



City of Homer

www.cityofhomer-ak.gov

Office of the City Clerk

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Agenda Changes/Supplemental Packet

TO: MAYOR LORD AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: RENEE KRAUSE, MMC, CITY CLERK
DATE: MARCH 17, 2025
SUBJECT: SUPPLEMENTAL

DISCUSSION TOPIC(S)

- a. Homer Volunteer Fire Department

Memorandum CC-25-089 from City Manager as backup.

Public Comment Received

page 3

From: marshall@xyz.net
To: [Department Clerk](#)
Subject: Comments regarding HVFD
Date: Monday, March 17, 2025 3:21:14 AM

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Please forward the following to the Mayor and City Council Members:

I regret that I am not able to present to voice my concerns at tonight's meeting. Please consider this email as my comments.

May 2019, a fire started at our neighbor's house and quickly got out of hand, coming within 50 feet of our home. We are so grateful for the efforts of KSEA, HVFD, WSEA and the Yukon Hot Shots which fought that blaze all night and saved our home and the entire Yukon/Greer Roads neighborhoods. They were extraordinary!! We were also incredibly fortunate that the fire retardant plane and the bucket helicopter were available and utilized.

My concerns are the decreasing number and turnover of volunteers at HVFD. The magnitude of that fire needed volunteers from 3 departments and the Forest Service. I am fearful that the lack of volunteers at HVFD puts all of our community's safety at risk. I ask that the Mayor and City Council address this problem and focus on recruitment and retention issues.

Thank you for this opportunity to voice my concerns.

Eternally grateful to all the firefighting volunteers at HVFD and the surrounding departments!

Karen Murdock
55200 East End Road
Homer, AK 99603

From: Miotke
To: Department Clerk
Subject: Written Testimony Submittal
Date: Sunday, March 16, 2025 3:20:10 PM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside your organization. Exercise caution when opening attachments or clicking links, especially from unknown senders.

Written Testimony for City Council Name: Dan Miotke Email: homermiotke@icloud.com Phone: Residency: City Resident City Council Meeting to Participate In: Worksession (if scheduled) Mon, 03/17 Public Comments Upon Matters Already on the Agenda - Citizen may comment on regular agenda items not scheduled for public hearing such as Consent Agenda items, Memorandums, Pending Business, New Business, Resolutions, and Ordinances to be introduced. Written Testimony: Thank you for allowing the opportunity to testify on the matters of the Fire Department. After much discussion and reflection I have consolidated my concerns into 3 points.

1. How is the direction of the department established? Under the current system the City relies heavily on the Chief and City Manager to establish the strategic plan of the department. Then a budget is provided for Council approval. Due to the specialized equipment and function of a Fire Department it can be difficult for the council to make an informed decision on funding. A solution to this could be a task force that could be part of the process of developing a plan and providing guidance to the Chief / City Manager allowing for more transparency and public input on direction.

2. Adequate funding to implement a plan. Fire Chief Robert Purcell presented the attached presentation in 2019 after a very thorough look into our local Fire Protection. Our community was well behind the curve at that time. I do believe we have made a substantial commitment to improving response capabilities with the purchase of response vehicles but are lacking in the personnel to operate these apparatus. I provided this presentation for evaluation of what was proposed, hopefully it can be analyzed to evaluate what progress has been achieved.

https://www.cityofhomer-ak.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/city_council/meeting/45931/fire_department_presentation.pdf

3. Lastly, is personnel management of paid staff and volunteers. One of the most critical roles of a leader is the ability to effectively manage people in a way that promotes pride in work and service, safe and effective work environments, and most importantly appreciation of service whether it's paid or volunteer. It doesn't matter if you have all the fanciest equipment or tools, people want to feel that what they have to contribute to an organization is valued and recognized. Sometimes this is hard to define in a set of parameters that is established by the system. This can be small or large but it all adds up to the success of the organization.

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Thank you for your time and interest, I am available for further questions by phone or email

-Dan Miotke
907-399-3062
homermiotke@icloud.com

Electronic Signature: Dan Miotke Submitted on Sunday, March 16, 2025 - 3:20pm The results of this submission may be viewed at: <https://www.cityofhomer-ak.gov/node/60081/submission/53083>

Neighbors Helping Neighbors



The
Team
That
Cares

Community
Volunteers

HOMER VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT



Report on the Homer Volunteer Fire Department Recommendations for Volunteer Recruitment and Retention

“An Educational Institution that Provides EMS and Fire Services”

Cost Effective Fire Protection
The ISO Evaluation and Rating
Fire Department Budget
Fire Department Staffing
Volunteer Emergency Services
Staffing Recommendations
Immediate Intervention
Benefits

2018
486 EMS Call – 78%
142 Fire Calls
Total 628
Responses

Cost Effective Fire Protection

- The role of the Fire Department is to achieve the lowest “Cost of Fire” to the community
- Appropriate investment in the FD Budget and Code Compliant Construction reduces Fire Loss and Insurance
- The goal is to achieve the most cost effective balance

