



## MESA 2025: FINANCING THE FUTURE CITIZEN COMMITTEE

November 10, 2004

The Mesa 2025: Financing the Future Citizen Committee met in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on November 10, 2004 at 5:30 p.m.

### COMMITTEE PRESENT

Kyle Jones, Chairman  
Kirk Adams  
Jill Benza  
Pat Esparza  
Don Grant  
Rex Griswold  
Greg Holtz  
Aaron Huber  
Eric Jackson  
Dennis Kavanaugh  
Mark Killian  
Patricia Schroeder  
Robin White

### COMMITTEE ABSENT

Robert McNichols  
Scott Rhodes

### EX-OFFICIO MEMBER

Keno Hawker

### STAFF PRESENT

Mike Hutchinson

#### 1. Follow up on items from last meeting.

Chairman Jones asked whether any of the members had questions relative to the previous presentation and there being none, he proceeded with the rest of the meeting.

#### 2. Approval of minutes from the previous meetings.

The minutes of previous meetings were unanimously approved by the members of the Committee,

#### 3. Presentation by the Fire Department.

Fire Chief Harry Beck and members of his staff highlighted a power point presentation on the department's history, current status and future goals. (A detailed copy of the presentation was distributed to the members of the Committee.)

Committeemember Esparza asked how the department's four minutes or less response time goal was determined and whether that was a national goal.

Chief Beck responded that they have learned that if they can get to scene of an accident within four minutes they have the technology and expertise to save lives. He said that if it takes much longer than four minutes, the chances of bringing victims back are very low. He added that in order to provide effective service that saves people's lives, they need to respond within four minutes or less.

Assistant Chief Bob DeLeon responded to a question from Committeemember Esparza and discussed the Sister City Program. He explained that the department (the City) has donated apparatus to one of Mesa's sister cities (Guayamus, Mexico) and also provided training on the various equipment. He said there is no formalized program in place and training is provided on an as-needed basis to ensure that the recipients safely operate the equipment.

Committeemember Adams asked whether the department's accreditation with the National Commission that occurred in 2001 included benchmarks for response times. He asked what the benchmark response time was, if any, and if not, he asked what kind of goals the department had to meet to achieve the accreditation.

Emergency Services Chief Gil Damiani advised that in the department's accreditation document they used four minutes or less 90% of the time as a benchmark. He noted that that is actually a NFPA standard that has been adopted. He added that at the time they were using a three minute response time, which they were not even close to achieving so they decided that in order to achieve accreditation they needed to adopt an achievable, reasonable response time goal and therefore four minutes or less 90% of the time was selected.

Chief Beck added that during the accreditation process the department's internal goals are evaluated and they receive assistance in measuring just how well they are meeting the goals. He said they helped them put benchmarks together and put tools in place and said that each year the department had to report back on its progress with regards to the goals in order to be re-accredited. He emphasized that the process is ongoing.

Committeemember White commented on the donation of equipment and training provided by the department and asked who pays for the cost of the department traveling to the sister city to provide the training. Chief Beck responded that there are no costs associated other than getting the vehicle down to the border. He stated that training is voluntarily provided and they spend approximately four hours with the group and then assist over the telephone on an as-needed basis.

Committeemember Killian asked for an overview on the relationship between Homeland Security, the Fire Department and the Police Department, how all of that works and whether regular meetings are held to interface with first responders.

Chief Damiani reported that there are three goals for the entire Emergency Management process, the first is response, the second is early identification and the third is prevention. He added that the early identification and prevention are mostly police activities and noted that their role in meeting the crisis is huge. He said they spend a lot of time with them, coordinating efforts and trying to help them work through their needs.

Emergency Management Deputy Chief Paul Carbajal added that a police officer is assigned to the Emergency Management Division, Lt. Wade Pew. He stated that his office is located right next to

the Chief's and they share information and resources as far as grant funding. He advised that the rapid response team's part of the monies that is received for that particular grant goes right to supporting the police component, the law enforcement component of the rapid response team. He added that part of the MMRS funding goes right into the law enforcement component, Homeland Security funding, which supports the bomb team with robots for the bomb squads and other needed equipment. He emphasized that they work together as a team. He stated that staff is trained to be aware of anything that appears out of the ordinary and call the police so they can check it out.

