

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2021
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION, 6:00 PM
33568 EAST COLUMBIA AVENUE
SCAPPOOSE, OREGON 97056
JOINT WORK SESSION WITH SCAPPOOSE FIRE DISTRICT

- **JOINT GOALS & STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS**
- **RADIO SYSTEM**

Mayor Burge called the work session to order at 6:00 p.m.

Present: Mayor Scott Burge; Council President Megan Greisen; Councilor Joel Haugen; Councilor Brandon Lesowske; Councilor Pete McHugh; Councilor Tyler Miller; City Manager Alexandra Rains; Interim Police Chief Shaun Davis; Legal Counsel Peter Watts; City Recorder/Scappoose Fire District Board Member Susan M. Reeves; Scappoose Fire District Board President Dave Sorenson; Scappoose Fire District Board Member Mark Gift; Scappoose Fire District Chief Jeff Pricher; Division Chief Josh Marks; Division Chief Miguel Bautista; and Finance Director/HR Alex Tardif.

Remote: Councilor Josh Poling; Anna Del Savio (South County Spotlight); Mike Fletcher; Mike Coxlong; and an unknown caller.

City Manager Rains explained this evening as another follow up to your requested goal of having continued meetings with the boards of other agencies, we do have the Fire District here before you this evening. She stated, we appreciate you all showing up to spend some time with them. She went over the agenda.

Chief Pricher stated first and foremost Mayor, City Council and City staff thanks for helping to organize this first meeting of both Government entities working together as we move forward as a community. He stated this is a big step forward. In the 10 years he has been here, this has never happened, and he sees only good things coming from these types of meetings tonight and in the future. He stated on behalf of the District, we do have a few of our Board Members here and all of our Chief Officer staff in the event there are questions that need to be answered and they can also show that their team is here to help the City in any way they can.

City Manager Rains asked Chief Pricher if he would like to discuss the joint goals and strategic planning process they have been through and how they'd like the City to participate in that or identified goals that we could work on together.

Chief Pricher replied, absolutely. He stated as we shared with you when we delivered our annual report earlier this year, one of the goals that they were hoping to accomplish were joint goals between the Fire District and the City in that we are the City's Fire Department, even though we are not a city department, we are a District and we are the City's ambulance provider and they felt it was very important to understand what goals the City may have or from a public safety perspective for them and then also for the Board Members to share with

the Council what some of our goals are now and into the future, so that we can hopefully align where we need to go and what we're doing as we are trying to be good stewards of the taxpayers dollar. He stated we all know funds are tight. He explained the Fire District Board is currently reviewing their ten goals that are posted up in their board room for staff, volunteers and the Board to see and they are doing their best to keep those updated but as we move forward into the next iteration of their Fire District, they are going to be moving forward into a strategic planning process for two years, five years, all the way out to twenty years, with different benchmarks and different goals. He stated they believe it's important that the City is part of that process moving forward so that they can capture multiple perspectives on what they should be doing to provide the best public safety to our community. He stated they are hoping at the end of this meeting that they can have a Councilor or two identified to participate in our strategic planning process when we do get to the phase where we're going to be having meetings so that we can get good input on their plan moving forward. He stated the plan isn't just the Fire District plan it's the community's plan. He stated after we gather all the data and the important points that we think need to be shared, before we do a final version, we plan on having several open houses throughout the fire district area to solicit input from the community to make sure that they actually feel as though they are a part of the process. He stated we know this is going to take a long period of time, but it is important that they hear from the City how they can best service our community.

Council President Greisen asked if the Fire District will have an outside agency or consultant helping them through that process or is it something that staff will be putting together?

Chief Pricher replied we are going to pull this one together ourselves. He explained they are trying to maximize their dollars and keep them for replacing equipment, station renovations and other things like that and they are hoping they can share information about that at this meeting tonight. He stated if there are questions, he has been sort of the point person at several meetings here, but it is also good to hear from the Board and get an understanding from them, his bosses, on which direction they are going and what they are thinking. He stated when it comes to the finances, their Finance Director Alex Tardif is here with us as well. He explained Alex Tardif has the best forecast available at this time on where they are financially.

Councilor Haugen stated he thinks this is a wise and smart step for us to embark in this collaboration. He thanked them for being here. He stated on the strategic plan, he is always of the mind that it's good to have an outside perspective on things rather than from the inside. He is wondering if it wouldn't be money wisely spent to hire a qualified consultant for this strategic plan and see how the City can support the Fire District better and how the Fire District can support the City better and having those outside set of eyes with that kind of experience, to him might be worth the modest investment to take that step.

