
Meeting Date: 12/6/2024

Subject: Public Safety Department

Attachments: Ordinance 2024-20

Presented by: Adam Vaughn, Finance Director; Dan Ford, City Manager

Approved for Agenda by: Dan Ford, City Manager

Discussion:

As a part of the plan to reduce the overall budget deficit, Fire Chief Tim Smith has offered to retire early and the City would then move to bring the Fire and Police departments under one Public Safety department lead by current Police Chief Joseph Mehline as the new Public Safety Director. Under the Public Safety Director there would be additional management positions of Deputy Police Chief and Deputy Fire Chief made up from the current Police and Fire captain positions.

As discussed in recent council meetings, the City plans to continue talks and preparations for the potential movement of the Fire service to a Regional Fire Authority (RFA). This current action would serve as an interim step and potential long-term change if the RFA plans are not able to come to fruition. Consolidating resources will have long-term positive budgeting impacts in addition to potential increases in the level of service that our public safety departments provide.

A Public Safety Director would be able to provide administrative oversight to both departments to ensure that each unit is working towards best practices and maintaining compliance with applicable laws. The director would rely on the deputy chiefs to handle the day-to-day operations of each department while providing general oversight.

As we continue looking towards the future of the City and the service we can provide, it is essential that we have the capacity for somebody to lead strategic planning, policy development, community relations, and staff development in both departments. These are time-consuming activities, that the director will be able to focus time on while the deputy chiefs continue the day-to-day operations.

Consolidated public safety departments is not a unique action, the City of Toppenish has done it in the past and a US Department of Justice and Michigan State University report states that is a growing trend across the nation (cops.usdoj.gov).

Fiscal Impact:

Consolidation of departments would have about \$150,000 in yearly savings.

Recommendation:

Adopt Ordinance 2024-20 Repealing TMC sections 2.20.030 and 2.20.040 and establishing a Public Safety Director appointment through revised TMC section 2.20.030

Alternatives:

Maintain current departments with additional position or service cuts or increase in taxes.