



OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

**Memorandum**

**To:** Mayor Jim Ardis  
Members of the City Council

**From:** Patrick Urich, City Manager

**Date:** November 19, 2018

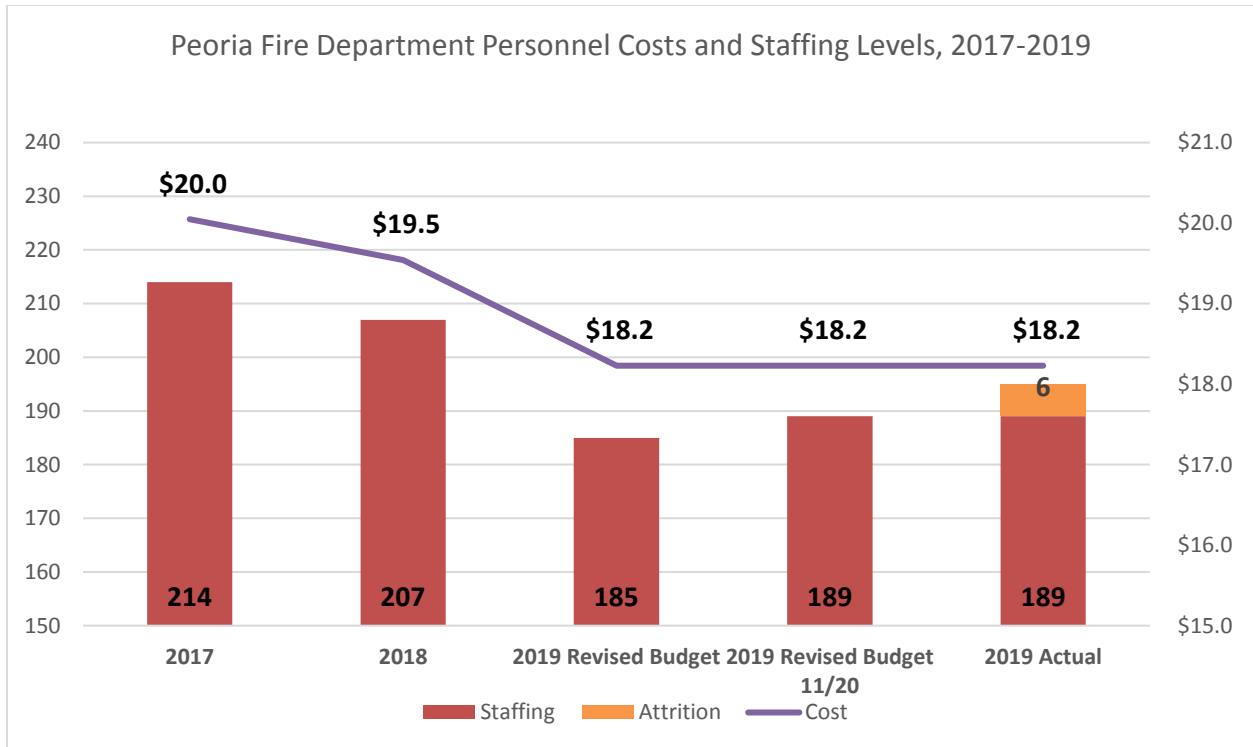
**Re:** Fire Department Staffing and Decommissioning Recommendations

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**Due to the Voluntary Separation Initiative, pending retirements, and vacant positions, and with the attrition of six (6) positions in 2019, there will be no need to lay off firefighters in 2018.** The 2019 Revised Budget called for the decommissioning of Engine-2 and Rescue-2 and the closure of Station 8 (Hurlbert). The budget recommended the elimination of twenty-two (22) positions within the Department and a personnel budget of \$18,228,558. The current staffing level in the department is 207 positions. With the 2019 Revised Budget, this number would drop to 185 positions.

Currently, there are three (3) vacancies in the department, and three (3) known retirements, with the latest being January 2, 2019. Six (6) additional employees have signed up to take the Voluntary Separation initiative. All of these retirements and voluntary separations are at significantly higher salaries than an entry level fire fighter. Even when taking into consideration promotions, if the City were to reduce eighteen (18) positions at this time, instead of twenty-two (22), the additional four (4) firefighters retained will allow the overtime of the department to be reduced considerably.

The Fire Department would start 2019 with staffing level of 195. By attrition, the next six (6) vacancies would not be filled as the 2018 hires would remain City employees. After these six (6) future retirements, the Fire Department staffing would remain at 189. The personnel budget for the department would remain at the level recommended in the 2019 Revised Budget, \$18,228,558. Overtime would be reduced to keep the budget in line with the Revised Budget, as the new hires have less time off than more senior employees. The following chart shows the personnel budget of the Fire Department and the proposed staffing levels and the number of firefighter positions that would eventually be removed by attrition, not layoff.



In addition, the Command at the Fire Department adjusted their recommendation and seek to eliminate both Rescue Squads as part of the 2019 Revised Budget. The following is from the Fire Chief:

**Rescue-1 will be taken out of service.** This will be a reduction of 9 personnel.

- Truck-1 and Truck-4 will carry extrication tools;
- Per current Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs) the Trucks will operate as Rescue for fires when needed;
- Specialized rescue equipment for tech Rescue will move to Truck-1;
- Specialized rescue equipment for water rescue will move to Engine-1;
- Equipment for extended or extreme extrications will move to TRT Vehicle which is operated as a jump crew from Station 10 (Wisconsin).

**Rescue-2 will be taken out of service.** This will be a reduction of 9 personnel.

- Truck-3 will move from Station 3 (Armstrong) to Station 11 (Florence) to cover territory;
- Per current Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs) the Trucks will operate as Rescue for fires when needed;
- Truck-3 and Truck-14 will carry extrication tools;
- Specialized equipment for tech rescue will be placed on Truck-3
- Specialized equipment for water rescue will be placed on Engine-16
- Equipment for extended or extreme extrications will move to TRT Vehicle which is operated as a jump crew from Station 10 (Wisconsin).

At this time Engine-2 will remain in service. After serious consideration and discussion with Division Chief of Operations Ardis, we feel that removing the water from Station 8 (Hurlbert) would have a much higher impact on firefighter and citizen safety.

Fire Command would still recommend the building of the new Station 4 (Jefferson). By leaving Engine-2 in service it will give the City the time needed to find a proper location for the new station and the number and types of vehicles to locate in that station.

We believe that two Rescue Squads play a role within our complement of vehicles, but they are not as important as a Fire Engine. The main goal in these reductions is to position the department to protect the employees and the citizens. The Rescue Squad's inability to pump water, or reach areas we cannot reach without the Truck companies, makes them the least versatile machine when it comes to fighting fires. Simply put, I am not thrilled about any of the choices we have to make, but we have been tasked with making them. As a Fire Department, we must have the capability to spray water quickly and removing the Rescue Squads and keeping Engine-2 gives us that opportunity in some of the busiest fire areas of the city.

Staff will be prepared to discuss these items with Council tomorrow evening. Should you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me.