

# City of Waukesha Fire Department

## Emergency Response

### Strategic Planning Process

#### Overview



## **Strategic Planning Process**

Strategic planning is defined by *Encarta Dictionary* as “planning for good business” and further defined as “the planning of all the activities of a business to ensure competitive advantage and profitability”. The Waukesha Fire Department is a “Service Business” in as much as it provides a service to its customers instead of producing products. The measure of a successful service business is its ability to achieve its mission in a comprehensive, competent and cost effective manner. The measure of that success or lack thereof, is the department’s ability to satisfy its customers and achieve its mission, while achieving acceptable performance benchmarks, compared to industry standards and applicable regulations.

Measuring the success or shortcomings of a service industry is difficult without establishing some base assumptions of the quantity and quality of the service that is expected. In a city of nearly 70,000 residents, reaching a consensus for what is expected of the fire department can only be achieved in broad terms. Nationally, studies reveal that citizens expect promptness and reliability; a customer service attitude; and crews that are physically capable, trained, disciplined and well-equipped. Measuring how well the fire department meets those expectations is based on personal experience, and the outcome of a person’s individual emergency. A more reliable method of measuring service delivery is an assessment of how well the fire department meets service levels identified in applicable regulations and standards.

The Waukesha Fire Department interfaces with more than 10,000 citizens each year who are involved in emergent situations. These emergencies cover a wide array of situations – building fires, transportation fires, dumpster fires, brush fires, medical problems, traumatic injuries, automobile accidents, train derailments, building collapses, hazardous materials spills, industrial accidents, trench collapses, confined space incidents, high angle rescues, and other situations that require the involvement of the police department or another service agency, public or private, on the scene of a problem or mishap, ultimately determining that they lack the tools, equipment, expertise, or personnel to resolve the situation. Each of these incidents impact more than just the people directly involved; locally, family members, employees, customers, parishioners, and more, have all been affected by the consequences of these types of events.

Persons affected by an emergency can obviously quantify whether their lives were improved by the fire department's intervention, yet there is no accurate measurement of what effect a fire department may provide to a community in improving the quality of the lives of its citizens. This is evident in the wide disparity throughout fire departments in Waukesha County. To many citizens, they see a fire station and assume they have a competent fire department that can respond to any emergency that might arise in their community. Similarly, they see an ambulance and assume that highly-trained paramedics will arrive with the training, equipment, and expertise to resolve any medical emergency. Yet nothing could be further from the truth. Like most things in life, you get what you pay for. Highly effective emergency services are no different. If the organization is not appropriately staffed, equipped, trained, and led, at some point it will fail its community and its membership.

That is why it is imperative for competent fire officials to analyze their organizations and provide the political leadership with an accurate assessment of what their organizations can and cannot achieve. This can be done through a community risk assessment process that identifies, analyzes, and prioritizes risks to the community and community members. Risk control techniques then need to be developed to identify appropriate mitigation strategies to control the risks. Two methods should be used in this evaluation. An internal assessment should be conducted by fire department management, and then an external review should be conducted by third party experts to verify or challenge the organizational assumptions and conclusions. Once the risk analysis has been completed, the results are compared to the department's mission statement and then a strategic planning process is initiated to serve as a "road map for the future".

The strategic planning process identifies where the organization currently is, and how it will achieve its mission today and into the future. The first step is typically an analysis of **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)** to the organization's ability to perform its mission. Then, an external analysis of political, economic, social, and technological factors is conducted. From this information, goals, objectives, and timetables are established for the location of fire stations, the staffing of fire companies, the replacement and acquisition of equipment, and options for service delivery.

In August of 2001, Allen LaConte was named Chief of the Waukesha Fire Department. He began an internal analysis of the fire department, which resulted in a reorganization of his staff. In January of 2002, he renamed the Assistant Chief's position (that which he had previously held) to "Assistant Chief of Operations" and promoted Kevin Croegaert to that position. He then renamed the position of Deputy Chief of Fire Inspection (held by Steven Howard) to "Assistant Chief of Administration". Together, the fire department staff set off on the Strategic Planning Process.