Fire Department Budget

Fire Loss

**Fire Code Implementation
and Fire Safe Construction**

Fire Insurance Premiums

Fire Department Economic Impact

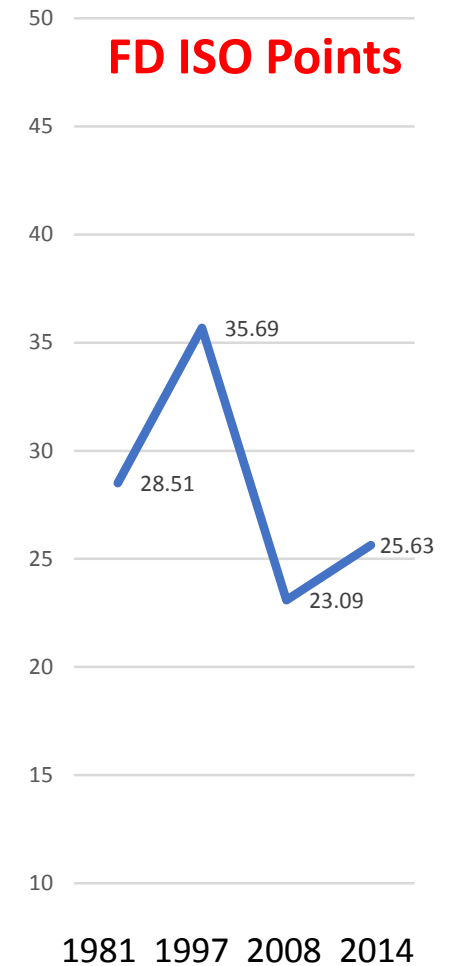
- **HVFD reduces insurance premiums paid by at least 4 to 6 times its annual budget, more than offsetting all of the City property taxes**
- **Insurance premium dollars paid leave the community. Most tax dollars remain in the community**
- **When fire service capacity is neglected, insurance rates rise and property values and property tax revenues are depressed, as is development and investment**
- **To recover requires budget increases to regain the lost capacity. Initially this puts additional downward pressure until insurance rates fall again**
- **Failing to maintain the appropriate level of fire service is a costly mistake for a community**

