



Administrative Report

N.1., File # 22-4004

Meeting Date: 4/19/2022

To: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
From: KEITH KAUFFMAN, INTERIM FIRE CHIEF

TITLE

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON THE ASSESSMENT OF THE REDONDO BEACH FIRE DEPARTMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In March of 2021, City Management appointed Keith Kauffman as the interim Fire Chief and directed him to assess the Redondo Beach Fire Department (RBFD). Chief Kauffman hired Joe Castro, a retired Chief Deputy of the Los Angeles Fire Department with over 38 years of experience to assist him as a subject matter expert. Their work focused on the input from three main stakeholder groups: City Leadership, The Redondo Beach Fire Department (RBFD) Members, and the Community.

Through a series of interviews and surveys, a matrix of various priorities and goals were established that served to help focus the assessment on the following priority areas:

1. Department Reorganization and Leadership
2. Efficiency and Service Delivery
3. Response Times
4. Training
5. Emergency Management
6. Communication and Community Engagement
7. Policy, Procedures and Accountability
8. Prevention

Detailed research into each of the priority areas was done to establish the current state of the organization, the factual data that would be needed to show transparency, and the recommended steps necessary to establish the best practice or move the priority area forward.

The results of the assessment revealed a RBFD that is loved but misunderstood by the community and could greatly improve awareness through better communication and engagement. The RBFD is in need of a vision and direction that can be established through reorganization and dedicated leadership committed to that unified vision. Adjustments to the RBFD's complement of non-sworn administrative personnel must be prioritized to allow department leadership to have time to focus on the future. Potential efficiencies in the service delivery model were identified and the overall document should serve as a blueprint for the next Fire Chief. In all, there were 68 recommendations made by the authors.

BACKGROUND

Interim Chief Keith Kauffman and Chief Deputy (Ret.) Joe Castro began work on the Assessment of the RBFD in April of 2021. The entire 92-page document and 158 pages of associated appendices are attached. Provided here is a summary of the most important topics and chapters in the report. The goal of the document was to:

1. Determine the current state of the RBFD and provide recommendations for improvements and efficiencies.
2. Research, survey and interview City leaders and community stakeholders to document their perspectives and expectations of the RBFD.
3. Identify a benchmark of fire department related operations that City leadership can use to evaluate services of the RBFD, any future studies of the LA County Fire Department, or any local regionalization with other fire departments.
4. Utilize the assessment's document to assist the City of Redondo Beach in determining the most desirable qualifications and skill sets for the next Fire Chief.
5. Serve as a transition document for the new Fire Chief.

ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

Instead of merely focusing on the department itself, the first step was to obtain and understand the desires and expectations of the community, its stakeholders, and the City's leadership. The RBFD should be committed to incorporating the needs and expectations of both the residents and policy makers in the service delivery planning process. This meant that to complete the assessment thoroughly, there were three main stakeholder groups of interest to focus on:

1. **City Leadership** - to include the Mayor, and the elected members of the City Council, City Manager, Assistant City Manager and the City Attorney
2. **The RBFD Members** - to include all sworn and civilian personnel
3. **The Community** - to include community stakeholders, business owners, families, the School District, and a City-wide survey

In addition to the broader study of the RBFD, a focused assessment of the RBFD Harbor Patrol (out of Fire Station 3) was conducted using the same principals. Because the Harbor is a unique micro-community within Redondo Beach with special interests, needs, and emergency responses, the same three-pronged approach was taken. From the City Leadership perspective, we added members of the Harbor Commission to the stakeholder group; from the Harbor Community we added boaters, marina and yacht club leadership; and from the RBFD we spoke with the personnel assigned to the Harbor, Fire Station 3.

Using the information gained through interviews and surveys in this three-tiered approach, we developed priorities and concerns (also referred to as Priorities) for many of the services RBFD provides. These priorities were established by reviewing the content of the interviews and surveys as explained by the different tiers and giving particular attention to those things that were brought forward by a majority of people in one particular tier, or more importantly when the priority or concern was highlighted in two, or sometimes in all three stakeholder groups. From here, a Priority Matrix

was established to focus the direction of the research.