In 2002, the staff of the Waukesha Fire Department began the strategic planning process. A SWOT Analysis was conducted to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the organization. A variety of proactive initiatives occurred due to this process, such as the development of a vehicle replacement plan, the contracting of hazardous materials response to the county, and the contracting of technical rescue service to interested communities.

In 2003, an independent analysis was performed by Tri-Data Corporation, which verified many of the fire department's assumptions and identified other areas of concern. The major issues that needed to be addressed were identified, by both fire department and Tri-Data staffs, as response times, staffing levels, vehicle replacement, airport response, and dispatching processes. Meetings were subsequently scheduled with the Common Council and a strategic plan was identified.

### **Plan Components and Recommendations**

Following the internal and external evaluations, multiple presentations were made to the Common Council defining existing service levels, response time studies, gaps in existing coverage, and a strategic plan to address these deficiencies. Ultimately, the recommendations that were presented and accepted by the Common Council were to relocate fire station #2 from Stardust Drive to Pearl Street, to relocate fire station #3 from Sentry Drive to Oakdale Drive, and to build a new fire station and hire nine additional fire fighters.

The final phase of this six year process culminates with the relocation of fire stations #2 and #3 in 2009. The process has not been accomplished without compromise and careful evaluation of service needs and their associated costs. This 25 year plan will enable the Waukesha Fire Department to provide reliable service through the year 2033.

The need to invest in public safety is not new to this growing city.

- July 21, 1852 - Citizens formed the first volunteer fire department in the village (population listed as 5,000 with an area of 1.2 square miles).
- 1869 - A wood framed building located on South Street was purchased for \$295, and was ultimately designated as Fire Station #1.
- 1884 - A new fire station #1 was constructed at the intersection of Clinton Street and Broadway, at a cost of \$5,000.
- 1918 - A second fire station was added through the purchase of the old Resthaven Garage located at the intersection of Arcadian and Hartwell Avenues, at a cost of \$6,000 (population expanded to 12,000, and the city grew to 2 square miles).
- 1926 - The volunteer fire department was disbanded, 15 firefighters were hired, and the Waukesha Fire Department became a fully paid department.
- 1957 - A new fire station #1 was built on St. Paul Avenue at a cost of \$200,000 (population of 30,000 living in an area of 6 square miles).
- 1963 - A new fire station #2 was subsequently built on Arcadian Avenue (the daily minimum staffing level at this time was 17 firefighters).
- 1977 - The Common Council was faced with a city that had grown to 50,000 people over an area of 14 square miles. The concern was raised over fire department response times and equitable distribution of service levels.
- 1980 - Upon completion of a three year study, the following recommendations were made:
  - Relocate fire station #2 to Arcadian Avenue and Hwy. 59
  - Construct two new fire stations
  - Hire twelve additional firefighters
  - Increase daily minimum staffing level to 23
- 1981 - Twelve firefighters were hired, fire station #2 was relocated to Stardust Drive (free land was offered at this location), fire station #3 was constructed on Sentry Drive, fire station #4 was constructed on county owned land on Northview Road, and the staffing level was increased to 23 as recommend.

Members of the Common Council, in 2002, were confronted with escalating response times and gaps in acceptable fire and EMS coverage on the southeast, south, and west sides of the city, as the city grew to 24 square miles with 67,000 citizens. A variety of recommendations were identified to correct this situation. The Tri-Data Corporation advised that fire station #1 should be relocated to Buchner Park, and 27 firefighters should be added to increase the daily minimum staffing level from 23 to 30 (these suggestions were not funded by the Common Council). The Common Council then asked for a plan that would meet the recommended service delivery guidelines as outlined by the National

Fire Protection Association (NFPA), Wisconsin Department of Commerce, Insurance Service Organization (ISO), and Occupational Safety and Health Association (OSHA).

