

The Committee on Government Operations, Public Safety & Public Service met on Thursday, September 23, 2021 at 6pm in the City Council Chambers.

Members present were Councilor Stephanie Martins, presiding and Councilors Michael McLaughlin, Jimmy Tri Le and Richard Dell Isola

The Committee considered a Resolution offered by Councilor Fred Capone: That the administration provide an update as to when the Fire Department study will be completed and presented to the Council, as well as the status of new hires.

Mayor's Chief of Staff Erin Deveney, Fire Chief Tony Carli, Firefighter Union Rep Craig Hardy and Councilor Fred Capone the Sponsor were also present.

The Committee noted that this was a continuation of the PowerPoint presentation held on the subject matter at the Special City Council meeting on July 8th. Councilor Capone noted that he had additional questions since that meeting on the new hires as well as the proposed new EMS Service. He asked the Chief if he could provide an update on the new hires and stated that he wanted to understand the math related to the EMS service as it related to billing and insurance payments and if it exposed the City to potential liability. Chief Carli responded that that he would defer the liability question to the City Solicitor but explained that of the 19 new hires 5 of the trainees would graduate from the fire academy in October and another 6 would graduate in November with some of the others already working on apparatus. The Chief explained that he was not looking at EMS as a money maker but as an additional service to community but informed the Committee that Cataldo would be helping with the billing. Councilor Capone asked if Cataldo would charge the City a percentage of the billing and the Chief stated that it had not been discussed as of yet. Councilor Capone remarked that his major concern was with the liability to City in providing an EMS service and had also heard that there was a large degree of burnout for those that perform EMS services and didn't want to see that happen at the Fire Department. Councilor Capone complimented the firefighters for the job that they do and declared that he didn't want to make the job harder but easier and didn't want the firefighters forced into providing EMS services. Chief Carli explained that a lot of those concerns were brought up by the Union and he assured the Committee that they didn't want to burnout the firefighters or force them to do EMS services. Union representative Hardy informed the Committee that some firefighters want EMS while others do not. He confirmed that Cataldo ambulance service is down with continued delayed response times. He asserted that if the Fire Department does take on EMS Services that it would take a while to do right but feels that the membership is being rushed into and would like to see all parties sit at the table to negotiate this new responsibility and requested that the process be slowed down until a new Fire Chief is appointed. Councilor McLaughlin remarked that purchasing the ambulance was like putting the cart before the horse and suggested that the process be slowed down with Chief Carli announcing his retirement. Councilor Dell Isola referenced a recent incident with a family member in which it took 25 minutes for an ambulance to arrive and wondered if there would be a different response time for someone fainting versus someone having a heart attack. Chief Carli acknowledged that situations like this are very stressful for his firefighters on the scene but didn't think the response time would be much different. Councilor Dell Isola asked if the hiring

of the 19 firefighters going through academy along with the hiring of 8 more through the federal grant would make things safer in the City and the Chief responded that it would definitely help and suggested that the City use the Municipal Resources, Inc. study as a path work and guide for the Fire Department. Union Rep Hardy referenced additional retirements expected and stated that the Department needs more members and requested that the Federal grant be used to hire those additional 8 firefighters. He remarked that the bodies are our best equipment and that they are need of more members without providing EMS services. Councilor Dell Isola asked how long the process was to hire a new Chief and Chief Carli explained that it was up to the administration to make that decision. Chairperson Martins asked if the new members were working in Everett yet and Chief Carli noted that they were riding apparatus but were not providing an interior firefighting only exterior assistance. She asked if EMS training would be provided to existing firefighters and Chief Carli stated that it would be discussed with the Union. Councilor Mclaughlin asked how do we improve service from Cataldo until City provides EMS service and Chief Carli referenced that the contract could be tightened up. Councilor Mclaughlin expressed his concern that the City should not take a back seat to Cataldo service. Chief Carli remarked that he was not sure what the answer is and Union Rep Hardy concurred and mentioned that the problem was everywhere since Cataldo is the only dog and pony show in the area and suggested that they should pay their employees more to get more people interested in working in EMS. Union Rep Hardy informed the Committee that the call volume for the Fire Department has also gone through the roof. Councilor Capone suggested that with all the new development in the City that the focus should be on hiring more members before starting up EMS services. Councilor Capone referenced the MRI study suggesting the Chief and Union meet regularly and both Chief Carli and Union Rep Hardy concurred that they have open communication. Councilor Capone asked if the Union was ok with the study that was done and Union Rep Hardy acknowledged that they did discuss their issues with those conducting the study. Councilor Le asked if the grant for the 8 firefighters could be extended and Chief Carli explained that it was a 3 year grant that needed to be activated during that timeframe. The Chief noted that there was still a cost to the City since the grant only covered 75% of cost in year one – 50% in year two and 25% in year three. Councilor Capone suggested that the matter be referred back to Sponsor since all of his questions had been answered however Councilor Mclaughlin requested further time so that Cataldo ambulance could be invited to discuss their poor response time.

The Committee voted: To grant further time and to invite a representative from Cataldo ambulance, Mayor's Chief of Staff, Chief Financial Officer, Firefighter Union Rep Craig Hardy and Police Chief Steve Mазzie.

Respectfully Submitted,

John W. Burley
Clerk of Committees