

**Public Safety Committee
Meeting Minutes
August 15, 2019**

Members Present: Alderman Will Krause
Alderman Janet Stack
Alderman Chris Farrar

Other Present: Jay Keeven, Director of Police
Rick Welle, Fire Chief
Eric Williams, Director of Public Works
Kevin Head, City Administrator
Jeff Berkbigler, City Attorney
James Whiteford, Deputy Fire Chief
Jeanne Wojcieszak, City Clerk/Collector
Walter Williams, Economic/Community Development Director
Anna Roseman, Fire Department
Emily Fultz, Public Works Department
Charles Bolinger, Intelligencer
Jim Anderson, EFD Firefighters Pension Fund
Rodney Hall, Fire Department
Terry Becker, Fire Department (Volunteer)
2 Citizens (No information given)

The regular meeting of the Edwardsville Public Safety Committee was called to order by Chairman Will Krause at 4:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers with a quorum present: Chairman Will Krause, Alderman Chris Farrar and Alderman Janet Stack.

Public Comment:

Firefighter/Paramedic (FF) Lieutenant (Lt.) Rodney Hall, President of Edwardsville Firefighters Local 1700 spoke on behalf of the FFs he represents. Local 1700 became aware of a proposal to eliminate two (2) FF positions and to permanently close Fire Station 2 located on 340 Montclair Avenue because of what he says is a perceived crisis in the Edwardsville Firefighters Pension Fund. The sale of Station 2 and the money saved from the two (2) FF salaries would be used to add additional money into the pension fund, according to the information he had. Lt. Hall stated, "We believe this would be a serious and potentially life threatening mistake."

Lt. Hall commented on the pension fund not being a crisis, but a long-term funding problem caused by the consistent underfunding of the pension by the city. He stated he believes a long term solution exists. The funding ratio, depending on the actuarial method used, is no less than 57.5 %. That is right at the aggregate funding ratio quoted by the Illinois Department of Insurance.

Lt. Hall stated, "The real crisis, in our opinion, would be to eliminate two (2) FF positions and close Station 2." When Station 3 was built it was based on a three (3) station model with Station 2 being a critical part in that model. The closing of Station 2 would greatly increase response time to the eastern part of the city. He also commented on the increase of emergency calls received by the fire department. In 2008 there were 2,179 calls and in 2018 there were 3,112 and the emergency calls continue to increase this year.

Lt. Hall ended his comments by stating, "While we appreciate the city's desire to increase their contributions to our pension fund, decreasing fire department staffing and closing a fire station is not

the answer. Pursuing this course of action could lead to a tragic loss of life and property to the public we serve and we strongly urge the city to reconsider their proposal.”

Approval of Minutes – Motion by Alderman Stack, second by Alderman Farrar to approve minutes with amendments from the Public Safety Committee meeting held Monday, July 08, 2019. Motion carried.

Police Department:

Informational Item:

- Justin Jones has been given a conditional offer of employment with the City of Edwardsville Police Department (EPD).
Police Chief Keeven stated that with a recent retirement, the EPD worked off the lateral hiring list with the Board of Fire and Police Commissioners. Mr. Jones was the top candidate. EPD is waiting on a response from him. His full background will start if he accepts this position and if not, EPD will go to the next candidate on the list.

Fire Department:

Informational Items:

- Update on Lieutenant’s exam August 19 – 21, 2019
Monday and Tuesday of next week there will be an assessment center at the Public Safety Building for ten (10) candidates. On Wednesday there will be a written exam. This is to compile and maintain a list for a lieutenant position should one become open. It is promoted directly off of this list. The lieutenants list is required by the Board of Fire and Police Commissioners Act and must be refreshed every three (3) years. Edwardsville Fire Department (EFD) is using a new vendor for this testing.
- Update on the City of Edwardsville Emergency Plan
Fire Chief Welle received the EPD’s input in terms of continuation of operations for the police side. The next step is getting the information from Public Works and then Administration which is the last of the four (4) major area of the emergency plan.

New Business:

Action Items:

- Approval of the Ordinance Amending Chapter 74 of the Codified Ordinances of the City Of Edwardsville, Illinois by the Addition of Article IX Prohibiting Cannabis Business Establishments. This is the follow-up to the recently-passed Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act (Act), Illinois Governor JB Pritzker signed on June 25, 2019. Beginning January 1, 2020 recreational marijuana will be permitted in the state of Illinois in addition to medical marijuana that is already for sale. It is up to each of the municipalities to determine whether they are going to allow the sales taxation of that product in their community. Recreational marijuana will still be permitted within the confines of one’s private home but it will not be allowed within the public domain.

City Attorney Jeff Berkbigler stated that bringing forth this ordinance is the first step to determine whether the city council and officials were even going to allow the sale of recreational cannabis in the city. If the council chooses not to allow it then zoning issues are moot. If the council chooses to allow the sale of cannabis then the staff needs to get direction and discuss different zoning proposals and regulations, including local sales tax consideration.

