

Legislation Details (With Text)

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DATE: November 21, 2014

TO: Board of Mayor and Aldermen

FROM: Eric Stuckey, City Administrator
Rocky Garzarek, Fire Chief

SUBJECT:
Discussion Regarding Maintaining Temporary Fire Station 7

Purpose

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the Board of Mayor and Aldermen (BOMA) with information to facilitate a discussion regarding options to maintain a temporary fire station in the Goose Creek area until a permanent facility can be constructed.

Background

On the morning of Friday, August 15, 2014, a tragic accident occurred on Interstate 65 at exit 61 (Peytonsville Road). The incident involved a gasoline tanker that exploded after coming in contact with a bridge abutment. The ensuing fire caused significant damage to an existing bridge and a new bridge that was nearing completion, requiring removal and reconstruction of both bridges that remains underway. In addition, city residents, like those living in the Ladd Park community were made subject to a much greater risk due to increased response times from Fire and Police resulting from the closed major thoroughfare.

Prior to the accident, Fire Department records reveal average response times in excess of ten minutes for those in the affected area. A review of the available alternative routes indicates that response times would increase significantly. Research confirms that quicker response times minimize the effects of medical emergencies and significantly reduces the overall losses experienced in fire related responses.

Realizing the added risk created to some of our residents, the City began immediate discussions with our County partners about medical, law enforcement and fire protection needs for the affected area. Through these partnerships, Williamson County offered free space within the Williamson County Ag Expo Center for temporary living quarters for four of our Fire personnel per day and housing of an existing Fire Department ladder truck and rescue vehicle under a covered parking area. The parking area has suited us well thus far, but with the approaching winter weather a climate controlled space will be necessary to protect the fire pump from freezing. With these provisions, the Fire Department employed a redistribution of staffing and resources to combat this risk. As a side note, the Sherriff's Department provided a trailer to house EMS personnel who respond with an ambulance on this same site.

Additionally, the Insurance Services Office (ISO) evaluates fire departments and assigns each a class between 1 and 10, with 10 being the worse. The majority of insurance suppliers use this class to determine insurance premiums for homes and businesses. In 2009, the Franklin Fire Department was assigned a Class 2 rating which only applies to those properties located within five road miles of the closest fire station and within 1000 feet of a creditable water supply. Ladd Park, as an example, falls just outside of the five mile requirement and therefore is assigned a Class 10 rating. Homeowners in this area have expressed to the City that their insurance carrier has dropped them as a client, while others have had significant price increases to maintain coverage and still others who have not been able to obtain insurance.

The Fire Department planning process generally recommends that a fire station be erected when 400 rooftops exist within an area that is not within five road miles of an existing station or experiences an extended response time. Existing structures and current building permits within Ladd Park total 336; Stream Valley 115, and Berry Farms 93, for a total of 544.

Although the bridge is now open, this area remains vulnerable to future events until additional access can be completed. These facts, coupled with our already extended response times and the existing Class 10 insurance rating makes it prudent on our part to continue providing services through this temporary fire station.

Financial Impact

The current budget allocates money for the addition of twelve new personnel effective March 1 in anticipation of the completion of Fire Station 8 (Westhaven neighborhood). For a variety of reasons, this project was delayed and groundbreaking didn't occur until November 4, 2014 with an estimated completion date of one year later. The need to hire personnel to outfit this station has now changed to August 2015. It is possible to reallocate budgeted funds originally intended for new Fire Station 8 to support staffing or equipping of temporary Fire Station 7. The budget process for Fiscal Year 2016 could include consideration of funding for the opening of Fire Station 8 and the continuation of temporary Fire Station 7. This could be in the form of full staffing for both, a continued redistribution of resources until adequate funding becomes available or other options.

Climate controlled housing for the ladder truck will costs approximately \$25,000 and will be constructed in a manner that allows for its use (re-use) for future needs that may arise.

It is unclear at this time how long Williamson County will be able to allow Franklin Fire Department personnel to continue to occupy the present space within the Ag Center facility. It may be necessary to explore temporary housing at or around the Ag Center site. Staff is researching this issue further in terms of cost and logistics.

Recommendation

Staff recommends the approval of additional funding of approximately \$25,000 for the procurement of a temporary shelter for the ladder truck, further research regarding the need for housing Fire personnel, and other issues related to maintaining a fire station in the Goose Creek area until a permanent facility can be constructed. It is expected that a more detailed proposal will be brought to the Board in early 2015.