



**MINUTES
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
May 20, 2025**

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm.

Present: Mayor: Charlie Miner; Council: Jahn Dyvik, Mike Feldmann, Deirdre Kvale, and Todd Newcomer

Staff Present: City Administrator: Scott Weske; Fire Chief: Mike Heiland; and City Clerk: Jeanette Moeller

Absent: None

APPROVE AGENDA

A motion was made by Feldmann, seconded by Dyvik, to approve the agenda, as presented. Ayes: all.

OPEN CORRESPONDENCE

No one was in attendance to address the City Council during Open Correspondence.

BUSINESS ITEMS

A. Discussion of Updates Regarding the Fire Department and Fire Services Planning

Mayor Miner indicated a lot had occurred over the last few weeks. Additionally, Orono Fire Chief Van Eyll had been laid off and the Orono Council had appointed an Interim Fire Chief, Shea Chwialkowski.

City Administrator Weske updated the Council regarding ongoing fire services planning. Biweekly meetings are being held to discuss the transition and noted that they have been discussing the duty crew program with the part-timers and scheduling. Currently, Orono had the hours slated for 6:00 am to 10:00 pm, and the new thought was to reduce that to either 6:00 am to 6:00 pm or 6:00 am to 8:00 pm. He reviewed possible staffing breakdowns that Orono was asking for, and the possibility that Long Lake paid on-call firefighters could help fill some holes in the gaps within Orono's schedule.

The Council discussed some of the requests that the Orono Fire Department had made related to staffing and whether they were needs or wants.

Councilmember Dyvik stated that part-timers cannot do more than 28 hours per week and recalled there was an agreement about the schedule included as part of the contract amendment.

Weske responded that he understood, but he'd interpreted that the amendment exhibit itemized what the parties would be working towards and were aspirational.

Mayor Miner felt it had been loosely written that when there was a need or void in part-time, the Long Lake paid-on-call firefighters could step in.

Councilmember Dyvik commented that the idea was that the paid-on-call firefighters would work until around 5:00 or 6:00 pm, which was coming home from work time, but he noted that 8:00 pm is not that time and he wondered whether Orono was just trying to get as many paid hours as they could.

Mayor Miner observed that this would affect the paid on-call firefighters because it meant that they wouldn't be paging them out until 8:00 pm.

Fire Chief Heiland explained that in the two returning CAD zones, it would be paged as an all-call from 4:00 pm until 8:00 pm. He agreed with Councilmember Dyvik, and when they first started negotiating, Orono pursued a schedule of seven days a week from 6:00 am to 10:00 pm, and believed that Orono felt they were conceding to Long Lake because they were getting rid of Sundays and cutting back the hours on Saturdays.

Councilmember Feldmann asked who the 'they' Chief Heiland was referring to.

Heiland clarified that he was referring to Interim Orono Fire Chief Chwialkowski. He clarified that the 6:00 am to 8:00 pm request was for Monday through Friday, with Saturdays from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm.

Councilmember Newcomer asked if Orono had any problems filling all of their shifts before the amendment had been signed.

Weske replied that they did have problems and he believed that there were 10 to 12% a week that were not filled, and that was with former Orono Fire Chief VanEyll working extensive hours every two weeks.

Councilmember Feldmann asked how many part-time firefighters were currently on the Orono Fire Department.

Weske responded they had nine part-time firefighters who could work a maximum of 28 hours a week.

Heiland noted that one of the nine part-timers was Chris Adams, so technically they have eight part-timers.

Councilmember Feldmann shared examples of available hours and the importance of efficiency in the scheduling of the part-timers. He asked if Interim Orono Fire Chief Chwialkowski was setting this up to fail by asking for too many hours without having enough workforce to fill them.

Weske reflected that there were different parts to this and noted that the Orono part-timers would also be at Station 2 a majority of the time because that was what Interim Fire Chief Chwialkowski had indicated Orono Councilmember Persian wanted.

Councilmember Dyvik commented that he believed Orono Councilmember Persian wanted leadership to determine where it was best for them to be stationed, and he did not recall that it was determined the best location would be Station 2. He felt the determination should be made by Fire Chief Heiland, Assistant Fire Chief Farley, and other leadership in the department, and not made because that was what an Orono Councilmember wanted to happen, which may mean that sometimes part-timers would be at Station 1 and sometimes at Station 2.

Councilmembers and staff continued to discuss duty crew stationing; how calls and will be paged throughout the coverage area; and the working schedule for the Orono part-timers.

Mayor Miner and Council member Dyvik sought Fire Chief Heiland's input on what he'd suggest for a duty crew hours schedule.

Heiland indicated that he would choose a duty crew schedule of 6:00 am to 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

Councilmember Dyvik stated that the hours should be 6:00 am to 6:00 pm if that was what Chief Heiland and fire leadership felt was best. He added that the duty crew should be responding to the full service area and not just two specific CAD zones.

