



MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 12, 2017
TO: Joe Gilmore, Acting City Manager
FROM: Jeff Sorensen, Fire Chief
RE: FY18 Firefighter/Paramedic Staffing Request

Hiring three (3) additional firefighters will allow us to meet the goal of staffing Rescue #36, the rescue vehicle (SUV) stationed out of Oakton and Greenwood, on a full-time basis. At present, due to staffing constraints, we are only able to staff the vehicle approximately 25% of the calendar year, when leave time (vacation/sick days) is not at the maximum. The addition of this vehicle to the fleet is proposed for FY 18, but currently we have been utilizing our previous decommissioned command van for a trial period. Due to increasing call volume and a continual uptick in demand for service, we are unable to keep pace with concurrent calls, which are multiple calls going on at the same time in our City. With the staffing of Rescue #36, we are able to maintain our ability to respond to EMS (Emergency Medical Service) and fire calls in a timely manner. We also believe we will be able to reduce overtime expenses by \$100k, though this is difficult to predict due to potential injuries and FMLA use throughout the year. If we have these extra personnel on shift, it will be much easier to maintain minimum staffing levels without being required to pay overtime to off duty personnel.

Rescue #36 background, additional:

This vehicle is staffed with two personnel and is lighter, faster, and less expensive than the “big rigs” (fire engine or ladder truck). Utilizing an SUV, we are able to provide the required support personnel needed on an ambulance call without putting miles and wear and tear on the larger fire vehicles. Personnel assigned to Rescue 36 can also jump on the ambulance to provide additional assistance on critical life-threatening ambulance calls while the patient is being transported to the hospital. Currently, we respond with the fire engine or ladder truck to assist the ambulance crew on emergency medical calls. This function is normally handled by engine and ladder truck crews throughout the Chicagoland area. Nationally, however, there is a move to utilize SUV’s or similar smaller vehicles, when available, to provide support to ambulance crews. During the trial period, we have also utilized Rescue 36 for certain non-emergency responses (e.g. including unoccupied elevator alarms, carbon monoxide alarms with no symptoms).

Staff is available to elaborate further, but it is our viewpoint that, due to the rising call volume, along with proposed developments in town that include an assisted living facility, there is a need for more EMS coverage in order to meet our response time goals, particularly for EMS calls. During the trial period, there were numerous examples of multiple call situations, wherein Rescue 36 responded to the “first-out” EMS call with an ambulance, leaving the ladder Truck or engine available for subsequent EMS and fire calls. Simply put, it worked very well and we anticipate a greater benefit to the community if we can staff the vehicle on a daily basis.



Attrition:

As a fall back (maybe more like a safety valve), I have been attempting to illustrate the impending departures of staff in our Dept. I keep a spreadsheet that indicates when "likely" retirements will occur. Unfortunately in our Dept., like most police and fire departments, absent any incentives, there is really no way to know for certain when staff will leave. What I just alluded to with the mention of incentives, is that some area Departments give certain benefits to employees that make their intentions known in advance. This works well in our line of work, when the "pre-action" time for hiring can be 3-9 months between the recognized need for a hire and the day that new hire is able to fill a slot in Operations (due to the hiring process, the training interval including the Academy, etc.). Simply put, it's a money loser when someone leaves unexpectedly and we have to back-fill with OT until the new hire is fully on board. That's why some employers see the incentive system as a winner, and a nice perk for the departing employee.

In summary, if we were to add head-count, and then later in the Fiscal Year determined that the additional expense was too "rich" due to a development of some kind (think State of IL LGDF shortfall), we could attrit our way back to our previous staffing level once retirement(s) occurred.

My best guess is that we will have four (4) personnel leave in FY 18, no more than five (5) and no fewer than two (2). Between now and May of 2023 we estimate that eleven (11) people will retire from our Department. Two of these departures are guaranteed due to our maximum age of 65, by Department rule.

Conclusion:

Fire Admin. (Paul and I) and our Command Staff (3 BC's and Captain) are committed to delivering the best we can with what we have and what we hope to obtain for the Dept. for FY18. Calls are trending upwards- not simply a one-time spike- but rather 2016 was a record year after 2015, which itself had been a record year for our total number of responses. We have a graphic that we used to employ that would show a 100% increase in call volume since the 1970's, with only a minor corresponding increase in head-count for the Dept. during that same time period. I feel the time is right to try to progress and be better able to add staff, in order to:

1. Better manage the rising number of calls, especially multiple call situations; and
2. Provide quick and proper EMS care with a lighter, quicker and more efficient vehicle (Rescue 36).

Three-Year Fiscal Impact (Estimate)

	FY18 Budget	FY19	FY20
Salary	\$ 129,074	\$ 203,391	\$ 211,527
Pension	\$ 32,269	\$ 50,848	\$ 52,882
Benefits	\$ 29,052	\$ 51,197	\$ 52,733
Other	\$ 39,000	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500
Subtotal	\$ 229,394	\$ 306,936	\$ 318,642
Estimated Overtime Savings	\$ (50,000)	\$ (100,000)	\$ (100,000)
Estimated Net Impact	\$ 179,394	\$ 206,936	\$ 218,642