

FIRE COMMITTEE MINUTES

January 20, 2005

The Fire Committee of the City of Mesa met in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on January 20, 2005 at 9:30 a.m.

COMMITTEE PRESENT

Mike Whalen, Chairman
Rex Griswold
Janie Thom

COUNCIL PRESENT

None

STAFF PRESENT

Paul Wenbert

Chairman Whalen excused Committeemember Thom from the beginning of the meeting. She arrived at 9:35 a.m.

1. Discuss and consider amending the 2003 International Building (IBC) and Fire (IFC) Codes by adding a Section 915 which would require all new and existing high rise buildings be equipped with a firefighter breathing air replenishment system (BAR).

Fire Chief Harry Beck stated that the Fire Committee heard a presentation on this topic a few months ago, and he advised that Assistant Chief Cliff Puckett and Fire Community Safety Advisor Hal Key were present to provide the additional information requested by the Committee.

Assistant Chief Puckett stated that the Breathing Air Replenishment (BAR) system is described in the handout titled "Leading Edge in Fire Safety. How a Rescue Air System is Used in a High Rise Fire Operation" (see attachment). He noted that the BAR system saves firefighters critical time and effort during a high-rise fire by enabling them to refill air bottles on nearby floors. Assistant Chief Puckett stated that the Fire Department recommends installing the BAR system in all City of Mesa buildings that have five or more stories. He added that the Fire Department also recommends that the requirement be retroactive to include approximately 12 existing buildings in Mesa that have five or more stories. Assistant Chief Puckett reported that Phoenix and Chandler are presently utilizing the BAR system, and he advised that installation costs for a retrofit or for new construction are approximately \$3,800 per floor. He cited local examples of BAR installations, such as \$78,000 to retrofit the 22-story APS building in the City of Phoenix, which included installation in two stairwells, and \$35,000 for new construction installation in a seven or eight story building in the City of Chandler.

In response to a question from Committeemember Griswold, Assistant Chief Puckett responded that the installation includes metal piping connected to a series of panels beginning on the 3rd

floor and installed on alternating floors above the 3rd floor. He explained that a Mesa Fire Department truck would house the mobile compressor that supplies air to the metal piping inside the structure.

Chairman Whalen requested that the Fire Department contact the owners of all existing City of Mesa buildings that could be affected by the retrofit requirement to afford them an opportunity to comment and provide input prior to a Council decision regarding the recommendation.

In response to a question from Chairman Whalen, Assistant Chief Puckett stated that 2009 is the proposed deadline for completion of retrofit installations.

Responding to Committeemember Thom's question regarding the cost to retrofit a building, Assistant Chief Puckett stated that the cost is approximately \$3,800 to \$4,000 per floor.

Mr. Key advised that he was aware of one building owner who was advised by an inspector about the possible requirement for the BAR system. He added that the building owner investigated the installation process, and he is now waiting for a Council decision on the proposal.

Chairman Whalen responded to Committeemember Thom's concern by noting that he has requested that the Fire Department notify the owners of existing buildings regarding the proposal and the date on which the Council is scheduled to consider the recommendation in order to provide the owners an opportunity to comment and provide input.

Committeemember Griswold encouraged the Fire Department staff to obtain information from construction firms that have BAR system installation experience in other communities.

It was moved by Committeemember Griswold, seconded by Committeemember Thom, that staff's proposal be moved forward to the full Council for further discussion and Council action.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that the only other type of structure included in the proposal is a building that has two or more basement floors below grade; that shopping malls would not be an effective application for the BAR system due to the large number of entrances; and that the proposal includes an appeals process to address special circumstances.

Chairman Whalen called for the vote.

Carried unanimously.

2. Hear an update on Homeland Security Grants that have an impact on the City of Mesa.

Chief Beck advised that staff was present to provide an update on Homeland Security Grants, and he introduced Assistant Chief Bob Deleon.

Assistant Chief Deleon, utilizing a PowerPoint presentation (a copy is available for review in the City Clerk's Office), advised that the Mesa Fire Department has been very active in efforts to secure grants. He noted that the funds obtained often enable improvements outside of the "Police and Fire arenas," and he reported that \$230,000 in grant funding has been utilized to purchase infrastructure protection for City buildings, upgrade a City microwave tower and to

provide equipment for emergency responders. Assistant Chief Deleon provided an overview of the funding received.

- Department of Homeland Security Grants

2003: \$860,000 in grants was received.

