

IAFF 2623 Budget & Staffing Concerns for Fairview Fire District

Presented May 26, 2011

Goals & Concerns

- Safety of Public
- Safety of Firefighters
- Deploying appropriate staffing
- Deploying appropriate equipment
- Reduction in Firefighter Turnover
- Fiscal prudence

Fairview at a glance

- 1 Officer/ 3 Firefighters on duty 24/7/365
- Supplemented by Volunteer Fire Company
- Approximately 1700 alarms per year
- 14-17% of alarms are overlapping
- 2 Fire Engines
- 1 Ladder Truck
- 2 BLS Ambulances

Current Response

- 41-11 (Engine) *Rescue pumper*- 1 Officer, 1 Firefighter
- 41-45 (Ladder) 2 Firefighters
- 41-12 (Engine) 2 Firefighters
- 41-71 (BLS Ambulance) 2 Firefighters or Officers
- 41-72 (BLS Ambulance) 2 Firefighters or Officers

Fairview Fire District staffs the fire station, ***NOT*** the fire equipment, essentially making the operation **First Come, First Serve**. On-duty staff can only handle 1-2 incidents at any given time.

Financial Issues

- According to Commissioners Bob Gephard & Joseph Petito, Fairview needs \$900,000 over Three (3) years to fill potential budget gaps.

The Decision Making Process

- Take no action
- Take corrective action
- Take extraordinary action

What are the results and/or consequences of doing such??

Doing Nothing

- The only benefit of not filling open positions is the cost of medical coverage and pension. The District still has the same amount of staff hours to cover.
- The current staffing situation is having negative effects on employees' health & safety.
 - Extended work hours
 - Fatigue & Cumulative effect on health
 - Long-term effects of shift work amplified
 - Overtime and longer work hours are not allowing rest days for employees.

Industry Standards

- NFPA 1710- 1 Officer and 3 Firefighters per apparatus.
- NFPA 1720- 15 Firefighters on scene in 10 minutes, 90% of the Time
- OSHA 1910.134- Respiratory Standard- “2 in, 2 out.”
- NYS PESH- “2 in, 3 out” Pump Operator cannot be part of the safety team.

Major suggestions and questions

The public and board both have asked what the following actions would do to taxes, as well as the safety of Public and Firefighters.

- Reducing current Staffing from 4 to 3 personnel.
- Cutting or Reducing Ambulance Service

Effects of reducing Staffing

- Ambulance service can no longer be provided safely, resulting in extended waits for transport to ER.
- Department will be unable to safely staff 41-12 or 41-45
- ISO Ratings will fall from 4 to 9 (due to above circumstances,) insurance rates may rise 40%+
- Staff will be unable to make initial interior fire attacks, Per OSHA 1910.134 & NYS PESH Standards. Result: Increased potential loss of life and property.

Effects of reducing staffing (Cont.)

- 1st Come, 1st serve, **ALL OVERLAPPING CALLS (15% of all alarms) WILL HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY EXTENDED RESPONSE TIMES**
- Long-term decline in volunteerism reduces ability of Volunteer Fire Company to truly supplement staffing
 - Fire District Building, due to age and construction is not conducive to comfortably having volunteer members and career staff in one area.
- May constitute gross negligence on behalf of commissioners, who could be held personally liable

NIST Staffing Study

- Conducted in 2010
- 4 Person Fire Crews (Per apparatus) Were found to be:
 - 30% More Effective than 2 Person Crews
 - 25% More Effective than 3 Person Crews
 - Got water on Fire 16% faster than 2 Person Crews
 - Got water on Fire 10% faster than 3 Person Crews

IAFF GIS Study

- Conducted in 2004
- Points out staffing deficiencies
- Points to need for additional staffing for Engine, Ladder, & Ambulance

- Can be viewed on www.iaff2623.org

CT Male Study

- Conducted in in 2007
- Points to a need for additional personnel to meet NFPA 1720 Standard for Staffing & Deployment.

- May be viewed at Fire District Office

NYS Local Government Efficiency Study

- Currently in progress
- Being Conducted by Pace University

- Results Expected before the end of 2011.

Effects of reducing Ambulance Service

- Both ambulances can effect rapid transport to definitive care (Per NYS Protocol) in critical situations (Can meet up with Paramedic en route to ER)
- Overlapping incidents (15% of alarms) may get engine 1st response, increased wait time may be upwards of 17-20 min. for an ambulance, or **DOUBLE** the National Standard of 9 min.

Effects of reducing Ambulance Service (Cont.)