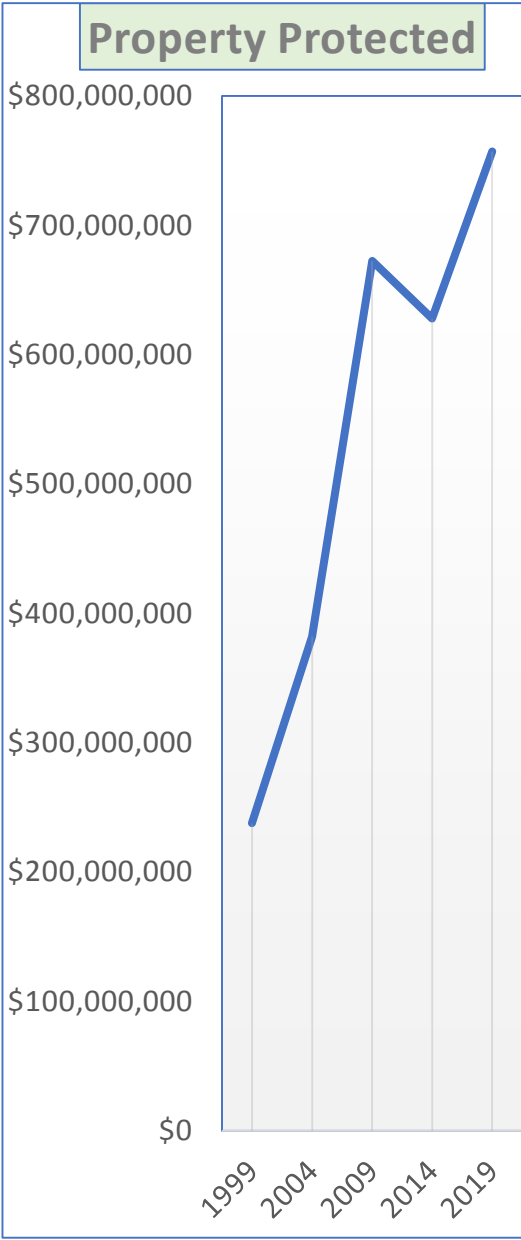
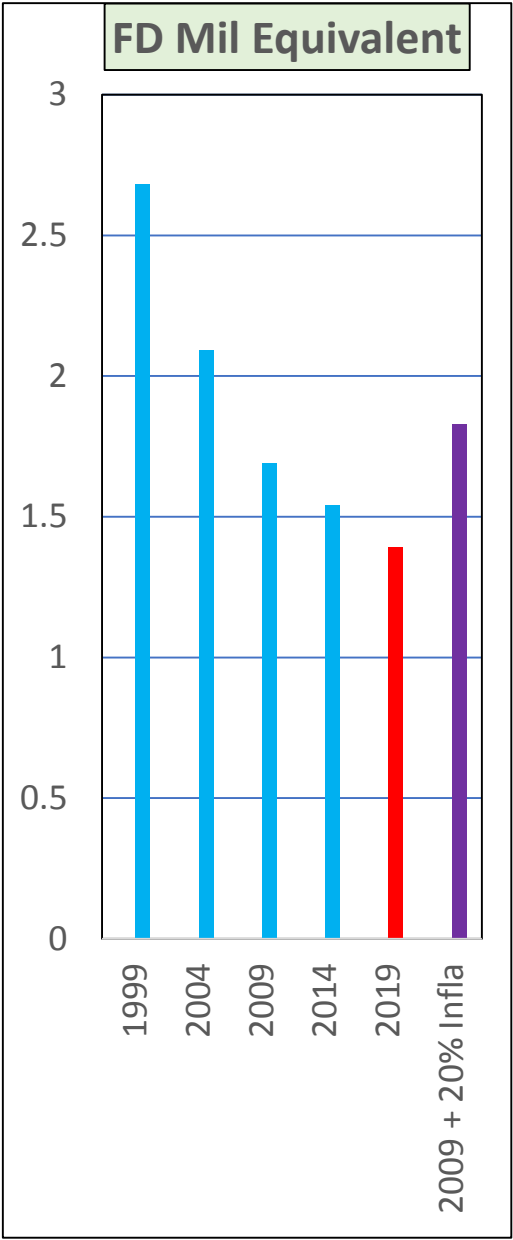
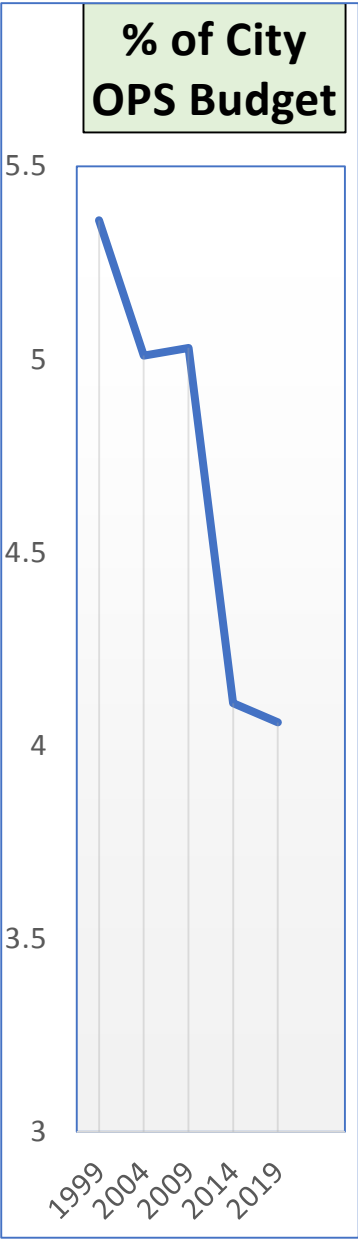
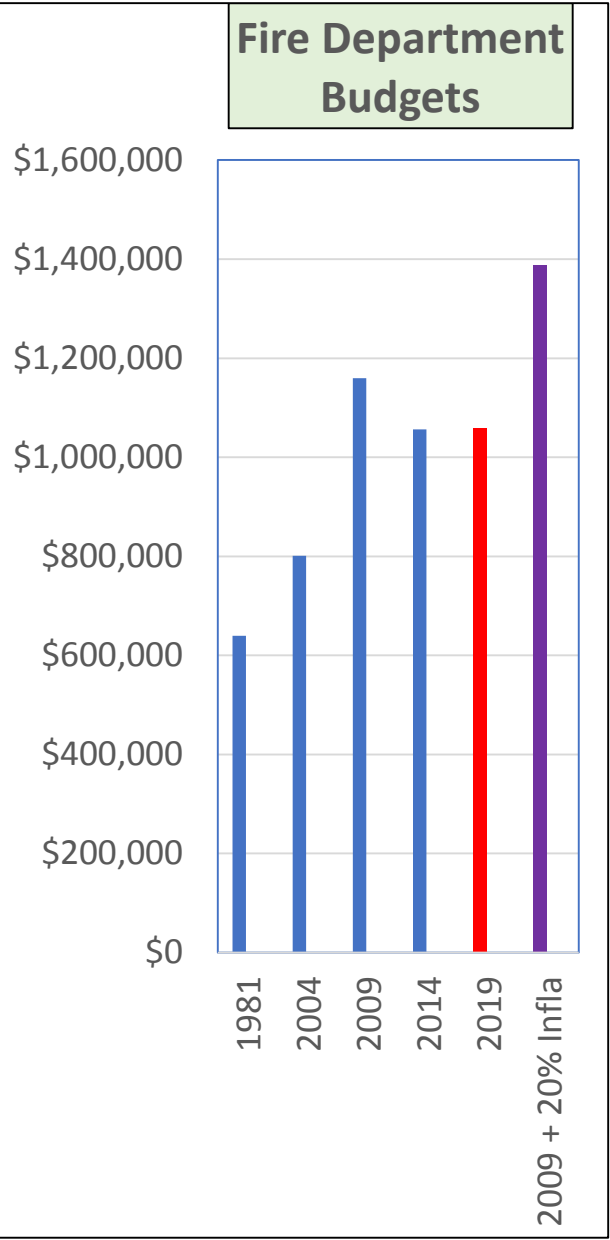
Comparison of Insurance Services Office (ISO) Ratings 1981-2019

