

AGENDA ITEM
13A

Date: April 1, 2021

Council Action Date: April 21, 2021

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Alex D. McIntyre, City Manager

SUBJECT: Fire Department Operational Performance Study

SUMMARY

On December 9, 2019, the City Council unanimously approved an agreement to conduct a Fire Department Operational Performance Study. The purpose of the Study was to evaluate current fire operations and their alignment with industry best practices.

RECOMMENDATION

No specific action is requested at this time.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS**Why another Study?**

There have been 7 studies of the Fire department since 2003. In July of 2018, the City Council authorized a 40-hour roving paramedic engine, known as Medic Engine 7. Four months later, the City Council appointed a new City Manager. In July 2019, additional resources were requested by the Fire Department. To address this request, the City Manager recommended to the City Council, to commission an operational review to evaluate current fire operations and their alignment with industry best practices, and the development of a strategic plan to identify a path to meet the objectives identified. This review was to be led by the City Manager's Office opposed to the latest report that was led by the Fire Department. The Report was intended to address 3 major policy questions:

1. Why do we have so many calls for service?
2. What innovations might we explore to achieve greater efficiencies?
3. How do we pay for any recommendations?

Through the budget adoption process in 2019, the City Council appropriated funds to conduct the review.

Staff held a competitive bid process to identify a firm to Conduct a Fire Department Operational Performance Study (Study). On December 9, 2019, City Council unanimously approved an agreement with Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI) to conduct the Study and Strategic Plan. The Study is now complete and was released on April 2, 2021 for Council's consideration, and can be accessed using the following link: <https://www.cityofventura.ca.gov/documentCenter/View/26664/13A-ADVANCE-AGENDA-ITEM->.

Community Standard

When reviewing the recommendations, it may be helpful to consider ESCI's statement:

The community should set staffing levels based on risk, capability, and citizen expectations. There is no mandated requirement that fits all situations.

When evaluating the recommended enhancements to operations it is necessary to identify the community standard so the appropriate resources can be applied to achieve the desired outcome.

What is in the Study?

The Study can be broken up into seven main sections:

- Organization- Focuses on the community demographics and how the Fire Department is structured to meet the current service needs of the community.
- Leadership- Addresses the elements typically found in the management structure of Ventura's Fire Department and compares them to other fire departments.
- Financial Analysis- Reviews the composition of the City's finances and projects the Fire Departments financial impact assuming no operational improvements are made.
- Staffing- Explores the Department's current staffing levels, administrative functions, and evaluates them against best business practices and national standards.
- Infrastructure & Equipment- Assesses the Department's capital facilities, vehicles, and apparatus.

- Operations- Provides analyses of the Department's historical service demand for the previous four calendar years (2016–2019). This includes a breakdown by National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) incident type category along with incident density maps generated through GIS analysis.
- Recommendations- ESCI has developed 27 recommendations to assist the City in developing a Fire Department that is aligned with industry best practices. The table below displays the recommendations, the time in which they should be addressed, and the page that they are first addressed in the Study. ESCI grouped the recommendations into three implementation timeline categories: Short-Term (6 months–1 year), Mid-Term (1–3 years), and Long-Term (3–5 years). ESCI also identified several ideas and options to immediately enhance emergency operations capability and capacity, these recommendations are labeled operational enhancements in Attachment A.

There are two recommendations identified in the Study that are being proactively addressed; the first one being recommendation 2-F, Increase Public Education and Information Efforts. The City Council has authorized the centralization of the City's Communication team, this effort has enabled this City's Public Information Officer to dedicate one representative to Police and Fire. Staff anticipates that this action will address this recommendation in the Study.

Ambulance transport services for the City of Ventura and surrounding unincorporated areas, are provided by American Medical Response (AMR) through a contract with AMR and Ventura County. This agreement has specific performance metrics. The City has a separate agreement with AMR to support AMR's contractual obligations with the County. The fee the City charges for this service has not been addressed since 2009. The City Manager and City Attorney's Office is coordinating with the Fire Department to develop a solution.

Financial Impact of Operational Improvements

Largely due to cost and capacity, ESCI recognizes that it may be unrealistic to implement all their recommendations. ESCI developed four "deployment packages" that can be interpreted as a menu of options, all of which would result in meaningful change within the Department. The 4 deployment options range in cost between \$3.9 million and \$14.9 million and are outlined in Attachment B.

Funding Opportunities

The Study recognizes that existing revenue sources may not have sufficient capacity to pay for the recommendations and proposes Three options:

Recommendation 1-G Explore the option of an additional special measure to support Fire Department Operations.

Recommendation 2-G Adjust Fire Department Construction Plan Review Fees. Staff has addressed this recommendation; plan review fees were most recently approved by Council in May 2020 and will be presented to the City Council next month for consideration.

Recommendation 2-H Explore the implementation of a First Responder Fee to recover a portion of the costs of providing paramedic engine company responses to the Community. California State Statutes allow for emergency response agencies that respond to medical emergencies, but that do not have transport capabilities, to develop and implement a fee to recover a portion of the costs of providing that service. Huntington Beach and La Habra Fire Department are examples of two cities who have implemented this type of fee. If this approach is desired additional analysis would be required.

Next Steps

1. Council Meeting to Review Study- The City Council will have the opportunity to contemplate the recommendations in the Study and provide Staff with feedback.
2. June Budget Adoption- Staff will present the City's Fiscal Year 2022 budget to Council for adoption in June. The Recommendations in the Study have not been included in Staff's current budget proposal. Pending the City Council's direction, Staff's will develop an approach to address the direction in the proposed budget.
3. Department Strategic Plan- The development a five-year department strategic plan is necessary to identify a path to meet the objectives identified in the study.

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ATTACHMENTS:

- A ESCI Recommendations
- B Deployment Package Comparison

ATTACHMENT A

Recommendation	Suggested Timeliness	Page in Report
Immediate Recommendations		
1-A: Develop a Customer-Centered Strategic Plan.	6 Months-1 Year	29
1-B: Review and revise policies and procedures as necessary on a three-year planning cycle.	6 Months-1 Year	30
1-C: Broaden the representation on the Safety Committee.	6 Months-1 Year	30
1-D: Have Fire Captains electronically log all training activities in the Department's Records Management System (RMS).	6 Months-1 Year	30
1-E: Update the Countywide Annual Operations Plan.	6 Months-1 Year	30
1-F: Annually review the AMR EMS Sub-Contract Agreement.	6 Months-1 Year	30
1-G: Explore the option of an additional special measure to support Fire Department Operations.	6 Months-1 Year	31
Mid-Term Recommendations		
2-A: Conduct a comprehensive engineering and architectural assessment of each of the fire stations.	1-3 Years	31
2-B: Shorten the replacement schedule for fire apparatus.	1-3 Years	31
2-C: Add 8 firefighter positions to Fire Operations.	1-3 Years	31
2-D: Add an Administrative Training Captain position.	1-3 Years	31
2-E: Reconfigure the current commercial occupancy inspection program.	1-3 Years	32
2-F: Increase Public Education and Information Efforts.	1-3 Years	32
2-G: Adjust Fire Department Construction Plan Review Fees.	1-3 Years	32
2-H: Explore the implementation of a First Responder Fee to recover a portion of the costs of providing paramedic engine company responses to the Community.	1-3 Years	32
Long-Term Recommendations		
3-A: Purchase a "field-friendly" fire inspection records management system (RMS).	3-5 Years	33
3-B: Establish fire inspection metrics, and regularly publish these activities via the online Department "dashboard."	3-5 Years	33
3-C: Develop and implement a formal Community Risk Assessment and Reduction Plan.	3-5 Years	34
3-D: Establish a Community Paramedic Program	3-5 Years	34

ATTACHMENT A

Operational Enhancements		
Reconfigure ME-7 (Option 1): Add six positions to make Medic Engine 7 a full-time unit	Operational Enhancements	34
Keep ME-7 as a peak demand unit (Option 2): Add two positions per shift for leave coverage	Operational Enhancements	35
Construct Station 7 near the Harbor: 6,000 square-foot station	Operational Enhancements	35
Relocate Station 4 closer to Montalvo area: 6,000 square-foot station	Operational Enhancements	36
Alter Run-Cards to Eliminate Dispatching to Certain Types of Omega Incidents	Operational Enhancements	37
Add 2 Paramedic Squads-Dual Role FF/PMs: Add 14 FF/PM positions + equipment/vehicles	Operational Enhancements	37
Add 2 Paramedic Squads-Single Role Paramedics: Add 24 PM positions + equipment/vehicle	Operational Enhancements	38
Add BLS/ALS Transport Unit(s)	Operational Enhancements	39

ATTACHMENT B

Deployment Packages				
Recommendation	1	2	3	4
2C: Add 8 Firefighter Operations Relief Positions	X	X		X
2D: Add an Administrative Training Captain Position	X	X	X	X
2D (Option 1): Upgrade the current Training Battalion Chief position to an Administrative A/C position	X	X	X	X
Reconfigure ME-7 (Option 1): Add six positions to make Medic Engine 7 a full-time unit²	X	X		X
Add 2 Paramedic Squads-Dual Role FF/PMs: Add 14 FF/PM positions	X			
Add 2 Paramedic Squads-Single Role Paramedics: Add 24 PM positions		X	X	X
Keep ME-7 as a peak demand unit (Option 2): Add two FF/PM positions per shift for leave coverage			X	
Capital				
Add a Fire Station: Construct Station 7 near the Harbor	X	X		X
Move a Fire Station: Move Station 4 closer to Montalvo area				X
Year 1 Cost Estimate (In Million)	\$12	\$12	\$4	\$14
Ongoing Cost Estimate (In Million)	\$8-\$13	\$6-\$10	\$4-\$7	\$6-\$10