



Fire Department Study Committee Minutes of September 5, 2013

I. CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Councilor and Chairman Brad Lown at 8:00AM in Conference Room "A" of Portsmouth City Hall

Present were: City Councilors: Brad Lown and M. Christine Dwyer, Fire Chief Steven Achilles, Fire Commissioner Paul Wentworth, Portsmouth Residents: Peter Somssich and Eric Gregg and City's Special Projects Manager Adam Cannon

Others Present: City Manager John Bohenko, Portsmouth Herald Reporter Chuck McMahon and Executive Assistant Tracy Freeman for the recording of minutes.

Absent: Portsmouth Resident Norm Olsen

II. REVIEW OF CHARGE:

Chairman Lown read the charge of the Committee:

"The purpose of the Committee is to choose an independent consultant to perform an independent study of the Portsmouth Fire Department for the purpose of recommending to the City Council and Fire Commission changes to the practices and organizational structure of the Department in order to reduce costs and/or improve service without materially affecting public safety"

Councilor Dwyer added that if the purpose of this study is to solely cut costs directly from the department, then she sees no reason to have this study.

Peter Somssich agreed with Councilor Dwyer's statement and added that he would like to see items other than just cost reductions like improvements and efficiencies and performance.

III. PLAN FUTURE MEETING DATES:

Chairman Lown suggested meeting on Monday's or Tuesday's. After brief discussion, it was decided that Tuesday's would work best.

The committee then set the date for the next meeting and agreed the meeting should be an hour in duration.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 17, 2013, at 8:00AM in the Training Room of Fire Station 1. Commissioner Wentworth noted that he would not be available for this meeting.

In this meeting, Fire Chief Achilles will provide an overview of how the Fire Department operates and the Committee will decide on how frequent they should meet.

IV. REVIEW OF POLICE STUDY COMMITTEE MINUTES:

Chairman Lown handed out copies of the Portsmouth Police Steering Committee Minutes for the Independent Study done in 2010 along with three articles from [ICMA.org/Public Management/September 2013](http://ICMA.org/Public_Management/September_2013) Is it Time to Change Public Safety Operations? Is The Current Model for Public Safety Service Delivery Sustainable? Bargaining For A New 12-Hour Firefighters' Shift Structure.

The PD Committee met several times before selecting the consultant, Public Safety Strategies Group (PSSG). Chairman Lown mentioned that he had already reached out to PSSG regarding Fire Department study and they would be willing to submit a proposal.

City Manager Bohenko indicated that the Committee needs to define the scope of what we are looking for first and suggested that Adam Cannon and Chief Achilles work together on setting up the Request for Proposal (RFP) and identifying at least five (5) firms to send it to.

Council Dwyer suggested we ask for a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) first stating it would establish the qualifications of the consultants first prior to requesting a proposal from just anyone who wants to submit one. Having been a committee member on the PD study, she relayed the process they took in that study and after the proposals were received, they were rated and a phone interview was done and in her opinion, it was clear who the top consulting firm was after the interview.

Chief Achilles commented in that the purpose would be to select a vendor that would have both the expertise to conduct an operational study of the fire department and a firm that has experience with departments similar and size, challenges, and demographics.

Eric Gregg inquired about the RFQ and RFP process and asked if the two-step process would deter qualified firms from applying?

City Manager replied that most firms are already prepared for this type of process and didn't see a negative in going with this two-step process. He added that price should not be a factor right now that contingency could be used but need to have proposals first before requesting City funding.

Chairman Lown stated that the Police Dept. study is available on-line and identifies such areas as organizational structure and culture, strategic planning, staffing, budget, future needs and statistics of calls and types of calls.

V. ADJOURNMENT:

Chairman Lown thanked the committee for their time and adjourned the meeting at 8:20AM.

Respectfully submitted by
Tracy Freeman, Executive Assistant

Reviewed by
Fire Chief Steven Achilles