

JOINT ELECTED OFFICIALS AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

ACTION: METRO FIRE DEPARTMENT MERGER UPDATE

Meeting Date: February 24, 2011
Department: Eugene and Springfield Fire Departments

Agenda Item Number: 2
Contact: Randall B. Groves, Chief

ISSUE STATEMENT

Based on a 2009 consulting firm report and internal analysis, the Eugene and Springfield city managers and fire chiefs took preliminary steps toward a functional consolidation of the Eugene and Springfield fire departments. The goal was to improve service effectiveness as well as produce cost efficiencies by moving towards a metro fire service model. The term “functional consolidation” refers to a consolidation of some of the administrative and support functions of the fire departments (similar to the 3-Battalion integrated response system currently in use by the cities). The functional consolidation is not a full merger of the two departments, but is a series of incremental (and reversible) steps toward a full merger, assuming those steps prove successful.

BACKGROUND

In an era of financial challenge, new and creative solutions are necessary for sustaining core community services, particularly in fire prevention, suppression, rescue, and EMS. To this end, completed elements of the functional consolidation feature new and more efficient ways to provide services by skillfully combining the strengths of both fire departments through the use of multi-role, multi-skilled personnel and eliminating unnecessary duplication.

In June 2007, the two cities effectively eliminated jurisdictional boundaries for the purposes of emergency fire, rescue, first-response EMS, hazardous materials and ambulance transport. The closest and most appropriate resource is now dispatched, regardless of jurisdiction. This approach, known as the 3-Battalion Response System, has resulted in faster initial response to emergencies, as well as better backup coverage to ensure that a safe level of resources are available throughout the metro area. The only tangible costs have been associated with a limited amount of staff time and the minimal one-time cost of renumbering some fire stations and vehicles into a single cohesive system.

In 2009, the two departments commissioned a study of potential further collaboration by Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI). The study results were presented to elected officials in June 2009, and discussed at a follow-up meeting in September.

Elected officials also received, as background for the December 7, 2009 Joint Elected Officials meeting, a detailed report explaining what the consolidation would entail in each functional area of the department. At that meeting, members of the Springfield City Council voted unanimously in support of initial steps, while members of the Eugene City Council voted to consider the matter further while meeting as a single body.

In July 2010, the two departments entered into a “functional consolidation” which involved the sharing of a number of key management and administrative positions through an inter-governmental agreement. This agreement allowed both cities to achieve a combined annualized savings of \$562,000 beginning in FY11. These savings resulted from the elimination of a number of positions which were eliminated through attrition. This led to a reshuffling of responsibilities and a new organizational structure (see attached organizational chart) to manage the functional consolidation. Current shared positions include:

Chief of Departments (Eugene)

Deputy Chief of Operations (Eugene)

Fire Marshal (Springfield)

Administrative Services Director (Springfield)

- At this point limited to ambulance billing oversight

Deputy Chief of EMS and Community Relations (Springfield)

Deputy Chief of Special Operations (Eugene)

EMS Chief (Eugene)

Emergency Medical Services Officer (Springfield)

Training Chief (Springfield)

By sharing these key positions, a more unified system has been established in delivering fire prevention, suppression, rescue and emergency medical services in the metro area.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

Since July 1st, staff from both departments have worked to establish the new structure for the functionally consolidated metro fire service. This process began with a formal introduction process of the new metro fire senior staff, which consists of the Chief of Departments and five division-level managers, to both cities executive management teams. This was a small but important step considering that fire division managers from one city are frequently working on projects in their area of responsibility for the other city. In addition to successfully running both departments, the following accomplishments towards integration have occurred in the first six months:

- Functional Consolidation Intergovernmental agreement signed.
 - The IGA requires one fiscal year of notice for dissolution of shared positions with the exception of the Fire Chief.
 - The IGA provides for shared Fire Chief position for FY11 only giving both cities an opportunity to evaluate effectiveness.
- Standing organizational meeting schedule established.
 - Weekly Senior Staff (executive/division) meetings established
 - Monthly Leadership Team (executive/division/section/supervisor/IAFF leadership) meetings established.
 - Monthly Joint Labor-Management meetings established with each IAFF union along with quarterly joint IAFF meetings.
 - Quarterly Joint City Manager Office meetings established with both cities
- Formal communication system established for internal memorandums and general orders.
- 3-Battalion integrated response system has been further refined with regard to apparatus deployment and computer response file adjustments.
- Integrated metro training schedule developed and implemented on January 1, 2011.
- IAFF labor Memorandum of Understandings.
 - Emergency Medical Services Officer (EMSO) shared position, signed.

- Shared IAFF Training staff – MOU draft complete, anticipate signing agreement in February.
- Shared IAFF Fire Marshal Office staff – MOU draft completed, anticipate signing agreement in February.
- Metro Standard Operating Procedure (SOPs) initiative is anticipated to be complete by March 31st.
- EMS protocols have been integrated into the standard Metro model.
- Metro Strategic Plan (draft) complete and on target to be implemented July 1, 2011 (FY12).
- Metro Work Plan (draft) complete and on target to be implemented July 1, 2011 (FY12).
- Metro Standards of Cover report on target to be completed by March 1, 2011, for reporting period Calendar Year 2010.
- Metro Annual Report completed and released in November 2011.
- Rural Metro Ambulance (RMA) contract executed for a 90 day trial period in Springfield, as approved by Lane County, under an IGA with the City of Eugene which already utilizes this service. This provides the ability to shed limited non-emergency inter-facility ambulance transport calls increasing emergency response capacity. Agreement began in November 2011, up for review end of February 2011.
- Joint Apparatus and Equipment Committee charged with developing integrated apparatus and equipment specifications.
- Joint grant application submitted to FEMA for extrication equipment standardization and replacement.
- First joint Awards, Promotion and Employee Recognition ceremony held on January 20, 2011.

CHALLENGES

Although significant progress has been made, there are areas that remain challenging as the two departments work towards a merged organization. Some of these challenges include:

- Managers filling shared positions are finding it challenging to keep up with multiple responsibilities, e.g., managing the Springfield Fire & Life Safety Department, managing the Eugene Fire & EMS Department and managing the merger integration. These are essentially three jobs. These challenges will decrease as more areas of the two organizations are integrated into one way of operating. The tough budgetary environment in both cities has also taken a substantial amount.
- Fulfilling multiple roles has led to less personal contact between Senior Staff and rank and file department employees.
- Change, and the perception of change, has proven difficult for some members in both organizations.

NEXT STEPS

During the remainder of FY11 the departments will continue to manage the day-to-day operations and attend to the business needs of both organizations. Staff will also continue the pursuit of integration between the two fire departments.

- Work towards an integrated records management system that provides for commonality between the two systems.
- Pending the execution of the Training Memorandum of Understanding with IAFF 851 (Eugene) and 1395 (Springfield), implement a Metro firefighter recruit training academy in spring of 2011. This will allow the departments to better utilize training staff by creating a joint program utilizing shared staff positions. This opportunity will also allow the City of Springfield to take advantage of an existing hiring list developed by the City of Eugene to fill some firefighter/paramedic vacancies.

This in turn saves money for Springfield.

- Evaluate cost savings associated with the development of a joint supply, order, distribution and maintenance system for the two departments. Staff believes there are potential savings in this area but more analysis is needed to confirm this assumption.
- Develop a joint financial analysis team to begin capturing savings and evaluating areas for future savings.
- Continue discussions with labor to evaluate the financial viability of the merger initiative and work towards becoming a single fire and emergency medical services organization.
- Work with the Insurance Services Office (ISO) to re-evaluate both cities fire insurance rating based on the metro fire service model. In a recent meeting with ISO representatives, staff was informed that ISO points were gained under the integrated metro model over what was received during the last grading received as separate city departments.
- Decide whether to extend the IGA for the Fire Chief position for an additional year, through FY12. This would allow more time to evaluate the merger initiative while continuing to provide savings achieved through sharing positions. If the decision is made to separate, funding will need to be identified to replace at least the fire chief position.

RELATED CITY VALUES

City of Springfield Goal #3: Enhance Public Safety

City of Springfield Value #3: Results through collaboration

City of Eugene Goal #1: Safe community

City of Eugene Goal #5: Fair, stable, and adequate financial resources

ELECTED OFFICIAL OPTIONS

This is an information only item to provide an informational update about the fire service merger initiative.

CITY MANAGERS' RECOMMENDATION

None. This is an informational work session only.

SUGGESTED MOTION

None. This is an informational work session only.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Metro Fire Organizational Chart

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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