Councilor Lesowske replied to the Board, he really appreciates their service to our community. He stated to Chief Pricher you and all of your staff provide a critical service for community members and we really do appreciate that. He stated as part of building on this idea of a strategic plan, he would be curious to know how much discussion or thought has been placed

around having a firehouse on the east side of Highway 30, to be able to provide services for our residents that live over there. He stated as we are all aware there's a potential for longer trains that will be heading through town that could potentially prevent services to be rendered to those that are in need. He would like to put it out there that that become part of the conversation piece as the City looks at a 50-year plan in developing for our community that we're growing correctly with our community and being able to provide those services in the instance that potentially there would be a blockage.

Chief Pricher explained they have had internal discussions about what it would look like to have a station on the other side of the tracks. He explained they're hoping that as the east air park development process continues that there may be opportunities for them to find some way to staff something on the other side of the tracks. He explained, they have not hired a consultant to look at where a fire station would be best suited, but they are very aware of their response times within the City bubble and aside from the occasional long train, they have had no problem meeting their target response time of under eight minutes to all areas within the City.

Director Sorenson stated just from the perspective of being on the Board for a long time, they have looked at this numerous times in the past and as Chief Pricher was saying, we are still meeting our times. We don't personally know what the train schedule is going to be like in the next ten – fifteen years. He stated it's important to get together and talk about where the building's going to be inside Scappoose, which would probably drive it to a great extent if we needed to expand additional building, if you will, then where it would be at. He stated it has been looked at and we just can't justify it, we don't have the manpower. He stated the capital funds to build is one thing, but then the operating costs after that is what kills you, it really slows you down. He stated as Chief Pricher stated, unless you have someone building something big out at the airport or something and willing to provide space or land or building, he doesn't know if that can fly really well.

Chief Pricher stated one of the statistics that comes to mind, and please don't hold him to the exact number, but it was somewhere between 2,100 and 2,400 new homes have to be built in order for them to adequately fund additional manpower for a station that is not their main station.

Councilor Lesowske stated to City Manager Rains, as the Fire District continues their strategic planning moving forward, the City having insight on potential properties that could be developed or supporting them or knowing what our housing inventory count becomes that would trigger potentially that threshold. He asked is there a way for the City to be supportive in being able to help identify those needs?

City Manager Rains replied what she would say is that the nice thing is that Chief Pricher and the Community Development Center have always had a really good relationship so he is generally very well apprised of development happening in the City. She explained the other thought she had was that as we embark on our 50-year planning process, the RFP is out and actually due November 22, that any kind of technical advisory committee or group that would

help oversee that process there would be a representative from the Fire District on that. She thinks in that respect, as long as we keep in communication with one another we can certainly support those efforts and even just the Council allocating dollars for an ambulance. She thinks the City and Fire District work well together and she thinks we will continue to support one another in that way, particularly when it comes to long-range planning.

Legal Counsel Pete Watts explained we are embarking on this 50-year process which is a buildable land inventory so we're going to be looking at that, the housing needs analysis and then our urban reserves and then as part of that we're going to look at areas that are currently in our Urban Growth Boundary but might not be urbanizable because of slope and other natural constraints and then if there are properties that maybe are directly adjacent they could work. He explained during all that process, we are actually required by State law, to coordinate with our partners not just on things land use related but also would we require something like sprinklers because that would be an alternative. He stated for new construction for a fire station, that gets to be very expensive so at some point developers and others, he thinks, would probably prefer to set aside land for a fire station and figure out whether through State, Federal, and other grant source could find a way to pay for that personnel. He stated if a developer goes in and builds something big and our tax base goes way up and we're able to get the Urban Renewal paid off then at that point it is kind of a windfall to every taxing jurisdiction. He explained those are the kind of things that we would look at to make sure we are doing all we can to coordinate and also doing all we can to support them in their operations.

Councilor Miller stated he would imagine where a fire department would be located would probably be driven upon the call volume and population in the specific area. He stated depending on where our Urban Growth Boundary ends up and where our development actually ends up it may or may not be on the east side of the railroad tracks. He asked if that is an accurate assumption?

Chief Pricher replied he would say that is a very fair assumption.