2004: In excess of \$5 million in grants was received, \$4.4 million of which was from the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) that was established to address the top 30 high-risk urban areas in the country. The funding was utilized to establish special teams (Fire and Police rapid response teams) to respond to terrorist events.

Assistant Chief Deleon stated that the City of Mesa, the City of Phoenix and other surrounding communities have cooperated to develop strategies.

- Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS) Grants

2004: \$400,000 in grant funding was received to maintain the MMRS system and enhance the City's capability to respond to biological, chemical, explosive or radiological attacks in cooperation with other Valley communities.

In response to a question from Chairman Whalen, Assistant Chief Deleon advised that the Fire Department is being assisted by a local pharmaceutical company to insure that the City's stock of dated pharmaceuticals is properly rotated. He stated that a major portion of the funding is directed toward purchasing and maintaining an up-to-date inventory of pharmaceuticals.

Assistant Chief Deleon noted that the Department of Homeland Security's current application period combined all grants into one process with specific funding designated for each area.

- Fire Act Grants

2003: \$ 52,549 in grant funding was targeted for community education.

2004: \$518,300 in funding was received to purchase Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA's) for firefighters.

Assistant Chief Deleon explained that the funding was utilized to replace SCBA's with cutting edge technology equipment (backpacks, masks and air tanks) utilized for firefighting and chemical incidents. He noted that the replacement of this equipment was necessary with or without the grant funds.

In response to Chairman Whalen's question, Assistant Chief Deleon stated that 214 breathing apparatus units are currently in service, but that number does not include units assigned to the Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team or utility plant personnel. He emphasized that the priority is to provide personal protection equipment to first responders. He added that after the new units are in place, staff would investigate the cost to upgrade the older equipment so that the protection is more widely available to other employees.

Assistant Chief Deleon reported that the City's contribution in matching funds totaled \$244,821 for grants in excess of \$5 million. He explained that there was little fiscal impact because the matching fund dollars were already budgeted for equipment upgrades.

Responding to a question from Chairman Whalen, Assistant Chief Deleon advised that the SCBA's do not provide protection from radiation, but the department does have radiation measuring devices.

Assistant Chief Deleon noted that one application is submitted for Homeland Security Funds, which are then disbursed through the State to the various cities and counties. He noted that protection of first responders continues to be the priority, and that the next area to be addressed is protection of critical infrastructure. He added that several projects have been funded that are not specifically defined as being "Fire and/or Police," such as the \$200,000 upgrade to a City microwave antenna and an allocation of \$135,000 to Municipal Security to address the 6th Street gate security issue and improve security for warehouse and utility buildings.

In response to questions from Chairman Whalen, Assistant Chief Deleon confirmed that the State retains 20 percent of the funding, except for MMRS funds, to address State issues prior to distributing funds to the counties and cities, and that this report includes Homeland Security grants received by the City for both "Police and Fire."

Responding to questions from Committeemember Thom, Assistant Chief Deleon explained that the City applies for grants from Homeland Security in a format that identifies the City's strategies and needs. He added that justification of the application must include the manner in which the grant would benefit the City of Mesa, the surrounding communities and the State of Arizona. Assistant Chief Deleon addressed Committeemember Thom's concerns regarding the rotation of pharmaceuticals by advising that staff reviews expiration dates on a continual basis. He noted that at the present time staff is expending effort to replace one inventory item that has an expired date.

Committeemember Thom stated that charitable organizations such as CARE are able to utilize pharmaceuticals that have expired or are close to expiration. She also noted that not all pharmaceuticals are prescription items. Committeemember Thom suggested that staff investigate the possibility of donating to charitable organizations the expired date pharmaceuticals or those that are about to expire.

Noting that the Phoenix metropolitan area has been designated as being at high risk for a terrorist event, Committeemember Thom asked if staff had statistical information regarding the probability of an attack and in what form that attack might take place.

Assistant Chief Deleon explained that Phoenix was identified as being at high risk based on population figures, and he stated that an "all risk" approach is utilized by staff when applying for grant funds. He further stated that staff is unable to predict the form or likelihood of a future terrorist event.

Committeemember Thom noted that when 9/11 occurred, many people were aware of what could happen, the probabilities, who would be involved, and where the terrorists were located, but that information was not shared with local law enforcement. She added that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agent who wrote the "Phoenix memo" did not share the

information with law enforcement agencies other than the FBI. Committeemember Thom asked if staff has established relationships with other law enforcement agencies in order to share information and be better prepared for future events.