Chief Beck commented that there is a growing need for that type of teamwork because the indicators are constantly changing and new approaches to them come forward on an ongoing basis.

Committeemember Adams asked what the turnover rate is with the department's employees and noted that he did not come across any comparison charts showing the City's rate of pay for officers compared to other cities and the County. He asked where the City stood as far as this issue.

Chief Beck responded that most of the cities try to stay close to each other in salary levels and added that Mesa tries to be in the "middle of the pack." Chief DeLeon added that the department's turnover rate is approximately half of what the other City department's are and one third of the police department's turnover rate. He said that they do a good job recruiting and maintaining employees and said that is why they put a lot of effort into the testing processes. He stated that the Human Resources Department conducts salary surveys and reported that Mesa appears to be within the market of all of the municipal governments in the valley. He added that firefighters are hired for the long term and tend to remain with the department.

Committeemember Adams asked what incentives or pay increases must be offered in order to attract additional recruits.

Chief DeLeon said that that is a \$100,000 question because over the next 1.5 years they know of 23 people who are going to retire as a result of the DROP Program and in addition, there will be other retirements and people leaving to work in other areas. He reported that they received a total of 1,600 applications for positions and out of those only 500 remain after the first testing. He said they hope to finally have 80 to 100 people to select from but pointed out that they are the same individuals testing for positions in other valley, state and national departments. He emphasized the importance of maintaining a competitive pay package, benefits, etc. in order to attract and retain the best candidates.

Chief DeLeon commented that the testing processes are very strict and the reason for the large number of applicants is the fact that the Fire Department's minimum requirements are quite low. He said applicants must be 18 years of age and possess a high school diploma. He noted that the minimum requirements serve as a recruiting tool because applicants become interested in the position, participate in the testing process, which includes behavioral based questions, oral boards, reading comprehension and all sorts of orientation questions. He said a good number of the candidates who do not pass the tests go out and expand their education so that they can be more qualified candidates the next time around. He stated that occasionally they get people who are paramedic trained.

Chief DeLeon explained that the departments that lose the greatest number of people after training them are the smaller ones since the candidates want to work in larger departments that offer greater promotional opportunities. He said Mesa does not have to recruit, the candidates know what the City has to offer.

Committeemember Adams asked how many people the department was short of at the current time and how many people they will need over the next five to ten years in order to continue to provide quality service to the citizens.

Chief Beck noted that right now the department is down ten positions and they are just finishing up a testing process and will then conduct an academy. Chief DeLeon added that if there are 3, 4 or 5 individuals in the system and the department has no current vacancies, they would like the opportunity to make those candidates offers ahead of time, before the positions open up. He stated that they would like to bring them on board and have them do jobs that need to be done because they are short on staff anyway and then when the next academy occurs, they would participate in it. He reported that by the end of 2006, on top of the ten vacancies they are looking at 23 additional people who will be leaving as a result of the DROP program. He pointed out that some people will need special certifications that can take up to 10 months to obtain and so that has to be taken into account. He emphasized the importance of recruiting in the schools and said at the current time there is only one person working on recruitment and that person also does the testing and participates in the promotional process. He said they do not have the staff to go out and actively recruit the way they should. He discussed the City's diversified population and said they need to attract more Hispanics and female candidates.

Chief Beck stated that in terms of the department's attrition rate, it is around 10 a year and on top of that there are the DROP retirements. He added that the need for additional fire stations also increase the need for added staffing and training. He said they are forecasting that by 2005 they will have 355 firefighters, by 2010 they will need 455 and by 2025, 760 firefighters will be needed. He explained that the numbers are based on a flat 3.5% growth rate and do not account for any aging population issues, DROP retirements or other factors. He added that the figure also does not include attrition.

Committeemember Adams asked what the numbers would be if they included attrition and Chief Beck said he will get that information together and provide it to the Committee.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that people can remain in the DROP program for up to five years but they can also retire any time after two years; and the fact that the department needs to be in a position so that by the end of 2009, with no growth factored in, they are prepared to hire 144 replacement firefighters for people eligible for retirement.

