work assignments are distributed in a supervised and measured manner which allows for better accountability standards. There have been 19,442 properties inspected in 2013 with $1.2 million billable revenue. Operational challenges are to maintain staffing level in expectation to increase to match the expansion of the City. The five year strategic plan allows for the division to monitor new construction plans submitted to the plans reviews division. Fire Prevention Division is able to prepare for the City’s growth and future inspections.

April Mitchell reported that the collection rate in this area is 89-90%. Most fire and safety inspections are done in the later part of the year due to fluidity of businesses in operation from one year to the next creating vacancies. The information is received from the Tax Collector’s Office of licenses for occupational licenses. Personnel inspect every physical building. Chief Jones has 30 assigned personnel (21 field inspectors, 4 in plans review, and 5 supervisors). He stated that commercial property inspections are done a 100% each year. There are some businesses that are cited for violation for non-occupational license. Inspections are batched each week and billed appropriately. Inspections are based on square footage and flea markets are done as one unit. Additionally, the Code does not allow for inspections of mobile units. If a food truck is at a fixed location, it can be inspected.

**Emergency Preparedness**

Mr. Steve Woodard reported this division maintains and maximizes the five pillars of emergency management: mitigation, prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. He stated EPD provides services beyond disasters such as working with numerous COJ departments to acclimate directors and chiefs to using the ICS to enhance the execution of numerous special events, COJ initiatives and high-profile court trials all of which assist with yielding a more effective process in the allocation of taxpayer-funded resources. EPD accomplishments:

* trained 288 employees in CPR
* scheduled 21 additional CPR training classes scheduled between April and October 2014
* installed 53 new AEDs in COJ buildings
* publishing 10,000 employee information guides

EPD identify and submit for grants for the department. Mr. Woodard provided a brief summary of various grants and other programs that have been awarded. He stated that the challenge for the division is staffing to carry out the mission essential functions. He commented that leveraging volunteers and promoting public private partnerships is a focus of the division. In the case of disasters as it pertains to movement and security of inmates, Mr. Woodard stated the he is engaged with JSO and other agencies involved and will make it action item to report back to Council. Hazardous material facilities are required to report to Fire Prevention Division.

**Training Division**

Acting Chief Jill McElwee provided summary of the internal efficiencies of the division. She commented the division is committed to ensuring the highest level of competence and compliance for all employees. The innovative cost savings ideas reduced new recruit on-site training from a 12-week program to 4 weeks which places the recruit in the filed right weeks sooner. The program is split between the training division and field officers. FY 13/14 cost savings on the 96 recruit hires to date is $24,096. The training division accounts for 9% of the ISO score. She commented that an additional ISO certified training facility needs to be constructed. There was discussion of the demographics of instructors, diversifying the division and training certifications.

**Wrap Up**

Director Senterfitt reviewed the accomplishments and cost saving strategies of the department. He shared that the chiefs meet weekly to review its financial status. The details provided were thorough and commended by committee members. Director Senterfitt gave detailed information about the SAFER grant to add 67 new firefighters which offset a large portion of funds requested for overtime.

**Public Comment**

Mr. Joseph Strasser was provided three minutes for comment. He shared his previous experience as a budget officer and working with administration. He encouraged the committee to stay within the budget.

The next meeting is scheduled for April 10th at 3:00 p.m. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:50p.

Yvonne P. Mitchell, Council Research Division (904) 630-1679

Posted 04.11.14 5:00 p.m.