

City of Cambridge

The Finance Committee conducted a public hearing on Wednesday, February 24, 1993 beginning at 5:50 p.m. in the Sullivan Chamber, City Hall.

Vice Mayor Edward N. Cyr, Chair of the above referenced committee, convened the hearing and stated that the purpose of this date's proceedings was to discuss the fiscal impact of the recently completed fire survey. Present at the hearing were: Councillor Francis H. Duehay, Councillor Jonathan S. Myers, Councillor Sheila T. Russell, Councillor Walter J. Sullivan, Councillor Timothy J. Toomey, Jr., Councillor William H. Walsh, Councillor Alice K. Wolf, City Manager Robert W. Healy, Assistant City Manager for Fiscal Affairs James P. Maloney, Jr., Fire Chief Kevin J. Fitzgerald and Deputy City Clerk John E. Flynn.

To begin the discussion, Vice Mayor Cyr recognized the City Manager for a statement.

City Manager Healy stated that the recommendation forwarded to the City Council and with the concurrence of Chief Fitzgerald would produce a neutral fiscal impact. He did note that some savings would result as they relate to plant costs with the closing of Engine Company 7. He also outlined to the committee plans for the construction of a joint communication center that would house computer assisted dispatch (CAD) and Enhanced 911. To finance this center, a recommendation would be forwarded involving the sale of Engine 7. The City Manager also stated that personnel assigned to Engine 7 would be redeployed to open companies in the department. He further stated that the city is in the process of hiring an additional 30 firefighters. Together these actions should result in meeting a desired goal of four firefighters per apparatus.

Chief Fitzgerald stated that with a total complement of 278 positions, it should result in 4 firefighters per apparatus in most of the companies a lot of the time.

Vice Mayor Cyr noted that with a full complement, given the vacation schedules of a veteran department and a variable issue - long term disability that the number of firefighters per apparatus would be a fluid one.

City Manager Healy, in a follow-up comment, stated that with a complement of 278, it results in an appropriate compromise where the department would have four per apparatus.

Vice Mayor Cyr inquired if the department could move resources internally to meet the desired coverage goal.

Chief Fitzgerald in response stated that presently no company is staffed at four per apparatus. He cited the fact that the department is a veteran one and that the vacation schedule plays a part in staffing per company.

Councillor Wolf inquired if the collective bargaining agreement allows for the city to restrict vacation usage.

Chief Fitzgerald responded in the affirmative and stated that the department tries to restrict it to 16 (1/company) and two deputies. He also stated that the vacation schedule is based on five ten week periods.

Councillor Myers stated his pleasure with the news of additional personnel to be hired in the department and that the recommendation would have a positive impact on public safety.

Councillor Toomey inquired if the Binney/Fulkerson Street site was selected to house the communication center if a piece of apparatus from the closed Engine 7 could be stationed there for coverage in the area.

Chief Fitzgerald in response stated that Engine 5 and 2 will provide sufficient coverage to the Kendall Square area and the MIT community.

Councillor Toomey requested the City Manager and Fire Chief to revisit this request to determine its feasibility.

Councillor Walsh stated that the recommendation represented a fine compromise and congratulated the department for its professional service to the citizens.

Councillor Sullivan also noted his pleasure with the quality of service of the Cambridge Fire Department.

At this time, the Chair opened the floor for public comment.

Mr. John "Spike" Lawless, President of Firefighters Union #30, requested the committee to review the department's staffing patterns over the past seven years including the overtime costs and injuries. He further stated that the union needs a commitment regarding future staffing patterns from the city.

Vice Mayor Cyr inquired if the recommendation being presented by the City Manager would constructively work to solve union concerns.

Mr. Lawless responded in the affirmative but qualified it by stating that in the short-term, it would bring an infusion but it was not a long-term solution.

Vice Mayor Cyr inquired of the City Manager if 278 was an appropriate staffing level.

City Manager Healy responded in the affirmative and noted that the city does not have the resources to go above that level. he acknowledged the union's concerns.

Vice Mayor Cyr inquired of overtime costs for FY92 and FY93.

Mr. Maloney stated that overtime has increased and for the first six months of FY93 it was approximately \$300,000.

Mr. Lawless stated that the union was not interested in overtime but interested in sufficient staffing levels.

Vice Mayor Cyr thanked all for participating in the hearing.

The hearing was adjourned at 6:26 p.m.

For the Committee

Edward N. Cyr (JEF)

Vice Mayor Edward N. Cyr
Chair

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COMMTTEE REPORTS

S-199

Finance Committee Report for a
hearing held on Wednesday,
February 24, 1993 regarding the
fiscal impact of the recently
completed Fire Survey.

In City Council,

April 12, 1993

*Report accepted
Placed on file*