Assistant Chief Deleon advised that staff has established relationships with many agencies. He noted that grants such as the Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Program (LETPP) provide funds to evaluate the protection requirements of buildings in order to prevent terrorism and to enable agencies to share intelligence information. He reported that a Statewide intelligence group, comprised of representatives from many agencies, was recently formed in order to coordinate efforts and share information on a daily basis, and he noted that the group was actively involved in recent incidents in Glendale when acid was discovered in several buildings.

Committeemember Griswold commended staff on the rotational system that is in place for pharmaceuticals. He asked if the City was required to pay a fee in order to rotate pharmaceuticals in advance of the expiration date.

Assistant Chief Deleon advised that staff continues to evaluate procedures regarding rotation and over-the counter costs of pharmaceuticals. He noted that the recent availability of a generic form of a drug resulted in the City's cost decreasing from \$30,000 to approximately \$1,500. He added that staff would also investigate Committeemember Thom's suggestion relative to providing pharmaceuticals that are about to be rotated out of inventory to charitable organizations.

Committeemember Griswold suggested that the City and a pharmaceutical company enter into an agreement that for a fee the City's pharmaceuticals that expire in one year be rotated into the system, and that the City's inventory be replaced with stock that has a four-year life span.

Assistant Chief Deleon advised that an approach currently being evaluated by staff is that an organization would maintain the inventory in their store, and that the City would have access to the inventory as needed. He added that the organization would rotate the inventory as necessary.

Chairman Whalen noted that Assistant Chief Deleon recently replaced Assistant Chief Puckett in this area, and he commended him for becoming knowledgeable of this area in a short amount of time. He also complimented Assistant Chief Puckett for his service, and he expressed the hope that Assistant Chief Deleon would be equally effective in establishing relationships and contacts with other agencies.

Assistant Chief Deleon thanked Chairman Whalen for his comments and stated that he will continue his efforts in that area. He also expressed appreciation for the effective Emergency Management staff that Assistant Chief Puckett put in place, which consists of Deputy Chief Paul Carbajal and Lieutenant Wade Pew of the Police Department and Captain Jim Bloomer and Captain John Delaney of the Fire Department.

Chairman Whalen expressed support for continuing the ongoing community threat evaluation process and discussing the movement of hazardous materials through the community with Union Pacific. He noted that threats to water facilities and the electric grid are also areas of concern. He asked if staff was aware of grants to fund increased video and security systems,

and he expressed the opinion that technology must be utilized to supplement manpower in addressing security issues.

Assistant Chief Deleon advised that applications for the next round of grants were recently completed, and he noted that one of the categories addressed the process of assessing the vulnerability of hardened critical infrastructure. He added that other funding areas for which the City applied included video security surveillance systems for electric substations, gate access security systems for electric substations, the Communications Department, and security for hardened critical infrastructure. Assistant Chief Deleon advised that Lieutenant Pew has been instrumental in identifying needs and coordinating the effort with Municipal Security.

Chairman Whalen expressed concern relative to the security of the City of Mesa's fire stations. He noted that many security companies have profited in the past few years, and he suggested that the cooperation of these companies be solicited in order to provide security in this area.

Assistant Chief Deleon advised that grant funds have been requested in order to address fire station security.

Responding to Chairman Whalen's question regarding the civilian patrol, Assistant Chief Deleon advised that the Community Emergency Response Team has a part-time, grant-funded member for which additional grants have been requested in order to maintain the position. He explained that the mission of each team member is to assist neighborhood residents during the first 72 hours of an incident.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that the initial focus for the Community Emergency Response Teams' staff was to train the trainers; and that training civilians improves the likelihood that suspicious acts can be recognized and reported by the public.

Chief Beck advised that the Fire Department has utilized grants to purchase standard equipment and supplies that normally would have been purchased as a part of operating costs.

Additional discussion ensued relative to the fact that a Citywide drill was recently completed and another will be scheduled in a couple of months; and that the City Council strongly supports training and drill activities to ensure public safety.

3. Hear a presentation regarding the program and services of the Fire Department's Fire and Life Safety Education Section.

Chief Beck noted that emergency response is the high-profile service provided by the Fire Department, but he explained that the Fire Department considers that function to be crisis management. He explained that prevention is the goal of the Fire Department. Chief Beck stated that Fire and Life Safety Education is a key area that impacts the community. Chief Beck advised that although this area has experienced substantial budget cuts, many programs have been maintained as a result of staff's personal commitment, and he commended them for their efforts.