Director Gift explained he thinks this is part of the Fire Districts long range plan that we're looking at, our strategic plan, as well as with the City's long range plan. He thinks a lot of the key points that we're probably going to be looking at down the road have been mentioned already. He thinks it is a very needed process for them to look at a future location, how to arrange the funds, secure the property, etc., over a period of time whether it is through fees with new development that go into a reserve fund for this later on. He stated how we staff it, there's some options there. He explained seventy percent of our calls are medical so that is going to be the biggest volume. He stated whether we just run maybe a medic on that side of town, not necessarily a fire engine, those are some of the things in the long-range planning that we could look at to see if it feasible somewhere down the road.

Councilor McHugh asked the Fire District if they had any statistics showing the percentage of call on the east side of Highway 30?

Chief Pricher replied he does not have that statistic but is pretty sure they could come up with that from 2019 forward fairly easily.

Councilor Haugen stated to follow up on Councilor Lesowske's question about the alternate facility, it seems like a logical partner in this would also be the Port of Columbia County. He explained as the road gets completed around the airport that's going to provide easy access to most of east Scappoose and they have an interest in fire protection as well with all the airport facilities and they will be growing presumably as time goes by. He stated having them as part of the conversation would make sense to him as well.

Chief Pricher replied, absolutely. He explained they do have a very good working relationship with the Port.

Chief Bautista explained a lot of the growth at the airport, he has a background in having worked with Hillsboro and Portland. He explained they are working closely with the development of the fire code and standards on the National Level, and he sits on two National Committees that oversee the standard development that affect airports. He stated working with Chief Pricher prior to coming on board with Scappoose, one of the latest hangars is a good example of working in collaboration with all the stakeholders to integrate a win-win solution for fire safety. He explained as we look over the next ten – twenty years as that development gets built out, we'll be having more conversations about what does fire safety look like over there. When it comes to the buildings, response, apparatus, and other future needs. He explained sitting on those Boards also talking about developing these standards, having a realistic approach for jurisdictions our size. He explained a lot of the standards are made for larger jurisdictions, so he wants to be able to bring in realistic scope for communities our size to make sure that when we do make the standards they are practical and something that we can actually take on and also bring back their experiences of things because maybe there are gaps in the code that weren't addressed before and make sure they are being addressed so we can serve our community.

Councilor Haugen welcomed Chief Bautista to our community.

Mayor Burge thanked Chief Bautista for his work on the hangar.

Councilor Poling asked the Fire District if they have had any thoughts or conversations with PCC as a possibility with the new PCC development for fire science or ems services/training to happen or to grow over there.

Chief Pricher replied, no. He explained the facility as it was designed is specific to the growth of the aviation industry and the metals work that they are doing out there. He explained he knows that PCC is hoping to expand classes to more than just what the program is at PCC. He explained on a different note, Scappoose Fire District is looking at expanding their volunteer program to include potentially seniors and or juniors at the high school level and one of the early discussions they had with PCC and the high school is if they were able to put some classes

together to where when high school seniors walk away they could actually have college credit for one or more of their fire science credits if that's something that they were interested in. He explained on their staff they have somebody who currently teaches at Eastern Oregon University and one of their other staff members is still a certified teacher, so they are looking at pursuing that more so than they have in the past. He explained there was a plan and project in place on the east side of the new airport development that Council approved some land being changed from farmland to industrial, it was sort of gifted to PCC in a way. He explained PCC was going to be building a public safety training academy in Scappoose and it was supposed to be on the east side of the road from where they are putting in that new road right now but unfortunately PCC has never followed through on completing that facility. He stated if it does happen, we will support that 100% and they would love to collaborate with them on that. He explained, it would be for law enforcement, fire, dispatchers and other disciplines.

Mayor Burge stated when it comes to ambulances, the future of Columbia County probably at some point is going to go for another needs assessment for a hospital but that would benefit your cost structure on taking people to an emergency room, he would assume.

Chief Pricher replied that is a very complicated question. He stated the short answer is it would allow their staff to be out of service less than they are now because their turnaround times depending on what part of their response area they are transporting from, can be two hours plus where they are actually out of service, but they still end up with the cost challenge and for our community here in Scappoose they are finding that 60% plus are Medicare funded for insurance which means they are netting maybe \$400 to \$500 for transports as opposed to people who have full insurance where they are receiving \$1,700 or more.

