

# Fire Study Presentation

At the May 8th City Council Meeting, Tom Wieczorek, the Director of the Center For Public Safety Management, presented an update of the City's fire study:

- At the beginning of the year, before the Township Board voted for dissolution, we were looking at overall fire services, existing performance, and alternatives; could the fire department be better, what were the possible costs for improvement?
- We were into the study for just one month when the Township dissolved the Fire Commission and we had to change our focus to what options the City had moving forward.
- Our first stumbling block was getting accurate data from the joint fire department. The data that was available had many discrepancies. There were hundreds of fire calls that didn't have arrival times recorded by the fire department. Another team member was brought in for the sole purpose of making sure the data was reliable.
- The fire department is categorized as a paid-on-call department, not a career department. A career department would need 15 people on duty 24/7.
- 75% of American firefighters are volunteers and 85% of the nation's fire departments are all or mostly volunteer, according to the National Fire Protection Association.
- The majority of fire departments in Michigan are paid-on-call. Both fire departments, Township and City, will be in the same category, paid-on-call.
- The City will be cross-training interested police and DPW workers, which will help with response times.
- We worked on a project in Grand Traverse where five townships dissolved. They all formed their own departments. Paradise, a community whose fire department we worked with after the dissolution, reduced their ISO rating from a 6 to a 3 (the lower the better) and they are an all volunteer department.
- Fires in schools are very infrequent today, maybe 4000 across the whole country, mostly lab fires and air-conditioning units on roofs. Since 1958 there has not been a single fatality in a school fire, and that is true for all fire departments: career, paid, or volunteer across the US.
- School buildings are inspected by the State Fire Marshall when they are built and when modified, and they use only non-flammable construction materials.
- ISO ratings (Insurance Service Office) are rated 1, the best, through 10, the worst. They are usually grouped 1-3, 4-6, and 7-10; home owner insurance rates are similar within a group. Since the City has hydrants throughout, we get an automatic 40% of the points allotted for the rating.
- The joint fire department currently carries a 5 rating which went down from a 6 in the last two years.
- Set terms for replacement of trucks and equipment. Try to stagger replacements so they do not occur all at once. We need to run the trucks regularly to reduce maintenance issues.

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## Fire Study Presentation (Con.)



**Fire Chief, Dennis Smith, with volunteer firefighters and new equipment for the upcoming City of Grand Blanc Fire Department.**

- The importance of station 1: Station 1 is critical to the City. Closing 1 would impact response times in the City. Station 1 needs to remain open for optimum coverage of all City residents. If station 1 was closed, stations would be needed at the four corners of the City to provide equivalent coverage at a cost of almost **\$20 million**. Additionally, station 1 affects the Township, particularly on the east side, and closing it would impact response times there.
- Condition of station 1: It needs a vehicle exhaust system, which will cost about \$40,000, and there are grants available. Station 1 is a “Taj Mahal” compared to many stations I have evaluated across the country. Some communities operate out of fiberglass tents.
- Modifications of Station 1 could eventually include a sprinkler system. Fire stations and their equipment can short out at times. Township stations 2 and 3 also lack an exhaust system and need appropriate updates.
- Location of Station 1: It is ideal for the City. You want stations to be centrally located near major routes. You can put opticons out to help with exiting onto Saginaw Street and firetrucks have sirens for warning motorists. When prototype response times were run, Fire Station 1 was perfectly located for the City.