



MEMO

Department

To: Common Council
From: Chief Carrel, Fire Department
Date: 5/19/2026
Re: Fire Department Staffing Proposal

Background information:

The Fire Department staffing has been under budget for several positions for over a year. With E. Chier's resignation in May 2025, the department's staffing dropped to -4. The three (3) EMT/Firefighters hired in June 2025 brought the department back up to only being short one (1) full-time position. The retirement of L. Ziemer in January 2026 again reduced the staffing levels of the department, bringing the total to being short two (2) full-time positions since then.

The Fire Department, similar to the Police Department, is facing several retirements in the next couple of years. Also, similarly, the Fire Department anticipates that as those happen, there will be internal movement among members to backfill those.

Since 2025, the Fire Department has also reintroduced its Intern partnerships with local schools and has had success with one (1) Intern in 2025 and two (2) Interns in 2026.

The current application process and Police & Fire Commission Interview panel have yielded six (6) newly eligible candidates for hiring by the Fire Department. This is the highest amount of eligible candidates that the Fire Department has had in several years, while we are facing a very tough competition against other local department who also have posted vacancies, including a nearby department that just added three (3) additional positions they are now recruiting for.

Strategic Plan:

To prepare for the upcoming retirements and needed backfills, it is proposed to add a +1 Firefighter to the department headcount. The backfill strategy to prevent the department from falling below current staffing levels and in anticipation of the upcoming retirements, is to add one (1) additional full-time Firefighter, to begin being hired in June.

The +1 Firefighter being hired before the first retirement will allow the new Firefighter to become trained and prepared to be able to work independently by the time the retirement and internal promotion process initiates. This strategy will keep the Fire Department at full staffing level, ensuring no drop in coverage or interruption to servicing residents.

Upon retirement and the internal promotion process, the department would return to its original staffing levels.

Budget:

The cost of the additional full-time position to begin in June 2026 is able to be covered through the salary and wage budget due to the current two full-time vacancies.

2027 costs will depend on any finalized announcements for retirement and will be evaluated through the 2027 POP Planning process.

Staff Recommended Action:

It is requested that the +1 Firefighter staffing be approved to begin in June 2026 and to be evaluated with the 2027 budget and POP planning.