

Homer Volunteer Fire Department

March 17, 2025 Work Session



Work Session Goals



- Address some concerns that have been raised
- Share what City administration is considering through HVFD department budget discussions
- Share areas of positive progress at the department

A look back

March 17, 2025 HVFD Work Session



HVFD- Chiefs



- Longtime Chief Robert Painter retired in January 2018
- Former Chief Terry Kadel left the department November 2018
- Former Chief Robert Purcell stepped in to lead the department during the search for a permanent replacement December 2018 through July 2019
- Chief Kirko joined the City in July 2019

HVFD- COH Leadership



- Former City Manager Koester left her position April 3, 2020.
- Interim City Manager Yoder began his contract in April 2020 and left the position in June 2020.
- Former City Planner Rick Abboud served as Acting and Interim City Manager during in between periods until former City Manager Dumouchel was hired in July 2020.
- Chief Kirko was tapped by City Manager Koester to serve as Incident Commander for City EOC. He served in that position and lead the HVFD throughout this continued disruption in City leadership and to the end of the Disaster Declaration that expired June 29, 2021.

HVFD- unprecedented times



- January 2020 HVFD lost two long serving volunteers with passing of Gary Thomas on January 14th and Marge Tillion on January 23rd.
- March 18, 2020 a Disaster Emergency Declaration was issued due to the current and expected impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in the City of Homer

HVFD Volunteers & Staff

March 17, 2025 HVFD Work Session



Volunteer and Staff



- Firefighter's – 2 certified, 2 currently in training
- EMT only – 7
- FF/EMT – 7
- Support – 6
- Staff – 8
 - Staff are Fire Fighter/EMT
 - Deputy Fire Chief position is currently unfilled



Demands for HVFD have grown

- Fire Services
 - Structures, Vehicles, Wildland, Marine, Aircraft
- Medical Emergencies
 - Basic and Advanced Life Support Ambulance Services
- Rescue Scenarios
 - Vehicle extraction, Rope Rescue, Water Rescue, Confined Space Rescue
- Hazardous material calls

Training need for HVFD have grown



- Emergency service disciplines have their own training and continuing education requirements.
- Recertification is necessary every two years
- Weekly training is conducted every Tuesday for HVFD, KESA & WESA staff and volunteers,

Training need for HVFD have grown



- 1st Tuesday – Medical run review with Doc
- 2nd Tuesday – EMS Training
- 3rd Tuesday – Fire Training
- 4th Tuesday – Fire or all department drill
- 5th Tuesday – Mutual Aid w/KESA & WESA

Volunteerism challenges*



- Changes in everyday life and family dynamics
- More single parent households
- Employers less willing to let employees leave to respond to calls
- Extensive training hours
- Risk to life and health
- Aging of the volunteer fire service

Volunteerism challenges*



- Long term impacts of Covid-19
 - Departments had to modify recruitment and volunteer activities
 - Some left due to concerns of putting themselves and loved ones at risk

* FEMA US Fire Administration Retention & Recruitment for Volunteer Emergency Services May 2023

Volunteerism challenges*



- Cliques and groups within departments that exclude others
- Leadership that doesn't focus on the needs of others
- Atmosphere where members of different generations don't get along

* National Volunteer Fire Council Volunteer Retention Research Report August 2020

Volunteerism challenges*



- Realities of volunteering changed or didn't meet expectations
- Lack of clear expectations of time and effort required

* National Volunteer Fire Council Volunteer Retention Research Report August 2020

Volunteer Retention



What we're doing-

- Reviewing and updating current policies
- Conducting interviews with potential volunteers
- Sharing expectations during interviews
- Conducting “stay interviews” when participation begins to lag

Volunteer Retention



- Set minimum response requirements
 - Two overnights at the station or respond to six calls per month
 - Attend two trainings per month

Volunteer Retention



What we're working toward

- Budgeting for a volunteer stipend
- Developing a mentorship program
- Conducting exit interviews
- Recognizing volunteers for service milestones

ISO – Insurance Services Office

March 17, 2025 HVFD Work Session



ISO



- Collects data on a community's fire department, water supply, and other fire suppression resources
- Assigns a Public Protection Classification (PPC) score.

ISO



- Insurance companies use ISO ratings to help determine fire insurance premiums
- ISO ratings provide a benchmark for evaluating fire protection services and identifying areas for improvement
- Fire departments can use ISO ratings to plan, budget, and justify improvements to their services
- ISO rating Class 1 represents best fire protection, Class 10 community doesn't meet ISO minimum criteria

ISO



- Homer's last ISO assessment was conducted in 2019
 - Current ISO Rating of Class 4/10
 - At Class 4 since 2008
- We were on last years schedule but the assessment didn't occur, we are standing by for rescheduling

Looking ahead

March 17, 2025 HVFD Work Session



HVFD support



- Improve Community narrative
- Support current staff and volunteers
- Understand we can't rely on the past to dictate how will conduct ourselves in the future

HVFD support



- Recognize there are two (or more) sides to every story
- Support HVFD budget needs and requests
- Propose solutions

HVFD support



- Direct concerns to the appropriate audience
 - HCC directs the City Manager will administer the affairs of all City Departments, and
 - Hire and, as needed, remove the heads of all departments and employees of the City, exercising supervision and control over them and their work with the aim of maximizing efficiency

HVFD support



- Staff is not hired to support volunteers and volunteers are not trained to support staff. Homer Volunteer Fire Department is, and will continue to be, a mix of staff and volunteers who are trained to work as a team and support each other in responding to our communities fire and EMS needs.

Next steps

March 17, 2025 HVFD Work Session



HVFD Evaluation



- Compile information to Council to review including the 2015 needs assessment study, 2020 National Volunteer Fire Council Volunteer Retention Research Report, the 2023 US Fire Administration Retention and Recruitment for Volunteer Emergency Services report.

HVFD Evaluation



- Schedule a near future worksession to discuss and provide direction on HVFD evaluation.

HVFD Volunteer Policies



- Review and update 2009 HVFD policies

HVFD Reports to Council



- Develop quarterly reports that includes
 - HFVD calls inside and outside city limits
 - Staffing and active volunteer roster