

CITY OF POCATELLO, IDAHO
CITY COUNCIL
FIRE DEPARTMENT MASTER PLAN
SEPTEMBER 18, 2018

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1: Mayor Brian Blad called the Special City Council meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. Council members in attendance were Heidi Adamson, Roger Bray, Rick Cheatum, Jim Johnston and Linda Leeuwrik. Council member Beena Mannan was excused. Mayor Blad announced the purpose of the meeting is for Council to participate in discussion regarding a proposed Pocatello Fire Department Master Plan. Also in attendance were Ruth Whitworth, City Clerk; Richard Diehl, Deputy City Attorney; Heather Buchanan, Human Resources Director; and Don Bivins, Project Manager for Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI).

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2: Mr. Bivins gave an overview of the services ESCI provides. His organization identifies needs and cost effective measures for fire departments. Mr. Bivins mentioned his organization is visiting areas within the City and interviewing Fire staff. He noted the evaluation process usually takes approximately 120 days after the site visit is complete. Once completed, Mr. Bivins will return to Pocatello and present his recommendations to the Mayor and City Council based upon the evaluation results. Short- mid- and long-term recommendations will be given. Top priority items will be defined, and also “suggested” but not necessary items, will be included.

Mr. Bivins explained the review is only a snapshot in time. If Council changes the dynamics of the department, ESCI cannot go back and re-determine the needs. Mr. Bivins mentioned they will look at response time more closely than anything else. He gave an overview of how response time is determined.

General discussion followed regarding the current dynamics between fire staff and the City Council. Mr. Bivins explained disgruntled staff within an organization is normal. However, the number of disgruntled Fire Department staff in Pocatello appears to be at a high level.

Council shared the following items they determined as strengths in the Fire department:

a) Outstanding personnel; b) well trained; c) take pride in their job; d) invested in the community; e) adaptable (some switch between Fire and EMS roles); f) make the best of situations when resources are not available; and g) are out in the community training/educating the public about fire safety. It was noted that dialog between Council and Fire Union members take place at a quarterly meeting.

Council discussion regarding their approval of three new apparatus and staff positions followed. They feel Fire staff was very appreciative of these approvals.

Council shared the following items they determined as weakness in the Fire department:

a) Fire Union members feel the Council is not always appreciative of them. Mr. Johnston mentioned a steak fry was recently held so City Council members could visit with Fire Union members and their families. Some of the family members shared various challenges associated with a firefighter's job and how the family is affected; b) relations between Fire Union and City employees could use some improvement and ideas of how this may be accomplished was shared; c) a review of ambulance and fire truck call out procedures should be done. There may be a better way to accomplish this more efficiently; d) lack of diversity within the Fire Department;

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e) Brotherhood of Union members can be a positive and a negative. There appears to be some bullying and peer pressure taking place within the department. Movement between Platoons may help to correct some of these issues; and f) overtime concerns continue.

Mr. Bivins gave an overview of what ESCI will do with the information gleaned. The information is dissected and broken down to give actual circumstances and not perceptions. He noted that all organizations have issues. He has ideas to help correct the problems already identified. However it will take time for some of the recommendations to come into alignment. Mr. Bivins noted, in time, Pocatello's Fire Department could become a great model for other Fire Departments to follow.

Mr. Johnston was excused at 11:45 a.m.

General discussion was held regarding Council working together to address concerns identified within the Fire Department. No action by the City Council regarding the Pocatello Fire Department Master Plan was taken at this time.

AGENDA ITEM ON. 3: There being no further discussion, Mayor Blad adjourned the
ADJOURN meeting at 11:50 a.m.

APPROVED BY:

BRIAN C. BLAD, MAYOR

PREPARED BY AND ATTEST:

RUTH E. WHITWORTH, CITY CLERK