Committeemember Adams stressed the importance of determining a dollar figure because it represents a tremendous amount of money that needs to go into the planning. He said that people take the service they receive for granted and expect it to continue and there is going to be a large hole to fill and they need to plan ahead.

Chief Beck agreed that the department must remain competitive in the market.

Committeemember Kavanaugh asked what the average response time was in the western part of the City versus the eastern part. Chief Damiani responded that 50% of the calls in the City are west of Gilbert Road where the response time of four minutes is achieved 75% of the time. He added that in the far eastern portion of the City, that figure is closer to 55%.

In response to a question from Councilman Kavanaugh relative to residential fire sprinklers, Chief Beck said that residential fire sprinklers are a major issue for fire protection in a growing City like

Mesa. He stated that it is a fact that fire sprinklers save lives and noted that more lives are lost nationally in homes than any other place. He noted that the cost of fire sprinklers is relatively inexpensive and doesn't need to be backed up or reprogrammed, it lasts the life of the building provided it is maintained at a decent level. He reported that Scottsdale has had residential sprinklers in place for quite some time and stated that the department is going to take another hard look at this issue.

Deputy Chief Dan Stubbs commented that between 70% to 80% of all fires occur in residential occupancies and said while the sprinklers may not decrease the number of fires, they will decrease the amount of damage and loss of lives that occur. He reported that buildings with sprinklers experience approximately 1/10<sup>th</sup> of the damage that buildings without sprinklers do.

Committeemember Kavanaugh noted that from time to time, critics of fire departments will say they the way to save money is to cut back on staff and that it is not necessary to have four people on a unit. He added that they question the need for a paramedic on the unit and asked for input on this issue.

Chief Beck responded that a national standard is in place that requires at least four firefighters on a fire fighting unit in order to function, not only in terms of service delivery on an effective level, but also for the safety of the firefighters. He said that he was involved in a Fire Department Analysis Project at Oklahoma State University several years ago and they conducted a very detailed analysis of what a fire company does when they go to a fire. He stated that they performed experiments to determine what would happen if one of the members was pulled off the unit and reported that the delivery suffered significantly and safety was compromised. He encouraged the members of the Committee to do a ride along and witness first hand what the firefighters experience on a daily basis. He added that when people are overloaded things get missed and it is extremely critical that the units be adequately staffed.

Committeemember Jackson asked what portion of the department's funding comes from the current Quality of Life tax and Management Assistant/Budget Analyst Dorinda Larson reported that they currently receive \$5 million from the Quality of Life Fund out of the \$49 million budget. She explained that the department receives the part of the funding that is in the quarter cent Quality of Life Tax, which is ongoing. She informed him that the actual vote itself was for 65 firefighters to be added into the response system and said they are currently at 52, which represents four engine companies and there is one more plus the people to be put in service by 2008.

Ms. Larson explained that the department does not receive any funding from impact fees into the operations of the department and stated they are used by the financial staff for debt service and that type of thing. Financial Services Director Bryan Raines noted that they use the impact fees in the Fire Department to pay for all of the capital facility needs that arise when they add new stations. He said they cannot use the monies for remodels and projects like that but they can use them to add capacity to the system by building a new station or bringing on a new ladder truck or pumper. He added that the impact fees from development help offset the debt service costs for those new facilities.

In response to a question from Committeemember Jackson. Ms. Larson said that capital improvement projects could have multiple funding sources to get off of the ground and then monies for ongoing costs typically come from the general fund.

Chairman Jones emphasized that the revenue streams have restrictions on how they can be used.

Committeemember Adams asked whether there is a national standard for firefighters per 1,000 people and if so how that was arrived at. Chief Beck stated that he was not aware of a standard and said it is more the result of a community trying to provide a level of service that is both needed and wanted. He said they try to provide the best possible service with the available resources and so they do the math and figure out what that is in terms of firefighters per 1,000 residents. He added that the 1 per 1,000 appears to be the norm.