Assistant Chief Puckett advised that the goal of the Department is to prevent incidents from occurring, and he acknowledged the many hours donated to this effort by volunteers.

Fire and Life Safety Education Administrator Deena Barbara addressed the Committee and advised that national, state and local statistics have been reviewed in order to determine the community's needs relative to preventing death and injury. Utilizing a PowerPoint presentation (a copy is available for review in the City Clerk's Office), Ms. Barbara provided information that identified the needs for which the programs were created. She advised that the department works closely with the National Safe Kids Coalition and statistics from that organization indicate the following:

- Unintentional injury remains the leading cause of death among children ages 14 and under in the United States.
- Each year, 1 out of every 4 children sustains an injury serious enough to require medical attention.

Ms. Barbara noted that despite budget cuts to many other programs, the Mesa Public Schools continues to provide the Fire and Life Safety Education programs.

To address the needs of senior citizens, Ms. Barbara advised that a home safety check program was developed that is implemented by trained volunteers. She provided the statistical information listed below:

- Adults 55+ are twice as likely to be killed or injured by fires or falls compared to the population at large.
- In the home, there is a fatal injury every 16 minutes and a disabling injury every 4 seconds.
- The four leading fatal events in the home are falls, suffocation by an ingested object, poisoning and fires.
- Injuries and deaths have enormous financial, emotional and social effects on the community and society as a whole.

Ms. Barbara outlined other programs offered by the department.

Drowning Prevention Program

Noting that this program targets both children and parents, Ms. Barbara presented the following information:

- Drowning is the leading cause of unintentional injury-related death among children ages 1 to 4.
- In 2004, 19 preventable water related incidents occurred in the City of Mesa. 15 of those cases involved children under 12 years of age.
- Typical costs for a near drowning victim can range from \$75,000 for initial treatment to \$180,000/year for long-term care.

Ms. Barbara stated that water safety education is offered through the Mesa Public Schools, the Family Tree Program and in conjunction with the Parks and Recreation Swim Program. She added that information is also provided through water safety events, mailers and public service announcements.

Child Passenger Safety Program

- Motor vehicle crashes remain the leading cause of unintentional injury-related death among children ages 14 and under.
- In 2004, the Fire and Life Safety Education section installed over 1,200 car seats.

Ms. Barbara reported that 98 percent of the inspected car seats were installed and used incorrectly. She added that partnerships exist with the schools, the Police Department and the hospitals regarding car seat education. Ms. Barbara also noted that Mesa hosts an annual car seat event at Mesa Community College, and the public is invited to have their car seats inspected. She advised that the event is televised on Channel 12, and that representatives from other Valley fire and police departments and hospitals participate.

Risk Watch School Program

Ms. Barbara advised that this comprehensive injury prevention program is taught by firefighters in 56 elementary schools for children in kindergarten through sixth grade. She cited examples of topics as follows: kindergarten students would be taught that matches are tools rather than toys, fifth graders would learn about first aid, and sixth graders are instructed on the use of the Heimlich maneuver.

High School Driver Safety Program

- Teaches high school students the consequences of unsafe driving.
- Offered in partnership with Mesa Public Schools to six area high schools.

Ms. Barbara added that other Valley communities and the City of Tucson have contacted them in order to duplicate this successful program in their community.

Firesetter Program

This program is directed at children between the ages of 4 and 17 who have a problem relative to setting fires. Participants are often referred to the program by parents, school officials, teachers and counselors, physicians, the police department or the court system.

Lifesaver Program

Lifesaver is a program that has been taught to citizens of all ages, from 13 to over 70 years of age, and provides instruction in the following areas:

- CPR and the Heimlich Maneuver.
- First aid skills for choking, bleeding and shock.
- Familiarization with the 9-1-1 system and the Fire Department.
- What to do in an emergency.

Bike and Pedestrian Safety

Ms. Barbara advised that research indicates that wearing a helmet while riding a bicycle can reduce the risk of head injury by as much as 85 percent. She noted that this program was initiated at the request of Hermosa Vista Elementary School, which has approximately 140 students who ride bicycles to and from school. Responding to staff concerns that only 40 of these students wear helmets, Ms. Barbara stated that a program was developed which includes classroom education and incentives to students observed wearing helmets. She reported that the program has been very successful, and that a presentation would be made to the Mesa School Board in the near future to propose expanding the program. Ms. Barbara also advised that the International Walk Your Child to School Day Program has been presented at Lincoln and Edison Elementary Schools to address concerns relative to these particular schools.

