



City of Grand Island

Tuesday, April 9, 2013

Council Session

Item I-2

#2013-106 - Consideration of Approving FTE Amendment for the Fire Department

Staff Contact: Cory Schmidt, Fire Chief

Council Agenda Memo

From: Cory Schmidt, Fire Chief

Meeting: April 9, 2013

Subject: Amend FTE classifications for fire department

Item #'s: I-2

Presenter(s): Cory Schmidt, Fire Chief

Background

At the February 19, 2013 study session, a presentation was brought before City Council to help create a better understanding of desired changes needed in the fire department organizational structure. The current structure has remained relatively unchanged since the 1980s. The City commissioned a study by ICMA to review the public safety departments and make recommendations based upon their findings. The police department came forward with their recommendations last summer during the budget process. The fire department was still involved at that time with the recruitment for the new fire chief.

As the new Fire Chief, I've had a chance to review the ICMA findings and put together a recommendation that integrates those recommendations as well as my own. This is the first step in the implementation process. The next phase will include equipment recommendations.

Discussion

My goal, as well as that of the ICMA study was to identify the most cost effective, efficient way to use our current budget authority to deliver the services that the citizens of Grand Island have come to rely on. As stated earlier, the structure of the department has been relatively the same for the last thirty years. As our community has grown, our demographics have changed and it is prudent that we make sure our department is correctly aligned with the changes we've experienced. The recommended changes in organizational structure are to reclassify three captain positions to shift commander, add a life safety inspector position, and eliminate one of the four division chief positions. These proposed changes should enable the department to better utilize its personnel and provide more consistent management. Total FTEs for fire department would remain the same at 69 and the budget authority needed to provide the service will remain relatively the same.

The addition of the life safety inspector position will ensure that needed inspections that the fire department hasn't been able to accomplish will happen on an annual basis. As stated in the ICMA study, a strong fire prevention program is the most effective method for increasing community safety and reducing the number of fires.

The proposed changes will take effect over the next few months. The reduction in the number of captains and the addition of shift commanders will follow the Civil Service testing process and therefore will not be fully implemented before summer. The life safety inspector will be a civilian position and if approved by Council, recruitment will begin shortly.

Alternatives

It appears that the Council has the following alternatives concerning the issue at hand. The Council may:

1. Move to approve
2. Refer the issue to a Committee
3. Postpone the issue to future date
4. Take no action on the issue

Recommendation

City Administration recommends that the Council approve to amend FTE classifications for the fire department to include reclassification of three captain positions to three shift commander positions, eliminate one division chief position, and add one life safety inspector position.



Sample Motion

Move to approve FTE amendments for the fire department.

Proposal to Restructure Fire Department Command Structure

 Presented by Cory Schmidt, Fire Chief

Recommendations made at February 19th Study Session

-  Promote three captains to shift commander
-  Hire one certified life safety inspector

February 19th Study Session Questions

- ☞ Level of education needed for shift commander
- ☞ Union or non-union position
- ☞ Effectiveness of current inspection program
- ☞ Estimated cost of positions

Education/experience needed for Shift Commander

- 🌊 North Platte – Six years in career department including three as company officer
- 🌊 Salina – Ten years firefighting experience, including three as company officer, 12 college credits
- 🌊 Council Bluffs – Eight years experience, 2 years as engineer
- 🌊 Rapid City – Associate degree and four years as company officer, plan on Bachelor's in 2014

GIFD proposed education and experience

- At least ten years experience in Grand Island Fire Department including three years as a company officer
- The ability to obtain an associate degree in fire technology, public administration, business, or closely related field within 2 years
- In the future, associate degree will be required prior to promotion. Bachelor's will be preferred

Union or non-union position

- 🇺🇸 Eligible for the union
- 🇺🇸 Union must petition to allow membership

Proposed staffing

- Plan on utilizing fill-in personnel to cover for officer absences
- Minimum manning will be changed from 16 to 17 per shift
- Currently allow and schedule up to five employee to be gone, will allow only four in the future -limit OT
- Only one officer will be allowed a scheduled absence at any given time (current policy)

How often will a fill-in person be utilized

🌊 In 2011, out of 42,120 hours , captains were absent 7970.5 hours

🌊 18.9% of the time a captain was absent


🌊 332 days out of the year a captain was absent

In 2011, a single captain was absent 1041 hours due to injury


How often will a fill -in person be utilized?

