

AMERICAN FORK CITY COUNCIL
JUNE 24, 2019
WORK SESSION MINUTES

Members Present:

Bradley J. Frost	Mayor
Kevin Barnes	Council Member
Staci Carroll	Council Member
Barbara Christiansen	Council Member
Rob Shelton	Council Member
Clark Taylor	Council Member

Staff Present:

David Bunker	City Administrator
Camden Bird	Admin Analyst
Terilyn Lurker	City Recorder
Aaron Brems	Fire Chief
Kyle Maurer	Finance Officer
George Schade	IT Director
Darren Falslev	Police Chief
Scott Sensanbauger	Public Works Director

Also Present: Leif Nelson, Mat Sacco, Eddie Hales, Ryan Hunter, and one additional person

WORK SESSION

The purpose of City Work Sessions is to prepare the City Council for upcoming agenda items on future City Council Meetings. The Work Session is not an action item meeting. No one attending the meeting should rely on any discussion or any perceived consensus as action or authorization. These come only from the City Council Meeting.

The American Fork City Council met in a work session on Monday, June 24, 2019, in the Fire Rescue Station Training Room, located at 96 N. Center Street, commencing at 5:00 p.m.

1. Discussion on proposed Station 52.

Mayor Frost welcomed attendees. He mentioned that the topic of fire stations had been one he had wanted to discuss for about two months. He felt it needed to be discussed during this meeting as the topic could have ramifications during the following City Council meeting.

Fire Chief Brems thanked everyone for coming. He explained that two years ago, the City had hired a company named ESCI to help with the fire station location study. He pointed to his slides which contained data to show the calculations presented. He stated that he appreciated the Council for coming and showing their support; the Fire Department reaped the benefits of their support.

Fire Chief Brems showed a two-minute video demonstrating what the Fire Department did. He further went over the Department's mission statement. He explained that the Department was there to serve the public. He continued that the Department had attended a convention the year

prior, held for the State firefighters. He mentioned that the topic was Fit for Duty, Fit for Life and added that quality of life did not exist without Public Safety. He continued that the Fire Department and Police Department worked together as a team as they often were on the same calls. He stated that the Department had a motto “Always Ready” and continued that firefighters served people on their worst day. As a result, he went on, the Department needed to be prepared with training, people, equipment, and facilities. He stated that the Department was in immediate need of this station and would fail its mission without the second facility. Fire Chief Brems stated that he felt the Department had the best people but could not overcome its need of an additional building. He continued that the department was asking for support to build another station in the North East quadrant. He mentioned that there were target hazards in the area and that the current station was 10 minutes away from the NE section of town. He continued that the far NE residences were unprotected. He explained that, for example, heart tissue died at the rate of 10% every minute, which did not leave a lot of room for firefighters to help. Consequently, by the time firefighters got to that area, their hands were tied. Fire Chief Brems added that the team was top notch but that the Department was behind because of the distance. With the South side exploding with growth in both commercial and residential, he continued, the problem was further compounded.

Fire Chief Brems explained that his was the busiest fire station in the county. He explained that the station was on track to have received 3500 calls this year. He continued that because of the concurrent calls, the station staffed nine individuals at a time. Pleasant Grove, he continued, had enough firefighters to deal with one call at a time. Fire Chief Brems stated that his Department could deal with two or three calls at a time, but added that the distance to travel was the issue. He continued that in 2018 the Fire Department had received 3182 calls, out of which 79% were medical calls, and 21% were accidents and fires. These calls, he continued, included 900 transports out of the hospital in 2018. Fire Chief Brems explained that the calls kept increasing and that his department was trying to keep up. He stated that the Department was getting to the point where it could no longer handle the demands.

