



CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MEETING

AGENDA SECTION	WORK SESSION
MEETING DATE	JUNE 1, 2026

ITEM:	Discussion of Fire Service Delivery and Organizational Study. (10 minutes)
<i>Presenting Item: Daniel O'Brien, Fire Chief</i>	
DEPARTMENT: Fire	BY/DATE: Daniel O'Brien / May 27, 2026
<p>CORE CITY STRATEGIES: <i>(please indicate areas that apply by adding an "X" in front of the selected text below)</i></p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Community that Grows with Purpose and Equity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Engaged, Effective and Forward-Thinking <input type="checkbox"/> High Quality Public Spaces <input type="checkbox"/> Resilient and Prosperous Economy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Safe, Accessible and Built for Everyone <input type="checkbox"/> Inclusive and Connected Community </p>	

BACKGROUND

The City previously completed fire service staffing and regional service delivery studies in 2013 and 2019. Both studies identified concerns regarding the long-term sustainability of the Paid-on-Call staffing model, increasing EMS demand, and the need to evaluate future organizational and regional service delivery options.

Since those studies were completed, recruitment and retention challenges for Paid-on-Call firefighters have continued to increase throughout the Twin Cities metropolitan area. At the same time, operational demands, training requirements, inspection responsibilities, and administrative workloads have continued to grow.

The City is now at a point where long-term planning regarding fire and EMS service delivery is necessary to ensure sustainable operations and continuity of service.

SUMMARY OF CURRENT STATUS

The Fire Department continues to provide effective service to the community; however, several medium to long-term operational concerns exist. The current rental licensing and property maintenance inspection program requires significant staff time and focus on non-core responsibilities. These duties reduce the Department's ability to focus on firefighter training, emergency management, public education, community risk reduction, and operational readiness. In addition, enforcement-related responsibilities can negatively impact community perception by positioning the Fire Department as regulatory enforcers rather than public safety responders and educators.

The Department is also facing increasing complexity related to commercial fire permits, fire protection systems, and code enforcement. Currently, the Fire Chief is the only individual fully qualified to review and approve commercial fire protection permits and installations. This creates operational continuity and succession planning concerns, as it could take several years for additional personnel to develop the required technical expertise.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends Council authorization to include a comprehensive Fire Service Delivery and Organizational Study in the 2027 fire department budget. The two previous studies will provide valuable context for a new updated study that is reflective of present-day conditions.

The study will evaluate:

- Future staffing and deployment models
- Transition to an all-career staffing model
- Regional or shared service opportunities
- Governance and financial impacts
- Transition of rental licensing responsibilities to another department without reducing firefighting staffing levels
- Organizational needs related to commercial fire inspections, permitting, and potential Fire Marshal responsibilities

The goal of the study is to provide the City Council with objective analysis and long-term options to ensure sustainable, effective, and financially responsible fire and EMS services for the community.

Requested Council Action/ Discussion Topics / Key Questions

Staff requests that the City Council discuss and provide directions regarding the inclusion of a comprehensive Fire Service Delivery and Organizational Study in the 2027 Fire Department budget.

ATTACHMENT(S)

- 2013 Study
- 2019 Study