- 🇺🇸 In 2012, out of 42,120 hours, captains were absent 5998.5 hours
- 🇺🇸 14.2% of the time, a captain was absent
- 🇺🇸 250 days out of the year, a captain was absent

Working out of class

 City of Grand Island / IAFF contract states:

“When an employee is asked to work out of class for more than five full consecutive shifts, they shall be temporarily appointed to the position and received compensation in the class for which they are working at the beginning of the sixth day.”

 Guaranteed at least a 3% increase

Compensation for working out of class

- 🇺🇸 Covered in contract, starts on day six
- 🇺🇸 Most comparable cities have similar policy as Grand Island or do not compensate at all
- 🇺🇸 Rapid City pays \$1 per hour extra to work out of class

Compensation for working out of class

- Will be negotiated in future contracts, currently not a standard practice among comparable cities
- Should similar plan as Rapid City's be negotiated and accepted, will cost \$24 per shift when an officer is absent
- If an officer is absent every day (365 days) has the potential to cost an additional \$8760 per year in wages

Effectiveness of current inspection program

- 🇺🇸 In 2012 only 465 inspections were completed
- 🇺🇸 Current goal is 779 (1/3 of 2337)
- 🇺🇸 Future goal with fire inspector position is 1169 (1/2 of 2337)
- 🇺🇸 Difficult to take on special programs (home inspections)

Why are inspection numbers so low?

- 🌊 Crews are responding to more calls
- 🌊 Paperwork drives our industry
- 🌊 Licensure requirements are increasing
- 🌊 Training is required to ensure professional response
- 🌊 Limited window of inspection time (business hours, weather, and other time requirements)

Life Safety Inspector

- 🌊 Goal of 1169 inspections per year will be attainable
- 🌊 Provides ability to schedule inspections
- 🌊 Uniformity of inspection process
- 🌊 More efficient use of resources
- 🌊 Better customer service

Total cost of reorganization

🌊 \$27,090 to promote captains to shift commanders

🌊 \$85,117 to hire life safety inspector

\$112,097 additional costs

🌊 \$122,665 savings due to Division Chief elimination

🌊 \$112,097

🌊 \$10,568 in savings

Total cost of reorganization

- 🌊 Overtime frequency should remain relatively steady due to change in manning policy, most likely will increase but not substantially
- 🌊 Currently, no provisions are in place to compensate working out of class, not a standard practice
- 🌊 If out of class pay is adopted in future, price is fairly low based on current numbers

Summary

- Will meet ICMA recommendations
- Better managed/more efficient department
- Mentoring and succession planning
- Strengthen fire prevention program

RESOLUTION 2013-106

WHEREAS, in April 2012, a study was presented by ICMA for the City of Grand Island outlining recommendations for the Grand Island Fire Department; and

WHEREAS, on February 19, 2013 a study session was presented to City Council in regards to restructuring the fire department; and

WHEREAS, a request has been made to approve the FTE plan for the fire department to reflect a reduction of three fire captains and one division chief and an addition of three shift commanders and one life safety inspector.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GRAND ISLAND, NEBRASKA, that the proposed FTE plan for the fire department is hereby approved.

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Adopted by the City Council of the City of Grand Island, Nebraska, on April 9, 2013.

Jay Vavricek, Mayor

Attest:

RaNae Edwards, City Clerk

Approved as to Form	▣ _____
April 5, 2013	▣ City Attorney