PRIORITY MATRIX								
	Dept. Reorganization /Leadership	Efficiency /Service Delivery	Response Times	Training	Emergency Mgmt.	Communication /Engagement	Policy /Procedure /Accountability	Prevention
RBFD Members	X	X		X		X	X	X
City Leadership	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
The Community		X	X		X	X		X

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Through data driven research into each of the priority areas, the following abbreviated list of recommendations have been provided as an executive snapshot of the assessment and, it should be noted, are general in nature.

- Select the new Fire Chief with the following skill sets: strong and participatory leadership, Southern California fire department knowledge, operational and training expertise, administrative ability, emergency management experience, receptive to innovation and change, experience and willingness to engage with elected officials and members of the public and business community
- Develop a new mission/vision and strategic plan for the next three years*
- Reorganize the ancillary administrative duties and potentially the schedule of all chief officers to better accomplish the priorities identified in this report
- Develop a proactive system to increase diversity within the RBFD*
- Hire additional administrative/clerical staff**
- Update all administrative policies/directives/manuals*
- Establish department-wide standard operating guidelines for all tactical operations*
- Have RBFD continually monitor/evaluate/measure and improve how long it takes to arrive on-scene when called to an emergency**
- Have the RBFD take the lead in the City's emergency management continuum**
- Develop a robust community relations/public information program*
- Explore EMS dispatch protocols and the service delivery model for better efficiency and work-load relief*
- Redefine the Harbor Patrol's mission and deploy accordingly**
- Implement a fire explorer/cadet program*
- Leverage community volunteers for various emergency and non-emergency functions
- Explore cooperative agreements with neighboring south bay cities to share executive personnel, logistical and resources/facilities**
- Analysis required to plan for future infrastructure costs and needs
- Develop a system to realize grant funding opportunities
- Realize more local and regional training opportunities for RBFD members*
- Encourage RBFD members participation in the CAL OES ROSS system as single resource & Incident Management Team participants*

- Evaluate statistical data of current company-based fire prevention policies*
- Determine ways to streamline and reduce workload on fire/ems resources*

***Denotes - The recommended action is administrative in nature and is currently in progress.**

****Denotes - The recommended action requires City Council direction or budgetary action.**

Each of these recommendations are described in more detail in the body of the report and all 68 can be found in Appendix 1.

It should be noted that of the 68 recommendations brought forward in the assessment, 24 only required administrative attention or direction by the department's leadership and have already been completed, while an additional 15 are currently underway.

CONCLUSION

The assessment has revealed a RBFD that is loved by the community it serves, but one that can improve awareness through better communication and engagement. While community trust and sentiment are high, those feelings are not necessarily shared by City leadership who lacked confidence in the department's ability to progress and provide added value to the citizens of Redondo Beach. From within the walls of the RBFD, we (the assessors) discovered incredibly dedicated public servants who believe the RBFD can be a premier level department, but that it also needs vision, strategic planning and strong leadership to break free from cultural norms that have caused stagnation and inaction.

Eight key priority areas were developed that represent the concerns and expectations of the stakeholder groups. Save for the appointment of the next Fire Chief, all of the pieces of the organizational puzzle are currently there. Other than deficiencies in the budgeted amount of administrative personnel, the RBFD is fully staffed. The arrangement of sworn personnel, especially at the Division Chief level, does not provide the efficiency that City leadership expects and the community deserves, nor does the deployment of personnel resources promote organizational continuity for its members. We did not unveil information or data showing the need to increase the sworn complement without first addressing changes to the service delivery model to increase efficiency with current personnel.

The next Fire Chief must break some historical cycles of territorialism at the Division Chief level, set clear expectations and rearrange their schedules and job functions in order to support a clear vision for the organization. A failure to focus on this has created internal power struggles that present the single biggest issue stifling the forward progress of the agency. This has mired the RBFD in the role of "consequence management," handling issues as they come in daily, while failing to focus forward, and into the future. The result is that the RBFD is often measured by costs for services instead of by the unique value it provides to the community. We will never forget the way one brilliant firefighter summed it up, saying, "*we just need some bragging rights.*" The culture is currently risk averse and this stops innovation and the creation of additional value.

