



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 17-327, **Version:** 1

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**ACTION REQUESTED:**

Communication from the City Manager and Fire Chief with a Request to APPROVE a RESOLUTION Approving the CLASSIFICATION of Qualified Members of the Fire Department as PEACE OFFICERS for the Purpose of Investigating Fire or Explosions which are suspected to be Arson or Arson-Related Crimes.

**BACKGROUND:** The Fire Investigation Act (425 ILCS 25/0.01) describes that one of the duties of the Fire Chief is to determine origin and cause of a fire or explosion. For decades the Peoria Fire Department has had an investigation division as part of the Fire Prevention Bureau.

In early 2010, the Fire Department analyzed the history of investigation of the fires within the City of Peoria and this analysis showed that arson fires were continually increasing in recent years. The crime of arson is a critical threat to the citizens of Peoria and the Peoria Fire Department. Arson fires in particular cost the citizens of Peoria their lives, thousands of dollars in repair costs, and also increases insurance costs by the increase in rates as well as the cost to the community at large in court costs.

The Peoria Fire Department is responsible for investigating origin and cause of fires that occur in the City of Peoria. The Peoria Fire Department Investigators and the Peoria Police Department work side-by-side on investigations of arson fires.

In 2017, Joshua Harris from the Peoria Fire Department was sent to the Southern Illinois College Police Academy Basic Arson Investigation and the Illinois 40-Hour Mandatory Firearms Training in Bellville, Illinois for training and to enhance interview skills and investigative techniques. Joshua Harris successfully completed the necessary training to be given peace officer status per the Peace Officer Investigation Act.

The Fire/Arson Investigation Unit will work in collaboration with the Peoria Police Department on investigations that involve the act of arson. This will enhance the prosecution required to bring awareness to the public of this crime and the collaboration of partners like the States Attorney's Office, insurance companies, the Office of the State Fire Marshal, and forensic specialists will increase the amount of successful prosecutions of the act of arson.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** Not applicable.

**NEIGHBORHOOD CONCERNS:** By having this specifically trained fire/arson investigation unit, public safety to citizens is greatly enhanced, as well as the restoring peace of mind to the citizens of our community.

**IMPACT IF APPROVED:** Increased awareness to the public of the crime and prosecution of arson, enhanced public safety to the citizens, decreased cost of citizens' lives and property, and probable lower insurance costs.

**IMPACT IF DENIED:** Fewer prosecutions of arson related crimes, higher insurance rates, higher cost of lives and property loss to the citizens of Peoria.

**ALTERNATIVES:** Not applicable.

**EEO CERTIFICATION NUMBER:** Not applicable.

**WHICH OF THE GOALS IDENTIFIED IN THE COUNCIL'S 2014 - 2029 STRATEGIC PLAN DOES THIS RECOMMENDATION ADVANCE?**

1. Attractive Neighborhoods with Character: Safe and Livable

**WHICH CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTOR(S) FROM THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DOES THIS RECOMMENDATION IMPLEMENT?**

1. Reduce crime.
2. Have an efficient government.

**DEPARTMENT:** Fire