Chief Marks explained how Fire Med works. He explained what it does is it takes those deductibles and basically wipes it off, so they don't see any of those deductibles or co-pays, anything like that. He explained they bill the insurance and what the insurance doesn't pay it is taken care of through that program.

Councilor Miller asked, in regard to the Medicaid/Medicare transports, are they breaking even?

Finance Director Alex Tardif replied they are nowhere close to breaking even.

Councilor Miller asked if they have an idea of what the annual loss calculations are?

Chief Pricher replied it is over a million dollars a year.

Finance Director Alex Tardif replied 70% of their business is EMS transports. He explained the EMS receipts are not covering their operations.

Council President Greisen asked if the Fire District has a community response team (CERT), if not, is that something that is just available countywide?

Chief Pricher replied at this moment in time the Fire District does not have a CERT program, but they do have folks in house that have completed the train the trainer required for the FEMA approved course. He knows there is a CERT program in the City of St. Helens, and he knows they volunteer their time throughout the County, they don't just stay locally.

Mayor Burge explained there was a CERT program here at one time and he thinks it merged into the St. Helens program.

Council President Greisen asked about what is the pulse on if there is a major catastrophe/emergency? She asked how do we feel about a central location that we have where people can gather and how well is that facility prepped to handle hundreds of people in a state of emergency? She asked is there an identified location in the City limits of Scappoose?

Chief Pricher replied there are a couple of locations that have been identified over time. He explained the Fire District has always worked very closely with the Scappoose Police Department when it comes to emergency management. He explained the Fire District still has telephone lines active as well as equipment to turn their board room into an emergency operation center, if necessary. He explained a lot of the disaster and how it unfolds is going to dictate which structures or structure they would be able to utilize. He explained Petersen is probably the strongest and most robust school and also the auditorium at the High School. He explained the Fire District has been very active with a program called UASI and also the Regional Disaster Preparedness Organization which plan for big disasters and emergencies in the five County region of Multnomah County, Clackamas County, Washington County, Columbia County and Clark County, Washington. They have also secured equipment through grants from this to give them the ability to do water purification, they do have emergency shelters, mass casualty medical equipment and a couple of other things. They are also looking to better prepare and partner with the City in making sure that our emergency operations plans are as robust as they can be.

Council President Greisen stated one of her goals on the 50-year plan is that it is made public to the community where they go and what they do in the state of emergency and knowing that those locations are prepped to have people. She stated long range she would love for it to be more public and a lot more emergency education for our citizens. She knows that is hard during times of Covid. She stated maybe one of the City's annual town meetings topic in years to come has to do with emergency preparedness or an emergency plan here in the City.

Director Sorenson explained a couple of years ago now he went to a Special District Annual conference and there was a teacher from along the Oregon Coast, who talked about what they set up for the schools down there in case there was ever the big one and it was as simple as a five-gallon bucket and it is full of toilet paper and stuff like that.

Councilor Miller mentioned the CIS report where it talked about the incident command system. He stated this might be another opportunity where we can team with the Fire District on coming up with a plan on that topic as well.

Councilor Lesowske asked if the Fire District does any training on preparedness to make sure you have a 48-hour or 72-hour preparedness kit so if there was something that you had to shelter in place you would be prepared? He also asked about HAM radio, is that something that the Fire District currently provides in terms of training or certification?

Fire Chief Pricher replied there is a very robust program in Columbia County with HAM radio operators and they've actually set up through grants radio equipment at each one of the fire stations throughout the County. He explained if there is a major emergency or disaster the HAM radio operators have a network that they have already been working on with emergency management to deploy in the event something happens. He explained in regards to preparedness, the Fire District took a very proactive approach about six years ago and they added a rider to their normal website and created a Fire Marshall website and on that website there are several places that our citizens and community can get the information they need for preparedness. He explained unfortunately they haven't had the manpower to get out and hold community events. He stated once they get to a more stabilized staffing, they will look at having that be something they do annually. He explained they do go out to Springlake and do some educational trainings.

Legal Counsel Peter Watts explained Gerhardt received grant funds for education training/plans.

Mayor Burge recommended adjourning the work session and in the regular meeting move agenda item #6 to right after the consent agenda and then continue the discussion regarding the radio.

Council President Greisen thanked the Fire District for being here this evening.

Adjournment

Mayor Burge adjourned the work session at 6:57 p.m.


Mayor Scott Burge

Attest:


City Recorder Susan M. Reeves, MMC