Weske confirmed that they were responding to the whole service area.

Councilmember Dyvik added that during the day, the duty crew should be working out of both Station 1 and Station 2 because he didn't think duty crew members would be able to respond to the full service area as well from Station 2.

Weske noted that was why they were trying to schedule three firefighters on at a time, with two posted at Station 2, and one posted at Station 1.

The Council discussed the average percentage of duty crew shifts that were filled.

Weske pointed out that Long Lake Fire leadership was supportive of the 6:00 am to 6:00 pm duty crew shift, but in good faith, they had been willing to extend it to 8:00 pm.

Councilmember Dyvik did not agree with that approach.

Weske believed that the intent of doing so was for Orono firefighter retention purposes.

Councilmember Newcomer stated that he would like to see the part-timers fill the shifts from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm on Monday through Friday, and allow the Long Lake Fire Department duty crews to figure out the weekend coverages. He indicated that there should be enough hours in there, and if there were more people than slots, then they would have an extra person, and the Chief and the extra person could be stationed out of Station 1. That way, they could make sure that they have their hours to meet their job requirements and what was offered to them. He gave examples of going until 8:00 pm with duty crews and noted that if there was a Long Lake paid on-call firefighter in their home around 6:30 pm and a call came in, if they knew there was a duty crew on until 8:00 pm, the firefighter may second guess whether they needed to respond or not. When a department knows that their paid-on-call firefighters are back home and want to volunteer and serve, they should be allowed to, which is the approach he would rather take. He believed that 6:00 pm should be the end time for duty crews.

Council and staff further discussed the proposed duty crew schedule, whether the departments were training together yet, and when the easiest time of day is for firefighters to respond to calls.

Councilmember Dyvik reiterated that Fire Department leadership should decide what duty crew schedule is needed in the interest of public safety, and the schedule should not be determined based upon people wanting more hours.

Councilmembers voiced concern that the final scheduling decision was intended to remain with Chief Heiland as Fire Department leadership, not by input from Councilmembers or from Orono Interim Fire Chief Chwialkowski.

Councilmember Dyvik recalled that before the contract amendment had been signed, Interim Orono Fire Chief Chwialkowski had been clear in stating his position that he was totally against the merger of the Fire Departments. He emphasized that Interim Orono Fire Chief Chwialkowski should not run the show, but he could provide his input, and the final decision would be made by Long Lake Fire.

Council and staff continued discussion of various possible hours for duty crews; whether or not there may be a need for Saturday or overnight shifts; that the basis of the decision should be made by what the Fire Department leadership felt is needed for public safety, and what's implemented may carry forward into a future JPA; and financial considerations/calculations for duty crew hours being reviewed.

Heiland reported that Orono Fire's ladder truck had been moved into Station 1, and the tanker truck would be moved into Station 2 soon. He believed that the Orono Fire Department would be dropping their Wednesday training soon so that training would be on Monday nights in Long Lake. He noted that the only hang-up has been the hours issue.

Councilmember Dyvik asked whether the list of what equipment would be kept and what would be sold had been reviewed.

Weske confirmed that the list had been reviewed, but they have been going back and forth about its validity.

Councilmember Dyvik stated that he would like to see the equipment list be reviewed, regardless equipment ownership, and decisions made about what stays and what goes.

Heiland noted that there had been some consideration of having someone come in and offer a third-party recommendation.

Weske indicated that they had considered creating a truck committee consisting of a few part-timers, a few paid on-call firefighters, and a mechanic.

Councilmember Dyvik observed that Ryan Gonsior should be part of the committee, but added that he thought staff was going to make a first run at the equipment to come up with a list of what was needed and what wasn't needed that should be sold.

Weske stated that equipment would not be sold until 2026, when, and if, the JPA has been signed.

The Council discussed existing equipment; the status of equipment that had been ordered; items expected to be sold; and the dollar amounts for equipment items related to a settlement agreement that appeared to have been inflated.

Councilmember Dyvik commented on the need to get rid of redundant equipment.

Mayor Miner asked what was happening with the naming of the Department.

Heiland shared that a Naming Committee had been formed with members from both Departments with the idea that they would offer the cities a few final name suggestions within the next month.

Councilmember Dyvik questioned whether there would be any community input in the name selection.

Weske stated that they wanted Council feedback on the matter, and asked how much of input they would want to come from the community and the Council as far as the list of names.

Councilmember Dyvik stated that he felt the community should be allowed to throw in some names for the Naming Committee to consider.

City Clerk Moeller suggested that they allow the firefighters to come up with a Top 5 list of names for the Department, to be followed by a survey inviting community input through voting on their favorite names.

The Council discussed scheduling a meeting for the JPA advisory group, as well as a meeting with the elected officials on the Excelsior Fire District to include a few members of the Council.

OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was discussed.

ADJOURN

Hearing no objection, Mayor Miner adjourned the meeting by general consent at 6:28 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott Weske
City Administrator