- The 2nd Ambulance has saved lives (cardiac arrests, severe heart attacks, respiratory arrest, traumatic injury, allergic reactions.
- With legislation we have lobbied for at State Level, the Ambulance may be a potential source of future revenue for the Fire District.

Effects on Public Safety

- Increase in response times
- Delays in initial fire attack
 - Fire DOUBLES in size every 30 seconds
- Delays in patient care and transport to definitive care

Our Citizen's lives will be in grave danger!

Effects on Firefighter Safety

- Firefighters are facing increased work hours to cover openings as well as vacations, sick calls, etc.
- Firefighters are perpetually fatigued
- Increased stress- lack of a work/life balance
- Recent On-Duty Heart Attack
- Flight Of Talent
 - Retirements/Resignations/Transfers: 30% since 2009

Effects of Firefighter Safety (cont.)

- Firefighting is combat. Firefighters are under extreme physical stress when performing their duties.
- Cumulative lack of recuperative sleep has the same effect on humans as smoking a pack of cigarettes each day.
- Dangerous, as risk of serious injury increases with fatigue.
- Fire Commissioners have reduced training budget in recent years.

What Local 2623 Has Done

- 2008: Firefighters Forfeit 2 Vacation Days, saving District approximately \$35,000 in Compensation & Overtime.
- 2008-2010: Firefighters reduce amount of benefit time that can be banked, in order to lessen financial liability on Fire District.

What Local 2623 has done

- 2008-2010: Accepted Changes to Medical Insurance that resulted in approximately \$200,000 in savings.
- 2010- Firefighters accepted further adjustment to Medical Insurance plans to save District money.
- 2011: Offered approximately \$80,000 in concessions to Fire District.

What Local 2623 has done

○ Unfilled Special Positions:

- Assistant Public Education Coordinator
 - Left Vacant- \$20,748 savings to Fire District
- Preventative Maintenance Coordinator
 - Left Vacant- \$29,593 savings to Fire District

Important note: This isn't inclusive of cumulative overtime or increased pension costs if positions were filled!

What Local 2623 has done (cont.)

◉ Early Shift Relief Prevents Holdover/Overtime

- Approximately \$63,000 in Overtime is saved on a yearly basis.
- That is **\$315,000** over the life of the current contract alone!

What Local 2623 has done (cont.)

- Offered to assist Fire District in obtaining Federal SAFER Grants to restore staffing at reduced or no cost to taxpayers. (Approximately \$240,000 per year.)
- Lobbied for legislative change in Albany in regards to EMS Billing and Tax Issues.
- Trades/Skills work completed by Firefighters has saved countless dollars on outside contractors.

Following the Money

- ◉ HOW and WHY are we short this money?
 - Commissioners are responsible for budgeting
 - Commissioners made costly financial decisions

Following the Money

- ◉ Where are we short in funding?
 - 2005 Budget- \$2,079,425 Tax Levy, \$86,500 Fund Balance carried forward
 - 2006 Budget- \$2,278,425 Tax Levy, \$121,000 Fund Balance carried forward
 - 2007 Budget- \$2,501,200 Tax Levy, \$175,000 Fund Balance carried forward

Following The Money

- ◉ Where are we short in funding?
- ◉ *RESERVE FUNDS
 - 2008 Budget- \$3,005,700 Tax Levy, \$205,000 Fund Balance carried forward
 - 2009 Budget- \$2,935,480 Tax Levy, \$189,000 Fund Balance carried forward
 - 2010 Budget- \$2,832,000 Tax Levy, \$585,000 Fund Balance carried forward
 - 2011 Budget- \$2,596,100 Tax Levy, \$712,000 Fund Balance carried forward

Following The Money

- The falling tax levy was a result of money from the year-end fund balances being carried forward and applied toward the next year's budget, rather than being moved to the appropriate reserve funds.

**Who is responsible for this
“shortage?”**

**Is anyone on the Board of Fire
Commissioners willing to accept
responsibility for these financial
circumstances?**

Conclusions

- ◎ **This shortfall in the budget is not the fault of the Firefighters or the Union, and we simply cannot balance this entirely on our backs.**

Conclusion

- Immediate hiring of Firefighters is needed to provide for the health and safety of firefighters and the public alike. Concessions made by the Union make this significantly more affordable to the Fire District.

Thank You

Fairview's Firefighters are committed to providing the highest possible level of service to the public.

We are willing to work in good faith with the Fire District to find solutions to financial issues, however we cannot be expected to shoulder the entire burden on our own.