



MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 4, 2015
TO: Elected Officials
FROM: Chief Sorensen
RE: Public Safety Executive Officer

At the Budget Workshop meeting on 3/3/15, some questions arose regarding the Executive Officer position. As discussed briefly at the meeting, City Manager Hamilton had asked me to look into some fire department staffing models that did not utilize a sworn Deputy Chief. At that point I began researching how other fire departments are staffed, both locally and across the country.

On a national level, FEMA, through the U.S. Fire Administration, offers a class at the National Fire Academy to certify fire department leaders as "Executive Fire Officers". This certification can be applied to many different job titles across the fire service, but broadly refers to a high ranking leader or decision maker in a fire department. Nationally, there are departments that have a position titled as Executive Officer. Some examples are the fire departments in Hartford, CT, Hoover, AL, and Chicopee, MA. Many other departments have Chief Executive Officers. The title of Executive Officer is common in the military and has moved into the fire service, due to our paramilitary organizational structure..

Locally, though, there are many different ways that similar fire departments staff their executive level support. Traditionally, many departments have or have had two Deputy Chiefs – one Deputy Chief of Operations who handles emergency response issues and personnel management of the department and one Deputy Chief of Administration who handles administrative tasks, such as budget preparation and management, data analysis, and administrative support. Palatine, Prospect Heights, Arlington Heights, and Schaumburg are some local examples of this staffing model. Other fire departments, though, when faced with budget issues, have moved away from staffing two Deputy Chief positions and have developed different positions to handle the administrative and supervisory tasks. There are many different ways these departments have handled this. Des Plaines eliminated one of their two Deputy Chiefs but has three Division Chiefs in administration, both sworn and civilian, in addition to their Shift Commanders. Buffalo Grove eliminated one Deputy Chief, but has an additional sworn Battalion Chief assigned to administration. Other towns have District Chiefs or Sector Chiefs that are in charge of many different aspects of the fire service, from Emergency Medicine to Training to Administration.

Overall there are many different ways that departments in our area and across the country are trying to meet their staffing needs while also trying to lower their personnel costs. After weighing all these options, I am confident that this Public Safety Executive Officer position is the best and most economical solution for the Department and will allow me the ability to focus on operational objectives.