Fire Chief Brems described the 2018 station staffing for Lone Peak, Pleasant Grove, Saratoga Springs, Lehi, Draper, and American Fork. He listed the number of calls with the number of employees staffed. He explained that because of the hospital, the five rest homes, and the dialysis center, the Department was kept busy. Fire Chief Brems continued that Lehi ran 3539 calls with 16 employees on shift per day to handle their call volume. Draper, he continued, had had more calls but they also had 16 staff members. He stated that American Fork had double the volume that some of other cities did in terms of calls per firefighter. He continued that pride in the department and City kept the firefighters going but that the workload was also exhausting them. Fire Chief Brems stated that American Fork also had fewer in the Administrative Department when compared to other departments. He wanted to praise his firefighters for accomplishing what they did; they took pride in what they did.

Council Member Carroll asked how the numbers would change with the swearing in taking place after this meeting. Fire Chief Brems explained that six staff members were being added for Cedar Hills. He continued that some captains and lieutenants were also being promoted.

David Bunker stated that Cedar Hills station would not be helpful in regard to the distance: it did not truly split the calls in half. The second station, he continued, would help take advantage of the additional calls.

Fire Chief Brems explained that the ESCI study had recommended four to five stations. He continued that, if placed strategically, the City should be able to make three stations suffice. He continued by showing the fire station call volume for the last five years. He commented that the upward trend would not slow down as the City was growing. As the footprint of the City grew, more inhabitants would create more calls. He pointed that in the middle of the day, American Fork had an even bigger population.

Mayor Frost asked whether there could be an estimate on the amount of calls the I-15 freeway generated. Fire Chief Brems stated that it did keep the Department busy, but that he would have to research that data. He added that the Meadows shopping center also created a lot of calls and that some cities did not have so many responsibilities.

Fire Chief Brems explained that in addition to their normal call volume, they were required to do a bi-yearly inspection of the 1678 City hydrants. He continued that the Department also tended to public education events, did business inspections, and training hours. He explained that a total of 12,000 citizen contacts were done in 2018. Fire Chief Brems noted that without the needed administration staff, the fire captains had to do the work. He continued that training hours also had to be added to keep the firefighters up to date on all the new information and tactics. The older firefighters had to train the newer ones, which took them away from the bay.

Fire Chief Brems went over the conditions in 2016. At the time, the City had one station and two fire engines. Although there had been an increase of one engine, he went on, the City's means did not suffice compared with the national median in that the City was below in stations and pumpers. He explained that it was vital to grow the Public Safety Department, else the City would fail its residents and businesses.

Fire Chief Brems pointed to the travel time map and described the different color codes. He indicated the different travel times and explained that it also took 90 seconds for firefighters to get into the fire truck. He explained that they were struggling to rapidly arrive to their calls, particularly in the NE, where it sometimes took more than eight minutes to arrive. If the City were to build station 52 in the NE quadrant, the situation would improve. The ace, he added, was the new Murdock Connector road that was to be built which would allow a quick East West connection. The second station, he added, would build overlap to deal with the concurrent calls. This station and road would build overlap. He concluded stating that the Department could not overcome travel time otherwise.

Fire Chief Brems continued that when the firefighters took over Cedar Hills, that station would take all of Cedar Hills' calls as well as the NE section of town. He explained that there currently was no overlap in the NW and NE. Station 52, he added, would have great North-south access and would be able to take over the hospital. Increasing the service area would generate more calls. The overlap for Station 52 would help spread out the calls.

Fire Chief Brems wanted to stress that while his Department was very busy, they always covered the City's calls before calling for mutual aid. The area where the station would be, he continued, was mostly residential. He added wanting the station to not look too modern, but to blend in with the area. He added he was looking for an older look but was willing to take whatever the Council would approve. He mentioned that by modern, he meant flat roofs and angles. He explained preferring the look the other station had. He further presented a sample bird's eye view of Station 52. The Station, he continued, would be a 3-bay station with an engine,

ambulance, brush truck, and a spare ambulance. He mentioned that five firefighters would staff it. He also showed the floor plan and listed a few of the features of the new station.

