



CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Matthew R. Schmitz, MPA - City Manager

FROM: Blake Hayward – Fire Chief

DATE OF MEETING: November 4th, 2024

ITEM TITLE: Department Update – Fire Department

We have officially hit field fire season for Independence Fire along with the rest of the departments in Buchanan County. With the extreme dry conditions this fall we have seen our share of field fires along with other fire emergencies. This time of year, is normally busy for departments across the state but with the dry conditions a lot of the fires have spread quicker and don't take a lot to start. A simple spark, hot piece of equipment, or a discarded cigarette can lead to a good size fire very quickly. The addition of our Side by Side has been a huge asset for us with the fires and comes in really handy getting into places we couldn't get the larger equipment before. Not to mention we have used it a couple times on the trail systems in town this past year assisting the Police Department and Sheriff's Office.

We took delivery of our Dual-Purpose Fire Gear late last week. This gear was purchased using grant funds from the Iowa DNR Grant and Buchanan County Health Trust. This is light weight gear designed to help with heat stress on calls where our heavy fire gear isn't needed but still provides fire protection and visibility for firefighters. Capt. Newton spent the last shift getting everything entered into our gear inventory tracking system and issuing it out to members of the department. Along with grant funding, we have also received our Extrication Gloves that we also wrote a grant for. We were able to purchase 28 pairs of Extrication Gloves for each member of the department. These gloves are designed to protect members while working on accident scenes. These gloves will compliment our new gear perfectly!! In total we have received \$30,000 in grant funding this year helping offset our CIP and General Fund Budgets. Of course we couldn't do this without the great support of the local grant opportunities available to us. We have submitted our last grant for this year in hopes to hear by the end of the year about our funding. We have plans to submit for new jaws equipment next year with hopes to be as successful as this year.

We hosted another joint training exercise open to the County in partnership with West Edge Auto Salvage. We worked on Auto Extrication on 3 cars with members from Quasqueton & Brandon Fire, Jesup & AMR Ambulance and members from Buchanan County Sheriff's Office. This group training helps provide valuable learning opportunities for everyone involved as we are learning different techniques, ideas, and thoughts from everyone involved. It gives us a great opportunity to learn, train, and work together and has already paid dividends in a few calls since we have worked since the training. We continue to plan on having more joint trainings and hoping to get more departments across the county involved as well.

We have been working with Brindle Mountain on securing a loaner fire truck while Engine 1 is out of service. As of Oct 30th, they have a few things they are fixing up on the loaner truck before they send it to us and we hope to have it here in a couple weeks. Once the loaner gets here, we will do some training on it and add some tools and equipment to it and get it in service as soon as possible.

Earlier this month we wrapped up our Fire Prevention Week Activities. We hosted over 125+ students for station tours, attended several fire prevention activities at the schools and local groups, and judged

our annual fire poster contest. We invited the winners and their families to the station for a group pizza party and seemed to have a great response to something new we tried. In the past, the fire poster winners would ride on the fire truck during the Homecoming Parade, this year, with Homecoming being so early, we didn't have time to get posters out, back, judged, before the parade, so we went a different route. Early feedback sounded like people liked it and appreciated the effort. We also kicked off Fire Prevention Week with a Fire Station Open House where we had more than 150 people come through and visit the station and tour our building. We used this opportunity to talk about fire safety, discuss future plans and growth of the station, give a behind the scenes tour of the station, etc. We had a lot of positive feedback from this event as well and hope to continue to hold an Open House each year.

This fall has been extremely busy for us, and I can't say enough good things about the men and women of our department. The number of calls, training, and public relation events that have been going on these past couple months and everyone has been putting in extra effort to make it all go smoothly. I really appreciate all their hard work, dedication, and sacrifice they give to not only our community but our surrounding communities as well.

Thank you for all your support,

Blake Hayward

Fire Chief

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends discussion of this topic. No action is needed at this meeting, as any decision items needed would be brought forward to a City Council meeting for approval.