

FIRE COMMITTEE MINUTES

September 17, 1998

The Fire Committee of the City of Mesa met in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on September 17, 1998 at 9:35 a.m.

COMMITTEE PRESENT

Dennis Kavanaugh, Chairman
Jim Davidson
Keno Hawker

COUNCIL PRESENT

John Giles

STAFF PRESENT

C.K. Luster
Cindy Barris
Gary Bradbury
Dennis Compton
Gil Damiani
Bob DeLeon
Carl Geis
Pat Harman
Mike Hutchinson
Barbara Jones

STAFF PRESENT (CONT.)

Dorinda Larsen
Jeff Martin
Chuck Monroe
Tom Remes
Jerry Suftko
Paul Wilson

OTHERS PRESENT

Others

1. Hear a presentation, discuss, and consider Emergency Medical Service (EMS) transport program.

Fire Chief Dennis Compton introduced EMS Battalion Chief Gary Bradbury, contract administrator for the Fire Department's transport program.

Chief Bradbury provided background information pertaining to the Emergency Medical Service (EMS) transport program, outlining the City's progression from a rotation system to a sole provider (Southwest Ambulance) in 1990. Chief Bradbury advised that the original agreement with Southwest Ambulance was a three-year contract with options for two additional years. Chief Bradbury reported that the initial contract was extended and that a new contract was awarded to Southwest Ambulance in 1995. Chief Bradbury stated that the current contract will expire in March 1999.

Chief Bradbury commented that Southwest Ambulance (presently known as Southwest/Rural Metro) has provided exemplary service and administered the contract in good faith. Chief Bradbury stated that the local management staff and philosophy remain intact and that the public/private partnership has resulted in cooperative and effective administrative functions, functional and effective field operations and interpersonal skills, and high-quality customer service and patient care.

Chief Bradbury said that a review process for the transportation agreement was organized in January 1998 and utilized a team approach consisting of brainstorming, a review of other current contracts, a detailed review of the current contract, and the integration of new concepts. Chief Bradbury noted the diverse team membership and stated that a comprehensive contract proposal has subsequently been developed that enhances the current public private partnership and allows for effective and efficient future transport services while retaining the general structure and concept of the existing transport agreement. Chief Bradbury said that it is the recommendation of the Fire Department that the City proceed through the contract negotiation process with the current provider.

Chief Bradbury responded to questions from the Committee pertaining to licensing requirements and the limited number of licensed providers in the State.

Chief Compton advised that the contract is a service contract and that the City pays no fees. Chief Compton clarified that staff is requesting approval to proceed through the contract negotiation process with Southwest/Rural Metro and that a final contract will be submitted for Council approval at a later date. Chief Compton spoke in favor of restricting the duration of a new contract (possibly a two-year contract with a one-year extension) given the significant changes occurring in managed health care with respect to EMS and advances in alternative transportation (nonemergency transport where ambulance service may not be required). Chief Compton noted the exceptional service provided to date by Southwest/Rural Metro and said that continued service during the next two to three years will provide an opportunity for the City to develop a model for a future transportation program.

Committeemember Hawker expressed concern relative to continued service without a Request for Proposal (RFP).

City Manager Charles Luster stated reluctance to issue an RFP given the current volatile nature of transportation service. Mr. Luster noted the short-term duration of the proposal and the possibility that a trauma center may be located in Mesa in the future. Mr. Luster indicated agreement with the request from the Fire Department.

Mr. Luster and Chief Compton spoke regarding the extensive effort involved in developing the existing public/private partnership and the preference to establish a model for future service rather than contracting with a new provider at this time.

Committeemember Hawker stated the opinion that the City would be remiss not to issue an RFP.

Committeemember Davidson commented concerning the importance of opportunities for new providers but noted the redevelopment efforts of Southwest/Rural Metro in the downtown area and their favorable presence in the community. Committeemember Davidson expressed agreement with the proposed short-term approach.

It was moved by Committeemember Davidson, seconded by Chairman Kavanaugh, that the Committee recommend to the Council that staff be directed to proceed with contract negotiations regarding a possible extension of the current contract with Southwest/Rural Metro.

Chairman Kavanaugh stated that the City will be reviewing a model for future transportation service which may differ significantly from current practices given mandates for managed care.

Upon a tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES - Davidson-Kavanaugh
NAYS - Hawker

Chairman Kavanaugh declared the motion carried by majority vote.

2. Discuss automatic fire sprinkler protection.

Chairman Kavanaugh advised that the City of Scottsdale currently has an automatic fire sprinkler protection system and that Council recently indicated an interest in pursuing discussion concerning this issue.

Chief Compton said that in response to Council's request for additional information, staff has prepared material pertaining to a strategy for providing automatic fire sprinkler protection in the City. Chief Compton requested direction from the Committee concerning the proposal.

Chief Compton introduced Battalion Chief (Personnel and Safety) Bob DeLeon and Fire Marshal Chuck Monroe.

Chief DeLeon noted the significant growth projected for Mesa in the near future and the anticipated population of 750,000 by the year 2015. Chief DeLeon stated that the City has an opportunity to positively impact the safety of citizens/new structures by requiring fire sprinkler systems in all future occupancies in Mesa. Chief DeLeon spoke regarding the importance of fire sprinklers for life safety, noting that sprinklers operate automatically; prevent fast, intense fires; allow occupants to exit buildings (sound an alarm); and provide immediate fire protection 24 hours a day.

