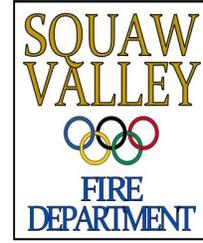




SQUAW VALLEY PUBLIC SERVICE DISTRICT



FIRE DEPARTMENT STAFFING LEVEL

DATE: April 28, 2020

TO: District Board Members

FROM: Allen Riley, Fire Chief
Danielle Grindle, Finance & Administration Manager
Mike Geary, General Manager

SUBJECT: Increase Fire Department staffing levels from 3-person to 4-person minimum staffing.

BACKGROUND:

Current Staffing Level (4/3):

Currently, there are 13 fulltime (F/T) employees in the Fire Department. Staffing consists of a Fire Chief and three 4-person shifts. Each shift includes:

- 1 Captain
- 1 Engineer
- 2 F/T Firefighters

The staffing level is referred to as a 4-person shift with a minimum staffing of 3-persons, or for the purposes of this report: "4/3 staffing". As the terminology suggests, 4 employees are scheduled to work every shift but a minimum of 3 are *required*.

Each shift works one 48-hour shift every six days. If an employee is out of the station because they are sick, on vacation, or at training, the vacant position on the shift is filled with a part-time (P/T) employee, if available. Part-time employees are often unavailable because the District neither provides them with a fixed schedule nor guaranteed hours and they are often provided little advance notice that there's a vacant position available, making it difficult to juggle other commitments.

If a P/T employee is unavailable during the shoulder season, the vacant position on the shift goes unfilled (so the District avoids paying a F/T employee overtime (OT) wages) and the shift works with the minimum of 3 employees. If a P/T

employee is unavailable during the busy season, the vacant position on the shift is offered to a F/T employee (paid at the OT rate of 1.5 the employee’s normal hourly wage). If a F/T employee is unavailable during the busy season, the vacant position on the shift goes unfilled and the shift works with only 3 employees. The shoulder season is between May 1st and June 15th and between October 15th and December 15th. The busy season is the remainder of the year.

If two employees on the same shift are out, Chief will fill both vacant positions in the manner described above. If the Chief can’t fill either vacant position, a F/T employee is forced to work OT to fill one of the vacant positions so that the minimum staffing of 3-persons is maintained.

That’s what we’ll refer to as 4/3 staffing, which is how the Fire Department has been staffed since 2010.

Proposed Staffing Level (5/4):

No additional F/T staff are proposed. The proposed staffing level maintains the same 13 F/T employees, eliminates all P/T employees, and proposes the hire of 3 seasonal employees. The differences between P/T and seasonal employees are summarized here:

	Part-time (P/T)	Seasonal
Wage	\$19.37 / hour	\$19.37 / hour
Schedule	Not fixed; hours not guaranteed	F/T work during busy season

The busy season is between December 15th and April 30th and between June 15th and October 15th.

The proposed staffing level is proposed for the *busy season* only and consists of a Fire Chief and three 5-person shifts. Each shift would include:

- 1 Captain
- 1 Engineer
- 2 F/T Firefighters
- 1 Seasonal Firefighter

This staffing level is referred to as a 5-person shift with a minimum staffing of 4-persons, or for the purposes of this report: “5/4 staffing”. As the terminology suggests, 5 employees are scheduled to work every shift but only 4 are *required*.

In the 5/4 staffing scenario, if an employee is out, the vacant position on the shift is not filled and the shift works with 4 employees.

If two employees on the same shift are out, Chief will fill one of the vacant positions.

So, that's 5/4 staffing which is how the Fire Department was staffed prior to 2010.

The staffing level during the *shoulder season* is proposed to be 4/4 staffing which means Chief will schedule 4 employees and backfill any vacant position on the shift to maintain a minimum staffing level of 4.

DISCUSSION: The change from 4/3 staffing to 5/4 staffing is proposed for these reasons:

1. Complies with the United States Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Policy 29 CFR 1910.134(g)(4)(i)[1] that mandates that firefighters never go into a dangerous situation in a fire or rescue incident alone, and that there be two firefighters outside a burning building to initiate a rescue of the firefighters inside, should they become in trouble.
2. Provide mutual aid to neighboring fire departments without leaving Olympic Valley residents and businesses with a vacant and unstaffed Fire Station 21.
3. Can run two simultaneous emergency medical calls and be able to provide continuous, uninterrupted Advanced Life Support (ALS) capability.
4. Allows Fire Department to provide Ambulance Service and generate revenue.
5. Additional expense is relatively small (see table below).
6. Increase the level of fire protection and emergency medical services provided to taxpayers.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Provide direction to staff to include an increase in staffing levels in the Fire Department from 4/3 staffing to 5/4 staffing in the FY 2020-21 Annual Budget.
2. Direct staff not to increase staffing levels in the Fire Department in FY 2020-21.

FISCAL/RESOURCE IMPACTS: The financial impact of increasing staffing levels was carefully analyzed and included estimates of revenue generated from providing ambulance service although this table does not consider such revenue. The table below shows current and proposed staffing levels and their respective costs for wages and benefits. The third and fourth columns show costs for current 3-person minimum staffing using both P/T and F/T employees, respectively.

	5/4 Staffing - Seasonal Employees	4/3 Staffing - P/T Employees	4/3 Staffing – F/T Employees
Wages	\$ 1,793,054	1,748,483	1,796,082
Benefits	\$ 1,292,766	1,286,523	1,287,702
Total	\$ 3,085,820	3,035,006	3,083,784

RECOMMENDATION: Provide direction to staff to include an increase in staffing levels in the Fire Department from 4/3 staffing to 5/4 staffing in the FY 2020-21 Annual Budget.

ATTACHMENTS: None.

DATE PREPARED: April 24, 2020