TO: Brian D. Mitchell, Village Administrator

CC: Edward Leeson, Fire Chief

FROM: Janelle A. Crowley, MBA, MA, IPMA-CP

RE: Assessment - Village of Matteson Fire Department

DATE: March 2, 2013

The purpose of this memo is to provide a limited assessment of the Village of Matteson Fire Department and the overarching question of overtime. In an effort for efficiency, with the intent to address the immediate question, my personal bio is attached.

INTRODUCTION

The Village of Matteson and its staff have dedicated themselves to service and sustainability that complements a welcoming community of growth, safety and security. However, as a result of the past several years, the Village must adapt and evolve, because the service environment faces a continually changing, complex and financially depleting situation, not previously faced by many municipalities. Coupled with the changing demographics, service resources are asked to be more service oriented, while technological innovations have assisted in some areas, it has also placed a significant burden on the service industry.

Hence, the Village of Matteson has asked for a brief assessment of the fire services provided to the citizens and stakeholders of Matteson. Due to timing constraints, this assessment will provide a brief review. The principles that guided this assessment include but are not limited to: discussions with staff; an overview of the Fiscal Year 12/13 Budget; organizational structure of the fire department; work schedules and required minimums; recommendations of the National Fire Protection Association [NFPA], Government Accounting Standards Board [GASB] and a cursory review of the standing bargaining agreement.

FINDINGS

As the service industry continues to evolve and change, services must adapt to a more intellectual mix of community members, who pay for the services that keep them safe. This is not inherent – it is expected from every taxpayer and stakeholder of Matteson.

This review recognizes and understands the current organizational structure of the fire department; guided appropriately by the principles of the NFPA and the bargaining
agreement, which supports the core complement of fire fighters and paramedics scheduled for each shift.

The findings and assessment of this review advocates for some adjustments to the current structure of the department. The fire department offers the community highly skilled individuals who provide a valuable service to the community, whether it is a fire or medical need - key for the safety and security of the municipality. It is important in this changing environment, to think creatively and not only think of hard costs, but to take a close look at the soft costs affecting the community; ultimately that which affects the bottom line and continued sustainability.

During the past twenty years, the department has tried to develop a department that mirrors the complexion of the community and at the same time, hold overtime costs to a minimum. On its face, it would seem like an easy task; however, the ever changing demographics of generations, the evolving workforce, competition of quality and qualified candidates, financial challenges and the evolution of technological advances has placed the fire department in a reactive-survival mode where incremental changes have been addressed, but again, not designed for a sustainable avenue of fire protection services to its constituents.

MISSION AND ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT

The mission for the Village of Matteson Fire Department; "is to provide effective fire prevention, suppression, emergency medical, and administrative services to our constituents ensuring the highest level of public protection possible." To that end, the remainder of this assessment will provide some thoughts and recommendations about the future of the Matteson Fire Department.

RECOMMENDATIONS

First, since the fire department is essential for the safety and security of the community, it is recommended that the department work with a focus group of community members, fire fighters, paramedics and stakeholders to discuss a strategic plan that addresses innovative recruitment methods, to attract, recruit and select new members for the department. It is vital to develop a strategic plan for the recruitment of a culturally competent inclusive mix of candidates in an effort to build a true complement of employees that mirrors the Village of Matteson population. This type of plan requires more than reaching out to obvious resources [e.g. educational institutions], it requires commitment, long term planning and innovation.

Second, it is imperative to evaluate the overtime costs. According to the longitudinal study conducted between 1987 and 2000, by researcher A.E. Dembe, et al, there is growing evidence that suggests:
"...long working hours adversely affect the health and wellbeing of workers. Studies have associated overtime and extended work schedules with an increased risk of hypertension, cardiovascular disease, fatigue, stress, depression, musculoskeletal disorders, chronic infections, diabetes, general health complaints, and all-cause mortality. Several reviews and meta-analyses have been published summarizing these research findings. Systematic reviews generally have concluded that long working hours are potentially dangerous to workers’ health."

