

MEMO

TO: Public Safety & Welfare Committee

FROM: Don A. Dishno, Deputy Chief Fire Marshal

DATE: 9/1/2026

RE: Ordinance Change for Fire Plan Review

Background

Historically, the Watertown Fire Department did not have the capacity to review plans for fire alarm, fire sprinkler, or other fire-protection systems. These plans were submitted to the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) for review.

With a full-time Fire Marshal now in place, the department can conduct these reviews in-house. This allows the department to review plans for compliance not only with Building and Fire Codes, but with adopted local ordinances as well. We are then able to retain applicable plan-review fees locally rather than having them collected by the state and provide a substantially faster response to applicants.

DSPS review timelines may extend several weeks due to workload. The Watertown Fire Department anticipates completing in-house plan reviews within 24 to 48 hours.

Financial Impact

The Fire Marshal is already certified and approved by DSPS to conduct these reviews. No additional staffing, equipment, or other expenditures are required.

Therefore, no additional financial impact is anticipated, aside from the collection and revenue of plan-review fees authorized by state statute and local ordinance.

Recommendation

The proposed ordinance updates the City's plan-review process to authorize the Watertown Fire Department to conduct in-house reviews of fire alarm, fire sprinkler, and other fire-protection system plans. Adoption will align the ordinance with the department's current capabilities, establish the local process for review and fee collection, and allow applicants to receive timely, locally administered service.