



Minutes - Final

Public Safety Committee

---

Wednesday, July 26, 2023

5:30 PM

Council Chambers

---

2024 Budget Priorities

Roll Call: Chair Affa, Hendricks, Zucal

Discussion: Public Safety Budget Priorities

[15-6083](#)

Police, Fire, EMS, E911

Purpose of the meeting is to lay out some priorities; detailed discussions will occur at future meetings.

Listing of Council Priorities – Clerk reads them – 2 minutes.

1. Chief Roca - Police priorities (5 minutes)
2. Chief Agosto - Fire and EMS priorities (5 minutes)
3. Committee members weigh in – (3 minutes @)
4. Action Items for the future – 3 minutes

**Attachments:** [Committee and Administrative Priorities](#)

[2023 Police Budget](#)

[2023 Fire Budget](#)

[E911](#)

Ms. Candida Affa stated that she will start with Chief Charles Roca.

Chief Charles Roca stated that most of his priorities remains consistent with what he introduced for the Budget Year of 2023. It is going to be personnel, training, recruitment, and capital improvement requests. He took a tour of the Easton Police Department and is very impressed. Their authorized strength is currently 233 officers. They have 207 officers now. They are very short and doing a very good job. They received 700 plus applications for the Police Officers that they are testing. They are focusing on training and certifications. Many of the training will be held at the Police Academy. They are a few that requires travel and lodging at an offsite location. Equipment is an essential need and have grants in place. One of the items is body cameras and tasers. The grant may not cover the body cameras and tasers. Potential new Police Station and Police Academy. The place they occupy was build in the 1960s. It is fragmented and want a better outflow. The Patrol Station located at 10th and Hamilton has been a problem since they moved in. The city has spent funding to repair a mired

of issues. (sewer system, roof that still leaks, HVAC system, garage door issues). It is presenting problems for ample parking spaces for the vehicles which they have to park inside. The Academy needs updates. The academy has a regional footprint. He respectfully submit that Council invest in the department. He asked about ARPA funding to invest in the infrastructure.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that they will now move to Chief Efrain Agosto.

Deputy Fire Chief Christian Williams stated that Chief Agosto is at a conference in Wisconsin doing a pre-construction meeting going over a new area they are purchasing. For 2024, the Fire Department will continue what they started in 2023. They will gradually return to previous staffing levels and ceased overview maintenance and capital improvements. The priorities are staffing, apparatus, and facilities. They want to continue restoring staffing. They asked to continue to staff 29 firefighters. They are waiting for a Water Safer Grant. They are asking for a Deputy Chief of Administration and part-time Clerk to assist the Office Manager. The Deputy Chief and Clerk will initiate a comprehensive review of our current rules and regulations and operating guidelines. Improve analysis injuries and accidents and do corrective actions. Increase community engagement and public outreach. Bring back a fire and EMS explorer program. Apparatus they continue long-term planning beyond 2023. They have a successful replacement plan. Two pumpers going through the construction process currently. One ladder at preconstruction. They are looking at 600 days to build a fire truck. They want to keep it at FDA standards. They want to replace a rescue apparatus in 2026. Central Fire House, Fearless Fire House, and Mack South need to be addressed. They continue to age and not appropriately constructed to meet the demands of today's modern fire services. They continue to grow the academy services and invest in to better serve the community. This includes replacing the fence for enhanced security, repaving the lot and repairing and restoring the training tower. In the EMS Bureau, their priorities are salaries, vehicles, equipment, and like the Fire Department, facilities. They need to evaluate their salary scale and consider a different scale all together. The part-time rate is not competitive. The current 31 pay scale is not representative of the professional requirements our staff maintains. There is a current scale number of 19 in which accurately reflects professional certified staff with an appropriate salary. Move the field staff to pay scale 19 and start all of the part-time at that full-time rate. Steps have been made. They will consider new equipment in advance. They need to reevaluate the fleet replacement plan. They are making sure they are not relying on equipment outside of the useful life span. Renovations are needed at Mack Firehouse and an additional paramedic station. The paramedics are directed by the Central Firehouse Project. The need a dedicated storage location. The problem

is how they store the vehicles. They just don't have enough space. In the future, they are considering a Deputy EMS Chief and a full-time staff.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that they have Fire and EMS together. She stated that committee members can weigh in for three minutes.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks asked Chief Roca about his staffing and the fact that you are currently at 26 down. How confident that you will be able to fill that next year. He stated that the Police Department received more applicants this year than they ever had.

Chief Roca stated that is correct and he is very confident that they will be able to fill that. The background unit is very busy to make sure that they are processing individuals. They got additional software to process people to help out. He stated that their team is very dedicated to finding good applicants for the position of police officers. It would probably be the first quarter of 2024 that they actually fill the authorize compliment.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks asked if they considered the use of the motorized or electric assisted bicycles for the bicycle unit.