Bilingual Program

Ms. Barbara noted that 20 percent of Mesa's population is Hispanic, and that a full-time, bilingual specialist is now available in their office to teach programs and hold events in both English and Spanish. She added that a special program, Families Traveling to Safety, targets Hispanic preschoolers and their parents who are seeking a GED (General Education Diploma) and provides information on fire, water and motor vehicle safety.

Senior Safety Program

Targeting adults age 65 and older, the one-hour presentation covers smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, home escape plans, fire and fall dangers around the home, and oxygen safety. Ms. Barbara also noted that following the presentation seniors are made aware of the PRAISE (Prevention & Risk Assessment in Senior Environments) Program.

Prevention & Risk Assessment in Senior Environments (PRAISE)

Ms. Barbara advised that ten trained volunteers are available to promote life safety by checking smoke detectors, extinguishers, extension cords, throw rugs, and lighting in the home environment. She noted that this service is particularly valuable for residents in wheelchairs. Ms. Barbara added that Lowe's has donated fire extinguishers and smoke detectors for seniors who may not be able to afford the items.

Connector Program

With 110 trained volunteers, the Connector Program assists the Fire Department by directing citizens to the appropriate social service agencies. The program operates in partnership with Mesa Community College to provide the following services:

- Fire Department support.
- Fire victim assistance.
- Social service referrals.
- Motorist assistance.
- Food Boxes.

Community Response Team (CRT)

The Community Response Team consists of 25 trained volunteers who are on call seven days a week between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 1:00 a.m. to provide grief support and community resource information. Ms. Barbara stated that the volunteers provide emotional support, assist in the death notification process, contact family members and assist with funeral arrangements. She noted that this service enables emergency response crews to be available to respond to other calls.

Ms. Barbara summarized that the public response to the programs has been overwhelmingly positive.

In response to a question from Chairman Whalen, Ms. Barbara advised that her staff consists of four full-time specialists, an administrative assistant and a part-time fire prevention assistant in addition to the volunteers and the firefighters who provide assistance with many of the programs.

Committeemember Thom suggested that a safety program be created to address the risk of elderly citizens falling in swimming pools as a result of medication related problems, or citizens utilizing walkers or wheelchairs.

Responding to Committeemember Thom's comment regarding the fact that some Gilbert schools are located in Mesa, Ms. Barbara noted that these schools receive emergency response services from the City of Mesa and that beginning next year, these schools will be also receive safety education programming.

In response to a question from Committeemember Griswold, Ms. Barbara advised that the car seat programs are available for presentations to groups.

Chairman Whalen expressed concern regarding the safety of pools owned by residents without children that could be easily accessed by neighborhood children as a result of inadequate gates and fencing.

Ms. Barbara advised that her department is attempting to address the issue by sending a quarterly mailer to every pool owner in the City of Mesa warning that a "silent killer" is present in their neighborhood. She stated that staff intends to go door-to-door in a manner similar to that employed for the smoke detector program in order to provide information to the pool owners. Ms. Barbara further stated that cooperation with the Mesa Public Schools will continue, and that the department recently joined the East Valley Safety Alliance, which is operated by Banner Desert Hospital. She added that public service announcements would continue to be used in order to increase public awareness.

In response to Chairman Whalen's question regarding the possibility of assigning Code Compliance personnel to address the issue of inadequate gates and fencing, Ms. Barbara expressed the opinion that Code Compliance could be effective in this area.

Committeemember Griswold noted the importance of teaching children how to swim with their clothing on and how to handle the panic of being in a water-related, dangerous situation.

Responding to Chairman Whalen's question regarding a possible overlap of services provided by the CRT and the Police Department's Victim Assistance Unit, Ms. Barbara advised that the two groups have a good working relationship. She noted that the Victim Assistance Unit targets criminal investigation situations and CRT responds to situations involving natural deaths. Ms. Barbara also noted that a couple of the volunteers participate in both programs.

Chief Beck commented on Ms. Barbara's excellent job performance. He noted that the programs attempt to focus on children and the elderly, two of the largest populations in Mesa, and the Hispanic community, which is the fastest growing population in the City. Chief Beck stated that he also wanted to recognize the citizen volunteers who enable the department to provide many of these programs.

Chairman Whalen thanked staff for the presentations.

4. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Fire Committee meeting adjourned at 10:35 a.m.

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Fire Committee of the City of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 20th day of January 2005. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

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Attachment