The plan presented, identified the need to relocate fire station #3, build two new fire stations (one in the southeast corner of the city and one on the west side), and add 27 firefighters. After lengthy discussions, the fire department was asked to provide alternatives to that plan. The Fire Chief then presented a proposal that would achieve most of the desired improvements in service delivery by relocating fire station #2 to the center of its response area (the area originally suggested in 1977), which would result in a substantial improvement in response times, eliminating the need to build a sixth fire station. The relocation of fire station #2 would allow the relocation of fire station #3 further to the south, ultimately creating a balance in that response area (if fire station #2 is not moved, fire station #3 cannot be moved without opening large response gaps between the two fire stations). The final component of the plan was to build a fifth fire station on Summit Avenue and hire 18 additional firefighters.

After lengthy public debate, the Common Council accepted this proposal with the limitation that only nine firefighters be added. With this guidance, the purchase of land to relocate fire stations #2 and #3 was undertaken, construction of fire station #5 on Summit Avenue began, and 9 firefighters were hired.

### **Planning Timeline**

The purpose of this timeline is to summarize major milestones and City of Waukesha Common Council actions regarding Fire Department response times and fire station locations. It does not include details after the Common Council approved the start of a project, and is not all inclusive of all Common Council actions.

- Spring 2002 – Recently appointed Fire Chief Allen LaConte met with Fire Department Executive Staff and established Fire Department goals, one being that of conducting a comprehensive study of fire station locations and response time analysis, with the results to be used to establish a 25 year strategic plan for fire and EMS service for the community.
- March 2003 – Common Council approved the contract to hire Tri-Data Corporation to conduct a fire station location and resource deployment study, and Plunkett Raysich Architects to conduct a space needs analysis of fire station #1.
- May 2004 – Fire Department staff presented the findings of the Tri-Data Corporation study and the results of the space needs analysis of former Fire

Station #1 completed by Plunkett & Raysich Architects. The Tri-Data study recommended increasing staffing levels by 27 people to enhance service, and identified that response times were increasing in the southeastern, southwestern, and western areas of the city. The study further recommended that fire station #1 be relocated to the vicinity of Broadway and Porter Avenue to decrease response times to the southeastern section of the community. This study provided the basis for Fire Department staff to conduct further response time analysis, and identified the future need to relocate fire stations to better serve the community.

- June 2004 – Common Council voted unanimously to construct a new Fire Station #1, at its present location (vs. an addition and remodeling).
- March 2005 – At a Committee of the Whole meeting, City of Waukesha Fire Department staff provided a presentation entitled, “Response Time is a Local Decision.” The presentation gave an overview of the need for rapid responses to fire and critical emergency medical services incidents, response time factors, and provided the basis of knowledge for the Common Council to establish a response time goal for the community, using current and historical response time data. Fire Department staff was then tasked with presenting options to meet various response time goals.
- June 2005 – At a Committee of the Whole meeting, Fire Department staff provided the Common Council with a review of municipal comparisons, fire and EMS response standards established by NFPA 1710, response time components, and maps generated using the city’s GIS system outlining various response time scenarios.
  - Scenario A - Establish a nine minute response time goal that would require no action.
  - Scenario B - Develop a plan that meets the NFPA 1710 response time goal, which would require the construction of two new fire stations and the hiring of 27 additional firefighters.
  - Scenario C - Identified as a “combination scenario,” establish a seven minute response time goal, which would require the relocation of fire stations #2 and #3, the construction of a new fire station on the west side of the community, and the hiring of 18 additional personnel.

After considerable discussion, a strong majority of the Common Council expressed support of the combination scenario.

- November 2005 – Common Council approved the 2006 budget, which included \$937,500 for land acquisitions for the relocation of fire stations #2 and #3, and the construction of fire station #5.
- April 2006 – Staffs of the Fire Department, Engineering Department, and Community Development Department met with the Common Council in closed session to discuss issues related to fire station land acquisition. Initial site recommendations were made to the Common Council, with Fire Department staff directed to utilize city owned property when feasible for locating fire stations. A presentation provided by the Fire Department identified several sites that were available and that met the needs of the Fire

Department. Staff was given direction to further explore the costs associated with obtaining these sites and to return with final recommendations.

