

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of Special Meeting Meeting

GOVERNMENT FORMS & SUPPLIES 844-224-3338 FORM NO. 10148

Held March 5, 2024 20

The Council of the City of Milford met in Council Chambers at 745 Center Street at 6:30pm on March 5, 2024.

Roll Call

Present: Lisa Evans, Kristopher Parrish, Ralph Vilardo Jr., Mark Thompson, Janet Cooper and Kim Chamberland. Mr. Vilardo made a motion to excuse Mr. Price Seconded by Mr. Parrish All yes Also present was City Manager, Michael Doss.

A Work Session: Chief Baird Presented The MCFD 2024 Budget Along With Project Plans For The Year to City Council. Chief Baird provided a Power Point Presentation with the following information:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the fire department board of trustees, officers, and over 40 members. We are proud to serve our community following the motto: "It's All About the Community." First, I'll review 2023, which was by all standards a typical one for MCFD: steady call volume, significant training, and abundant community outreach opportunities. Turnover remained exceptionally-low compared to other fire departments in the region; we hired KBA Architects of Milford to complete preliminary design work and provide an updated estimate to build the fire station addition; an ambulance chassis was ordered; District Chiefs Miles Miller and Nick Thiele, were accepted into the prestigious, Ohio Fire Executive Program; and three additional paramedics were certified. When you review the annual report, you will read much more about our accomplishments last year.

2023 saw firefighters complete a city-wide cavass to promote a new smoke alarm installation program funded by a FEMA Fire Prevention and Safety Grant, which will be repeated in 2024. The department also expanded its existing fire department key box program for emergency access beyond commercial buildings to residential properties, as well. Initial funding to provide free key boxes for single-family homes came by support from Milford Kiwanis Club, Milford Police Community Partnership, and Milford Community Firefighters Club. MCFD was later awarded its second, FEMA fire prevention and safety grant in as many years to sustain this new mission.

Starting with emergency details. After 2022 saw the highest, one-year call volume in the history of the department at 2,237 details, followed in 2023 by the five-year low of 1,929 details. While ironic, it is an unremarkable, one-year occurrence and call volume should return to average again in 2024.

Of the 1929 total details in 2023, 223 of them, or 11.6%, were responses into other communities to lend mutual aid...most into Miami and Anderson Township, and Loveland and Symmes Township.

Of the top five detail-types answered in 2023, medical calls were by far the most at over 77% of all details. Following were unintentional false alarms due to fire protection system malfunctions or false alarms, details cancelled while responding, structure fires, and finally, electrical problems.

Two ongoing metrics we use to monitor if minimum, daily staffing levels are adequate compared to call volume are "overlap," and the amount of backup ambulance details. Overlap refers to the number of times a second, separate emergency detail is dispatched to MCFD while it is already on one. This happened 18.2% of the time in 2023 but is within normal limits as are backup ambulance details numbering 150.

Turning to the 2023 budget, MCFD finished the year 6% under budget on expenses and with 5% more revenue than planned. The capital/debt line-item was higher than normal, and while the fire department is currently debt-free, the \$ 250,000 SCBA replacement and nearly-\$30,000 smoke alarm projects were a significant portion of capital expenses. About \$ 170,000 of this expense, however, came back to the fire department as FEMA grant reimbursements.

Since 2018 the fire department has secured over \$ 393,000 in federal and state grant monies. This includes \$ 73,085 last year for several projects including the purchase of firefighter PPE; power stair chairs for the ambulances, and a replacement commercial laundry extractor to more effectively clean firefighting PPE to support our firefighter cancer prevention efforts.

As we turn to 2024, our plan of attack is to continue "weathering the storm" of higher "costs of doing business." While MCFD has no current debt, it has secured \$ 225,000 in future financing for the aforementioned ambulance "remounting" project. Absent unforeseen problems, it is expected to be a project costing closer to the \$ 190,000 estimate and with a goal to satisfy the loan to complete it in just two payments.

In 2019 the fire board and city council agreed to place a 12.5 mill renewal tax levy and 4.5 mill increase on the November ballot which was resoundingly approved by voters. At that time, it was agreed by all the plans would be renew the tax levy at the conclusion of the five-year period without an increase. This remains the recommendation of the fire board to city council for the November 2024 election.

Opportunities the department faces in 2024 include navigating the waters of higher-than-normal goods and services. Many of the capital purchases planned for 2024 have already been delayed to better gauge the economy and condition of the budget later in the year.

Further aggravating matters are the industry-wide supply and demand issue surrounding recruitment and retention. Attracting new employees and the rising wages and benefits demanded to retain all employees are big challenges. The fire board has approved 17% in wage increases since 2022 and increased the starting salary for career firefighter/paramedics. But the region has career openings every day offering starting salaries in excess of \$ 80,000, 30% higher than ours. Firefighters simply trying to make ends meet are chasing higher-paying jobs while at the same time, recruits to backfill the openings they create are at an

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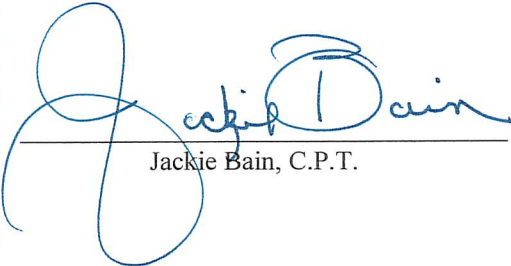
all-time low. We have been more successful than most agencies in leveraging our cadet firefighter program, but there simply is not enough talent entering the occupation to go-around. The fire station addition-planning continues. KBA is collecting information to provide a current, cost-to-build estimate. We feel the informal estimate used to help determine the 2019 tax levy amount was accurate. However, the dramatic rise in the cost of building construction and bank financing since the COVID pandemic could not have been foreseen then but is definitely posing an obstacle now. The fire board has assumed a position of completing preliminary design, obtaining a formal cost-to-build estimate, then working to find a solution. The cost-to-build estimate should be available shortly.

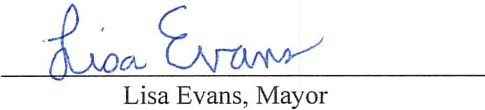
As you turn to the 2023-2024 budget page provided, you will see graphically the fire board and my long-standing budget philosophy, to well underestimate revenue and well overbudget expenses. The board and I consider only revenue that is firmly secured...from contracts for service, ambulance billing, and any grants in-progress...as the "total" revenue for the budget, year. The opposite is true for expenses, assuming "worst-case" scenario including for example, covering the financial liability of every hour of sick time accrued. We ultimately end the year in financial "black" due to having the integral cushion in revenue and expenses.

Milford Community Fire Department...it's board members, fire chief, officers, and members... take very seriously the level of trust each and every community member places in us and the work we do to protect them. This includes trust in the emergency services we provide, trust in the business that is providing these services, and trust that the money they invest in their fire and EMS protection is being guarded closely and spent prudently. I am proud of the business we operate and its accomplishments I get to share. Thank you for your time and I will entertain questions. Mr. Vilardo asked Chief Baird out of the forty members presently, how many openings Full Time do you have currently? Chief Baird stated that there are none. Mr. Vilardo asked what is the break down? How many Full-Time vs how many Part Time members are there? Chief Baird replied that he uses the number twenty Career member, approximately fifteen Part Time member and approximately ten volunteers. Mr. Vilardo said that was fabulous. Mr. Vilardo brought up a 17.5 Mil Renewal, and asked Chief Baird if he was looking at the next General Election? Chief Baird said yes. We passed that in November of 2019 so that it would be due for consideration in November of this year. Mr. Vilardo applauds him for his over estimate and under estimated, but would you say the last five years that it has been pretty consistent as far as being in the black most years? Chief Baird explained that he is still in the process of updating a ten-year plan that was created prior to the 2019 tax levy. That ten-year plan is what they are using as their barometer to see where we are in the scheme of things. The ten-year plan was shared with the City Council and the way that it was planned was that the department would accumulate reserves to a certain point and time around 2026 – 2027. That included the renewal in 2024 and then as they work their way back down slope towards 2029, the end of the ten-year plan at the time, we would be approaching a need for additional tax revenues. Everyone felt that this was a fair estimate. There are some mitigating factors that could affect the ten-year period. We have to see how we weather this continuing cost of doing business.

Mayor Evans thanked Chief Baird for his involvement in the community and all you do to spend the money wisely and we appreciate you. Chief Baird replied that he does his best. He will do his best to answer any questions that anyone may have.

Adjourn: There being no further business to come before the City Council; Ms. Evans adjourned the meeting at 6:51pm with a motion from Mr. Parrish Seconded by Ms. Chamberland All yes


Jackie Bain, C.P.T.


Lisa Evans, Mayor