Service delivery currently meets or exceeds community expectations, but all stakeholders mention that the RBFD over responds to much of the daily call load. Streamlined service deployment through emergency medical dispatch (EMD) training and the creation of "tiered dispatching" will open up other suppression resources to countless possibilities and move the RBFD well into the future of best

practices for emergency medical service (EMS) and innovation. To put it simply, the RBFD responds to medical calls 70% of the time and only has two paramedic rescue vehicles, all while staffing 4 large fire apparatus (3 engines and 1 ladder truck) that were built for the other 30% of calls, of which, only approximately 1.3% result in reportable fires. Placement of the word "Paramedic" on an engine or a truck, doesn't solve the underlying problem. Sending the right level of resources to the call type, especially EMS calls, could prove to be the single greatest efficiency gain the department has ever seen.

Following completion of the assessment, RBFD was notified by the Insurance Services Office (ISO) that there had been a recent change in the City's ISO rating which is based on a 5-year cycle and an analysis called the Public Protection Classification (PPC). For the first time in perhaps history, or at least as long as most of the leadership remembers, **the Redondo Beach Fire Department is now rated as a Class 1 agency.**

The ISO's Public Protection Classification plays a very important role in the underwriting process at insurance companies. This includes but is not limited to insurance companies making decisions on what businesses to sign, what coverages to offer, and the prices for that insurance. The Department's Class 1 rating is based on the City's Emergency Communications (Reporting, Telecommunicators, Dispatch circuits, - 10%), all aspects of the Fire Department and its operations (Engine companies, reserve apparatus, pump capacity, ladder companies, deployment, personnel, training, operations, community risk reduction - 50%), and the City's water supply (Supply systems, hydrants, etc. - 40%). It's exciting to note that there are only 388 Class 1 fire departments in the United States, and only 41 in California. This is a remarkable accomplishment and undoubtedly would have been identified in the assessment had the authors had access to the information prior to finalizing the document.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

Following the general discussion of the assessment, it is recommended that the Council provide direction on:

- 1. Instituting an over-hire program at the firefighter rank.** This would allow the RBFD to maintain full staffing and prepare for continued attrition. This will also help bring the truck back to 4-person staffing, allow the Fire Chief to move people into acting positions to mentor and groom future leaders, create functional succession planning, address diversity issues and reduce overtime. This could be done at little to no cost when instituted in conjunction with known retirements (like right now), or as a permanent over-hire that increases the Department's complement by 3 which could be presented as a decision package in the next budget.
- 2. Hiring additional administrative staff.** This would include the reallocation of funding for the admin specialist and a new senior management analyst. It could also include 4 part-time interns / inspectors. The goal is to free up chief executives so that they can focus on forward thinking ideas and allow a Division Chief to truly take the lead on Emergency Management for the City and to free up engine crews from being overloaded with fire inspection duties. These positions would come as decision packages in the new budget.
- 3. Creating a cooperative agreement for shared battalion chief services.** This would move

the City forward and include an MOU with Manhattan Beach, El Segundo, and possibly Torrance for shared services. Such action would solve many of the issues identified in the report with respect to the division chiefs and their assigned duties.

4. Harbor Patrol operations. Five options were presented in the assessment ranging from maintaining current operations as is, contracting with LA County, creating a hybrid schedule, or the option preferred by the authors (Option 5) which would maintain 24/7 water rescue services but increase landside paramedic response capabilities. This direction would require that the City open up the MOU with the RB Firefighter's Association to reclassify current positions and begin working on the detailed logistics that would come with any such change.

5. The purchase of new technology for the fire station alerting systems. This would include the station countdown clocks to help address response times and targeted alerts for only those personnel needed on a call. The upgrade would increase the wellness of the crews and would be presented as a decision package in the budget.

COORDINATION

This item was coordinated between the Interim Fire Chief and the City Manager.

FISCAL IMPACT

The costs of the various recommendations vary and will be prepared and provided following Council direction.

APPROVED BY:

Mike Witzansky, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

RBFD Assessment Report and Appendices