

SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING

March 28, 2024

The Safety Committee of Chardon City Council met on Thursday, March 28, 2024 at 3:00 p.m. in Conference Room A of the Chardon Municipal Center.

Andrew Blackley, Chairman of Safety Committee presiding.

Members of Safety Committee present: Andrew Blackley, Deborah Chuha.

Others present: Police Chief Scott Niehus, City Manager Randy Sharpe, Secretary Rebecca Repasky, Fire Chief Justin Geiss, Assistant Fire Chief Larry Gaspar, Finance Director Mark Iacofano, David Lelko, Richard Wolfe, Weston Miller.

Mr. Blackley called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Mr. Blackley moved and Mrs. Chuha seconded to accept the minutes of the Safety Committee from September 26, 2023. Upon voice vote the motion passed unanimously.

Regarding the renewal of the Fire Department Contract, Fire Chief Justin Geiss reviewed current staffing levels that consist of 3 shifts covering 24 hours/7 days per week. He stated that they have a minimum of 4 personnel maintained for each shift, and propose to add 2 additional full-time staff, increase overnight staffing from 5 to 6, and increase wages to become more competitive.

Chief Geiss reviewed run totals that have increased 25% over the last 4 years, which can be attributed to an aging population.

Mr. Blackley reviewed the new housing developments that will also impact the Fire Department in the future.

Chief Geiss explained that the CFD lost 8 full-time employees to other departments in the last 10 years, noting that most young members are looking for employment with a pension.

Chief Geiss reviewed the contract cost for 2025, 2026, & 2027 broken up by municipality.

Chief Geiss reviewed the increase in vehicle and equipment costs.

Chief Geiss reviewed the Emergency Services Formula which shows how the proposed costs per community were calculated. He explained that the figures were based on property values and the number of calls in each entity using a 5-year average. Using this formula, the City of Chardon would be responsible for 54.55% of the total contract.

Asst. Chief Gaspar stated that this formula has been used for approximately 30 years.

Chief Geiss explained that over the last 4 years, the department has been able to increase full-time pay by \$21,000 per year by cutting expenses in other areas.

Discussion occurred regarding retirement options currently offered to full-time CFD employees.

Mr. Blackley asked when the City has to renew its fire levy.

Mr. Iacofano stated that the levy will be on the November 2024 ballot.

Mr. Blackley summarized the Fire Department's proposal which included an 8% increase and additional staffing. He asked if the proposed increases were factored into the City's budget.

Mr. Sharpe stated that the increases have not been included in the City's budget. Now that staff has the figures from the Fire Department, the necessary levy millage can be calculated. He noted that when the current levy was calculated in 2021, it was known that a future levy increase would be necessary.

Mr. Iacofano stated that the City's capital plan accounted for a 5% increase, but did not account for 8%.

Mr. Blackley asked Chief Geiss to make a presentation at the next Council meeting that includes possible levy increases. He reviewed the process for approving the contract and submitting the levy information for the November ballot.

Mr. Lelko stated that he would like to see some information in April if Council needs to vote on the Fire Department's contract in May.

Mr. Blackley stated that if Council votes on the Fire Department contract in May, it is an appropriate time to begin discussing the levy amount.

Discussion occurred regarding public education of the levy.

Chief Geiss noted that historically, the fire prevention contract

with the City has been separate from the fire protection contract, but they are proposing to combine the fire prevention and fire protection contracts into one because of the increased need for fire prevention in the townships.

Regarding an update on the replacement of the aerial ladder truck, Chief Geiss stated that the ladder truck is the only vehicle in their fleet that the department does not own. It is owned by the City, but goes out on all commercial property calls and is the last vehicle out on car accidents or residential calls.

Asst. Chief Gaspar explained the history of the current ladder truck that was purchased by the City in 2003. Once it becomes 25 years old, it will need to be replaced, and noted that the current lead time for ladder truck delivery is 3 years.

Mr. Sharpe stated that he had asked the Fire Chief to provide figures on the usage of the ladder truck by the City and others, because he questioned if it is fair for the City to bear the entire cost of the truck, when it goes out whenever a mutual aid call is received. He stated that he would like to work out an arrangement that eventually the truck becomes the department's, and the next contract is when the costs could be divided amongst the entities.

Chief Geiss stated that he inquired about the effect that removing the truck would have on the Department's ISO rating. He was informed that the rating would automatically increase from a 3 to a 4, and would increase property insurance rates by 5-15%. He noted that they are actively pursuing grants and creative ways to offset the cost of a \$2.2 million ladder truck.

Chief Geiss stated that they started looking into companies that offer cost recovery that can be billed for the department's response to car accidents.

Mr. Lelko asked if the funding for the fire truck is included in the 2025-2027 contract.

Chief Geiss stated that while he increased his budget for capital expenditures, the funding of the ladder truck is not in the contract.

Mr. Sharpe stated that it is not addressed in the City's contract with the CFD, but it needs to be included in the fall 2024 levy.

DATE FOR NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was set for April 24, 2024 at 3:00 p.m.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Chief Niehus reported that the City received a letter from the Geauga County 9-1-1 program review committee requesting the City provide a resolution of support for the County's 9-1-1 plan, which is required by the O.R.C. He reviewed how the 9-1-1 Committee was established and stated that the City would need to annually endorse the plan. He added that the sheriff has indicated that there would not be any financial implications to the City.

Mr. Sharpe noted that the Law Director has indicated that he can have legislation prepared for the April Regular Session of Council approving the 9-1-1 plan, if it is favorable to the Safety Committee.

Mrs. Chuha moved and Mr. Blackley seconded to request the Law Director prepare legislation for the April Regular Session of Council approving the County's 9-1-1 plan. Upon voice vote the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Blackley asked if an update is needed on the City's emergency management plan.

Chief Niehus stated that the emergency management plan should be updated.

ADJOURN

Mrs. Chuha moved and Mr. Blackley seconded to adjourn. Upon voice vote the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 4:23 p.m.

Attest:

Amy Day
Clerk of Council