

City Manager's Briefing
July 15, 2024 – 4:00 p.m.
3rd Floor Conference Room – Municipal Building
211 S. Hamilton Street

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Pro Tempore called the City Manager's Briefing to order at 4:00 p.m. and stated all City Council Members were present except for Mayor Jefferson and Council Members Moore.

Present: Mayor Pro Tempore Michael Holmes, Ward 6; Council Member Amanda Cook, At Large; Council Member Vickie M. McKiver, Ward 1; Council Member Tyrone Johnson, Ward 2 (arrived at 4:05 p.m.); Council Member Monica L. Peters, Ward 3 (arrived at 4:33 p.m.); Council Member Dr. Patrick H. Harman, Ward 4; and Council Member Tim Andrew, Ward 5

Absent: Mayor Cyril Jefferson; Council Member Britt W. Moore, At Large

PRESENTATION OF ITEMS

2024-296 Fire Department Overview

Staff will provide an overview of the Fire Department.

Brian Evans, Interim Fire Chief, gave the presentation. He shared that the High Point Fire Department (HPFD) was both nationally and regionally recognized as one of the best agencies in the nation. He said that HPFD is one of 124 U.S. fire departments that is both accredited and ISO (Insurance Services Office) Class 1 rated.

He explained HPFD was more than a fire department and provided services for all hazards, including water, hazardous materials and technical rescue, as well as a bike team for special events in the city. He highlighted the HPFD dive team and pointed out it was one of only two dive teams in the state. He spoke on the Drone First Responder (DFR) technology and said it was the future of police in fire in this nation.

He provided a departmental and facilities overview of the different divisions.

He spoke on facilities, including 14 fire stations, the Training Center, Fire Prevention, and Logistics. He pointed out some of the facilities would need to be updated because they were not accommodating for female staff members due to being built in a time where there were only male firefighters.

He spoke on reciprocal contracts with surrounding areas and the call volumes and projected call volume as the population increased.

He went over the various incident types and pointed out the increase in the special incident category was due to diving team incidents.

He talked about the underwater robot received through grant funding and explained that the robot is able to dive down first before sending in a diver.

In response to Mayor Pro Tempore Holmes, Interim Chief Evans said call volume was a primary driver for recruiting more personnel.

He shared some of the statistics of fire and EMS call frequency and times. In response to Council Member Harman, he said unattended cooking was the most common cause of fires.

He spoke on current staffing and indicated there were 216 budgeted operating positions and 24 positions in administration. He shared that about 30 members of staff left between 2019 to 2024 due to retirements and other opportunities, and that there was currently only one vacancy in the fire department. He said he expected the number of vacancies to go up at the beginning of the year and talked about the impact of staff retiring in the future.

He gave an overview of the training process and said it took about 12-14 months from the hire date to be a fully qualified HPFD firefighter. In response to Mayor Pro Tempore Holmes, Interim Chief Evans said that 98 percent of staff were somewhat local and from the state of North Carolina with some coming in from out of state.

He shared the non-incident activities, including equipment testing and visits to businesses throughout the city to ensure fire codes are followed.

He went over past and future grant opportunities and the apparatus replacement plan. In response to a question by Council Member Andrew, he said that the department had its own fleet maintenance team and did not share it with the police department in order to ensure the equipment was repaired and ready in a timely fashion. Council Member Andrew asked for statistics on the volume of maintainers compared with the police department.

In response to Council Member Harman, Interim Chief Evans said the city does not get reimbursed when the dive team assists with other surrounding entities because they have reciprocal agreements with surrounding cities.

Mayor Pro Tempore Holmes thanked Interim Chief Evans for his presentation.

2024-298

Customer Service Overview

Staff will provide an overview of the Customer Services Department.

Jeremy Coble, Customer Service Director, recognized LaDawn Pearson, Assistant Customer Service Director, and presented the item. He provided an overview of the Customer Service department and reviewed the different divisions of the department.

He said there were 61 staff members, including indoor and outdoor staff, as well as after hours staff.

He talked about the core services performed by the department, including meter services, utility billing and collection, the contact center, field services, electric dispatch, and showroom tax collection.

Mr. Coble spoke on the upcoming software change to Advanced Meter Infrastructure (AMI) and said it would be proactive, by providing increased information about usage, power outages, and tampering. He explained it would also offer a more streamlined customer experience with a new customer portal, as well as a text message communication option for outages, balances, water leaks, and due dates.

In response to Council Member Harman, Mr. Coble said they would be engaging the public with help from the Communication & Public Engagement department to get the word out about the portal and software changes.

He spoke on the pre-payment option that will allow customers to pre-pay up front based on usage. He said this option would allow customers to avoid the down payment that is sometimes difficult for some of our citizens. In response to Council Member Harman, Mr. Coble said customers would pay the same rate with the pre-payment option.

In response to Council Member Harman's question about staffing changes due to the new automated software, Mr. Coble spoke of other municipalities that mistakenly cut staff and had to hire new staff and said he planned to migrate staff to other duties.

In response to Council Member Peters question about implementation, Mr. Coble said they would begin testing in late fall of this year and would start replacing meters in April of 2025. He said he hoped to have the text message feature rolled out by the beginning of next year.

Mayor Pro Tempore Holmes thanked Mr. Coble and his department for the presentation and their hard work.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the City Council, the meeting adjourned at 4:58 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cyril Jefferson, Mayor

Attest:

Alison Glynn, Deputy City Clerk

DRAFT