

P U B L I C N O T I C E

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

TUESDAY, MAY 5, 1981

9:00 A.M.

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- o To present the results of the Fire Study.

CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the above notice of meeting was posted on the bulletin board at the City Hall of the City of Abilene, Texas on the 1st day of May, 1981, at 3:00 o'clock p.m.


Assistant City Secretary

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The City Council of the City of Abilene, Texas, met in Council Workshop, May 5, 1981, at 9:00 a.m. with Mayor Elbert E. Hall, presiding. Councilmen Seaton Higginbotham, Dick Bowen, Juan C. Rodriguez, A. E. Fogle, Jr., L. D. Hilton & Kathy Webster, present. City Manager Ed Seegmiller, City Attorney Harvey Cargill & City Secretary Ruth Hodgin, present.

Mayor Hall asked Mr. Seegmiller to brief the Council on the LFWF Fire Management Study.

Mr. Seegmiller explained that the objective of the Fire Department Study was to identify opportunities to increase the effectiveness and reduce the cost of fire services to the City of Abilene and to develop a plan to implement these improvements.

Gary Thompson, LFWF, presented the study approach, which included considerable input from Fire Department employees, a review of fire service trends, and innovative programs, and the development of a "no constraints" approach. The "no constraints" approach was then modified to recognize existing short term and long term constraints.

The Study recommendations are based on a prioritized set of strategic fire service objectives developed during the study. These objectives are:

1. First Priority: Fire Prevention
2. Second Priority: Sprinkler Large Hazards
3. Shorten Discovery Time by using Detection Systems
4. Highly Productive Suppression Activity
 - Rapid Attack and Exposure Coverage
 - In-Depth Forces and Water Supply
 - Backup with Reserves and Mutual Aid
5. Improved Investigation and Reporting
6. Organization Reflecting Priorities

The Study Team found significant opportunities for improvement in these major areas; Fire Prevention, Fire Support Services, and Fire Suppression. A multi-year improvement program has been developed with specific recommendations in each of the areas outlined below:

1. Fire Prevention
 - Codes and Ordinances
 - Organization and Staffing
 - Role in the Development Process
 - Fire Preplans
 - Inspection
 - Safety Surveys by Suppression Forces
 - Public Education
 - Permits
 - Hazardous Materials
 - Arson Investigation
 - Management Systems and Procedures
2. Fire Support Services
 - Communications and Dispatching
 - Equipment Maintenance
 - Training
 - Management Systems and Procedures
3. Fire Suppression
 - Fire Station Location
 - Allocation of Personnel and Equipment
 - Fire Support Specialist Program
 - Management Systems and Procedures

The Improvement Program is projected to have a significant, positive impact and will:

1. Provide a Major Emphasis on Fire Prevention
 - Reduce the loss of property and life to fire in Abilene
 - Reduce the size of government by making the private sector responsible for certain aspects of fire safety.
2. Limit the Size of Fire Which Could Occur.
 - Detection systems so fires may be suppressed while still in their incipient stage
 - Sprinkling of large structures to automatically confine fires to a limited size.
3. Increase the Quantity of Firefighters and Apparatus Responding to Structural Fires, Especially at Target Hazards.
 - Improved tactical procedures and supporting activities
 - Better equipment and preparation for certain specialized hazards
4. Increase the Depth of Trained Fire Suppression Forces
5. Provide Significant Savings to the City

An Implementation Plan for the Improvement Program has been developed and includes: a project organization with specified responsibilities, a schedule of project tasks, a projection of cost and benefits and a start-up plan.

Bill Lloyd, LFWF, explained that the Texas State Board of Insurance sets its "Key Rate" by grading the Fire Suppression, Fire Prevention and Water Supply. Abilene current "Key Rate" is 17¢.

Mr. Lloyd presented the following recommendations for the Fire Department which include:

- Institution of a fire support specialist program, in which 40 City Employees would be cross-trained to supplement regular full-time firefighters.
- Eventual reduction in the full-time professional manning level of the department from 135 authorized positions to about 105. The reductions would come solely through attrition, Mr. Lloyd said.
- Adoption and enforcement of stronger building and fire codes.
- Strengthening of sprinkler ordinance.
- Upgrading of fire prevention role, including improving inspectors' pay and status.
- Increase in fire prevention manpower.
- Institution of shift change time earlier in the day.
- Institution of preliminary conference during development process to ensure fire prevention standards are met.
- Movement of training periods to the morning hours.
- Beginning of pre-planning, which provides information on buildings to firefighters before they arrive on a fire scene. Preplanning indicates such things as location for utility cutoffs.
- Consideration of various equipment recommendations, including the phasing in of four-inch hose, use of Carlin valves (automatic hydrant openers) and tandem pumper. Discontinue the use of lever fire alarm system.
- Beefed-up communications and dispatch.
- Increased utilization of training facility and officers.

Bob Edwards, Rural/Metro's Scottsdale Administrative Chief, said that the pre-fire planning provides firefighters with a reference book on structures, outlining such things as building layout and locations of hydrants, standpipes and utility cutoffs.

Fire brigade training was also suggested by Mr. Edwards. This would have employees of hospitals and major industries taught to assist in the event of a fire in their facilities by such actions as closing doors to prevent fire spread and directing arriving units to the exact fire location.

Mr. Edwards also brought up some fire prevention problems at City Hall. He cited several areas needing improvement, including City Hall basement, which houses the Fire Marshal's office but has only one unlocked exit.

James Pogue, Fire Chief, welcomed the fire prevention recommendations, but that he felt it would be hard to operate the department on fewer qualified firefighters.

Councilman Bowen was excused from the meeting because of an outside commitment.

Bob Fowler, Code Administrator, said that we needed a better code in which to enforce, especially in larger buildings.

One of the suggestions brought out was the recommendation that a "Fire Boss" or like unit be stationed at Pride Oil Company location.

Mr. Seegmiller discussed the "Key Rate". He said that the greatest payoff in the Key Rate improvement would come from code improvements.

Chief Pogue did not understand at this point how to implement the rest of the program and he had some problems until he could figure out how to resolve some of these questions that he had, but this would be resolved in the implementation phase.

Councilwoman Webster made the motion that the Council adopt the Fire Department Management Study and asked the Administration to begin implementation, returning to the Council for additional action during the implementation.

In seconding the motion, Councilman Fogle said the Council was adopting the basic concepts of the proposed program and that many decisions were still to be made in the future.

Mr. Fogle added, "What we are proposing to do is adopt the basic concepts of this program and to instruct the staff to commence implementation with the understanding that we are going to hold public hearings on code changes, ordinances, and that sort of thing. The steps of implementation will have to be brought back to the Council for approval."

During the discussion and before the vote was taken, Mr. Higginbotham said that his major concern was in manpower reductions and that he and the Council will be open to making changes in the manning levels, if during the implementation it is found the suggested 105 full-time firefighters and 40 Fire Support Specialists are inadequate.

Mr. Hilton said "To vote for your motion doesn't necessarily mean this exact mix of personnel immediately, because that will have to be done each budget year depending on available funds and/or the people in the different categories." Hilton added " We are committing not to fire the professional firemen that you have got trained. It is only as you get others trained and through attrition that you are putting this (program) in."

Mr. Seegmiller said the Council will be kept well informed on the implementation with work sessions, budget sessions, and retreats.

The motion was seconded by Councilman Fogle. The motion carried as follows:

AYES: Councilmen Higginbotham, Rodriguez, Fogle, Hilton, Councilwoman Webster and Mayor Hall.

NAYS: None.

There being no further business, Mayor Hall adjourned the meeting at 1:20 p.m.

City Secretary


Mayor