

10/18/2006

To the HONORABLE COMMON COUNCIL (distrubute please)
 Room 205, City Hall
 200 E Wells Street
 Milwaukee, WI 53202

Once again the elimination of fire fighter positions remains a hot topic for the 2007 Budget deliberations. In speaking with several fire fighters and battalion chiefs the concensus I get is that the proposed cuts will not jeopardize the safety of their membership nor the citizens. Many times that 5th individual is used to do P.R. assignments, other administrative duties and grocery shopping. There are members that work 40.0 weeks of which should be utilized for the administrative needs. I've noticed that several fire truck sits on the lot of a food store I frequent so I can only assume they are doing their shopping. The Fire Chief seems to be doing a flip-flop relative to the positions. In the 2005 budget he proposed eliminating stations but appears to back off that idea once the Mayor and Local 215 objected. Of course no alderman wants to have a station in their district closed. In the 2006 budget he indicated it would be a detriment to the department to eliminate the positions. Supposedly he's worked out a program that would allow for the elimination of the fire fighter positions without harm to his staff and the citizens. It would appear to me he's now focused on trying to save his job and saying what he believes his boss wants to hear.

The October 16th hearing focused primarily on the eliminated fire fighter positions, additional heo and lieutenant positions, fire arson squad and fire incident officers. There are a few areas that I've noted in the Fiscal Review that were not given much attention. It would be my hope that your body would persue them.

- (page 2) Will the Cadet program continue? It does not appear to be successful in recruiting minorities.
- (page 7) When the 3 battalion chiefs are eliminated what will happen to them? Will they retire, be demoted or fill the newly created (fire captain) Incident Safety Officer? If existing battalion chiefs are used will they remain Chief Officers or be represented by Local 215? Discussion is that the 3 battalion chiefs will assume Incident Safety Officer position retaining their battalion chief rate of pay. If they retain their rate of pay and become L215 members they will be subject to FLSA. There will be no savings to the City, actually more costly since they become unionized and compensated at a higher rate. Might as well remain battalion chiefs where there is NO FLSA implication.
- (page 7) Is it the departments intent to use the battalion chief currently over IT operations to oversee the Bureau of Administration. The IT and Administration deputy chief positions were rolled into one in 2006. The administration deputy chief is currently vacant. If that is the case why can't the remaining bureaus be ran by battalion chiefs?
- (page 8) Why is the position of Accounting Assistant III being created? The writeup notes "inventory and supply record maintenance", what does this pertain? are the duties? and who's performed prior? Where will this position be located?
- (page 8) Why didn't the reorganization (upgrade) go through for the administrative captain/lieutenant?
- (page 12) Will the FOCUS program continue? It would appear from the writeup that block grant dollars will not be awarded for this program in 2007. If this the case will the City continue to fund the program? Why was the department not able to use the funds in 2005?

From the actual budget document:

- (page 190.9) Why is there an additional battalion chief? A battalion chief was shift from the supporting decision to firefighting decision in 2006's budget. Is it being shifted back?
- (page 190.11) Why is there an auxiliary deputy chief proposed?
- (page 190.11) What happens to the auxiliary accounting assistant III?

Thank you for your follow up.

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10/19/2006

COMMON COUNCIL

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Room 205, City Hall
200 E Wells Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202

I am a retiree of the Milwaukee Fire Department, with a child *currently on staff*. In listening to prior and current budget hearings I'd like to address a situation of which I don't feel the policy makers are being given the correction information. During last years hearings the department came up with an amendment to save a deputy chief position that Matrix had slated for elimination. MFD's proposal was to eliminate one deputy chief (instead of two) and two battalion chiefs. The expected savings to the City for the deputy chief @ \$86,426 plus two battalition chiefs @ \$153,808 or **\$240,234. total.** Instead of eliminating that deputy chief position the department replaced it with a battalion chief at a cost of \$76,904; savings only \$9,522. Although the battalion chief positions were reduced from authority the **department merely shifted the cost from basic salaries to special duty overtime.** In order to provide adequate coverage for the six battalions within the city, 21 battalion chiefs were needed. The positions were reduced from 21 to 19; actually 18 since they moved one battalion chief from the field to replace the deputy they eliminated. The result is that you have 18 battalion chiefs covering 6 battalions which is impossible. The department has utilized the existing battalion chiefs with special duty to cover minimum staffing requirements due to the cut of the three battalion chiefs. These battalion chiefs are racking in much overtime to fill the deficiency, @ cost per shift is \$779. I highly recommend that you ask the Fire Department and Budget Office (+ Comptrollers Office which will be more inclined to present truer figures) the cost of overtime for the battalion chiefs, and compare 'like' pay periods for 2006 & 2005. Don't be surprised when you don't see the reduction in hours. Since the department proposed a savings but neglected to adjust their hiring I'd like to know where this money is coming from?

The Milwaukee Fire Department proposed this same idea in October/November 2000 for the 2001 budget. They insisted that they could cut the three relief chief positions and save the city +\$200,000. It took the Local 215 president to expose this and ultimately the relief chiefs remained. There is **no way 18 battalion chiefs can provide coverage for 6 battalions.** So with the 2007 proposal of reducing six battalions to five the same scenario will exist. You will **need 18 battalion chiefs to provide adequate coverage for five battalions.** The 15 that the department has proposed will NOT WORK!

In addition to hiring battalion chiefs on more special duty the department is hiring Local 215 members to act as battalion chief. The domino affect of hiring this employee to 'act battalion chief' requires that you must hire a member to fill in for that 'actor' and so on down the rank. Because these are **members of Local 215 and are subject to Fair Labor Standards** compensation the City ultimately pays more for the coverage than if a battalion chief positions had remained. This is how it goes. A captain is hired to act battalion chief; compensated @ \$15. Now you hire a captain to fill in for the actor- paid \$693 for special duty + \$174 for FLSA; \$867 total. If you hire a lieutenant to fill in he/she is paid \$593 + 150; \$743 total. Whe the battalion chief fills in he/she is paid \$779. The bottom line is that **no matter which rank must replace the daily deficiency the City pays at minimum \$743 or \$270,452 annually** when the MFD proposed a savings through their amendment last year. These are the **undisputable facts, please check them out!**

Either the Fire Chief doesn't under the workings of his staffing or is lying to you!

The MFD also has a couple of grant supported battalion chief positions. The position that is supposed to be funded by the Marquette Interchange grant does not provide reimbursement as indicated. File #03-1500 provides \$200,000 for the period of April 1, 2004 through December 31, 2008. How can the grant be supporting the annual salary of a battalion chief of @ \$79,000 (PLUS fringe benefits) for these 3.75 years? \$400,000 is a more accurate figure.

As pointed out in the **Matrix study the MFD is 'management' heavy!** A 'shell game' is being presented to the policy makers. This current administration doesn't have a problem with cutting the 'front line' manpower but consistently develops ways retain management. Last year the Chief adamantly objects to firefighter cuts, now he has no problem with it. **IF CUTS MUST BE MADE THEN LETS MAKE THEM 'ACROSS THE BOARD'.**

Tired of government waste and the crap that goes along with it.....