Fire Chief Brems stated there was \$323,000 in capital projects allocated for the architect and the design of Station 52. He added that the Department was requesting \$5.1 million for the station. He mentioned having talked to Fire Departments in other cities to make sure his cost was reasonable. He explained the \$5.1 million included architect/engineering, building costs, site improvements, utilities, drainage and practice range but did not include land acquisition or financing costs. Fire Chief Brems further explained that the estimated yearly operating costs were about \$1.95 million. He added that after the Cedar Hills contract, ambulance revenue, etc. the net increase would be \$530K. The estimate, he continued, did not include desks, computers, vehicles, etc.

Council Member Shelton stated that all the costs were one time-time costs. He continued that these items would need to be replaced in five years and asked whether these costs should be included. Finance Officer Maurer stated that replacement costs needed to be planned in the budget city-wide. Council Member Shelton stated he would like to see these adjustments made to the budget, particularly when it came to vehicles, which experienced a lot of wear and tear.

Council Member Barnes asked whether the \$1.9 million/year reflected current value or whether it included inflationary adjustments. He was answered that the cost reflected current value.

City Administrator Bunker stated that timing was critical. The station was needed. He added that budgetary constraints had to be considered. He continued that the City could request a GO bond in 2019, which would make the first payment take place in 2021. The current Police/Courts building bond was scheduled to have its final payment in 2020. He added that the Alpine School District would be seeking an additional bond on the 2020 ballot. He continued that Utah County may also have a tax increase in 2020. He added that the City had an agreement with Cedar Hills, and that Cedar Hills had been told that it would take about one year to have the station ready but they work with the us on that. Fire Chief Brems explained that with the new station and strategic overlap, Cedar Hills would be given the same benefits.

Fire Chief Brems explained that the need for a new station had existed since 2014. He added that he knew citizens wanted improved roads, but that if Public Safety would not serve them when they called on them, none of this would matter. He continued that the Fire Department was on the brink of failing if they did not act. When American Fork Fire Department was swamped, he continued, they could not hire consultants or contractors to help them like other departments could. He added that the Department had to grow with the City and that it currently could not keep up with the call volume without adding brick and mortar facilities as well as additional personnel. He continued that if the Fire Department failed, the issue was life or death. He added that he was willing to do whatever it took to get the new station and explained that he did not want to cut services or PR opportunities.

City Administrator Bunker stated that this was the preferred location. He continued that there were several other locations considered and added that the current property owner was the State, which would have American Fork negotiate with the State or the County.

Council Member Shelton asked what the objective for the work session was and whether it was putting the project in the budget, approving a task force, or starting the bond. City Administrator

Bunker stated that the most important issue was the budget, which would be approved the following day. The other issue, he continued, was funding issue which required a GO bond to be put on the ballot in the fall of 2019.

Council Member Shelton stated he wanted to compare the timeline of building the new station now versus 2020 so he could see the difference. He explained appreciating the planning and redundancy as he felt the Department had thought of everything. His worry, however, was what would happen if the bond did not pass in 2019. City Administrator Bunker stated that he thought the bond would pass, but that if the City waited any longer it would delay construction

Council Member Shelton stated he would like to see the Staff's timeline. He added there would only be a six-month difference if they waited. City Administrator Bunker explained that if the City asked for the bond in the fall of 2019, they could go into construction in January 2020. Waiting for 2020 for the bond would have the construction start in January 2021. Fire Chief Brems added that if the bond did fail, they could discuss a tax increase.

Council Member Shelton stated that if this was a critical need for the City, the Fire Department needed to get the information out to citizens. He stated that the fiber issue was a controversial one and it might hurt the City in the potential fire station bond vote. Council Member Shelton continued that the Alpine School District picks a non-municipal year to ask for their bonds. This way, he added, they got more voters. He explained that he had looked at numbers of voters for municipal elections vs. other elections and noted that municipal elections had a lower turnout. He gave the example of Pleasant Grove which had gone through a lot of community outreach for their building. He added that he wished to discuss sites, as he had some ideas about site locations and that he did not want for construction to be several years out. He mentioned that he had a problem with not having the cost of property as part of the budget presented. He stated that this cost should be added to the budget otherwise the budget would have to be changed.

