



CITY OF RICHMOND

REPORT TO COUNCIL

TO: Richmond City Council
FROM: Councillor Harold Steves, Chair
Community Services Committee

DATE: January 19th, 2000
FILE: 5140-01

RE: ENGINE 4 STAFFING RECOMMENDATIONS

The Community Services Committee, at its meeting held on Tuesday, January 11th, 2000, considered the attached report, and recommends as follows:

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

That five additional fire fighters be immediately hired to increase Engine 4 from a 3-man crew to a 4-man crew with the provision that, once E-Comm is activated, the fire dispatchers are used in the rotation, and the complement be reduced by five PCC numbers.

Councillor Harold Steves, Chair
Community Services Committee

Attach.

VARIANCE

Please note that staff recommended the following:

That fire dispatchers be re-deployed to Engine 4 to increase staffing from three to four fire fighters once E-Comm assumes dispatching responsibilities.

STAFF REPORT

ORIGIN

At the June 14, 1999, Council Meeting, Geoff Lake, President, Richmond Fire Fighters Local 1286 appeared as a delegation regarding the staffing level at No. 4 Fire Hall. The thrust of his presentation was that recent (April 15, 1999) changes to the Workers Compensation Board (WCB) Regulations required the City to increase the staffing level for Engine 4 from three to four fire fighters. A resolution was carried which stated:

That the report (dated June 14, 1999, from Richmond Fire Fighters Local 1286) be referred to staff to report to Council through committee as soon as possible, on all available options which would address the staffing safety issue at No. 4 Fire Hall (Sea Island) and on any other outstanding issues which have occurred as a result of the new WCB Occupational Health and Safety Regulations.

The purpose of this report is to present staff's recommendation for staffing of Engine 4 (Sea Island).

ANALYSIS

Staff reviewed the options included in the June 17, 1999, report to General Purposes Committee:

1. Use existing dispatch positions.

Pro: Cost effective method of achieving four man staffing.

Con: Implementation would be delayed until E-Comm is operational. The "Go Live" date for E-Comm is anticipated for spring 2000 but is indefinite. The Union has expressed a desire for an immediate solution.

2. Hire five additional fire fighters.

Pro: Implementation of a four-fire fighter engine company could occur within three weeks of hiring.

Con: Cost of five fire fighters per year including benefits (based on a first year rate) is \$216,114.30 per year.¹

3. Incur additional overtime.

Pro: Implementation of a four-fire fighter engine company would be immediate.

Con: The cost to maintain one additional fire fighter on overtime is approximately \$26,500.00 per month.

¹ The first year costs do not include fringe benefits for the first six months.

4. Close No. 4 Fire Hall and relocate Engine 4 to No. 8 Fire Hall at the airport. Re-assign one fire fighter from No. 8 Fire Hall crew to Engine 4.

Pro: Implementation of a four-fire fighter engine company would be immediate.

Con: Response time to Burkeville residential area increased from 1 minute to 8 minutes. Increased response times to Bridgeport and downtown increased from 4-6 minutes, to 12-16 minutes.

Con: A staffing reduction on crash trucks from seven to six.

Con: Vigorous union opposition to reducing staffing on crash trucks.

From January 01, 1999, to December 31, 1999 (0800 hours), Engine 4 responded to 1005 calls. Engine 4 was first on the scene at 327 calls, three of which were for structure fires:

March 17, 1999 - House Fire - Total loss \$95,000.00

A kitchen fire that extended to the second floor. Engine 4 arrived simultaneously with Ladder 7 and Rescue 7. There was no delay in attacking this fire.

March 31, 1999 - Stove Fire - Total loss \$70,000.00

A stove fire that was extinguished by a neighbour. Engine 4 arrived four minutes ahead of other responding units. There was no delay in entering the building as the fire had been extinguished.

August 16, 1999 - Warehouse - Total loss \$2,500.00

A transformer fire that was extinguished by an employee. Engine 4 cancelled other responding units before they arrived. There was no delay in entering the building as the fire had been extinguished.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial implications due to the efficiency gain achieved through E-Comm assuming dispatching responsibilities for Richmond Fire-Rescue.

LABOUR IMPLICATIONS

This Report has been reviewed by the Fire-Rescue Management Group (nine senior officers), and the Executive of the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) Local 1286. The Chiefs have endorsed the Report. IAFF Local 1286 have agreed with the factual content of the Report, and make the following observations:

- They have expressed concerns about delays with E-Comm. Initially, the "Go Live" date was to be December, 1999. This date is now anticipated for Spring, 2000, but is indefinite. They would like to see a definitive date for the implementation of the fourth fire fighter for Engine 4, and have proposed February 1, 2000.
- They also suggest that the City is currently saving the expense of E-Comm levies. These levies would amount to \$395, 630 annually or \$32, 969 per month.²
- To ensure the full and accurate representation of the Union's issues, the General Manager has requested that the Union address their concerns directly to the Community Services Committee

² Whilst the Fire/Rescue Department is saving on levies, it must still maintain a Fire/Rescue dispatcher until E-Comm is operational.

in written form. The Union President has also been invited to appear before Committee to represent the Union's viewpoint should he wish to do so.

CONCLUSION

The WCB Occupational Health and Safety Regulations mandate that a minimum of four fire fighters is required to engage in interior fire attacks.

Staff are in agreement with the Union in supporting the four-man crew. Re-deploying dispatchers to Engine 4 once E-Comm is operational would result in the most cost effective method for managing the staffing issue for Engine 4.

Reg Smith
Special Projects

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