

Fire Department

To: Finance Committee

From: Chief Reynen

Date: 10/16/2024

Subject: Union Contract MOU- Vacation Selection

Background

In January 2022, the city increased staffing from 8 personnel per shift to 9. Due to shift vacancies and apparatus changes, shift *minimum* staffing did not increase at that time. On December 1, 2024, the Watertown Fire Department will be adjusting minimum staffing levels from 6 personnel to 7. This allows for staffing the 4110 Command Car which will provide for officer oversight of day-to-day operations and more importantly, critical oversight and command of emergency scene operations. This position can only be staffed with a Battalion Chief or Lieutenant. The Department has allowed for 2 personnel to be off on vacation for many years but have never specified who could chose to be off on a day. To properly staff the 41140 Command Car, a Battalion Chief or Lieutenant must be on duty, thus cannot pick vacation for the same days. The current collective bargaining agreement would not allow for this as written. The officer group has worked diligently, along with union e-board members to develop a solution that meets the needs of both parties while moving the department forward, improving operations and safety for all.

In the MOU below, the only “new” or change to procedures is that the Battalion Chiefs and Lieutenants will pick their vacations for the year fist, allowing only one on vacation at a time.

The remaining language outlines long standing practices on vacation picks at Watertown Fire Department which is standard through many area fire departments. This includes the “double pick” procedure and outlining what happens with crew transfers and vacation picks.

This MOU shows the dedication of the Union and Administrations commitment to working together to achieve the common goal of improving safety and response to the community.

Budget Goal

1. Supports employee retention and growth, while also evaluating operations and the associated staffing.

Financial Impact

No additional cost. This allows for critical staffing positions to be filled while limiting risk to overtime costs.

Recommendation

Approve the attached MOU language to allow for improved staffing and safer emergency response.

2024 Operational Goal

1. Enhance community resilience and safety through proactive education, support, and adequate Fire/EMS response.