Council Member Shelton stated that this had to be added to the budget so the Council could see the true cost of everything. He added that, rolled into that bond, he would have liked to see funds for purchases of land on the South side of the town. He explained that, this way, a larger station could be built. Fire Chief Brems stated that if the City deferred one more year, it would need to build a station right after this one as a station would be needed in the South West in five years. He explained that the firefighters were exhausted. Council Member Shelton stated that he understood, but that the Cedar Hills station should alleviate some of that. He continued that Layton was looking at a tax increase for a new Police car and Fire Station through a property tax increase. He explained that they had done wonderful PR. He continued that he worried that American Fork would not have the time to do the right public relations work and stated that the City had lost a lot of trust with the pressurized irrigation bond. He continued that if the City was to rebuild trust with the community, information had to be put forth. He added wanting to see a financial package. He continued that the station should be pulled out of budget. If the Station was put in the budget, he wanted to make sure they moved forward with the right details in place.

Council Member Taylor stated that he believed all points were valid. He added being nervous about not acting on the station. He explained that there was a situation with the Alpine School district bonds finishing and taxes not being increased. He mentioned that the sales pitch for the Station had to be packed full of emotions and added that the need was legitimate. He explained that it was accurate to describe it as people's worst day and continued that a Public Safety campaign was vital. As a result, he continued, the campaign had to be dialed in and ready to

reach citizens. He added that there had been a decent attempt with the roads, and a better one the PARC Tax. He concluded that every advocate had to be rallied and that they had to be rallied immediately. He continued that it was time for action. The data provided during the meeting, he added, would make for a great campaign. He explained that it was up to the Council to make sure this was a successful campaign and that if this campaign did not go well, the City would have to look at tax increases.

Council Member Shelton stated that if the GO bond did not pass, the City could not do a sales tax increase until next year. Therefore, he continued, it was crucial to get this campaign right. The Alpine School District had gone out and done a survey to see how well people were educated about the District's issue. He recommended that the same be done. He concluded that the City had to be proactive to gather data and actively reach out to the residents. He pointed that the survey could not be an opt-in one. The one the school district did was one where they reached out to everyone. He added the City needed to know what the silent majority thought.

Fire Chief Brems stated that it was not possible to compare the School District with Public Safety. He added that the City needed to create a campaign that would emphasize the response time.

Council Member Shelton stated that a neighboring city had put off their station building for three years in spite of similar arguments. He added wanting to see what the temperature was with the public to address the public's questions.

Council Member Carroll stated that a lot of the benefits for station 52 hinged on Canal Boulevard. That road, she continued, was not built yet and would not be a benefit to the City until the end of summer 2020. During that period, she continued, the station would not be a benefit to the City. Fire Chief Brems explained that the road would be built by the time the station was to be operational. The EW corridor, he continued, would eliminate the need for a station in the NW area. With the new road being constructed, he added, the Fire Department was recommending the three station model. The overlaps, he continued, covered 90% of the city's service area. The only place that might require an extra station 20 years from 2019 was the SE corner. He added that this would set up the City for long term success.

Council Member Barnes explained that he understood the Chief's concerns. He explained that the government was a representative one, and that the Council Members had been elected to make smart decisions. He explained that the Council knew far more than the general population did. He continued that while he believed surveys were a positive thing, this needed to be weighed out against the fact that the Council knew 95% more than the population knew. Council Member Shelton stated the Council did not have a vote on the GO bond which, he continued, was part of the issue.

Council Member Christiansen stated that she trusted the residents to do the right thing. She explained that safety, time, and location was not hard for the residents to understand. She explained that given the right information, residents would make the right decision and that they would not think about the election until September or October, 2019. She concluded that an informational package could be put together in that amount of time.

Council Member Taylor stated that it needed to be made clear that the call volume was as high as it was. He continued that the argument for the station might not be easier, but that the story was more palatable.

