

PS COMMITTEE #2  
January 28, 2010

**MEMORANDUM**

January 27, 2010

TO: Public Safety Committee

FROM: Minna K. Davidson, <sup>MKD</sup> Legislative Analyst

SUBJECT: Update – MCFRS civilianization efforts in the Emergency Communications Center and Fire Code Enforcement

For this update, the Fire Chief will provide a mid-year status report on the implementation of FY10 civilianization initiatives in the Emergency Communications Center (ECC) and Fire Code Enforcement.

**Background**

For FY10, the Executive recommended, and the Council approved, civilianization initiatives in the ECC and Fire Code Enforcement. In the ECC, 10 uniformed positions were to be replaced with 10 civilian call taker positions. In Fire Code Enforcement, five uniformed positions were to be replaced with five civilian inspector positions. In addition, one civilian Engineer position was to replace one Master Firefighter position. Details about the proposed initiatives from the FY10 budget packet memo are attached on © 4-6.

For both initiatives, the new civilian positions were to be hired in September 2009 and achieve full performance status by March 2010. The uniformed positions were to be abolished and the personnel in them were to be reassigned to vacant positions in the field in March 2010. Because of the period of overlap between the uniformed and civilian positions, first year costs for the initiatives were expected to increase, but savings were anticipated for the following years. In Fire Code Enforcement, the replacement of the Master Firefighter position with the civilian Engineer position was to occur in July 2010, creating an immediate savings in FY10.

Both initiatives were intended to be part of multi-year civilianization plans. For the ECC, 16 civilian call taker positions would be phased in between FY10 and FY13. For Fire Code Enforcement, additional civilian positions would be phased in to complete the expansion of the workforce that was planned to support the major Code Enforcement initiative that began with the adoption of new Fire Code regulations in 2006.

## MCFRS Update

On © 1-3, MCFRS staff has provided responses to questions about the current status of the civilianization initiatives.

### **ECC**

In the ECC, 10 civilian positions have been hired and are currently participating in an eight-week internship on the ECC operations floor. All 10 candidates are scheduled to begin as full performance call takers on March 14. The Fire chief has amended his plan and will return 12 uniformed positions, rather than 10, to the field in March.

**Question: Updated costs for call takers.** In the FY10 budget, \$578,150 was budgeted for the 10 new call taker positions. In the Round 1 Savings Plan, the Executive took a savings of -\$162,000 because the 10 civilian positions were hired in November instead of September. Thus, \$416,150 remained in the budget for the civilian call taker positions. On © 2, the updated costs for the 10 new positions and direct training total \$316,000. **If this is the case, how is the remaining \$100,150 being used?**

<b>Item</b>	<b>\$</b>
Original FY10 budget	\$578, 150
Round 1 Savings Plan	-\$162,000
Available after Round 1	\$416,150
Current projected costs	\$316,000
<b>Amount remaining</b>	<b>\$100,150</b>

**Question: Savings from discontinuing uniformed positions.** Updated information on © 2 indicates that a total of -\$314,000 will be saved from discontinuing the uniformed positions. This savings amount was originally assumed in the FY10 budget for discontinuing 10 positions. However the plan has been amended to discontinue 12 positions. **Should the savings amount be amended to reflect the amended plan?**

**Question: Multi-year phase in:** In view of the experience to date and the current fiscal situation, are any changes to the longer term civilianization plan being considered?

### **Fire Code Enforcement**

As was mentioned in the review of the Round 2 FY10 Savings Plan, the five civilian inspectors will not be hired in FY10. The five uniformed positions were returned to the field in January instead of March. Discussion of the impacts of these changes is included in the Round 2 Savings Plan packet. The Committee will receive more detailed information about the status of Code Enforcement efforts at the Quarterly Update on Fire Code Enforcement which is scheduled for February 11.

**Question: Master Firefighter/Engineer:** What is the status of the replacement of the Master Firefighter position with the civilian Engineer position?

**Question: Distribution of workload.** How is the workload being distributed among the remaining staff following the reduction of the five uniformed positions?

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# MEMORANDUM

January 21, 2010

TO: Minna Davidson  
Legislative Analysis

FROM: Fire Chief Richie Bowers

SUBJECT: PSC Questions

Minna, here are the responses to the questions for the January 28, 2010 meeting of the Public Safety Committee.

## **ECC Responses**

1. *Updated information on the number of positions to be civilianized, and if any changes have been made.*

The ECC strategic plan for FY10 was amended to eliminate twelve firefighter/rescuer III positions and replace them with ten non-uniform call taker positions.