In what would seem to be counterproductive in reducing costs with the immediate plans to hire three new firefighter/paramedics, it is the immediate recommendation that this number be increased. As a result of recent retirements; another looming retirement, and members who are currently out as a result of workplace injuries; the overtime is not only affecting hard costs [e.g. legal costs, insurance, etc.], it is affecting soft costs through additional risk, plummeting morale, increased worker’s compensation expenses and the correlational costs of the Public Employee Disability Act [PEDA] and the Public Safety Employee Benefits Act [PSEBA], which attaches to long-term liability costs. Done correctly, this could result in a cost neutral option; however, it is not without personal sacrifice to current members of the department.

Third, explore the option of hiring paramedics vis-à-vis firefighter/paramedics. From a human resources perspective, it is key to build on strengths and not try to work with adequate human capital attributes. Without being trite, a paramedic does not always have the exemplary firefighter traits and a firefighter does not necessarily have the keen medical expertise warranted to save a life. This initiative most likely has the potential of being extremely challenging with the current bargaining agreement, albeit, it is worth exploring.

Fourth, The Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) encourages municipalities to compare performance against other like municipalities to determine appropriate benchmarks and how the department can operate more efficiently and effectively. This assessment compared the Village of Matteson with one other community of fewer than 25,000, which again, is different than the Village of Matteson with a population of 19,900 [2011], where services are rendered to surrounding unincorporated areas, the Timber Ridge Home Park and the ITW Deltar Plant. The amount of calls that the Village of Matteson Fire Department responds to on an annual basis, in comparison to the one community Matteson was compared with for this brief assessment, does appear to be significantly higher in volume; therefore, a more in depth analysis would need to be done to review this further. This does however elucidate the need for exploring whether or not a fire protection district is a worthy topic of discussion that could possibly help mitigate costs for the Village of Matteson.

Finally, it is fortunate that the Village of Matteson no longer provides services to the Village of Olympia Fields, which does suggest a loss of revenue, but at this juncture probably

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2 Reliance on long-term overtime can affect members of the department personally.

3 Supports the recommendation of the NFPA.
warranted because it does minimize risks [e.g. longer response time or lack thereof, potential for mistakes, overtime, etc.] to the Village, fire department and community. This is perhaps timely and allows administration to focus on the service needs required for the constituents and stakeholders in the Village of Matteson.

In closing, I would like to thank the Village of Matteson for allowing me to conduct this limited assessment. If you need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 847-331-8271.
Janelle Crowley, is the chief human resources officer for Elgin Community College [IL] with oversight of the certified police department. She is the president of the McHenry County (IL) Sheriff's Merit Commission, police commissioner for the city of Woodstock [IL] Police Department, past president of the Illinois Fire and Police Commissioner's Association, past president of the Stateline Society of Human Resource Management and the previous director of human resources for the city of Woodstock. Janelle has served as a certified assessor and team leader for the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA); was nominated and awarded the “Breaking the Glass Ceiling Award” by The National Center for Women and Policing in Los Angeles, California, was a recent recipient of the prestigious “Doc Wilson” award for her vision and training through the University of Illinois where she has served on the Advisory Board for the Police Training Institute. Janelle was recognized as Woman of the Year by the Woodstock Women’s Business and Professional Association and supported her Mother’s legacy by serving as an Ambassador for Rotary International in the eradication of Polio in India.

Janelle holds a bachelor’s degree in public and business administration, two graduate degrees – human resources development, the second in business administration and is currently a PhD candidate in management with an accepted committee dissertation. She has completed all four Labor Relations Academies with the National Public Employers Labor Relations Association, completed the Resolution and Conflict certification with DePaul University, numerous FEMA and Homeland Security certifications and was again awarded awarded the International Public Management Association certified professional in human resources professional distinction.

Janelle has been recognized for her professionalism in the development of task-prioritization, self-assessment tools and ranking instruments for promotional assessments. She has served as a pre-hire and promotional assessor for members of the National Sheriff’s Association (NSA), the International Association of Chief’s of Police and several consulting firms in and outside of the United States.

In addition to her dedication and involvement with public safety, her background includes Emergency Medicine; adjunct faculty for Northwestern University Center for Public Safety and consulting for Madison College School of Human and Protective Services. Janelle continues to serve as a board member for United Way of Greater McHenry County, serves as the Diversity
Chair for the Stateline Society of Human Resource Management, is a member of PEO and is an adjunct professor with Aurora University.