- Summer 2006 – Fire Department staff had numerous conversations with members of the Common Council regarding staffing for fire station #5. Based on input, Fire Department staff revised its staffing plan to include only nine additional personnel, creating a daily minimum staffing level of 26 to staff five fire stations. This plan would involve selective redistribution of personnel and apparatus.
- September 2006 – Staffs of the Fire Department, Engineering Department, and Community Development Department met with the Common Council in closed session and presented the following updated information with regards to the identification of the best available sites for the construction of fire stations:
  - Property formerly owned by Jack Griffin Ford on Pearl Street
  - Property owned by Waukesha School District on Oakdale Drive
  - Property owned by City of Waukesha “William Oliver Park”

The Common Council directed city staff to complete the necessary appraisals and environmental assessments to purchase the land on Pearl Street and the land on Oakdale Drive, and further provided feedback confirming the earlier directive to utilize city owned property through the use of William Oliver Park for fire station #5.

- November 2006 - At a Committee of the Whole meeting, as part of the Common Council’s discussion regarding the 2007 capital improvement projects, Fire Department staff presented information concerning the costs associated with the relocation/construction of fire stations #2 and #3, and construction of a new fire station. After lengthy discussion, the Common Council identified the construction of fire station #5 as the top priority and ultimately approved the funding for the engineering and design phases.
- March 2007 – The Common Council approved retaining Fischer- Fischer-Theis, Inc. for architectural and engineering services for the design of fire station #5, with a goal of having the design and engineering work completed so accurate construction costs could be presented as part of the Fire Department’s 2008 budget proposal.
- May 2007 – City completed the purchase of the land to relocate fire station #2 to Pearl Street. Staff of the Community Development Department continued discussions with representatives of the Waukesha School District with regards to the Oakdale Drive property.
- September 2007 – At a Committee of the Whole Meeting, Fire Department staff presented detailed information on the design and cost of fire station #5. This presentation included a detailed financial summary that was included in the Department’s 2008 budget request under capital improvements.
- November 2007 – As part of the 2008 budget, funding was approved to construct fire station #5, hire nine additional firefighters, and obtain the necessary vehicles and equipment to staff five fire stations based on a daily

minimum staffing level of 26. Budget approval also provided funding to conduct the initial design of relocated fire stations #2 and #3.

- Spring 2008 – Staffs of the Fire Department, Engineering Department, and Community Development Department worked with Fischer-Fischer-Theis, Inc. to complete initial engineering and design work to obtain construction cost estimates for inclusion in the Fire Department’s 2009 budget request. The Community Development Department continued to negotiate with the Waukesha School District the purchase of the Oakdale Drive property.
- July 2008 – Fire Department staff submitted 2009 budget requests, which included an initial capital improvement request of \$6,906,000 for the construction of fire stations #2 and #3.
- Current Status – The fire stations relocation project has been reviewed by the City Administrator, Mayor, and Finance Department, and is included in the 2009 executive budget. At the direction of the City Administrator, Fischer-Fischer-Theis, Inc. continues to work on final designs for the fire stations in order to refine costs and to have final designs completed by early 2009.

### **Summary**

Company operations are defined as the most basic manpower, organization, and training principles necessary to produce the desired emergency response. Well developed operational plans are critical to the effectiveness of our service delivery and to the safety of our members.

The Emergency Response Strategic Plan is based on recommended service delivery guidelines as outlined in the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), Wisconsin Department of Commerce, Insurance Service Organization (ISO), and Occupational Safety and Health Association (OSHA). The ability of the Waukesha Fire Department to meet these objectives depends on the political and economic commitment of the Common Council. The support and completion of this public safety initiative will enable the Waukesha Fire Department to provide reliable service through the year 2033.