Chief DeLeon reported that nationally, fires injure and kill more people than numerous other natural disasters combined; 80 percent of fire deaths occur in residential homes; and the majority of deaths are comprised of the elderly, the disabled, the poor, and the young. Chief DeLeon advised that 63 percent of fire fatalities (59 percent in homes) could be reduced with automatic sprinklers and smoke detectors and that average property loss nationwide is 38 percent less in homes with sprinklers than in those without sprinklers. Chief DeLeon stated that in Scottsdale, up to 71 lives have been saved (5 verifiable saves) with automatic fire sprinklers; fire loss has decreased 84 percent following the passage of the sprinkler ordinance in 1985 (with a 30 percent increase in population); and cost savings have been realized by citizens, businesses, and the City.

Chief DeLeon related three specific incidents in Mesa illustrating how fire damage has been significantly minimized due to commercial automatic fire sprinklers.

Chief DeLeon said that in Mesa, sprinkler systems are currently not required in commercial occupancies of less than 5,000 square feet/less than three stories in height (Group E, F, M, B, and R, Division 1) or in any residential structures. Chief DeLeon stated that it is the preference of the Fire Department that all new commercial buildings regardless of size or occupancy and all new homes regardless of size or location be fully sprinklered. Chief DeLeon outlined a two-step process to attain this goal, including: a) zero square foot allowance for commercial buildings, and b) all new construction completely sprinklered regardless of size or occupancy type.

Chief DeLeon presented statistical data pertaining to the number of fires, amount of fire loss, and number of fire fatalities in Mesa during the last 10 years. Chief DeLeon expressed the opinion that automatic fire sprinklers will save lives and property in Mesa.

Committeemember Davidson suggested that staff provide information pertaining to maintenance costs, malfunctioning equipment/accidental discharges, installation costs/requirements, insurance coverage, and savings realized due to controlled losses.

In response to a question from Committeemember Hawker, Chief DeLeon reported that automatic fire sprinkler installation costs in Scottsdale are typically less than carpet installation costs (production homes) and will continue to decrease as demand increases. Chief DeLeon advised that attic installations vary in commercial structures and are offered as an option in residential structures.

In response to a question from Committeemember Davidson, Chief DeLeon stated that it would be staff's intention to research methods to allow commercial entities to recoup costs associated with the automatic fire sprinklers in order to remain in operation.

Discussion ensued concerning the importance of input from groups such as the homebuilding industry and the City's economic development personnel as well as the feasibility of voluntary (optional) versus mandatory implementation. Committeemembers indicated an interest in pursuing the issue but suggested that staff conduct research to address concerns that may be presented.

3. Hear a presentation concerning the Partners in Prevention (PIP) program.

Fire Marshal Chuck Monroe stated that approximately one year ago, staff began reviewing self-inspection programs throughout the country and established a pilot program in the downtown area entitled Partners in Prevention (PIP). Mr. Monroe said that staff anticipates complete implementation of the PIP program by January 1999.

Mr. Monroe advised that the intent of the PIP program is to contact each business owner on an annual basis and share the responsibility for keeping each business safe from fire and life safety hazards. Mr. Monroe defined hazard classifications (high, medium, and low) and provided examples of each. Mr. Monroe stated that the PIP program will focus on low-hazard businesses.

Mr. Monroe explained differences between previous practices (code enforcers, one sided, all hazards) and the PIP program (educators, challenge to partner, low hazards). Mr. Monroe highlighted two essential attitudes pertaining to the PIP plan: a) each contact with the customer is important and may be the only one the City has and b) every member's goal is to prevent incidents from occurring through public education; injury, fire, and accident prevention; self-inspection; and enforcement activities.

Mr. Monroe stated that the PIP program works with the City's Systems Maintenance Program, supports the efforts of inspectors, provide pre-planning opportunities and on-site familiarization, and measures the needs of businesses. Mr. Monroe said that the PIP program is structured to assist in providing yearly contact with an emphasis on education, provide firefighters an opportunity to become familiar with all occupancies, and improve the efficiency of time spent with business customers.

Mr. Monroe expressed pride in Mesa's PIP program, which he believes is unique and among the highest-rated programs throughout the nation. Mr. Monroe distributed to the Committee a packet of materials provided to business owners who participate in the PIP program.

Chairman Kavanaugh commended the Fire Department for their efforts.

4. Adjournment.

Chief DeLeon outlined daily events scheduled for October 3-10, 1998 in celebration of the City's 100-year anniversary and the National Fire Prevention Association's Fire Prevention Week. Chief DeLeon encouraged attendance at the events.

Chairman Kavanaugh noted the importance of the events for the community and encouraged media dissemination of information. Chairman Kavanaugh additionally encouraged the Committee to participate in a ride-along with Fire Department personnel.

Committeemember Hawker commended the Fire Department for the summary of agenda items and meeting presentation.

Without objection, the Fire Committee Meeting adjourned at 10:36 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 17th day of September 1998. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

Dated this ____ day of _____ 1998

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK