Department of Fire/Rescue Services

City of York, Pennsylvania

Strategic Plan
For
Fire Stations and Staffing

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The Mayor's Committee on Fire and Emergency Medical Services

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FORWARD

Steven R. Buffington, Fire Chief

The impetus for this report is many fold, including the Pre-Act 47 Study and the "Fire and EMS Plan" commissioned by former Mayor John S. Brenner. In addition to these studies, Mayor Bracey has embarked upon a quest to examine the manner in which the City currently does business with an eye toward improving services and opportunities to reduce costs. With these goals in mind, the Mayor's Committee on Fire and Emergency Medical Services began a months long process of weekly meetings. The Strategic Plan for Fire Stations and Staffing is the culmination of that process.

It is a difficult mission for the Fire Chief to be tasked with participating in a comprehensive planning process that has the potential to recommend any kind of reduction in the Fire Department. However, as the Fire Chief I also understand my obligation to the Mayor and the citizens to ensure that the Department of Fire/Rescue Services operates as efficiently as possible. Even more importantly, I understand my responsibility to protect the safety of my fellow firefighters to the best of my ability with the resources made available. The contents of this plan will most likely cause shock for some, concern for others and hopefully understanding in most. We simply cannot continue to sustain the ever-increasing costs associated with our current operational model. Make no mistake; this plan suggests drastic changes for our department. It must be understood however these changes are necessary in order that we may continue to provide the best possible fire protection services for the City of York.

There are many challenges as we look forward to continued fire and emergency medical services in the City of York. Not the least of which is the current financial crisis that the City faces. In addition another major issue faced by the department is a seemingly never-ending increase in overtime expenditures. Each of these challenges has been addressed in this plan.

Currently the Department of Fire/Rescue Services employs sixty-seven uniformed personnel. The Fire Department administration cautions that to reduce personnel below this level will have a negative impact on service delivery and personnel safety. In the Fire and EMS Plan it is indicated that under our current staffing model that we are understaffed by 2.5 personnel. It is understood that given the current financial situation hiring additional personnel is not feasible. The plan addresses this issue as well. I caution the reader that in order to fully appreciate and understand the recommendations made, one must resist the urge to go directly to the recommendations and read the entire document.

I offer my full support of the Strategic Plan for Fire Stations and Staffing as presented. I would urge that when reviewing this plan that you do so with an open mind and an understanding that it is simply infeasible to continue to operate under our current model. Further, it is important to understand that this is in fact a plan. The individual recommendations made herein are dependant upon all of the others to provide an acceptable and successful outcome. I submit that the recommendations contained herein maintain the current level of service while providing for an increased level of safety to our personnel while providing a significant cost savings.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This plan is the result of weeks of work by the Mayor's Committee on Fire and Emergency Medical Services. The committee established by the Mayor initially to study and make recommendations on the "Fire and EMS Plan" delivered by Public Safety Solutions, Incorporated began meeting on January 6, 2011.

The committee reviewed the "Fire and EMS Plan" and quickly established that the immediate priority would be to identify those issues facing the Fire Department that were both significant but also manageable. It was decided early on that any recommendations would have to; maintain or improve service, maintain a response time of 3 minutes or less and not only allow the Department to maintain the current Insurance Services Office Fire Suppression Rating but also allow for improvement.

During the review of Fire Department operations, policies and procedures it became clear that there were significant issue that must be addressed quickly to preserve the current level of fire protection in the City of York. The following issues were identified:

1. Aging/inefficient fire stations
2. Soaring overtime costs
3. Staffing Utilization

The body of this document outlines in detail each of the issues identified. The City currently has two fire stations that are in such a condition as to make them extremely expensive to repair and remodel. This is compounded by the fact that even with significant investment of funds, neither of these buildings will make an effective fire station any longer. They have simply outlived their usefulness as such.

The overtime budget for the Fire Department has increased 899% since 2001. A small percentage of this overtime is directly related to the current staffing level of the

Fire Department. Since 2001 staffing levels have decreased. However, study of sick and injury leave has shown that the majority of the overtime budget is due to the use of sick and injury leave.

The committee also concluded that there was an opportunity to augment the current number of firefighters being sent to reported structure fires. Currently there are as few as six firefighters and one officer dispatched to some structure fires. The committee feels strongly that this number should be increased for the safety of both the citizens and the firefighters.

After identifying the above issues the committee set about looking at ways to address each of them that would not have a negative impact on fire service in the City of York. This was not a simple task and it was not undertaken lightly. However the committee makes the following recommendations that will not only maintain service but increase it:

1. Remove one front line engine company from service and reassign those firefighters as all station swing personnel.
    a. This will provide a total of four all station swing personnel on each platoon resulting in an overtime savings of $400,000 annually.
    b. This will also allow staffing on some apparatus to be increased from two to three dependant upon the number of personnel off duty each day.
2. Close the Rex/Laurel and Goodwill Fire stations.
    a. This will result in an immediate savings of between $3,000,000 to $3,500,000 for repairs.
    b. This will also result in an annual savings of approximately $44,000 in building maintenance and operating costs.
3. Construct a new fire station on Lot 11 to replace the Rex/Laurel and Goodwill stations.

a. Closing both fire stations will necessitate the construction of a new station in order to maintain service.
b. A new station will be more energy efficient, cost less to maintain and will provide a safe and healthy workplace for our firefighters.
c. The construction of this station also meets the recommendation of the "Fire and EMS Plan" to provide state of the art bunkroom facilities to help recruit new volunteer members.
d. The cost savings in the overtime budget will far exceed debt service payments on a new fire station.

4. Adopt a response protocol that dispatches all in-service apparatus to all reported structure fires.
    a. This will permit the Fire Department to assemble a minimum crew of eight to twelve firefighters and at least one officer at structure fires.
    b. If all personnel are not needed they can quickly be place back in service for other calls.

This plan, if adopted in full will not only maintain service and reduce costs; it will in fact improve services and allow the Fire Department to pursue an improved I.S.O. rating in the near future. One thing is certain however; the City cannot afford to continue to operate the Department as it currently does.

OVERVIEW

The committee began weekly meetings on Thursday, January 6, 2011. Mayor Bracey's charge was to examine the "Fire and EMS Report" with an eye toward implementing recommendations contained there in while also looking for other opportunities to improve the operational model of the Department. While certainly the impetus for this process was the "Fire and EMS Plan" developed by Public Safety Solutions, Incorporated. The committee quickly realized that the correct approach was to use that document as a stepping off point.

The committee recognized the limitations of "The Fire and EMS Plan" and considered many other factors during our research. Some of the other items considered were:

1. The history of the Department of Fire/Rescue Services
2. The current financial situation of the City
3. The Insurance Services Office Fire Protection Rating Schedule
4. NFPA 1710, Standard on Fire Department Deployment and Operations
5. Current stations
6. Current staffing
7. Current response model
8. Current response times.

The committee began by establishing that there were certain considerations that were givens and that any plan presented would have to ensure that these items were adequately addressed. These givens were:

1. 67 uniformed personnel must be maintained in order to field an effective firefighting force.
2. Any recommendations made must not reduce the current level of service.
3. The three-minute response time model must be maintained.

4. Any recommendations made cannot reduce the current ISO rating and in fact must enable the Department to continue to work toward an improved rating.

Once these limiting factors were established, the committee reviewed data and considered input from the command staff of the Department. It became readily apparent that there were several major issues that must be addressed very quickly.

1. Current fire stations and the condition thereof
2. Fire apparatus staffing
3. Overtime costs

This plan will be presented in sections that deal with the individual areas that lead the committee to its final recommendations. The committee recognizes that many of the recommendations contained herein will be viewed with a great deal of skepticism initially. However, we would urge the reader to thoroughly review the entire plan prior to coming to any conclusions. Throughout this document we will present much supporting documentation for the recommendations made. It is our sincere belief that this plan presents the City of York with the best available option to effectively provide fire protection services today and into the future while providing for the best possible safety of our members.

It is noted that this is a comprehensive plan and that the urge to pick and choose pieces of the plan for implementation should be avoided. Each recommendation is dependant upon the others to ensure a successful outcome.

HISTORY OF THE DEPARTMENT

OF

FIRE/RESCUE SERVICES

To better understand the issues surrounding our current stations and staffing it becomes necessary to briefly examine the history of the Department. It would be difficult to determine where we are today and where it is we want to be tomorrow without determining how it is that we got here.

Fire service in the City of York began with the formation of the Sun Fire Brigade of Yorktown in 1771. This fire company was the precursor to the Laurel Fire Company Number 1. The Laurel was followed by the Vigilant Fire Company Number 1 between 1778 and 1781 and proliferated into nine (9) individual fire companies over the years. These fire companies were loosely associated through the years and were established primarily based on neighborhood boundaries and political and fraternal considerations. In fact, if one were to examine the rolls of the various fire companies you would observe such names as Samuel S. Lewis as well as prominent local political and business leaders. It is clear that these organizations were highly influential in the community.

The history of the volunteer fire service in York is one of fierce pride. It was not uncommon for fire companies to meet at intersections and fight for the honor of being the first to have water on the fire. The fire stations built by these companies were also a testament to the pride and strength of the organizations. They built magnificent structures that were bigger and better than rival companies. An example of this extravagance is the Royal Fire Station, hailed as one of the finest fire stations in the country.

Eventually the City of York took over responsibility for fire protection and the Department became and remains today a combination career/volunteer fire department.

With this transition ownership of these large ornate structures transferred to the City. During the various economic difficulties throughout the years maintenance of these structures was deferred or simply ignored. We are now at a critical juncture in regards to the future of these buildings. The last fire station built by the department was the Vigilant Fire Station in 1973.

HISTORY SUMMARY

A review of the history of the York City Department of Fire/Rescue Services gives one a perspective why stations were located were they are today. It is clear that there was no comprehensive planning involved in the decision process. It is quite clear that through the use of modern computer response modeling and current guidelines provided by the Insurance Services Office and the National Fire Protection Association that there is an opportunity to improve efficiency.

It also became quite clear that many are extremely vested in the rich history of the Department and, that this may be a complicating factor when attempting to achieve buy-in on the plan. However, it is well time to get beyond the attitude of two hundred years of tradition unimpeded by progress. We must always remember and honor the history of the Department but we cannot allow this to hamper progress.

CURRENT FIRE STATIONS

The Department of Fire/Rescue Services currently operates out of four stations and a headquarters complex.

DEPARTMENT OF FIRE/RESCUE SERVICES FACILITIES

Fire Headquarters
43 South Duke Street

Station 99-1 (Rex/Laurel)
51 South Duke Street

Station 99-2 (Vigilant)
267 West Market Street

Station 99-5 (Goodwill)
833 East Market Street

Station 99-9 (Lincoln)
800 Roosevelt Avenue

It is obvious that several of the fire stations have far exceeded their useful life as such. Over the course of years the fire stations have fallen victim to deferred maintenance or in some cases a complete lack of maintenance due to budget constraints. Fire Chief Steven R. Buffington shortly after his appointment in July of 2010 prepared a facility needs assessment of the Fire Department buildings. This document is included as Appendix A. Each station will be discussed individually in this chapter.

When considering the current fire stations it is important to remember the history involved. Again, the fire companies were generally formed based on political, fraternal and neighborhood considerations without the benefit of comprehensive planning. As we consider our current and future needs relating to fire stations we have the benefit of computer response modeling and planning as a single entity rather than nine (9) individual organizations.

The following is an individual overview of the Rex/Laurel and Goodwill stations and their current condition.

REX/LAUREL FIRE STATION

The Rex/Laurel Fire Station is actually two separate and distinct structures built at different times. The Laurel Fire Station was built in 1877 to accommodate hand drawn fire apparatus. As a historical side note, the President of the United Sates was Ulysses S. Grant and York was still a borough. In 1888 the Rex Hook and Ladder Company struck a deal to build a structure adjoining the Laurel. There were no interior openings between the two buildings. There has since been an opening created on the first floor level and they operate currently as one station. This station is heralded in local legend as the oldest continuously operating fire station in the country. In addition the structure is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Rex/ Laurel was historically home to an engine company on the Laurel side and a truck company on the Rex side.

Time has not been kind to the Rex/Laurel. There are a total of 58 windows, most of which are fourteen (14) feet tall that must all be replaced. It is estimated that the cost of this project alone will cost $1,000,000 or more. The replacement windows must be correct for the period due to the historic nature of the buildings.

Windows, Rex/Laurel

Window, Rex/Laurel

In addition there were numerous roof leaks that have caused a great deal of damage throughout the buildings. It is anticipated that it would cost between $1,000,000 and $2,500,000 to repair and renovate these buildings. It should be clearly understood that even with these repairs and renovations the Department would be left with a magnificent structure that was designed for hand and horse drawn fire apparatus and would still not be well suited for modern use.

Recently due to several issues it was decided to relocate the ladder truck to the Vigilant Fire Station. In November of 2009 a crack was discovered above the apparatus door on the Rex side. The crack is visible from above the door up to the fascia board at the top. During this same period there were a series of accidents in which the ladder truck struck the doorway while exiting the station. An engineer examined the front wall of the station and made the determination that absent timely repair; the heavy ladder truck should not be run out of this station. In addition, the engineer examined the apparatus bay floor due to cracking of the concrete. A copy of the engineering report is attached. Based upon this report and the series of accidents, it was decided to relocate the ladder truck to the Vigilant Fire Station.

Front wall, Rex side

C.S.Davidson, Inc.

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May 6, 2010

Chief Steven R. Buffington
City of York
43 South Duke St
York, PA 17401

Re: Rex Laurel Fire Station
Structural Evaluation
Engineer's Project No. 0407.8.80.00

Dear Chief Buffington:

As requested, C.S. Davidson, Inc. (CSD) performed a series of site visits at the above referenced property in November and December of 2009. The purpose of those visits was to evaluate the slab on grade and the lintel above the truck door at the northern bay of the fire station. The purpose of this letter is to describe my findings and provide recommendations.

Brief Description

The existing fire station consists of two truck bays. The original southern bay was originally constructed in 1887, while the northern bay was added in 1888. The portion under investigation was the northern bay. It is a 2-story wood framed building. The exterior is enclosed with brick masonry, while the interior is finished with lathe and plaster. It has a poured concrete slab-on-grade

Observations

The concrete slab just inside the overhead door of the northern truck bay has multiple, significant cracks. During the investigation, it was noted that there was a significant downward slope from the door threshold to the street elevation. A steel plate was installed across the door threshold at some time in the past to cover the cracked and deteriorated slab. The cracked slab area extends almost the entire width of the truck bay by a length of approximately 8'-0".

Around the time that the slab was under investigation, it was also found that a deflection exists in the lintel above the overhead door. As viewed from across the street from the station, the façade of the building has visibly sagged. Cracking occurred in the brick mortar joints, and it appears that an attempt was made at some time in the past to either re-point or caulk the cracked joints. Some exploratory investigation was performed, and we determined that the lintel consists of a wood timber, which is likely the original framing member. A small area of the interior side of the lintel was exposed near the center of the span and also at the northern bearing point. The lintel material, as viewed from these two limited areas, appeared to be solid; no rot, termite damage, or other typical deterioration factors where found. Also noted during the investigation was a masonry tower built on the roof at the northwest corner of the station. It differs from the existing bell tower at the southwest corner, because the southwestern tower was part of the original construction; whereas, it appears that the northwestern tower was built on top of the roof some time after the building was constructed.

Initial engineering report, Page 1

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June 28, 2010

Chief Steven R. Buffington
City of York
43 South Duke St
York, PA 17401

Re: Rex Laurel Fire Station
Structural Evaluation
Engineer's Project No. 0407.8.80.00

Dear Chief Buffington:

I am in receipt of a letter from you dated June 23, 2010, which indicates that the City is unable to make the recommended lintel and slab repairs to the Rex Laurel Fire Station, as recommended in my May 6, 2010 letter to you. This is due to a limitation of available funds. Your letter also indicated that the ladder truck recently struck the doorway as it was exiting the station.

As noted in my previous letter to you, the lintel above the door has sagged, and the floor slab has deteriorated and is cracking. A significant slope occurs in the slab from the door threshold to the road, thus worsening the condition. In general, the limitation of the door height, door width, and sloping slab are all contributing to deterioration of the existing structure and increases the potential for more damage.

As such, and given that the necessary repairs cannot be made at this time, it should be considered prudent to relocate the heavily used ladder truck to an alternate location, and instead use the building to house equipment that is less frequently moved in and out of the building.

For the sake of long term functionality of the existing building, the repairs to the lintel and slab should be completed as soon as the City has funds available to do so. In the event that the City experiences an extremely heavy or severe weather condition, such as a one hundred year snow event, the roof should be immediately off-loaded to prevent structural danger.

Should you have any questions or concerns, or if we can be of further assistance, please feel free to contact us. Thank you for the opportunity to be of assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

C.S. DAVIDSON, INC.

Kerryn E. Fulton

Kerryn E. Fulton, P.E.
Projects Administrator

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Initial engineering report, Page 2

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As such, and given that the necessary repairs cannot be made at this time, it should be considered prudent to relocate the heavily used ladder truck to an alternate location, and instead use the building to house equipment that is less frequently moved in and out of the building.

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Should you have any questions or concerns, or if we can be of further assistance, please feel free to contact us. Thank you for the opportunity to be of assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

C.S. DAVIDSON, INC.

Kerryn E. Fulton

Kerryn E. Fulton, P.E.
Projects Administrator

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Follow up engineering report

Moving the ladder truck to the Vigilant Fire Station resulted in an overcrowding at that station and subsequently the duty officers were relocated to the Rex/Laurel. The

officers currently occupy a makeshift office and sleeping area on the second floor of the Rex side of the station.

Officer's bunkroom area

Duty office

When considering the future of this station it is certainly necessary to remember it's grand past and significant historical value. It is obvious that it does not lend itself to use as a modern fire station and that we have not done justice to the structure due to a lack of

maintenance over the years. These factors weighed heavily in our final recommendations.

GOODWILL FIRE STATION

The Goodwill Fire Station was constructed in 1903 and is the second oldest station. This is a single bay station that is home to Engine 99-5 as well as a reserve engine. The doorway to this station is extremely narrow providing only inches of clearance for apparatus as they pass through. It is a testament to the operators that there are not more accidents involving striking the doorway. The apparatus bay in this station is also very narrow.

As with the Rex/Laurel time has not been good to this station either. Deferred maintenance has also taken a hefty toll. Again, like the Rex/Laurel the windows must all be replaced. Although not in a historic district that would require period correct windows, it would still represent a significant cost for replacement.

As noted earlier the apparatus bay opening is very narrow. Previous investigation has revealed that the cost of widening the opening would be in the $65,000 range and would not provide a great deal more width. In addition this would destroy the architectural features of the doorway.

Goodwill Fire Station Doorway

The interior of the station requires significant remodeling to include; complete repainting, floor covering replacement throughout all living spaces as well as the installation of a vehicle exhaust extraction system. It is not inconceivable to expect cost estimates to approach $1,000,000 to bring this station to decent state of repair.

STATION SUMMARY

Over the years the lure of easy budget savings has resulted in a state of neglect at many of the Fire Department facilities. At the time deferring maintenance must have seemed like an easy way to trim budgets with little immediate impact. However, as time progressed, maintenance continued to be deferred or ignored all together. This bill for this practice has now become due and payable.

It is readily apparent to all, but the most die-hard history buffs, that the Rex/Laurel and Goodwill fire stations have come to the end of their useful service lives. It is further apparent that to close both of these stations without replacement would result in a major negative impact on response times, the ISO rating and service to the public. It is obvious that the time has come to make some difficult decisions. To continue down the current path is neither wise nor in the best interest of the Fire Department or the public.

No matter what decision is made regarding the Rex/Laurel and or the Goodwill fire stations it is incumbent upon the City to make every effort to ensure that these historic structures are preserved, preferably by finding a private entity to purchase and preserve them.

CURRENT STAFFING

The Department of Fire/Rescue Services is currently staffed by sixty-seven (67) uniformed personnel. Of these, fifty-six (56) are assigned to the four (4) operational platoons that staff four (4) front line engine companies and one (1) front line aerial truck. The remaining personnel are assigned to the Fire Prevention Bureau and management positions.

Each platoon is staffed with twelve (12) firefighters, one (1) Captain and one (1) Assistant Chief. In accordance with the current collective bargaining agreement between the City of York and the York Professional Firefighter's Association two firefighters staff each apparatus. The remaining two firefighters on each platoon are assigned to "All Station Swing" positions. These positions are to cover annual leave, sick leave, injury leave or other absences. The collective bargaining agreement permits up to five (5) personnel to be off on annual leave at any one time. This creates a situation at times where there is a need to hire three (3) personnel on overtime to staff apparatus. Some of this overtime is offset by assigning the Captain to a piece of apparatus in lieu of hiring overtime.

This staffing model has been the norm for many years. It is based on maintaining a minimum level of staffing on each apparatus. Although the collective bargaining agreement specifies that there must be a minimum of two career personnel assigned to each apparatus it does not require a minimum number of apparatus to be in service. The number of apparatus in service is entirely a prerogative of management rights.

The current staffing model has become more and more difficult for the City to maintain financially. Overtime costs associated with maintaining minimum staffing have become increasingly burdensome. In fact, since 2001 overtime has increased a staggering 899%. It is acknowledged that during this time period staffing has been

reduced from seventy-four (74) to sixty-seven (67). However the reduction in personnel has leveled at sixty-seven (67) personnel while the overtime budget continues to grow.

Overtime Expenditures	
2001	$72,036
2002	$97,905
2003	$145,352
2004	$125,156
2005	$111,090
2006	$164,825
2007	$279,364
2008	$458,018
2009	$549,749
2010	$647,830

It is understood that the current staffing level drives a certain portion of this overtime. This is calculated by using a formula that determines the number of personnel required to staff apparatus at a given level. The formula accounts for average use of annual leave, sick leave, injury leave and other time off. This can then be used to calculate overtime requirements if staffing is not sufficient.

Current Apparatus Staffing Model	
Total Hours in a Year	8,760
42 Hour Work Week x 52 Weeks a Year	2,184
Minus Average Time Off Floor	-450
TOTAL HOURS AVAILABLE	**1,734**
Personnel Required to Cover 1 24-hour position	
8,760 / 1,734	5.05 Staff Required For 1 24- hour period
Staff Required for Current Model	
4 Engines x 2 Staff x 5.05	40.4 Staff
1 Ladder Truck x 2 Staff x 5.05	10.1 Staff
TOTAL	**50.5 STAFF**
Staffing Deficit	
Staff Required	50.5
Staff Available	48
DEFICIT	**2.5**
Overtime Required for Staffing Deficit	
2.5 Staff x 1,734 Hours	4,335 Overtime Hours Needed
4,335 x $39.26 (Avg. O.T. Rate)	**$170,192 Overtime Built Into Schedule**

As the above table illustrates the overtime built into the current staffing model accounts for only 27% of the overtime used in 2010. Another overtime expense that is built into the current staffing model is overtime required for emergency recall during significant fires or emergency events. As a result of an arbitration award, the Department is required to recall off duty personnel to staff reserve apparatus under certain circumstances such as working and extra alarm fires. Although this can vary greatly dependant upon emergency activity it tends to stay fairly steady from year to year. In 2010 the Department used approximately $14,183 in emergency recall or approximately 2.2% of the 2010 overtime expense. These two commitments equal 29.2% of the total overtime budget in 2010.

One then must ask, if the formula accounts for average time off the floor, what accounts for the balance of the overtime budget? The following figure calculates the difference between those overtime commitments built into the current staff model and the actual overtime paid.

2010 Overtime Analysis	
Actual Overtime Expense 2010	$647,830
Overtime Built Into Staffing Model	-$170,192
Emergency Recall Overtime Expense	-$14,183
Un-reimbursed Special Detail Overtime (Approx)	-$5,000
OVERTIME BALANCE	**$458,455**
The remaining overtime of $458,455 is attributable to the use of sick and injury leave.	

Average 2010 Overtime Earnings	
65 Eligible Employees / $629,457	$9,684 Per Employee
Highest Actual Overtime Earnings	$32, 425
Annual Salary	$55,999
Total Earnings	$88,424

The committee reviewed attendance records for 2009 and 2010 to determine overtime usage. While doing so the use of sick and injury leave was also examined. A review of the attendance records indicated that there was an apparent issue with the use

of sick leave within the Department. In 2010 the average sick leave usage was 11 days per employee of those that used sick leave. There were only 11 members that did not use any sick leave. This seemed to be a very high average. Various fire departments from around the Commonwealth were surveyed and the following results obtained.

City	Sick Leave Average
Harrisburg	8
Altoona	5
Wilkes Barre	7
Erie	5
Williamsport	6
Altoona	5
Chester	7

As the examples above show, the average sick leave use by the Department is greater than that of the departments surveyed. Sick leave abuse has been identified as a problem in the fire service nationwide.

Department Sick Leave Usage 2010	
Days Used	Personnel
0	11
1	10
2	5
3	7
4	4
5	1
6	4
8	6
9	1
11	1
12	1
13	1
15	1
16	1
20	2
33	1
37	1
43	1
55	1
68	1
104	1

CURRENT STAFFING SUMMARY

It is obvious that current staffing levels are unsustainable without major changes in the use of sick and injury leave that will reduce the cost of overtime. This must be a joint venture between management and labor. The Fire Department administration firmly believes that sixty-seven (67) uniformed personnel is the lowest safe and effective level of staffing. To fall below this level would compromise the Departments ability to assemble an effective fire fighting force at working incidents and would place the safety of residents and firefighters in jeopardy. However, they are also committed to taking those steps necessary to maintain this level of staffing while reducing the need for overtime.

This plan will significantly reduce overtime costs while increasing apparatus staffing levels so long as the use of sick leave is controlled.

CURRENT RESPONSE MODEL

The current response model of the Department of Fire/Rescue Services is based on the following; the apparatus staffing requirements of the collective bargaining agreement, a desired three-minute response time, the ability to assemble an effective firefighting force on scene and of course financial limitations. In addition an attempt was usually made to not strip down all available resources for any one incident type. This model has been used for many years without modification. The following is an example of the response protocol used currently.

Current Response Protocol

Call for Service Type	Apparatus Dispatched	Number of Personnel
Trash Fire, Dumpster Fire, Medical Assist, Vehicle Accident w/Injury	1 Engine	2
Vehicle Fire	2 Engines	4
Residential Structure Fire	2 Engines, 1 Truck	6
High Risk Structure Fire	3 Engines, 1 Truck	8

At least one officer responds on all calls and when available there are two. They have not been included in the above figures as they are command staff not typically dedicated to fire suppression activities.

Current staffing recommendations as written by the NFPA, OSHA, NIOSH, the American Insurance Association, International City Managers Association, the IAFF and the IAFC offer guidelines for staffing. Their recommendation is for apparatus to be staffed by four personnel and in some cases five. They do not offer recommendations for total number of apparatus arriving on scene, only to provide adequate number of personnel to safely conduct emergency scene operations. The staffing in the York City Department of Fire/Rescue Services has never been above two personnel assigned to each apparatus as provided for in the current collective bargaining agreement. Based on this staffing model, the department response protocol attempts to assemble sufficient personnel on scene depending upon the incident type. For example, an accident with injuries, or debris removal would receive one engine (two personnel) and the duty officer(s). A residential structure fire would receive two engines, one aerial device and

the duty officer. A high-risk response receives three engines, one aerial device and duty officer. The purpose generally is to assemble the appropriate number of personnel on scene to address the incident; the number of responding apparatus is merely a mechanism to do so.

The minimum standard for any members operating in a hazard zone is the two-in, two-out policy, which states for initial attack on a fire, two persons may address the fire but two persons must be outside ready to assist them should they need help. It is permissible to utilize the pump operator as one of the two personnel outside. For an initial attack then, defined as the first few minutes of fire attack, four firefighters must be assembled on scene. This plan will address the need for personnel at a fire by reorganizing the response and freeing up career firefighters for response.

CURRENT RESPONSE MODEL SUMMARY

It is incumbent upon the Department to adjust operations, staffing and dispatch protocols where feasible to come as close to compliance as possible. When developing the plan to accomplish these goals the practice of leaving a single engine company staffed by two personnel while all other apparatus is committed at a working incident was considered and addressed.

FINANCIAL

When considering any plan of action it is imperative that you first understand the resources that you have available for implementation. Obviously it would be folly to develop a plan that is beyond the financial means of the City. Therefore the financial issues facing the City were examined prior to plan development.

FINANCIAL DISTRESS

Although not in quite the dire financial straights facing many other third class cities in the Commonwealth, the City of York is nonetheless faced with challenges. During these challenging financial times revenues for the City are dwindling as costs continue to rise. Each year the revenue from taxes continue to represent an ever-decreasing percentage of the total revenue and state and federal aid dwindle more and more. Adding to the financial burden of the City is the disproportionate number of tax-exempt properties within its boundaries. It is very clear that much needed reform at the state level is not likely to materialize in the foreseeable future.

INCREASING COSTS

Each year operating costs continue to rise. Costs associated with labor are rising disproportionately to revenue and Act 111 arbitration rulings continue to perpetuate this. As evidenced in the staffing section of this document sick leave is draining financial resources at an alarming rate. In fact, the cost of overtime, most of which is related to sick and injury leave has risen 899% since 2001. Although staffing has decreased in that time frame it must be noted that the decrease in staffing has flattened while overtime continues to rise.

BUDGET

When examining the Department budget it is quite evident that there is little room for trimming. By and large the major portion of the budget is associated with personnel costs.

Budgeted Personnel Cost Analysis			
Year	**Total Budget**	**Personnel Cost**	**Percentage**
2010	$9,296,742	$8,388,760	90.2%
2009	$9,156,384	$8,237,847	89.9%
2008	$8,530,957	$7,634,871	89.5%

As the table above shows, the costs associated with personnel continue to gradually increase each year leaving little room for reduction in other areas of the budget.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

The finances of the City were a major determining factor in the development of this plan. It is impractical to develop a plan that is beyond our financial means. Review of the budget clearly indicates that any significant savings opportunities will be in the reduction of costs associated with personnel. The only area of personnel cost that can be significantly reduced without personnel reductions is in overtime. Therefore any viable plan must include a provision to reduce and limit the need for overtime as this plan does.

As with any plan there will be costs involved in implementation. However, the immediate cost savings in overtime will significantly offset those costs.

STRATEGIC PLAN

OVERVIEW

The Department of Fire/Rescue Services must establish a comprehensive plan to address the issues of physical fire station condition and location, escalating overtime costs, and maximum effective utilization of available resources. The following limiting factors were identified and addressed in this plan:

1. Minimum fire department staffing of 67 personnel
2. Requirement to maintain a 3-minute response time
3. Compliance with the Insurance Services Office apparatus location requirements
4. Maintenance of the current level of service

With the above limiting factors taken into consideration the Fire Department administration developed a comprehensive plan that will address each of the issued identified earlier.

OUTLINE

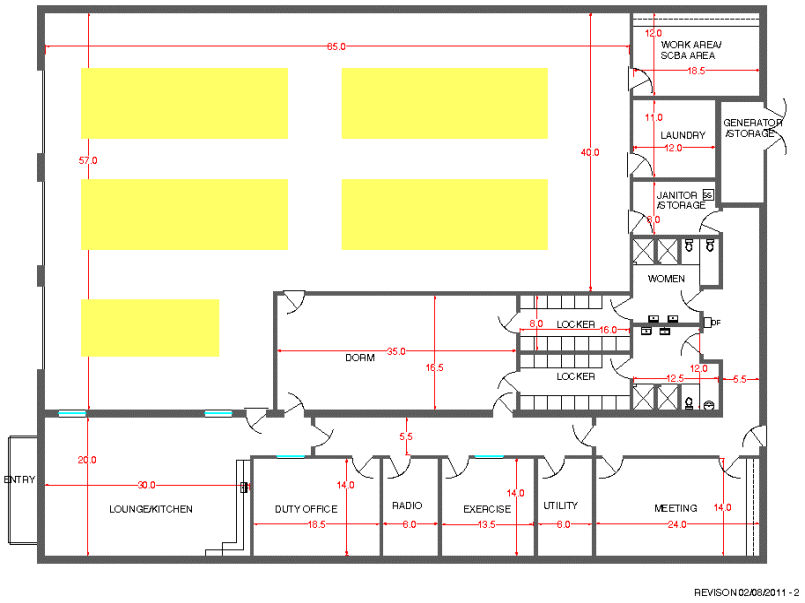
This plan will be presented in sections that will include supporting documentation and the reasoning behind each recommendation made.

1. Fire Stations
2. Staffing/In Service Fire Apparatus
3. Response Protocol

FIRE STATIONS

It is obvious that both the Rex/Laurel and Goodwill fire stations have served long past their useful life. To continue to invest money in either or both of these stations would not be financially prudent nor would it produce satisfactory results. It is anticipated that the combined costs to repair and renovate these stations would be between $2,500,000 and $3,500,000. Even if the City should decide to invest this money we would be left with two very nice buildings that are totally unsuited to serve as modern fire stations.

The committee recommends that both the Rex/Laurel and Goodwill fire stations be closed. One new fire station should be built to replace them. The recommended location for this new station is the property known as "Lot 11" located at the intersection of Duke and Princess Streets. This station would house one (1) in-service engine, one (1) reserve engine, one reserve aerial truck and the duty officers. It would be approximately eight thousand (8,000) square feet and one story in height and combine the functions of both stations that would be closed. The initial concept for this facility is that it would be functional yet austere.



The debt service on this facility will be more than offset by savings realized by recommendations made later in this plan. In addition it is estimated that the cost of this station will be equal to or less than the estimated cost to renovate the Rex/Laurel and Goodwill fire stations combined.

It is the strong recommendation of the Fire Department administration that this new station be named after and dedicated to Firefighter Donald Harrison. Firefighter Harrison was killed in the line of duty while serving the citizens of York.

STAFFING/IN SERVICE FIRE APPARATUS

It is recommended that the current complement of in-service engines be reduced from four (4) to three (3). While still allowing for the three-minute response time throughout the City this will allow the two (2) firefighters currently assigned to the engine taken out of service to be assigned as all station swing personnel. This will provide several significant benefits.

Each platoon will have a total of four (4) all station swing personnel assigned rather that the two (2) currently assigned, drastically reducing the need for overtime. Estimated overtime cost savings of $400,000 are projected. As noted in the Fire Station section this savings will more than offset the debt service on the new facility. This plan will also allow the Department to assign any all station swing personnel not needed to cover leave as a third crew member on apparatus thereby greatly increasing efficiency and safety.

This will also allow the Department to reduce the reserve apparatus fleet by one engine. It is recommended that the 1982 Maxim engine be sold, as we would be able to place a 2002 American LaFrance engine into reserve in its place.

RESPONSE PROTOCOL

This final phase of the plan will adjust the manner in which the Fire Department responds to calls for service. It was readily apparent to the committee that the current response protocol does not come near meeting even the intent of national standards. It is further apparent that the City, given the current financial conditions, and limitations in the collective bargaining agreement with the union, is in no position to fully meet these standards. Therefore, it is recommended that all in-service apparatus be dispatched to every reported structure fire.

This response protocol will allow the Department to assemble between eight (8) and twelve (12) firefighters on every structure fire. The number will fluctuate due to annual, sick, and injury leave usage.

CONCLUSIONS

The committee spent many hours studying "The fire and EMS Plan" and evaluating the current operations and policies of the Department of Fire/Rescue Services. Although "The Fire and EMS Plan" was the catalyst for this plan, it was discovered early on that the best course of action was to use that document as a stepping off point to develop a plan that was responsive to the specific needs of the City of York.

It was decided very early in the process that the committee would attempt to identify key issues that were facing the Department and then determine which of those areas could be positively affected in a relatively short period of time. The key issues identified were:

1. Staffing/Sick & Injury Leave/Overtime
2. Financial Issues
3. Condition of Fire Stations
4. Response Model

In developing a plan to deal with these issues the committee realized that there were three (3) key limiting factors that had to be adhered to. The plan could not reduce service, increase response time or negatively impact the Insurance Services Office Fire Suppression Rating Schedule. In fact it was decided that any plan developed must allow for improvement in the rating. This plan meets all of these requirements.

In the end, the plan if adopted in it's entirety will allow for increased efficiency, safer response and a significant cost savings.