

*The Fire Department
Staffing and Funding
Battle:*

You Have to be Ready

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Why Are You Here Today?

- ❖ You are a Fire Chief who cares.
- ❖ You are a member of a fire department who wants to learn more about funding.



Why Are You Here Today?



- ❖ You are a member of local government who wants to learn more about their fire department and how it operates.
- ❖ You are an elected official

Why Am I Here?

- ❖ I have been a fire person for a long time.
- ❖ I have devoted a great deal of time to learning about government & how it works.



Why Am I Here?



- ❖ I have seen too many problems occur with people on both sides of the funding issue.
- ❖ The friction is terrible.
- ❖ I want to create a new level of understanding.



Why Are There Funding Disputes?

- ