

AGENDA – WORKSHOP OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PEARLAND, TEXAS, TO BE HELD ON MONDAY, MAY 20, 2013, AT 7:00 P.M., IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL, 3519 LIBERTY DRIVE, PEARLAND, TEXAS.

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. PURPOSE OF THE WORKSHOP:

- 1. COUNCIL INPUT AND DISCUSSION:** REGARDING CONSOLIDATION OF FIRE AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENTS. *Mr. Bill Eisen, City Manager.*

III. ADJOURNMENT

This site is accessible to disabled individuals. For special assistance, please call Young Lorfing at 281-652-1655 prior to the meeting so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Workshop Item No. 1

1. **COUNCIL INPUT AND DISCUSSION:** REGARDING CONSOLIDATION OF FIRE AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENTS. *Mr. Bill Eisen, City Manager.*

**AGENDA REQUEST
BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF PEARLAND, TEXAS**

AGENDA OF:	May 20, 2013	ITEM NO.:	Workshop Item No. 1
DATE SUBMITTED:	May 16, 2013	DEPT. OF ORIGIN:	Administration
PREPARED BY:	Bill Eisen	PRESENTOR:	Bill Eisen
REVIEWED BY:	Bill Eisen	REVIEW DATE:	May 16, 2013
SUBJECT: Consolidation of the Fire and EMS Departments			
EXHIBITS: Whitepaper Prepared by Chiefs Baum and Riley			
FUNDING:	<input type="checkbox"/> Bonds To Be Sold	<input type="checkbox"/> Grant <input type="checkbox"/> Bonds- Sold	<input type="checkbox"/> Developer/Other <input type="checkbox"/> L/P – Sold <input type="checkbox"/> Cash <input type="checkbox"/> L/P – To Be Sold
EXPENDITURE REQUIRED:		AMOUNT BUDGETED:	
AMOUNT AVAILABLE:		PROJECT NO.:	
ACCOUNT NOS.:			
ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION REQUIRED:			
ACCOUNT NO.:			
PROJECT NO.:			
To be completed by Department:			
Finance	Legal	Ordinance	Resolution

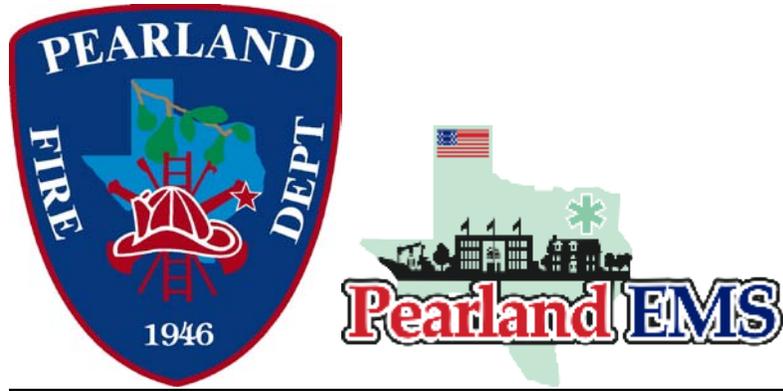
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2010, the City engaged the firm of McGrath Consulting Group to evaluate the City's Fire and EMS Departments. One of the recommendations submitted by McGrath was to consolidate the Fire and EMS Departments. The City Council discussed consolidation and opted not to move forward at that time. However, the City Council indicated that they wanted Fire and EMS to work together more closely and that the City Council would reconsider consolidation after the departments had experience with cooperative efforts.

The Chiefs of the two departments recently prepared the attached report and a workshop has been scheduled to reconsider the consolidation of the two departments

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Conduct the workshop.



White Paper

**Consideration of Fire Department & EMS Department
Consolidation for the City of Pearland, Texas**

Written By

Vance Riley, Fire Chief and Daniel Baum, EMS Chief

May 2013

Abstract

In April of 2010, the McGrath Consulting Group, Inc. issued a report for the City of Pearland entitled "Fire and EMS Departments Staffing, Scheduling, and Resource Deployment Alternatives Study." Although the scope of the study was a comprehensive assessment of the Fire and EMS departments, special emphasis was placed on whether these two departments should be consolidated into a single department and what future staffing model would best serve the citizens and visitors of Pearland. This report recommended that the City of Pearland combine the Fire and EMS Departments into one new Department. After the report was issued, and after much discussion, the Mayor & Council of the City of Pearland decided that the Fire and EMS Departments should remain separate at that time. The Fire and EMS Departments were instructed to work closer together for a while before consolidation would be reconsidered. In the three years since the McGrath Report, both Fire and EMS Departments have followed many recommendations from that study as well as followed Mayor & Council's instructions to work closely together. It is the purpose of this paper to reconsider consolidation of the Fire and EMS Departments.

Opportunities for Improvement

The City of Pearland continues to grow at an astounding rate with a population of over 100,000 plus another 30,000 in the ETJ that are protected by the city's Fire & EMS Departments. Current residential and commercial trends are validation of previously forecasted population growth in the City and ETJ. As the City's commercial and retail sectors grow, the population swells significantly by those traveling to Pearland to work and shop. The population growth and traffic increase emergency incidents. The high demand for emergency services puts considerable strain on existing limited Fire & EMS resources. The large, rectangular footprint of the City and the ETJ, coupled with heavy traffic at times, increases response times.

In 2007, the City of Pearland transitioned from an all-volunteer fire department to a combination department with two fire engine pumpers staffed during the daytime by full-time employees while the volunteers providing night time staffing. In 2011, Station 5 opened and full-time employees were hired to staff an additional fire engine pumper. Since January 2011 there have been 3 fire engine pumpers staffed around the clock using a combination of full-time, part-time and volunteer personnel. The City of Pearland EMS transitioned from an all-volunteer EMS to a system of part-time personnel and volunteers. Today, the EMS Department staffs 4 ambulances around the clock using full-time and part-time personnel.

These have been significant improvements in Fire & EMS response however the high demand for emergency services continues to strain the capabilities of current staffing of both Departments. For example, often a mutual aid ambulance must be requested for ambulance transport because demand for service has used all staffed Pearland ambulances. Mutual aid must be requested when the Fire Department has a working structure fire. Mutual aid Departments either back in to a Pearland station to cover additional calls or come directly to the scene to assist with fire suppression. There is difficulty in responding to simultaneous emergencies in different areas of the City. On occasions, all resources of both Departments are

fully deployed on emergency incidents. EMS and FD response times are below recommended standards.

The high demand for emergency services versus the limited resources produces other stresses. There is a high turnover rate in the EMS Department, possibly related to burnout from job demands as well as the lack of promotional opportunities inherent in a single role EMS agency. FD Operational supervisors must perform logistical and support services in addition to their primary duties. Consistent training is difficult to achieve due emergency incident demands. This lack of consistent training affects both Departments individually and in very important joint training exercises. Since the Departments are not cross-trained and not consolidated there are times when productivity of existing resources is not optimized. For example, when all ambulances are on incidents and another incident arises requiring an ambulance, FD personnel are not able to staff a reserve ambulance in the station and respond.

The proposed budget for 2013-14 will most likely include funding for a fifth ambulance that will operate 12 hours per day during peak call times. In addition, Fire Station 3 will be constructed to allow for it to be staffed by a combination of paid and volunteer personnel. The station is expected to be ready to occupy late in the 2013-14 fiscal year. Both of these actions will improve the capabilities of the two departments. However, it will still be necessary to further expand the resources of the departments. One way in which that be accomplished is through maximizing the effectiveness and efficiencies of existing resources.

Consolidation Design

To make the most efficient use of existing resources and the best use of taxpayer funds, the Fire and EMS Departments should be consolidated as soon as possible. The consolidation design will address as many concerns as possible that arose from previous 2010 discussions. Some design points of a consolidated Department include:

- No EMS Department employee will be required to cross train as a fire fighter or lose their job if they fail to cross train.
- No volunteers will be required to ride on ambulances or be required to train to EMT-Basic or higher levels of EMS certification.
- There will still be Battalion Chiefs (Shift Commanders).
- There will still be EMS Captains (Shift Supervisors).
- The Fire Chief will be the Department Director and the EMS Chief will become the Assistant Department Director.
- A goal will be to have all cross training completed by 1 October 2014. Existing EMS personnel who wish to cross train as fire fighters may possibly be trained in-house and cost effectively. The City will fund training and equipment costs.
- A Consolidation Team of members from both Departments, including volunteers, will be created to develop a Consolidation Plan with recommendations that are ready by 1 July 2013. This Consolidation Team will make recommendations into the process, within parameters, that include such things as Department name, methods and plans for cross

training, roles and responsibilities of existing supervisors, a new organizational chart, etc.

- A goal will be to have FY2014 budget estimates ready for Mayor & Council as part of the FY2014 budget process.
- Review and rework, as necessary, job descriptions and salary schedules. This will be expedited to work, if possible, with the current compensation study.

Many of the other points that would be listed as part of a Consolidation Plan have already occurred per Mayor & Council's instructions. Some of these include:

- Fire & EMS now share common dispatch and radio frequencies.
- Fire & EMS now share common third party dispatching agency as of 1 May 2013.
- Fire & EMS have participated in joint leadership training.
- Fire & EMS have the same Medical Director.
- Fire & EMS now have the same medical protocols.
- There are certified fire fighters in the EMS Department.
- There are certified EMT-Bs and EMT-Paramedics in the Fire Department.
- Fire & EMS share administration and training facilities.

Some challenges that will be considered, and addressed by Department Directors and/or the Consolidation Team will include:

- FLSA considerations for those that fail to cross train.
- How the move from 4 shifts to 3 shifts will affect EMS Department personnel retention.
- Possible reassignments of Command Staff including roles and responsibilities.
- Some feelings of loss of identity within both Departments (which is completely normal).

Solutions for the Challenges

The Fire Chief and the EMS Chief are both licensed EMT-Paramedics and both have advanced certifications in firefighting. The Fire Chief and EMS Chief both have experience in prior positions in consolidating Fire & EMS Departments. Both are aware of the pitfalls and problems that can occur if consolidation is not done correctly. Consolidation of Fire & EMS has worked in Texas cities for decades. We recommend consolidation of Fire & EMS Departments as it provides the following advantages:

- Improved Public Safety Customer Service and Patient Care.
- A total systems approach to emergency and patient care.
- More productivity due to cross-trained personnel.
- Improved Unified Command in emergency situations.
- Improved employee safety.
- Reduction of duplication of effort in some instances.
- Reduction of burnout.
- Improved team environment among staff.
- Improved employee retention as opposed to single role EMS personnel.

- Ability to respond to more simultaneous incidents with a reduction in mutual aid.
- Better utilization and redistribution of resources.
- Improved response times.
- Better ability to staff apparatus based upon the type of call.
- Higher quality and more consistent training among all response personnel.
- Ability to share civilian administrative positions.
- Increased career opportunities for current employees.
- Provides a larger pool to draw from in recruitment.
- Consistency of care.
- A unified quality control program.

Conclusion

The City of Pearland is poised to open new Fire & EMS Station 3 in October of 2014. This opening will include staffing one fire engine pumper around the clock as well as staffing a peak period ambulance. Both departments have a need for additional personnel resources, when Station 3 opens, and in the future as the City continues to grow. Consolidation solves many of the challenges that have been created by exponential population growth without corresponding exponential growth in the Fire & EMS Departments. It is the most cost effective way to improve public safety response in Pearland for our citizens. The Fire & EMS Departments are now working so closely together that the main differences are only in uniforms and budgets. There is plenty of evidence to prove consolidation works beginning with the City of Houston Fire Department in April of 1971. To this day, it continues to work in area cities. Texas City consolidated Fire & EMS in 2007. Baytown consolidated Fire & EMS in 2012. In Baytown all EMS personnel voluntarily chose to cross train. We are at a most opportune time in that requests for personnel, stations and equipment with the opening of new Station 3 will be handled best by consolidation. Consolidation is clearly in the best interest of providing the best possible public safety for citizens and visitors in Pearland.