

The Committee of the Whole met on Thursday, January 21, 2021 at 6pm remotely through the Zoom web application

Members present were Councilor Wayne Matewsky, presiding, Councilors Gerly Adrien, Fred Capone, Richard Dell Isola, Rosa DiFlorio, John Hanlon, Jimmy Le, Michael Marchese, Stephanie Martins and Michael McLaughlin.

The Committee considered a Resolution offered by Councilor Fred Capone: That the Fire Chief and Administration update the Council as to any progress being made to address the shortage of firefighter personnel.

Fire Chief Tony Carli and Firefighter Union Representative Craig Hardy were also present.

Councilor Capone asked the Chief if he could update the Committee on the progress on the hiring of firefighters. Chief Carli informed all that there was progress and that the intention was to notify 20 applicants early next week that they have been selected to join the Fire Department and will be trained over an 8 – 10 week period at one of the three State Fire Academies. Councilor Capone expressed concern over the loss of experience that the new hires could have gained from those that had retired over the past five years and didn't feel that the new hires would be 100% prepared once on the job. Chief Carli commended the current firefighters for continuing to do the job even though the Department was down 20 members. Chief Carli acknowledged that Cataldo Ambulance had been a good partner with his Department but noted that their response time had increased up to 33 minutes on some calls and felt that 3 minutes was too long to respond to call when his Department could be there in 2 ½ minutes in reference to his future plans to add ambulance services to the Everett Fire Department. Mr. Hardy agreed with the Chief's assessment of the Cataldo Ambulance service times and agreed that the City should provide ambulance services but wanted to make sure it was done correctly. He stated that if that was to occur then he felt that the Department would need to look at an additional 10 – 16 employees just for the ambulance services, but noted that right now the concern was bringing on the 20 new hires as soon as possible and Councilor Capone concurred that the focus was to increase staff now. Councilor Capone asked the Chief if there were grants available to add more firefighters. Chief Carli responded that the Department was exploring grants for equipment. Councilor DiFlorio asked if any grants for additional hires were being returned and Chief Carli responded that the grant could not be activated until the Department was back up to full staffing levels. Councilor Martins suggested that the Fire Department staffing levels should follow the population of the City. Mr. Hardy agreed with Councilor Martins noting that 4,000 new residential units were being constructed within the City and felt that the current guys on the job were already beat up doing the job with 20 less crew. He expressed his uncertainty on when the new hires would actually start and was concerned that the Department could lose an

additional 5 firefighters to retirement this year alone. He stated that one of the things the City should have looking at over these past years is planning for a new firehouse. Councilor McLaughlin asked how the Department could lose 20% of its crew. Chief Carli explained that he started the process in 2019 to bring new hires in with the bulk of the retirements occurring in 2020 in the midst of a pandemic. Mr. Hardy recommended that the City Council push to have a study done on how the Everett Fire Department operates. He informed the Committee that the communities of Chelsea and Somerville recently had an outside firm conduct a study that looked into potential future developments that included more dangerous new construction and then provided the City with a project plan. Councilor Capone agreed that the main concern is growth in the City acknowledging that the current firefighters were working long shifts and expected that without additional support they would get tired and moral would start going down, but remarked that he was happy to hear that the City was moving forward with the new hires. Chief Carli stated that he was hopeful that he could get the new hires working in a few months. Councilor Le informed the Chief that he would research and discuss with the Chief the need for plymovents for the Fire Department SUV's parked inside Central Fire station.

The Committee voted: To report back to the City Council with no recommendation.

Respectfully Submitted,

John W. Burley
Clerk of Committees

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The Committee considered a Resolution offered by Councilor Fred Capone: That the City Council invite the Mayor, Senator DiDomenico and Representative McGonagle to appear before the Council to provide an update on what programs and resources are available to Everett residents to mitigate the effects of COVID related economic hardships.

Senator Sal DiDomenico, Representative Joe McGonagle, Mayor's Chief of Staff Erin Deveney, City Solicitor Colleen Mejia, Assistant Solicitor Matt Lattanzi, Communication Director Deanna Deveney, Chief Financial Officer Eric Demas, as well as other City Department Heads Sabrina Firicano, George Lane, BJ Devereux, Rana Wehbe and Dale Palma were also present.

Senator DiDomenico informed the Committee that he would be providing them with a 10 page document full of helpful information, assistance, programs and resources to help the residents and businesses of Everett mitigate the effects of COVID related economic hardships. He discussed unemployment concerns, food assistance, the Federal SNAP program, Housing Assistance and the Right to Counsel, Housing Task Force and RAFT program, Homebase program, Mental Health Assistance and Small Business Assistance. He noted that President Joe Biden would be allocating \$150 billion to cities and towns and that there would be federal funds for public transit to offset proposed cuts by the MBTA. He stated that the City of Everett had a lot of contacts now in Washington with the new Biden administration that could be helpful to the City. He thanked all those involved in the major undertaking of bringing the vaccine early into the City for the first responders. Representative McGonagle acknowledged that the Senator had covered everything and remarked that the Mayor, Senator, City Council and himself all worked well together and were all on the same page in trying to help the citizens of Everett. Councilor Capone noted how quick the Senator and Representative were to respond to him upon his introduction of this matter. Councilor Capone asked the Mayor's Chief of Staff if the City knew how many businesses took advantage of the economic development State grant. Ms. Deveney indicated that she was uncertain at this time as it related to that grant but noted that the City was working with 12 businesses that were interested in CBDG grant funding that they were helping to navigate through the process. Councilor Capone asked if there were more things the City can do and Ms. Deveney responded that the Mayor feels that we can't do enough to help those in need and mentioned that the City was now transitioning from relief to recovery. She stated that the City was actively working with ABCD to provide food and housing assistance, but felt the City needed

more multilingual support. Councilor Martins agreed that the biggest issues were in communications and that the city needed more multilingual support. Ms. Wehbe provided Councilor Martins with her contact information to try to assist those in need. Councilor Martins asked the Senator if the State could transfer authority to the City to assist businesses with the State programs that were available. Senator DiDomenico explained that there was no way for the State to train or send someone to businesses to assist with program and noted that usually the businesses could get assistance through their Associations or the local Chamber of Commerce. Ms, Deanna Deveney provided an overview of how the reaches out to residents through local media, ECTV, website, social media, local organizations, churches and more recently through the Everett Matters Newsletter placed in water bills. The Mayor's Chief of Staff Erin Deveney provided the Committee with an overview of what each Department Head that was present had done throughout the pandemic that was not part of their normal job function at the request of Council Mclaughlin. Councilor Mclaughlin asked Senator DiDomenico how long the evictions timeframes were and the Senator responded that it was a long process but stated that he was thankful that the City of Everett didn't have as many as other communities since he felt that landlords and tenants were able to work things out. The Committee applauded the team efforts of everyone that provided assistance throughout the pandemic.

The Committee voted: To report back to the City Council with a recommendation to have the document to be provided by Senator DiDomenico posted on ECTV, City website, Social media and any other means that can be viewed by the residents and businesses of the City of Everett.

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