January 1, 2020 the medical dispensaries are the first ones to receive permits and they get one (1) additional location within their U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) district. The City of Edwardsville BLS district is St. Louis which includes 6-8 counties. Four (4) dispensaries will be in our BLS district in the Metro East.

Discussions continued on the pros and cons of the use of recreational marijuana and if recreational dispensaries is right for our community.

A vote of "Yes" for this ordinance is to prohibit the sale of cannabis and a vote of "No" is to allow the sale of cannabis. Motion to approve the Ordinance Amending Chapter 74 of the Codified Ordinances of the City Of Edwardsville, Illinois by the Addition of Article IX Prohibiting Cannabis Business Establishments failed, two to one.

Discussion Items:

- Discussion of Fire Station Logistics
City Administrator Kevin Head on behalf of the City, and Fire Chief Rick Welle on behalf of the Edwardsville Fire Department (EFD) each prepared a memorandum last week regarding the closure of Station 2 on Montclair Avenue and eliminate two (2) FF positions per Mayor Patton's request. Mr. Head and Chief Welle researched the impact of closing the Montclair fire station as an avenue to centralize our fire department. This would move Station 2 personnel, fire equipment and training into the new Public Safety Building.

Mr. Head stated that he first focused on the building. Station 2 has some concerns: the age of the building, some failing infrastructure, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant issues along with asbestos within the building. The City believes on average, closing Station 2 would save \$50,000 annually from the utilities, maintenance and supplies. This does not include manpower or equipment. Mr. Head's second focus was centralization of processes/procedures into one station, and what the City may gain. Currently EFD has thirty (30) FFs, and through attrition, no layoffs or reductions, reducing personnel would be by two (2). It would save the City approximately \$100,000 per FF position. The City is not advocating eliminating positions, rather not to filling these positions at this time. Another aspect is how EFD responds to calls. A high percentage of the call outs are medical and not fire. The third area of focus is the fire pension, and Mr. Head turned this over to City Clerk/Collector Jeanne Wojcieszak since she was asked to do the research on the fire pension fund. Mr. Head stated "Our recommendation is to close the Montclair Fire Station and potentially sell the property and what we use those proceeds for as a city. There are many options there. As the City develops we could use the proceeds for the pension, for procuring land for a future, newer fire station. Then of course reducing through attrition the number of firefighters that we currently have by two (2)."

City Clerk/Collector Jeanne Wojcieszak was requested to research the EFD pension and the expenses the fire department accrues verses the general fund. The fire/EMS budget is currently housed in the general fund. The general fund is funded by property taxes, sales tax and other intergovernmental revenues. As part of the tax levy, the city does levy for fire protection services and for the fire pension. The fire pension levy goes directly into the fire pension account and doesn't go through the any of other accounts. The fire protection levy including all of the fire department expenses goes through the general fund.

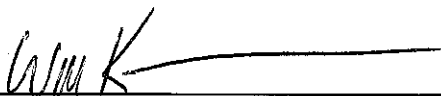
Over the past five (5) years the fire and EMS budget has increased 39 % and over the past decade the budget rose 59%. This includes salaries, employee benefits, training, commodities and contractual services. The general fund as a whole has only increased 15% over the last five (5) years and 33% over last ten (10) years. As the fire expenses increases, it takes up a larger portion of the general fund, according to Ms. Wojcieszak.

Over the past five (5) years the fire pension levy has increased 33% and the general fund levy has only increased .08% and the total levy has increased 15%. In 2012 the city levied \$475,000 and in 2018 the city levied \$902,000. With over twenty years of experience with fire pensions, Fire Chief Welle explained in a little more detail of how the pension works.

Fire Chief Welle said "We have talked a lot about the finances and there's no denying that the fire service is an expensive enterprise within the city's budget." Six (6) FFs were hired to keep three (3) stations operational. He said it is important to remember that since 2009 there has been a 50% increase in emergency calls. The new hires were not just to fill the stations but to take on the added volume of calls. When approving moving forward with the new Public Safety Building and as the city grows more to the east, Station 2 would be relocated further east so it fits within the overall concept of response times. Station 2 is too close to Station 1. Chief Welle said that closing Station 2 should be part of a plan which should also include a timeline, a location and the purchase of property for a new station on the city's east side. Any staff reductions is counterintuitive during this growth period, he stated. "I need the staff that I have. We work in three (3) shifts and there are ten (10) people assigned to each shift. You take one person away, you dropped staffing on that shift by 10%. I have a crew that is very much vested in the department and their dedication to what they're doing." One-third of EFD calls overlap each other over the course of a day. Chief Welle stated this is a fire department not just EMS. In 2018, 81% were EMS calls. Fire department business is very high risk, low frequency venture.

Old Business: None

The next regular scheduled meeting of the Public Safety Committee will be Wednesday, August 28, 2019 at 5:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers at City Hall. With no further business at hand the meeting was adjourned at 5:27 p.m.



Will Krause, Chair

Minutes prepared by: Anna Roseman, Fire Department