Council Member Shelton stated that the City had one chance with this vote. He added understanding the importance of the issue and continued that the City needed to make this the best year to undertake the project. He continued that the City would otherwise be left to property tax increase. He stated that he remembered having argued, in this very room that all that was needed was to give voters the proper information for the road bond. He continued that once resistance came up, the decision became a lot tougher. Council Member Shelton brought up the road bond; the Council had thought that if they got the information out to the public, they would make the right decision. He added that if done this year, it might be better for the City to pay for a survey. Council Member Taylor explained that the Council had to make a decision right away.

Fire Chief Brems explained that if American Fork had such a call volume as Pleasant Grove, he would not be as concerned. He added that he believed citizens would understand the need and continued that roads and public safety was crucial. He mentioned that the Department would champion a marketing campaign. On the south side of town, he added, the high-density growth was a benefit as well as a stress as multiple family dwellings posed greater risks.

Council Member Christiansen explained that her concern was that citizens believed that the road bond would only cover a portion of the community. She added she feared the community would think this was not a complete plan. She continued that if the City was to need another station in 5 years, the public had to be informed.

Council Member Shelton stated he was concerned with the residents living central and central East in the City. He explained that these residents were covered and added they might not approve of the bond. Mayor Frost stated he did not agree: people wanted lives to be saved. He added the campaign's message should be a simple one and mentioned that the City had an incredible amount of trust in their Police and Fire Department. He added feeling confident that the bond would be approved, as the Fire Department had put a lot of work in their marketing campaign.

Council Member Shelton stated that the Council should keep the station in the budget. If it passed, he continued, the City would have to make efforts to put the project together. He stated that the Council had to be very careful with the bond to have it equally weighted. He continued that the City might need a citizen's group to advocate for the bond. The problem he saw with the current budget, he continued, was that there were no funds set aside for land acquisition, financing cost, survey.

Council Member Carroll asked whether the survey was a marketing initiative or if it was meant to see how citizens felt. She added that the case for the station should not be tied to how the citizens felt as they might need to be educated. Council Member Shelton stated that the City should look at the survey done for the PARC Tax to gauge the kinds of questions asked. He added that some of the questions were meant to bring research to the Council. He explained creating a survey to gauge the education needed would be a wise decision.

Mayor Frost stated that the survey was meant to identify weak points. He explained that the PARC Tax was much broader. Council Member Shelton argued that the Council needed to be

careful with being overconfident. He added that the Council could not be sure of how the public felt until they asked. A survey would ensure the best chance of success. He further stated that if the bond did not pass the first time, it would not pass a second time. He explained he wanted to give the station project the best chance of success.

City Administrator Bunker stated he was concerned of having the station bond with the school district one. The public might feel that they had to choose between children and public safety, which would be a difficult choice, he continued.

City Administrator Bunker asked whether the Council wanted to add land acquisition in the budget for the following day. Council members agreed that the land acquisition cost should be added to the budget. Council Member Christiansen explained that the Council could plan for a survey and marketing campaign at the same time while adjusting the marketing campaign based on the survey. Council Member Taylor stated that he would like to see a citizens' group go out and talk passionately about this new station. He explained this would have power. Council Member Shelton suggested that they use the PARC survey as a model, if applicable.

Mayor Frost continued that the funds would be better spent educating people right away. Council Member Carroll stated that while she believed it was important to know what people needed to be educated on the topic, she felt that the Council had to move forward. Council Member Shelton explained that in business, knowing one's customer meant success. Council Member Taylor stated that in this case, this was a matter of life and death. Council Member Shelton explained that the situation was cut and dry for the NE parts of the City, but maybe not the whole City. Mayor Frost explained that the Council had had direction to include land acquisition.

Mayor Frost stated that there was a member of the public who could address some of the questions. Ryan Hunter, a citizen, explained that the delay that had happened with the water PI had been upsetting. He continued that building costs would not go down. Therefore, he believed that a survey and educational plan would be critical, while also understanding that there should be no delay. Council Member Taylor stated that public safety was the number one priority.

Fire Chief Brems asked whether a Fire Department Task Force needed to be created. He was told it was more important that there be a citizens group.

2. Adjournment.

The work session adjourned at 5:30 p.m.



Terilyn Lurker, City Recorder