

**MONDAY, APRIL 19, 2021, 6:30 p.m.**

**City Council Work Session ~ Annual update from SREPD**

**Present:** Mayor Scott Burge, Council President Megan Greisen, Councilor Joel Haugen, Councilor Brandon Lesowske, Councilor Pete McHugh, Councilor Tyler Miller, Interim City Manager Alexandra Rains, Program Analyst Huell White, and Fire Chief Jeff Pricher.

**Excused:** Councilor Josh Poling and City Recorder Susan Reeves.

Fire Chief Pricher explained when going through their SWOT analysis with staff, volunteers and the Board Members it was determined that they needed to do a better job of reaching out and working with the City and other government entities because in large part for the last few years we have pretty much been internal, and we are your fire department. He explained even though they are a District, they still serve the City. He explained they believe it is important for them to come to the City on an annual basis, or more if need be, and let the City know how and what they are doing and if there is anything they can try to do to improve services for the community. He explained they have a fairly large service area they are responsible for and with that large area it is important to them that they provide the best service they possibly can. He explained there are several things that they do and the only way to highlight that information is by putting out a report. He asked Council if they have any questions regarding the report the Fire District provided.

Councilor Lesowske explained he really appreciates the Fire District working with the City. He thinks that will be key in any relationship that we continue to build on and he thanked Chief Pricher for that. He asked Chief Pricher for an overview of the ballot measure.

Chief Pricher explained he has to be very careful about what he says with respect of the ballot initiative, but he can tell Council based on what has been approved for them to say by the Secretary of State is they do have a ballot measure that has been proposed to the public and they are essentially asking to add three firefighter/paramedics. He explained the purpose of adding those positions is to give them the opportunity to provide two ambulances 24 hours a day. He explained one of the things that this report shows is that they are starting to see a lot more overlapping calls. He explained with the ballot measure their goal is to try to get to a place where when people need help, they are able to supply two ambulances instead of one.

Councilor Miller asked Fire Chief Pricher when he reads in the document 24-hour coverage, what does that actually entail? He asked does that mean there is personnel 24/7 at the Scappoose main station to respond, what exactly does that mean.

Chief Pricher explained we have minimum staffing right now and three firefighter/paramedics to be at the fire station, physically at the fire station, 24 hours a day. He explained if they have a call and have to transport into Portland, then that leaves one person. He explained in addition to those three we have about twenty volunteers that are on a roster and come in when we have major emergencies which consist of car fires, structure fires, marine incidents, and motor vehicle crashes. He explained they don't generally have the volunteers come in on run of the mill

medical calls because the call volume is so high, and we would burn our volunteers out. They have tried that in the past and it is just too much for those who have jobs.

Councilor McHugh asked about the satellite station.

Fire Chief Pricher replied currently at the Chapman Station they have two volunteers there and at one time there were six, but with people moving and retiring that number decreased to two.

Councilor Haugen asked on the future capital replacement projects, are they contingent on the levy passage?

Fire Chief Pricher replied he is not sure he can answer the specifics on whether or not the levy will be focused on these projects, but what he can say is they are planning on replacing the roof at the Holbrook Station this year and all of these projects that are identified have been identified to tell a story to the public and our local community that there is a lot of stuff that we really need to pick up on in order to best provide the service that the community expects or at least the community continues to tell them they are expecting. He explained the challenge is always balancing how much revenue they get in versus how much they can spend every year. He stated unfortunately, as was identified in this report, there's several factors that really effect those dynamics, one of those being ambulance billing. He explained the majority of the patients are either on Medicare or Medicaid and the average payment they get from the Federal Government is about \$450, which is only 25% of the cost of a transport and which means they write off about a million dollars a year. He explained when we look at other things that they have presented to the Council on specifically tax increment financing, when we looked at the enterprise zones, all of those things are pulling dollars away from the Fire District and it makes it really challenging as we move forward to balance the revenues coming in with those big capital projects they are looking at. He explained the Fire District Board is very focused, as are the management of the Fire Department, to try to do as much as we can without having to go to the voters.

Mayor Burge asked how much does the Fire District get through Fire Med.

Fire Chief Pricher explained the way that they operate Fire Med is if someone has insurance and they transport them to the hospital, the Fire District will bill the insurance and whatever portion the insurance says they have to pay, the Fire District writes it off.

Councilor McHugh complimented Chef Pricher on the report and stated it is very nicely done.

Chief Pricher replied thank you and stated the staff put a ton of time into this and he will pass the feedback onto them.

Council President Greisen thanked Chief Pricher for the clarity and the detail of the report, it is professional, and she thinks it is a great piece to have out there as you are putting something out on the ballot. She asked where to do you see the City in this relationship, in terms of your needs from the City?

Fire Chief Pricher replied on behalf of the Fire District, what they hope to achieve moving forward is an open line of communication that perhaps existed but wasn't formally in existence and where they do see a really good relationship is with the Planning Department, they work really good together. He stated it would be great when both the City and the Fire District share goal setting, that maybe they share some of each other's staff during that time so we can share common goals. He stated the reality is if we are going to work together, we need to understand where each of the entities are at. He stated on behalf of the District, we sincerely appreciate the opportunity to present this to you and he hopes we can make it an annual event.

Council thanked Fire Chief Pricher.

### **Adjournment**

Mayor Burge adjourned the work session at 6:58 p.m.

  
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Mayor Scott Burge

  
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Minutes typed by City Recorder Susan M. Reeves