Committeemember Adams commented on the fact that the response times for surrounding municipalities are "all over the map" and asked what factors determine response time. Chief Beck responded that generally service delivery is looked upon basically in two dimensions, the distance traveled and the level of service provided. He noted that in extended areas, a community that is very rural will have longer response times because of the traveling distance between emergency locations.

Committeemember Griswold asked for clarification on the turnover rate over the past few years in the fire department and Chief Beck said the number is very low and he will get that information to the Committee. Committeemember Griswold said he understands that the department is run very well and has low turnover and commended the department on their efforts.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that the City does not charge for responses to calls in County islands; the fact that they occur under 100 times a year; the fact that the City does, however, have contracts with businesses that are located in County islands such as the GM Proving Grounds and Empire Machinery who pay a certain dollar amount for protection and emergency service; the fact that a response agreement with the County exists whereby the City keeps the firefighters operating at a safe level; the fact that in 2003 the department responded to 80 County island calls; and the fact that 78% of the responses are medical related rather than fire.

Committeemember Griswold asked whether the department has ever looked into using smaller emergency vehicles in an effort to cut costs and Chief Beck said that they explored that concept with their ladder companies, the most expensive equipment they buy. He noted that they have ladder tenders, which are basically smaller, less expensive units with a slightly lower operations and maintenance cost, but said they do not provide the full compliment of services. He stated that looking at more economical methods of providing service is an ongoing occurrence. He advised that a committee has been established within the fire department to take a look at what some of the alternatives are as far as transportation to and from medical emergencies.

Chief Beck added that when they start looking at vehicles of lesser capacity, they start "chipping" away at their service, the one stop shop fire service that has been extremely effective and popular in the community. He stated that they will continue to look at this issue and hopefully come up with an innovative and unique approach.

Chief DeLeon noted that in 2000 the department had a turnover rate of 4.3%, which includes all separations from the department including terminations, retirees, etc. He added that in 2003-04 it was 1.38%. He reported that the operating cost per mile on the department's engine and ladder companies is 85 cents per mile.

Committeemember Killian said that his family had two major medical emergencies last spring and in both cases, the department was very responsive and handled the situations in a very professional manner. He said despite the good work the department carries out, if the City does not have

enough emergency rooms there are going to be serious problems. He asked whether Mesa has a sufficient number at the current time.

Chief Beck responded that this is clearly a challenge that Mesa faces and added that Banner is trying to change that. He said that there are some new hospitals being constructed in Gilbert and stated that they look at hospital support as a regional issue as far as firefighting. He added that he believes they are catching up but a problem still exists because of the explosive growth Mesa and other cities are experiencing. He advised that if the City continues to attract a retirement age population along with the baby boomer situation, there is going to be an extremely high demand for emergency departments. He noted that there are a couple of hospitals on the drawing board and said it is not unusual to see ambulances waiting in a line at some hospitals.

Committee Killian expressed the opinion that as the Committee continues its mission, this is an issue that perhaps should be looked at. He said he doesn't know whether or not the Committee wishes to tackle this issue but added that it needs to be looked into because there are not enough hospitals in the east valley. He stated that both times he and his family had to go to the emergency room, there was "no room at the inn" and people should not have to wait hours to obtain treatment.

Chief Beck commented that health care is in distress throughout the entire country.

Chief Bradbury said that he has been working with the emergency medical service process for some time and stated that the hospital diversion and overcrowded process has really hit the department hard over the last five years. He noted that the problem ties up their units and impacts response times. He said they tried to view the issue as a system problem but it is really a hospital problem and the real backup is at the hospitals' doors. He informed the Committee that over the last five years there seems to have been a communication disconnect between the operation hospital staff and the administrative staff but added that they are beginning to bridge the gap. He also commented on the fact that there are some proposals out there for hospitals to be constructed in both the east and west valley. He pointed out that hospitals and the medical community are funded through healthcare, which has experienced severe difficulties over the last five to ten years.

Chief Beck advised that they have approached the hospitals and discussed the design of the intake process, mostly on the exterior of the buildings, because they need to get the units in and back out in service as quickly as possible.