Chief Charles Roca stated that he will never turn down technology. Technology is something very helpful. He is willing to test and evaluate and get feedback from the officers on the streets. Anything that will make their jobs easier and provide better service for our community, he is very much for. He would consider having electrical bicycles.

Ms. Candida Affa asked how many police officers are at the 10th Street Station.

Chief Charles Roca stated that the Patrol Station houses about 123 patrol officers ranging in different ranks. They will rotate the shifts out of that particular location. One of his ideas is bringing everyone under one roof again for the ease of personnel management.

Ms. Candida Affa agrees in having them all under one roof.

Mayor Matt Tuerk stated one of the challenges faced at the facility at 10th and Hamilton, if works against the administration's efforts to recruit new officers.

Chief Charles Roca stated that just to support the mayor's point, one of the main things is showing the employees of the city that they are valued regardless of if they come from the police department, fire department, EMS or Public Works or Health Bureau. He stated that they do care for the

employees.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that to have all officers under one roof, it will require a lot of renovating or moving.

Chief Charles Roca stated that they don't have the capacity right now. They have to establish a new facility for that purpose. Their purpose is to improve their level of accreditation.

Mayor Matt Tuerk invited members of the committee and Council to schedule a visit to the facility.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that next it will be comments for the Fire Chief.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks stated that in speaking about the 12 officers that may be available through the Safer Program. How likely are we able to get that through a grant.

Deputy Fire Chief Christian Williams stated that they applied for a grant and it will finance those firefighter for three years. It is around \$4 million the award will be if they are successful in getting that grant. They award in August or September. They hit a lot of the criteria. They previously had higher levels.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks stated that the funding is for three years and then it falls on the municipality to fund henceforth.

Deputy Fire Chief Christian Williams stated that they have enough manpower right now to staff the Fire Department with 29 firefighters. It becomes reliant on premium pay in order to pay that level. Premium pay can be a lot cheaper in a lot of sense than hiring a full-time employee because they don't encumber the pension cost or the equipment costs, and training costs. You are not getting a one-to-one comparison.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks stated that overtime has been certainly expanded greatly to the Fire Department. If they do get this grant, it will help a lot alleviate that expenditure.

Mr. Santo Napoli stated that he has two questions. Mr. Hendricks asked one of them. He stated that Deputy Fire Chief Williams mentioned the Explorer Program for the 14 to 20 year olds. Is that new?

Deputy Fire Chief Christian Williams stated that it is not a new program. It chartered through the Boy Scouts of America. The Fire Department had one 25 - 30 years ago. They still have the flag at Central Fire House.

Basically, you Charter through them. Philadelphia has a very successful program, and it enables 14 to 20 years old can apply to come in. The Fire Department has to meet a certain criteria, but it is a really low bar. The Boy Scouts provides online training. They will work twice a month and will be able to use the new facility to have classes. They can already have a job as an EMT. He would love to get something like this going. The want to get a class of 12 kids in Year 1. He stated that he grew up in Allentown and would have loved something like that.

Mr. Santo Napoli stated that he loves the idea, and it is a great feeder system to fill the ranks down the road with qualified candidates. He asked if they would work with Allentown School District. It is a great feeder system to fill the ranks.

Deputy Fire Chief Williams stated that EMS is already working with the Allentown School District trying to get a program off. The school offers EMS training. The Boy Scouts would love to be in Allentown and help us out with this. It is a nationwide program.

Mr. Santo Napoli stated that it is a great idea.

Ms. Candida Affa asked about the new Fire Academy. We need replacement of fencing. Is this a new property and new Fire Academy?

Deputy Fire Chief Christian Williams stated that they built a new building at the Mask South Fire Academy. It has a new firehouse, and the new building is in the back end of the property. The exterior fence is falling apart. They have a lot of cracks and sinkholes forming. They need the surface to be paved. The burn building power need to be refurbished. It was built 50 years ago without any significant work done to it.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that the Fire Academy itself needs nothing.

Deputy Fire Chief Christian Williams stated that it is not the building, it is the property that the building sits on.

Ms. Candida Affa asked if there were any other questions.

Mayor Matt Tuerk stated that municipal governments are responsible for a lot of things in cities. He stated that they maintain parks and Public Works. They do housing inspections. Foremost among those responsibilities is protecting public safety. You heard from the critical group of people in our administration on what their needs are. Their needs are in staffing. Public Safety Servies is provided by human beings. For too many years, the city has been forced to cut back on investments in staffing, facilities and equipment. They are critical needs.

**Adjournment: 5:59 PM**