Measure of Capacity to Need

Year	Max Points	1981	1997	Change 81-97	2008	2014	Change 97-14
Emergency Reporting	10.00	5.40	7.00	+30%	6.18	7.40	+37%
Fire Dept.	50.00	28.51	35.69	+25%	23.09	25.63	-28%
Water Supply	40.00	25.47	40.00	+58%	25.81	28.83	-28%
Divergence		-1.33	-5.72	-430%	-3.67	-4.16	+27%
Comm. Risk Reduction	5.50					3.99	
Total Points		58.05	76.96	+33%	51.41	61.69	-20%
ISO Rating		5/9	3/8		5/8B	4/4Y	

ISO Rating Chart	
ISO Class	Points
1	90+
2	80.00-89.99
3	70.00-79.99
4	60.00-69.99
5	50.00-59.99
6	40.00-49.99
7	30.00-39.99
8	20.00-29.99
9	10.00-19.99
10	0.00-9.99

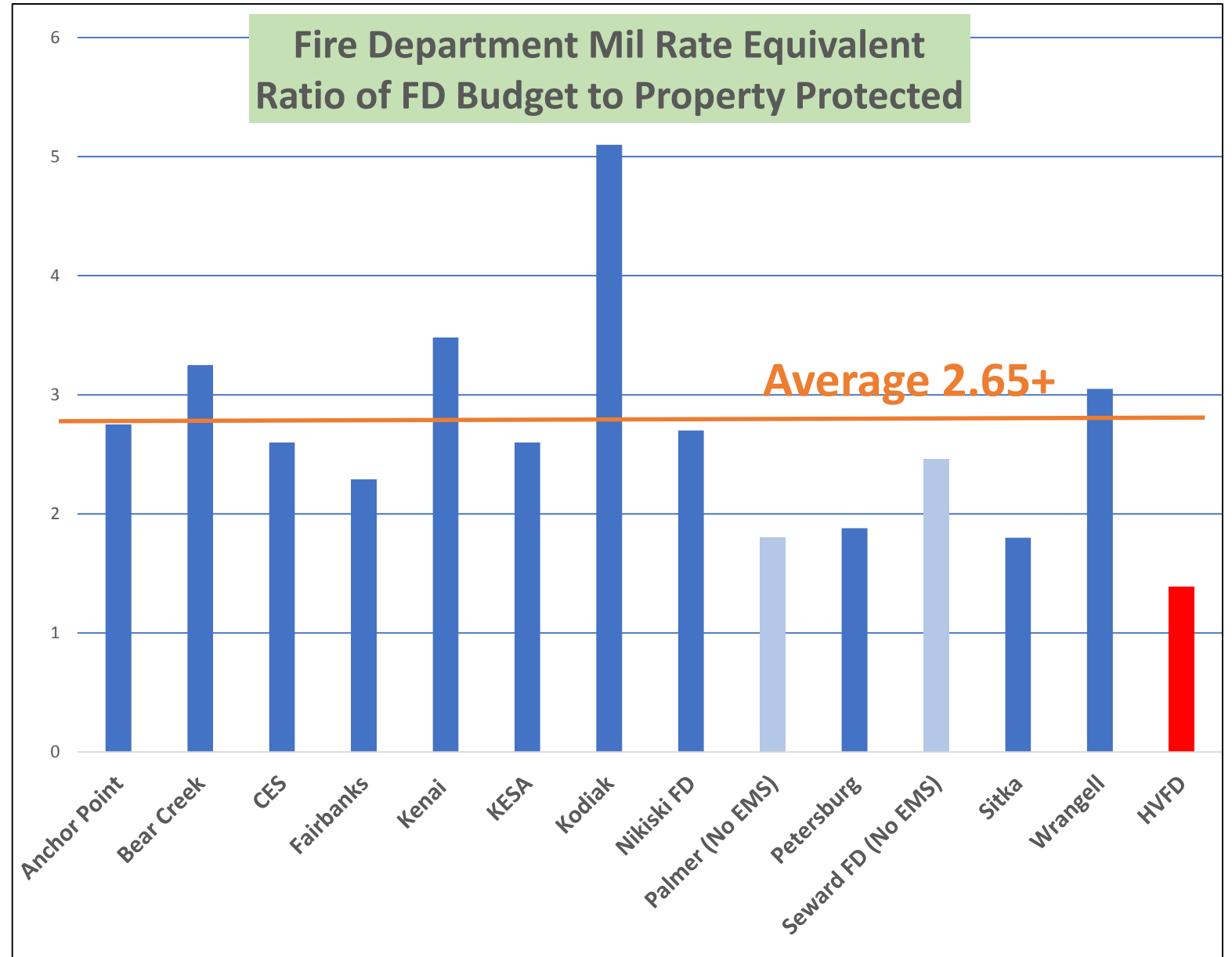




Fire Department Comparisons

Fire Department	Pop	ISO	Mill Rate	Budget
Anchor Point FD	2700	5	2.75	\$1,094,500.00
Kachemak Emergency Service Area	4000	5	2.6	\$1,079,150.00
Homer Volunteer Fire Department	6123	4	1.39	\$1,059,435.00
Sitka FD	8830	4	1.83	\$2,095,133.00
Kenai FD	7745	3	3.48	\$3,103,848.00
Kodiak	6100	4	5.10	\$2,459,976.00

Fire Dept.	Mill Rate
Anchor Point	2.75
Bear Creek	3.25
CES / Soldotna	2.60
Fairbanks	2.29
Kenai	3.48
KESA	2.60
Kodiak	5.10
Nikiski FD	2.70
Palmer (No EMS)	1.80
Petersburg	1.88
Seward FD (No EMS)	2.46
Sitka	1.83
Wrangell	3.05
HVFD	1.39
Average	2.65



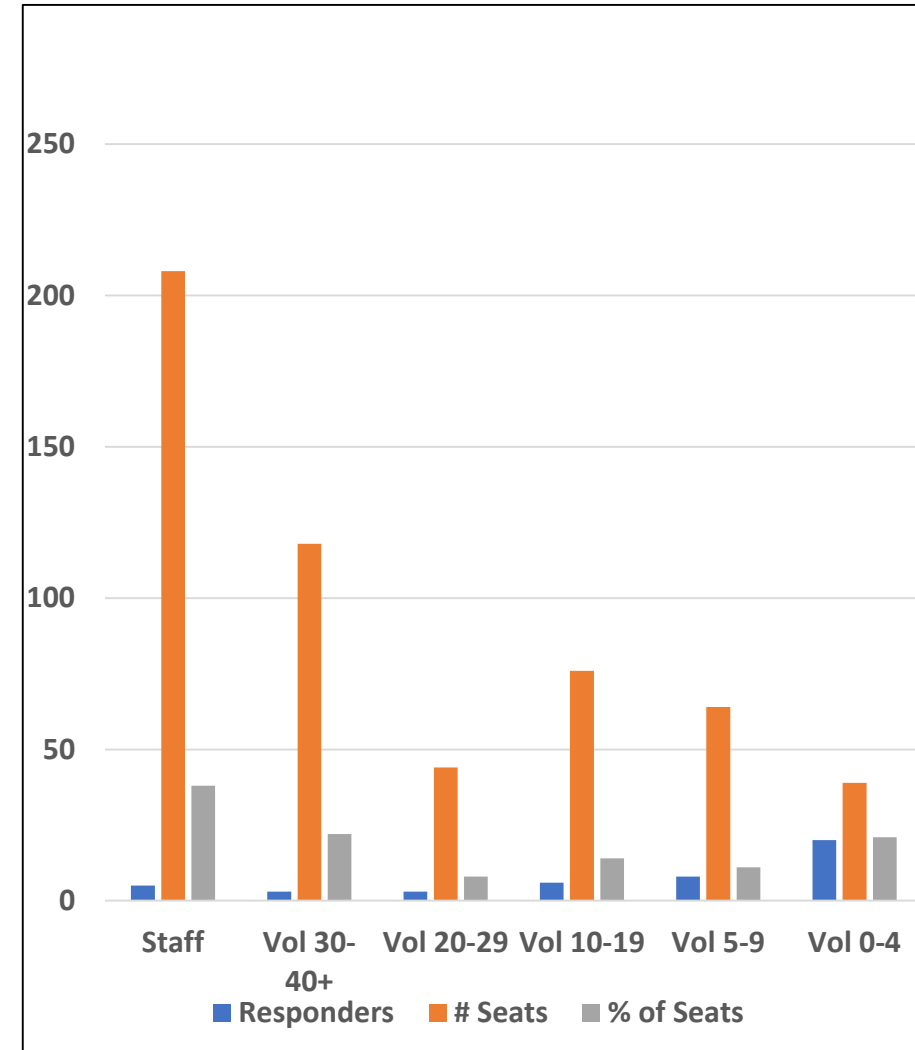
Fire Department at Risk

- **ISO – 28% Reduction in FD Capacity to Need from 1997-2014**
- **ISO - 50% Reduction in the number of Firefighters responding to fire alarms since 1997**
- **Inadequate resources to meet the needs. Effectively a 30% cut to the budget since 2009.**
- **Inadequate 8/40 Staffing to support the volunteers**
- **Commercial Fire and Homeowners Insurance Rates have increased**
- **ISO Evaluations on an a targeted 5 year cycle. Last evaluation in 2014. City faces a potential for a drop to a Class-5**

Jan-Mar 2019 Responses

Responders	Roster = 45 Responders	549 # Seats	% Seats
Staff	5	208	38%
Vol 30-40+	3	118	22%
Sub-Group Total	8	326	60%
Vol 20-29	3	44	8%
Vol 10-19	6	76	14%
Sub-Group Total	9	120	22%
Sub-Total	17	446	82%
Vol 5-9	8	64	11%
Vol 0-4	20	39	7%
Sub-Group Total	28	103	18%
Total	45	549	100%

Responder Participation



The Path Best Not Taken

- When volunteers are unhappy, they drift away quietly, rarely complaining
- It is exceptionally hard to rebuild a successful volunteer fire department once it has failed
- Permitting a volunteer service to degrade results in the hiring of full-time employees at great cost

ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS

Mat-Su

Mat-Su adds 25 medics, 2 ambulances in major shift to full-time force

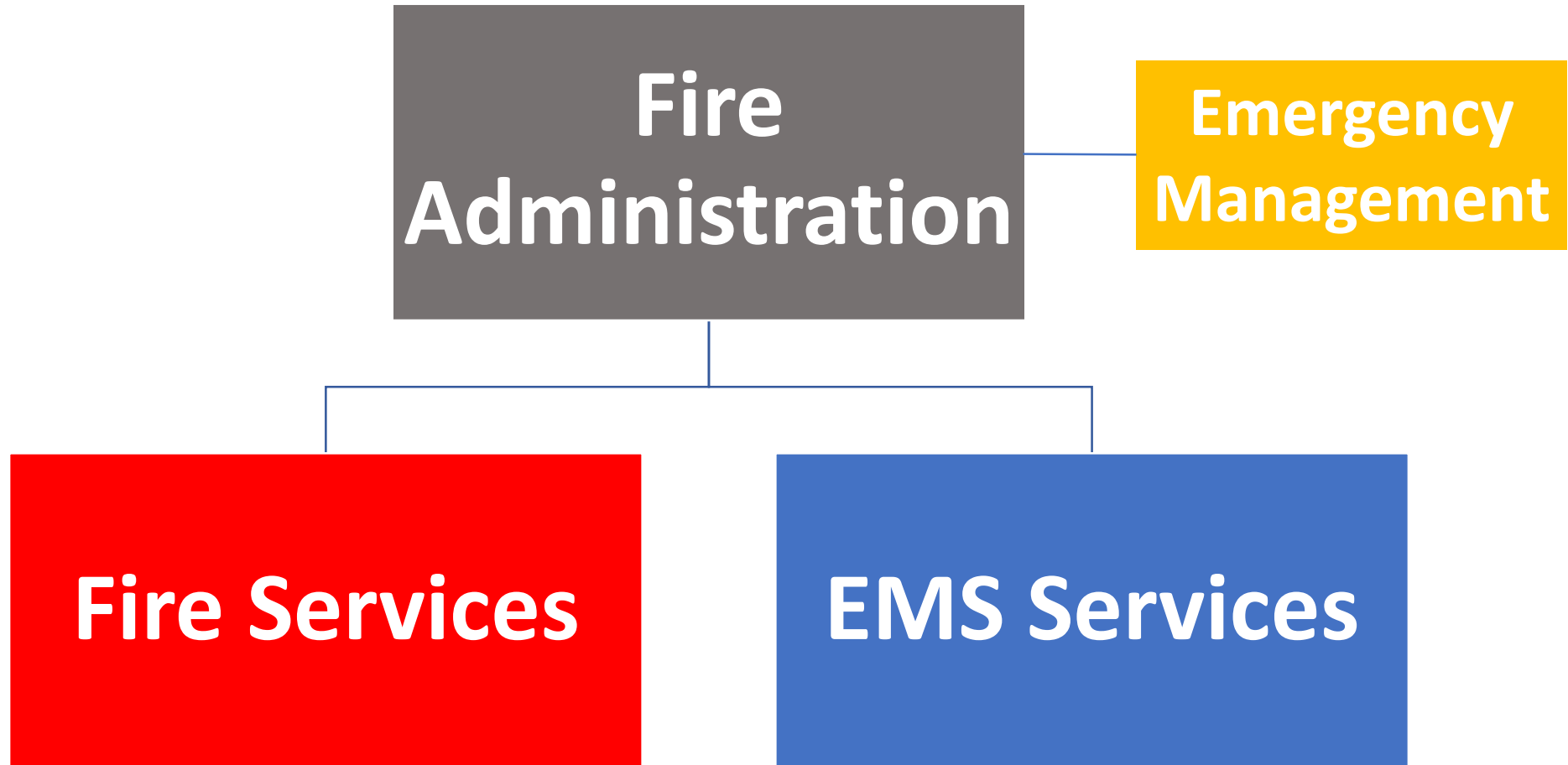
✍ Author: Zaz Hollander ⓘ Updated: 21 hours ago 📅 Published 21 hours ago



Matanuska-Susitna Borough paramedic April Yost in Central Ambulance 1 on Wednesday, March 20, 2019. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough assembly approved adding 25 EMT's and paramedics. (Bill

[Buy This Photo](#)

Fire Department Org Chart



Scope of Services

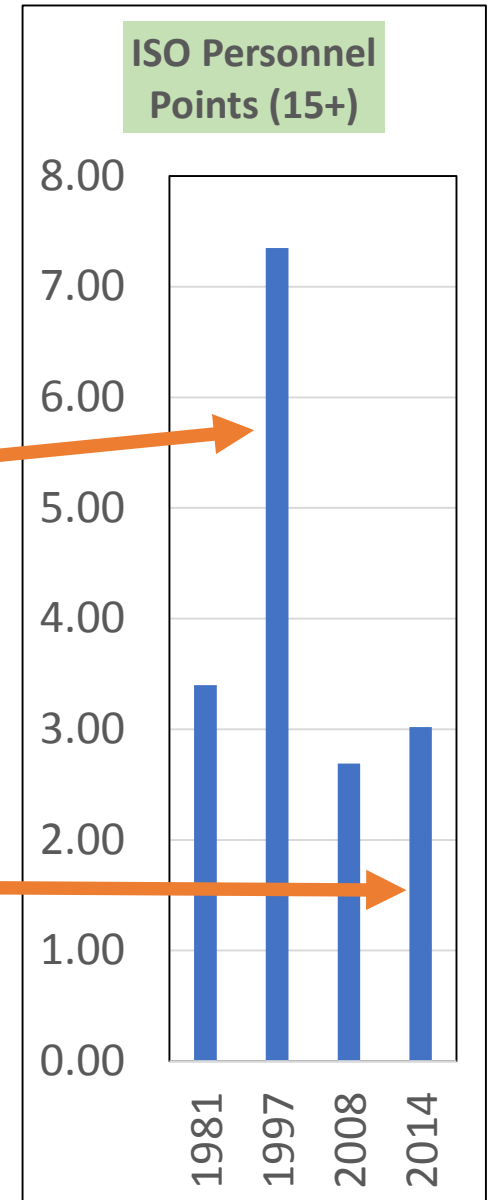
- Fire Services - Structural Fire Suppression, Motor Vehicle Firefighting, Wildland Firefighting, Marine Firefighting, Aircraft Rescue & Firefighting
- EMS - Basic and Advanced Life Support Ambulance Services
- Rescue Services - Vehicle Extrication, Rope Rescue, Water Rescue, Confined Space Rescue
- Hazardous Materials Operations
- Disaster Response and Management
- Public Education, Prevention and Preparedness
- Plan Reviews and Code Consultations

Training

- Every Emergency Service above has a course and continuing education requirements
- In addition we provide Firefighter-I, Firefighter-II, Officer-I, Emergency Vehicle Operations, Fire Apparatus Engineer, Fire Service Hydraulics, etc.
- EMT-I, EMT-II, EMT-III, Paramedic, ACLS, Ambulance Driver, etc.
- Methods of Instruction and Train-the-Trainer

Staffing Distribution

		Fire	EMS	DSS		
Year	Chief	AC	AC	/DSC	ESS	P.T.-ESS
Thru						
1999	1	1	1	1		
2000	1	1		1	1	
2010	1			1	3	
2115	1			1	3	2 p.t.
2017	1	1		1	3	2 p.t.
2019	1	1	Add 1		Add 1	2 p.t.



Staffing Recommendations 8/40

- ✓ The Fire and EMS Assistant Chief positions were the key to the high performance of the Fire Department through 2000
- ✓ The complexity of the Fire Service and EMS have both grown substantially since then, as has the volume of calls and work
- ✓ The Fire Department currently has 2 Divisions, Fire Services and Emergency Medical Services without Division Leadership
- ✓ The Fire Department is the largest City Department with 50+ personnel

☐ Add an EMS Assistant Chief to provide adequate support to maintain an effective volunteer emergency service – 2 Divisions Fire & EMS

☐ EMS Asst. Chief - EMS SME, Training Officer, Operations

☐ Fire Asst. Chief - Fire Service SME, Training Officer, and Operations

Staffing requirements for 24/365 ESS coverage

Hours in a Year	8,760.00 hours
Total Annual Hours per Employee	2,112.50 hours
Estimated Avg. Leave per Employee per Year	-200.00 hours
Estimated Working Hours per Employee	1,912.50 hours
Hours in a Year / Working Hours =	4.6 positions

24 Hour Staffing Requires 4.6 positions - Current Staffing is 3.6 or 80% Coverage

- ☐ Add 1 Emergency Service Specialist (ESS) to complete staffing of the ESS capability and to provide staff resources to support a wide range of fire department operations
 - ☐ 4 ESS with temp hires is the minimum 4.6 positions required to provide consistent expedited responses 24/365
 - ☐ The ESS program has had a significant impact, reducing response times by as much as 5-8 minutes, which can be lifesaving.

Immediate Intervention

Fund and Hire an EMS Assistant Chief to Restore and Sustain a Successful Volunteer Fire Department and EMS Service - Appropriation Request:

- EMS Assistant Fire Chief (Budgeted at 50/50 to Range 20I and 20J)
- Salary & Wages: \$77,028.00 Total, Benefits: \$44,021.00 **Total: \$121,049.00**

Fund and Hire a 4th Emergency Service Specialist to complete 24/365 Coverage to Support Consistently Shorter Response Times and Fully Support Daily Operations - Appropriation Request:

- ESS-II (Budgeted at Range 14A)
- Salary & Wages: \$51,243.00 Total Benefits: \$34,949.00 **Total: \$86,193.00**
- **Estimated Annual Cost \$207,242.00**
- Total FY2019 Special Appropriation Requested: \$120,891.00**

Core Fire Department Strengths

- **New Leadership is Coming to Lead the Organization**
- **Core Group of Dedicated Volunteers Responding to Calls**
- **Volunteers Ready to Support the Rebuilding of the Fire Department**
- **3 Highly Competent Staff Members**
- **Community Support for the Volunteers**
- **Volunteer Oriented Community to Draw New Recruits From**
- **Wide Community Support and for Fire and EMS as Priority Services**
- **Mutual Aid from KESA and Anchor Point for Major Incidents**

Goal & Benefits

- The Fire Department's Trend Line has been Downwards for Years, it is Essential to Bend the Curve Upwards and Begin the Recovery
"Volunteers are not free, just less expensive"
- Over time, insurance savings will more than offset the investment in the Fire Department
- The Additional Staff will fully support both the Fire Service and EMS Divisions and complete the 24 Hour Rapid Response Capability.
- An Adequate Budget will support the work and resources required to assure the HVFD volunteers are successful
- Effective Fleet Management will increase reliability and safety, while providing for predictable stable Fleet Expenditures
- This will sustain a Responsive, High Quality, Cost-Effective, Viable Volunteer Fire Department well into the future

From: [Catherine Stingley](#)
To: [Department Clerk](#)
Subject: letter to Committee of the Whole for 3.27.25
Date: Monday, March 17, 2025 10:47:10 AM
Attachments: [Josephine letter to Committee of the Whole.docx](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside your organization. Exercise caution when opening attachments or clicking links, especially from unknown senders.

Please find a letter from Josephine Ryan for The Committee of the Whole meeting tonight at 5pm. She will plan to speak during open mic.
Many thanks,
Cathy Stingley on behalf of Josephine who is away from her computer.

Cathy Stingley
HANDLE Practitioner, EFT Practitioner
907-435-7768

For The Committee of the Whole, March 17, 2025

My name is Josephine Ryan and I have lived in Homer since 1984. I have been with HVFD since 1996 for a total of 23 years as an EMT/firefighter and as photographer/historian.

Mark Kirko was hired and came on the job July 8, 2019. Since his arrival , five years and 5 months ago , he has hired and lost at least 14 permanent employees. 10 seasonal employees were hired and none of them returned in any capacity. There are presently a total of 6 EMT/Firefighter positions, as many as 2 seasonal positions, one Deputy Chief position, and one assistant to the chief. All of these positions have been vacated at least once. None of these employees stayed longer than about two years. Some of them stayed as little as 2 months. Each of them arrived full of excitement and enthusiasm. By the time they left, they were subdued, did their jobs and were disillusioned.

Of those paid personnel who left, one was an Assistant EMS Chief and 2 were Assistant Fire Chiefs, both of whom quit within less than a year. When these two positions were dissolved, a new position of Deputy Chief was formed, in the Spring of 2024. Since then, 2 Deputy Chiefs have quit. Additionally one Assistant EMS Chief was suspended and eventually fired.

During the time that Samantha Cunningham was Assistant EMS Chief, that position was dissolved and her salary reduced. The Assistant Fire Chief was then promoted to Deputy Chief and received a raise.

Of those who were told to leave, three were members of the board of directors of the re-established HVFD 501c3 volunteer organization. Two of them and one other volunteer worked to reinstate the 501c3 with the help of the City Mayor, Ken Castner after Chief Kirko dissolved it.

From 2019 through January, 2024 I counted 65 volunteers that left, were told to leave, or were pushed out. Since then most other volunteers are simply not there and cannot access the building anyway. In addition, this last summer five of us who have been active and support volunteers for an accumulated 115 years, suddenly found ourselves without access to the firehall or any kind of fire department event or any department communication or any volunteer benefits. We were literally pushed out of HVFD.

As of June 26, 2024 there were approximately 25 volunteers.

It is my understanding, having no access to information outside of heresy, that there are presently 10 volunteers of which perhaps 6 are active.

Just before New Years, 2025, I stopped by the firehall during business hours to discover that the front doors to this public institution were locked with a buzzer placed outside. I was surprised, upset, and angry. I think having access to the fire department is extremely important because people have historically run in with an emergency, needed their blood pressure taken, asked for directions, needed assistance of one kind or another. They turned to an institution they knew they could trust to help them.

To have someone come along from out of state who has been at HVFD for 5 ½ years and changed the camaraderie, the caring, the family atmosphere and the numbers of volunteers and employees is strikingly disturbing and alarming. In addition it has potentially put our community at risk of having inadequate numbers of trained, responding EMTs and firefighters. To be responsible for the loss of so many good people and contribute to the firing of a loyal, 31-year member should raise red flags.

I believe that part of the answer to this dilemma is to replace Mark Kirko with a Fire Chief who connects with his people, garnering their love and respect.

Thank you,

Josephine