Committeemember Killian commented that a number of years ago when Springerville was about to lose their hospital, a bill was run that allowed communities to establish taxing districts to directly fund hospitals. He said he does not know whether the legislation is still on the books but added that this is something that should be explored.

Chairman Jones asked whether any figures were available as to how many people are calling the fire department for their medical needs because they can't get into an emergency room or they don't have any insurance coverage. Chief Beck responded that they deal with those situations every day and said he is not sure whether they have kept any statistics on the actual number of calls or tried to break them out through a coding process, but they do impact service.

Chairman Jones said that this is an area that will have to be addressed at some point if it gets too far out of hand and Chief Beck concurred.

Additional discussion ensued relative to the fact that the department needs two additional stations on the west side of the City where half of the service calls come from; the fact that the centralized medical component in the future for the City of Mesa is pretty visionary and the department is not aware of any other systems exactly like it; the fact that the closest system is in Texas in the Parkland Medical System where they contract with a single hospital to provide medical control; the fact that it is rare for a paramedic to actually talk directly to a physician, it's third-party for the most part; the fact that the concept of centralized medical control has been in existence for approximately ten years; the fact that there are currently eight units handling over 3,200 calls and one that is at the 4,200 level, the fact that an infill problem exists and population densities are building up in certain areas where they don't need to add fire stations, they just need to add companies and response units; and challenges associated with projecting out to 2025.

Ex Officio Member Hawker stated that they are trying to project out to 2025 and determine a number for the fire department at build out and another number showing what is sustainable over time. He said that information would be very useful and Chief Damiani said they would provide it at another time.

In response to questions from Committeemember Griswold relative to manpower utilization, Chief Bradbury explained that the department provides the first response and they have the infrastructure to be able to get to the scene 75% of the time within four minutes on the west side of the City. He noted that the transportation service, Southwest Ambulance, is not geared up to provide that service and so they show up at the scene and do patient stabilization. He said they turn stable patients with good vital signs who are expected to do well on the trip to the hospital over to Southwest Ambulance who are required by contract to have a paramedic and EMT on the ambulance. He stated that that leaves one paramedic advance life support provider from the private sector, Southwest Ambulance Company, to provide the service to the hospital. He noted that they turn patients over about 78% of the time on a consistent basis and that allows the first responders to go back into service. He added that when dealing with critical patients who need advance life support care from the scene to the hospital, they provide a fire department paramedic in the rear of the ambulance in addition to Southwest's paramedic who is also in the back of the ambulance. He informed the Committee that according to their current cost recovery contract they are receiving \$77 per patient when they do ride-a-longs so there is a cost benefit back to the City for providing a subsidy to the private provider when they take control of the patient. He said that without that, they would be severely challenged to maintain any type of response standard. He further stated that the system works very well for them.

Committeemember Griswold commented that he has had many dialogues with hospital administrators over the same problem of service, particularly in the east valley. He said he has heard the same responses a number of times -- that they lose money on emergency wards. He added that they question why they should add more beds to lose money faster. He added that Mesa is one of the largest cities in the United States that does not have a teaching hospital and stated that they also don't have a pool of residents, training doctors, etc. He noted that both of those points work against them in trying to provide the quality service they want for residents.

Committeemember Adams expressed the opinion that the most important factor for the budget is response time and asked staff to define the medical benefits, specifically what is gained medically for a patient for each minute that they improve or each segment of time they improve. Chief Beck responded that they use the worst-case scenario to set up their system. He stated that they know if a person is not breathing or does not have circulation for four minutes, they begin to die biologically.

He added that every minute that goes by thereafter makes it more and more difficult to bring them back. He emphasized that those medical facts have been proven.

Committeemember Benza asked what the personnel costs were and whether anything was built in as far as inflation costs.

Ms. Larson said as far as personnel costs, they took the \$29.1 million and divided it by 355 firefighters and said it comes out at about \$81,000. She reported that that would be the average salary of all of the ranks of sworn personnel plus their benefits, the matching City costs. She added that they should be able to take the \$81,000 and multiply it by the 760 and come up with \$62.2 million.

