

---

**TO:** Kate Thunstrom- City Administrator  
**FROM:** Dave Schmidt- Fire Chief  
**SUBJECT:** Fire Inspector Pending Resignation/Replacement Considerations  
**DATE:** April 28, 2025

---

**OVERVIEW:**

The fire department is seeking your guidance on the transition following Captain Evan Sturzl's resignation. Captain Sturzl's wife has accepted a new job in Brainerd, and their family will be relocating to the Brainerd Lakes area this summer, likely around June. His departure presents staffing challenges, as he has played a key role in fire inspections and public education initiatives, contributing 16 hours per week in this capacity.

**Key Challenges:**

- **Limited Internal Staff Availability** – Current personnel do not have the capacity to absorb these responsibilities while maintaining existing workloads. Fire inspections and related activities must occur during business hours.
- **Specialized Skill Requirements** – The fire inspector role requires specific certifications and expertise that are not widely available within our current workforce.
- **Operational Impact** – A prolonged vacancy could affect fire safety inspections, compliance efforts, and public safety initiatives, including community education.

**Potential Replacement Options:**

**1. Internal Hiring (Promotion or Reassignment)**

- *Advantages:* Utilizes existing staff who are already familiar with our operations and policies.
- *Challenges:* May create staffing gaps in other critical roles; limited availability of qualified internal candidates with daytime availability.

**2. External Hiring (Full-Time Position)**

- *Advantages:* Brings in a dedicated professional with the necessary expertise, ensuring stability and supplementing daytime emergency response. Could assume other duties such as vacant and rental inspections and code enforcement.
- *Challenges:* Recruitment may take time, and budget constraints could be a factor.

**3. External Hiring (Part-Time or Contract-Based Position)**

- *Advantages:* Provides flexibility in staffing and budgeting while addressing immediate needs.
- *Challenges:* Qualified part-time candidates may be limited, potentially leading to inconsistencies in coverage.

### **Funding Considerations:**

To assist in evaluating the financial impact of each option, I have outlined Captain Sturzl's work hours and associated costs over the past two years:

#### **Year   Total Hours Worked   Total Cost:**

2023: 886 hours	\$13,446
2024: 966 hours	\$15,427

Understanding these historical costs will help determine budget feasibility for internal or external hiring and whether funding adjustments may be necessary. Additionally, we may need to explore alternative funding sources, such as the Public Safety Funds allocated by the legislature which has a balance of \$169,854.

### **Next Steps:**

Given these considerations, I would appreciate the Council's feedback on the feasibility of these options, any potential budget implications, and guidance on the best course of action.

### **ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED:**

Provide Council direction on the desired outcome for filling the future vacancy

### **BUDGET IMPLICATION:**