2. *Updated timetable for hiring, training, and full performance work assignment for the new civilian employees.*

Nine Public Safety 9-1-1 Call Takers were hired and began their classroom training on November 23, 2009.

On December 21, 2009, one of the Office Service Coordinators at the ECC transferred into a Public Safety 9-1-1 Call Taker II position and joined the class; bring the total number to 10 civilian call-takers.

The ECC training program has traditionally realized a 35% failure rate of candidates. To date, all 10 candidates are in excellent academic standing with program requirements.

All 10 candidates are scheduled to begin an 8-week internship on the ECC Operations Floor on January 17, 2010.

All 10 candidates are scheduled to begin as full performance Call-Takers on March 14, 2010.

3. *Updated timetable for returning the uniformed employees to the field.*

The 12 Firefighter/Rescuer III positions will be returned to the field when the 10 Public Safety 9-1-1 Call-Takers achieve full performance in March.

4. *Updated information about the costs and savings associated with each initiative.*

Direct training costs:	\$16,000
Projected FY10 costs for new call taker positions:	\$300,000
Projected FY10 budget savings for uniform positions:	\$314,000

5. *Any issues that remain to be addressed.*

None at this time from Fire and Rescue.

### **Fire Code Enforcement**

The Committee requested a mid-year status report on the two civilianization initiatives. For each one, please provide:

- Updated information on the number of positions to be civilianized, if any changes have been made.

The civilianization initiative for Fire Code Enforcement remains at five personnel. No changes are anticipated at this time.

- An updated timetable for hiring, training, and full performance work assignment for the new civilian employees.

A position description for the civilian Fire Code Enforcement Inspectors is complete, as is work revising the class specifications for these inspectors. Hiring of the civilian inspectors has been lapsed through FY11. The hiring, training and basic level service will require a three to four months effort. Full performance is anticipated to require six to nine months effort depending on candidate qualifications.

- An updated timetable for returning the uniformed employees to the field.

The uniformed Fire Code Enforcement personnel have been permanently assigned to stations in the Division of Operations. These assignments formally begin on February 2010. However, personnel

have been made available to field operations in the interim to reduce overtime expenditures.

- Updated information about the costs and savings associated with each initiative.

No costs are associated with the civilianization initiative in Fire Code Enforcement. This initiative is on hold due to budget constraints through FY11. Direct savings from the transfer of personnel for the remainder of FY10 is expected to be in the range of \$300,000.

- For Fire Code Enforcement, updated information about the impact of the civilianization effort on projected revenues.

Civilianization is not expected to impact budgeted revenues for Fire Code Enforcement at this time. The staffing model was and remains predicated on the concept of providing a critical mass of code enforcement personnel that could be shifted to existing building inspections in response to the cyclical nature of new construction work load.

**Issue # 4: Delay Kingsview's (West Germantown) second ambulance until FY11, -\$676,590.**

Kingsview Station 22 was intended to house one fire engine and two EMS units. For FY09, the Executive budgeted funds to place all of the units in service in March 2009. For fiscal reasons, the Council agreed to defer implementation of the second EMS unit to FY10, and took a reduction of -\$278,000 in the FY09 budget.

For FY10, the Executive initially included in his annualization costs \$278,000 to restore the second ambulance at Kingsview. However, he later determined that, for fiscal reasons, the second ambulance would have to be deferred until FY11, and recommended a reduction of -\$676,590. This amount would reduce -\$278,000 that was restored plus an additional -\$397,590. MCFRS staff believe the latter amount inadvertently remained in the FY09 budget for personnel costs for the deferred positions between recruit class graduation and the opening of the Kingsview station.

**PS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Approve as recommended by the Executive. (3-0)**

**ISSUES - CIVILIANIZATION**

**Issue #5: Civilianize 10 Firefighter/Rescuer III positions in the ECC.**

The Executive's proposal would create 10 new civilian call taking positions to replace 10 Firefighter/Rescuer positions that are assigned to the Emergency Communications Center (ECC). The Firefighter/Rescuer positions would be abolished, and the individuals would be transferred to new positions to open Station 34 or to positions that are vacant from attrition.

For the first year, this initiative will create a net increase of \$264,150 because positions will overlap during a transition period. (See table below.) For FY11, the Executive anticipates annualized savings of -\$483,000 (-\$219,360 from the conversion to civilian positions and -\$263,640 from abolishing the uniformed positions).

Positions	Date	FY10 \$ Change
Create 10 PS Communications Specialist III positions	September 2009	\$578,150
Discontinue 10 Firefighter/Rescuer III positions	March 2010	-\$314,000
<b>Net change</b>		<b>\$264,150</b>

Note: in addition to this cost increase, the Executive recommends an additional \$67,000 for training for the new ECC and Code Enforcement civilian positions.