Committeemember Benza stated that it comes out to approximately \$130 less at that point than it did in 2005, so there was nothing added as far as inflation or anything like that. Ms. Larson said it would be just rounding, it is today's dollars.

Chief Cameli pointed out that it is today's dollars and also includes benefits such as social security, state retirement, etc.

Committeemember Killian commented that as a community he believes it is good to revisit our history and remember that in this City at one time there was one hospital and then the community came together and built Southside, which is now a DES building. He added that Lutheran Hospital followed and the Dobson family graciously donated the land for Desert Samaritan. He noted that there was a social contract that the hospitals had that they were granted preferable tax treatment in exchange for particular services that were rendered. He expressed the opinion that the problem is that the social contract has been forgotten. He discussed community wide efforts to raise money for hospitals in the past and said it appears like a lot of those contributions from the community have been lost in the shuffle with the corporate giants coming in and doing what they are doing.

Committeemember Adams commented that the siren at the Greenfield & Southern station goes off every ten minutes. He said he agrees with Mr. Hawker that they have to look at those numbers to determine what kind of quality of care they want to provide. He added that the citizens must be made aware of this issue and the Committee can help by showing what it is they are willing to pay for. He noted that when it comes to healthcare, fire and police, people are willing to fork out the dollars and priorities must be set. He advised that the Committee can look at some innovative approaches where the City itself can be active in cajoling or working with the healthcare networks.

Chairman Jones noted that there was an article in the Arizona Republic about how health benefits for Mesa employees have remained constant while everyone else is struggling and that is because the City did some good planning in past years. He added that Mesa is stable, self-insured and able to maintain a constant level in its health care for its employees.

Chairman Jones thanked everyone for their input.

#### 4. Current issues/miscellaneous items.

There were no issues to discuss

5. Items from citizens present.

Ernie Johnson addressed the Committee and said he had a question about the four-minute response time. He stated that he finds it very impressive but believes it needs some clarification. He commented that he assumes that the four minutes cover the time from when the firefighters receive the calls to when they arrive at the scene but said he wanted to know how much time is spent dialing 9-1-1. He also asked how much time is spent between alarms going off and alarm monitoring services notifying the fire department.

Chairman Jones said he believes that when the operators are still taking down information from the caller they have already identified who is calling and notified a unit to respond.

Chief Beck added that the response times are measured from the time the dispatch occurs at the fire station and dialing 9-1-1 is included. Mr. Johnson stated the opinion that dialing takes 20 seconds and the Chief said it depends on how quickly they can get the information from the caller. Mr. Johnson clarified that he is talking about fire calls and said he wants to know how much time elapses between the time the fire alarm goes off in the house and the fire department is notified.

Chief Beck responded that he doesn't have any figures on that but said Mr. Johnson was accurate and the response time previously discussed is from the time the dispatch occurs to the time the firefighters arrive at the scene. He added that the time previous to that is called the discovery time and reporting times vary from incident to incident.

Chief DeLeon provided an example of a typical incident and emphasized that the four minutes is just the time it takes to arrive at the scene. Mr. Johnson stated that they are actually talking five minutes then once the dispatcher gets the information from the caller. Chief DeLeon said he was correct although it could be less than that, they deal in averages.

Mr. Johnson asked what the typical response time is between alarms going off and alarm monitoring companies notifying the fire department. Chief DeLeon stated that they used to test the systems, they would hit the alarms and see how long it took for the monitoring service to call dispatch. He noted that they required notification in less than a minute and if it wasn't, the monitoring service was told to do a better job. He added that they could actually issue the company a citation.

Chairman Jones thanked Mr. Johnson for his comments.

6. Schedule next meetings:

Wednesday, December 8, 2004, 5:30 p.m.  
*\*Presentation by the Neighborhood Services Department*

Wednesday, January 12, 2005, 5:30 p.m.  
*\*Presentation on Citywide Technology and CIP issues*

7. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Mesa 2025: Financing the Future Citizen Committee adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Mesa 2025: Financing the Future Citizen Committee meeting of the City of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of November 2004. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

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BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK