



**Waconia Fire Department
Strategic Plan**

2016-2020

February 2015

A Message from Chief Morse

February 2015



The Waconia Fire Department has a long-standing history of providing excellent service to the community, doing so since 1883. The Department operates with the utmost pride. In order to preserve and continue that history, it was determined that its structure and strategic direction must change. It was felt that due primarily to the growing population and increase in requests and expectations of the community served; the current operating model was not sustainable. As a result, the formal structure of the Department was changed in 2013 and the need for a formal strategic plan identified.

The ultimate goal of this task is to identify a path by which the organization can follow to provide the best possible service to the community while maintaining or improving all aspects of the organization. Entering into this process, the following 5 areas were of utmost importance to consider.

1. Provide the highest quality services, personnel, equipment, and facilities affordable to the community.
2. Provide a quick and safe response to meet the expectations of the community and to minimize loss of life, minimize injuries and damage to property.
3. Improve public interaction opportunities, educational opportunities and improve relationships with our partners.
4. Create highly effective fire prevention and code enforcement programs.
5. To provide a progressive level of service by continuing to train and develop staff and update the delivery and technology of the services we provide.

A committee was formed consisting of representatives from City Administration, City Council, and Fire Personnel. Work commenced in March of 2015 with the goal to review all aspects of the Department and develop a Strategic plan for the next 3-5 years.

I would like to extend my appreciation for the countless hours of time committed to working through this process by all members of the committee and the patience of the firefighters to see this process through.

Mark Morse, Fire Chief
Waconia Fire Department

Executive Summary

To work on this first ever, departmental strategic plan, the City assembled representation from across the organization. Chief Morse acted as the facilitator and scribe for the Committee. Although Waconia had not gone through this process formally in the past, the team assembled brought a lot of talent, experience, and information to complete the process and achieve the goal.

The committee members attended multiple meetings and were given “homework” between each meeting to assist with identifying areas of concern, areas for improvement, and areas of success. Brainstorming sessions as well as several S.W.O.T (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) exercises occurred through the process. All members of the group were given equal and ample opportunity to ensure their thoughts, concerns and ideas were discussed. Members were encouraged to share information about the process with all stakeholders they were representing and obtain feedback. Meeting minutes were distributed and all information written on whiteboards and flip charts remained on display throughout the process. This was done to create transparency and provide opportunity to generate dialogue and questions outside the formal meetings to assist in engaging additional discussion or generate ideas that the committee may have overlooked.

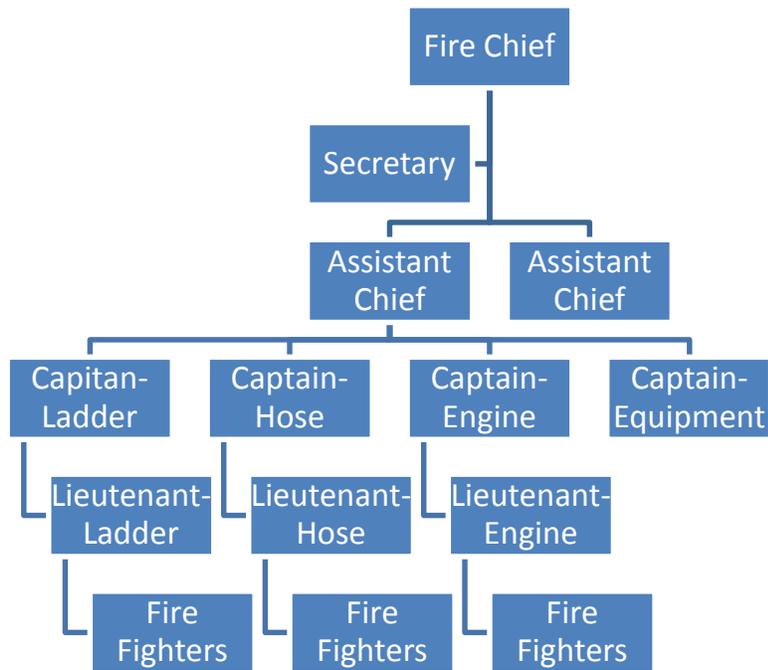
Ultimately, three major areas to specifically address were identified through the strategic planning work of the committee’s discussions: Staffing, Service Delivery, and Resources. Key areas to address within these areas were identified.

- Staffing
 - Develop Staffing Program to Meet National Standards and Community Needs
 - Succession Planning
 - Recruit and Train Personnel as Necessary
 - Create a Program Designed to Support Continuous Professional Development
- Service Delivery
 - Evaluate Current and Future Delivery of Services
 - Enhance Relationships with Local and Regional Partners
 - Refine Outreach Programs and Special Events Response Plan
- Resources
 - Plan for Construction of New Facility
 - Ensure Adequate Equipment and Apparatus to Maintain and Enhance Service Delivery

Organizational Background

The Waconia Fire Department provides fire, first responder, rescue, fire prevention and education services to Waconia, Laketown Township, and Waconia Township and our Mutual Aid Partners. The population is estimated at approximately 15,000 residents residing in an area of 37 square miles. These services are provided from one main fire station centrally located within Waconia. The department consists of 30 paid on call firefighters. The department currently has 7 vacancies.

A copy of an organizational chart is shown below representing the internal structure of the Fire Department. The Fire Chief reports to the City Administrator. All employees are ultimately responsible to the City Council and the residents of the communities we serve.



Mission Statement

Provide the citizens who are protected by the Waconia Fire Department with professionally trained individuals to help reduce the loss of life and property due to fire, natural disaster, life threatening situations, and all other emergencies when summoned by the public.

These services shall be performed in an effective manner by maintaining proper training of the fire department personnel, fire prevention, emergency responses, and fire suppression.

Vision Statement

It is our vision to be known as an innovative and progressive Department. We are dedicated to the delivery of effective fire suppression, rescue services, and quality fire/safety education to the public. We strive to offer the best available education and training to our members. We are committed to providing an environment which fosters teamwork among members. We desire to have an atmosphere of open communication which promotes the health and welfare of individual members.

Strategic Planning Priorities

Priority #1: Staffing

The Waconia Fire Department strives to provide professional, prompt, high quality, and cost efficient fire and emergency services to the residents we serve.

Our “paid, on-call” staffing structure means that all members of the department wear a pager and can be paged at any time to respond to a call. Response is voluntary for each member of the department, with a higher expectation of response for those driving the Command Vehicle. A challenge that has been identified is that the number of responding firefighters is unpredictable. Department records show that the average number of responding firefighters to all calls is 13. This number is an average and so there are many calls at different times where we see a greater or lesser response. Daytime and nighttime response averages are about the same at this time. These response numbers suggest that at any time only 1/3 of the department is available to respond to calls for service. We have seen a growing number of occasions, primarily during the week, during the day, when only two firefighters respond to a call for service.

A decline in the availability of our on-call personnel, coupled with increasing requests for service and increased administrative requirements, has adversely impacted the ability of our organization to meet the demands of the community and maintain the incident scene safety of our personnel.

The administrative demands for the operations and staff of the Department have dramatically increased. While adjusting the structure of the Department in 2013 to distribute the task load improved this situation somewhat, documentation of administrative time spent by the Chief Officers has identified a further need to review administrative capabilities and effectiveness of the Department.

In regards to emergency response, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) sets national fire service response and staffing standards. While these standards are not law, they are generally considered as compliance documents for fire departments and are often adopted by OSHA and other State safety and health authorities. NFPA 1710 (Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations) is a guiding document that specifies the minimum requirements for the operation and deployment of fire suppression, emergency medical services, and special operation responses. The document is split into the categories of fire and EMS response. The fire response directive requires the minimum response and on scene arrival of one engine company staffed by four (4) firefighters within four (4) minutes and a full first alarm (14) personnel within eight (8) minutes 90% of the time. These are most often referred to as Tactile Response Capabilities. Waconia Fire & Rescue is not capable of reaching these goals at this time. In order to improve our current capabilities and adequately meet the future response requirements of the community and meet national standards, we have identified the need to develop objectives within this strategic plan to assist in meeting these standards.

Lastly, the current Fire Chief has identified that he intends to end his responsibilities as Chief at the end of 2016. A plan for recruitment/replacement is imminently needed.

Objective 1	
Develop Staffing Program to Meet National Standards and Community Needs	
Related Tasks	Timeline
Create an administrative staffing plan	2016
Use statistical data to review current response trends	2017
Evaluate staffing and response protocols to identify methods to work toward minimum staffing and response requirements.	2017
Strive to meet NFPA standards	On-going

Objective 2	
Succession Planning	
Related Tasks	Timeline
Create plan for Fire Chief recruitment	2016
Refine plan for recruitment and development of leadership positions within the Department	2017
Create plan to monitor individual development towards command level officer positions	2017

Objective 3	
Recruit and Train Personnel As Necessary	
Related Tasks	Timeline
Review and refine recruitment process	In-process
Develop plan to monitor individual development	2017

Objective 4	
Create a Program Designed to Support Continuous Professional Development	
Related Tasks	Timeline
Review and develop retention plan	2016
Create an officer training program	2018
Continue to support and enhance current introductory member training program	On-going
Continue to provide access to FF I/II and EMR certifications to assure the Department can deliver effective core services	On-going
Create individual training and development plan for each member of the Department	2019
Create plan to monitor individual continuous development	2019

Priority #2: Service Delivery

The second issue identified by the Committee was Service Delivery. By Service Delivery, we mean the way in which services are delivered to the community. As the community changes, so do the changing needs of the community. Evaluating how and what services we can provide to the growing community has become a higher priority.

In addition to the challenge of response to calls for service, the department is experiencing a growing number of requests for department members to assist the many special events in the community, while availability of firefighters to volunteer their time declines. The department has been severely challenged to get a sufficient number of members to staff these events and find a vast number of events are staffed by the same few volunteers. This is not sustainable since these individuals are likely to “burn out” if this trend continues. Many requests for service at events are currently being respectfully declined due to a lack of volunteers to assist. This is currently creating disappointment and frustration by some of the requesters, even though it is thoroughly explained to them the challenges we face with staffing. This is more often than not due to multiple events occurring on the same date. While we recognize the importance and value in supporting the community through event attendance, it is recognized that our core mission is to provide for life safety, fire prevention and suppression and property conservation activities.

Objective 1	
Evaluate Current and Future Delivery of Services	
Related Tasks	Timeline
Study of alternate staffing models (i.e. duty crews, combination department, administration, etc.)	In-process
Create community conversations regarding services provided by department	In-process
Review and refine fire inspection and Fire Marshall program	2018
Develop a plan for service delivery tied to the community’s growth plans	2018
Review and refine department’s emergency management program	2018

Objective 2	
Enhance Relationships with Local and Regional Partners	
Related Tasks	Timeline
Continue to support current mutual aid program	On-going
Research joint purchasing opportunities	On-going
Continue to work with Townships on review of Department services	On-going
Work with Townships on contract renewal	2017

Objective 3	
Refine Outreach Programs and Special Events Response Plan	
Related Tasks	Timeline
Evaluate the relativity of all outreach programs as they relate to the mission of the Department	2017
Create new programs to match community needs and priorities tied to mission of the Department	2017
Evaluate city programs/events supported by the Department	2017
Evaluate non-city programs/events where Department support is requested	On-going
Review data about availability of volunteers	On-going
Develop plan for how the Department will respond to requests for service for special events	In-process

Priority #3: Resources

To support the efforts in the other two priorities, the Committee identified Resources as a key priority. Within this section, we highlight the need for ensuring adequate equipment and apparatus. In addition, the City has identified the need for a new Fire Station and has preserved the old Public Works Site on Highway 284, as the location for a new facility. Both of these items need to evolve as the potential changes in service delivery occur. Re-evaluation of apparatus response and needs versus traditional use is currently being reviewed and modified annually to better serve the community and reduce operating costs.

Objective 1	
Completion of New Facility	
Related Tasks	Timeline
Review site for proposed new Fire Station	2016
Create committee of department, non-department, and stakeholders to assist in the design and review of facility	2017
Hire architect	2018
Complete space needs analysis	2018
Determine use of existing facility	2018
Educate community regarding new facility	2019
Develop financing strategy	2019
Build new facility	2020

Objective 2	
Ensure Adequate Equipment and Apparatus to Maintain and Enhance Service Delivery	
Related Tasks	Timeline
Annual review of operating budget to meet service delivery plan	On-going
Annual review and update capital improvement plan to meet service delivery plan	On-going
Continue to work with Township partners to develop reserves for purchases	On-going
Review possible grant opportunities to enhance planned purchases	On-going

Tasks Sorted by Year

In-process

Review and refine recruitment process	Staffing	In-process
Study of alternate staffing models (i.e. duty crews, combination department, administration, etc.)	Service Delivery	In-process
Create community conversations regarding services provided by Department	Service Delivery	In-process
Develop plan for how the Department will respond to requests for service for special events	Service Delivery	In-process

2016

Create plan for Fire Chief recruitment	Staffing	2016
Create an administrative staffing plan	Staffing	2016
Review site for proposed new Fire Station	Resources	2016
Review and develop retention plan	Staffing	2016

2017

Refine plan for recruitment and development of leadership positions within the Department	Staffing	2017
Create plan to monitor individual development towards command level officer positions	Staffing	2017
Identify, train, and mentor personnel capable of assuming supervisor level positions	Staffing	2017
Develop plan to monitor individual development	Staffing	2017
Use statistical data to review current response trends	Staffing	2017
Evaluate staffing and response protocols to identify methods to work toward minimum staffing and response requirements.	Staffing	2017
Work with Townships on contract renewal	Service Delivery	2017
Evaluate the relativity of all outreach programs as they relate to the mission of the department	Service Delivery	2017
Create new programs to match community needs and priorities tied to mission of the department	Service Delivery	2017
Evaluate city programs/events supported by the Department	Service Delivery	2017
Create committee of Department, non-department, and stakeholders to assist in the design and review of facility	Resources	2017

2018

Create an officer training program	Staffing	2018
Review and refine fire inspection and Fire Marshall program	Service Delivery	2018
Develop a plan for service delivery tied to the community's growth plans	Service Delivery	2018
Review and refine Department's emergency management program	Service Delivery	2018
Hire architect	Resources	2018
Complete space needs analysis	Resources	2018
Determine use of existing facility	Resources	2018

2019

Create individual training and development plan for each member of the Department	Staffing	2019
Create plan to monitor individual continuous development	Staffing	2019
Educate community regarding new facility	Resources	2019
Develop financing strategy	Resources	2019

2020

Build new facility	Resources	2020
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On-going

Continue to support and enhance current introductory member training program	Staffing	On-going
Continue to provide access to FF I/II and EMS certifications to assure the Department can deliver effective core services	Staffing	On-going
Strive to meet NFPA standards	Staffing	On-going
Continue to support current mutual aid program	Service Delivery	On-going
Research joint purchasing opportunities	Service Delivery	On-going
Continue to work with townships on review of Department services	Service Delivery	On-going
Evaluate non-city programs/events where Department support is requested	Service Delivery	On-going
Review data about availability of volunteers	Service Delivery	On-going
Annual review of operating budget to meet service delivery plan	Resources	On-going
Annual review and update capital improvement plan to meet service delivery plan	Resources	On-going
Continue to work with Township partners to develop reserves for purchases	Resources	On-going
Review possible grant opportunities to enhance planned purchases	Resources	On-going