This proposal is part of a multi-year civilianization plan to phase in a total of 16 civilian call taker positions between FY10 and FY11 (16 civilian positions are needed to replace 10 uniformed positions because a civilian workyear is 2080 hours while a uniformed workyear is 2496 hours). As part of this plan MCFRS is considering moving all of the fire/rescue call takers to the Police as common call takers in FY13.

**Council staff comment to the Committee:** The Committee may want to ask MCFRS staff to discuss the civilianization plan for the ECC and its implementation in more detail.

**MCFRS response:** MCFRS staff said that this recommendation will be the first part of a strategic plan for civilianization of the ECC. In the first year, the plan will achieve the goal of returning uniformed positions to the field. In the outyears, there should be cost savings from the civilianization. It is important to approach this initiative incrementally to be certain that no deficiencies are created as the implementation takes place. MCFRS intends to phase in the initiative from FY10 through FY13. For the longer term, they are considering with the Police whether there is a bigger efficiency to be achieved in the ECC.

**PS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Approve as recommended by the Executive. (3-0)**

**Issue #6: Civilianize 5 Firefighter/Rescuer III positions and one Master Firefighter position in Code Enforcement**

The Executive’s proposal would create 5 new Permit Services Inspector III positions to replace 5 uniformed positions, and one Engineer III to replace one Master Firefighter position in Fire Code Enforcement. As with the ECC positions, the uniformed Code Enforcement positions would be abolished, and the individuals would be transferred to other new or vacant positions in the field.

For the first year this initiative will create additional costs because some of the positions will overlap during a transition period. (See table below.) For FY11, the Executive anticipates annualized savings of -\$328,000 (-\$110,140 from the conversion to civilian positions and -\$217,860 from abolishing the uniformed positions).

<b>Positions</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>FY10 \$ Change</b>
Create 5 Permit Services Inspector III positions	September 2009	\$401,486
Discontinue 2 Firefighter/Rescuer III positions And 3 Master Firefighter positions	March 2010	-\$204,000
<b>Net change</b>		<b>197,486</b>
Create one Engineer III position	July 2010	\$99,000
Abolish one Master Firefighter position	July 2010	-\$139,000
<b>Net change</b>		<b>-\$40,000</b>

Note: in addition to this cost increase, the Executive recommends an additional \$67,000 for training for the new ECC and Code Enforcement civilian positions.

Phase 3 of the Code Enforcement expansion calls for the addition of 7 personnel. The Fire Marshal anticipates that those personnel will be civilian. At the end of Phase 3, civilian staffing will comprise about 38% of the fire code inspector complement, not including supervisors. MCFRS will continue to look for opportunities to civilianize other Code Enforcement positions.

**Council staff comment to the Committee:** The Committee may want to ask MCFRS staff to discuss the implementation of Code Enforcement civilianization in more detail.

**MCFRS response:** Chief Bowers said that MCFRS has tried to analyze strategically how best to incorporate civilian staffing in Code Enforcement. This is a multi-year implementation plan which needs to be implemented on an incremental basis. In response to concerns about the civilianization raised in public hearing testimony (© 60), Chief Bowers said that the balance between civilian fire protection engineers and uniformed firefighters will work well, but must be implemented carefully. Like other jurisdictions that have successfully implemented this model, MCFRS will try to hire civilians with appropriate background (such as retired firefighters or inspectors) to reduce the learning curve involved. In addition, when firefighters move from Code Enforcement back to the field, their expertise enhances field operations.

**PS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Approve as recommended by the Executive. (3-0)**

### ISSUES – RECRUIT CLASS

**Issue #7: Reduce Recruit Classes, maintaining a February recruit class of 18 Recruits (-\$4,214,050)**

Item	FY09	FY10
# Recruit classes	2	2
# Recruit slots	45 + 45	12 + 18
Recruit salary/benefits	\$3,900,000	\$700,000
Instructor overtime	\$1,000,000	\$300,000
Operating expenses	\$1,000,000	\$300,000
<b>Total cost*</b>	<b>\$5,900,000</b>	<b>\$1,300,000</b>

\*\$300,000 in FY10 will be funded from the 2009 SAFER Grant match.  
 \$About \$800,000 is one-time FY09 costs which are being eliminated in FY10.  
 Taking these two items into account, the difference in recruit class costs from FY09 to FY10 is approximately -\$4.2 million.

The Executive’s recommendation would provide for two recruit classes to begin in FY10. The first would be for the 12 SAFER positions and would begin in October 2009. The second would be for 18 firefighter/rescuers to help cover attrition and would start in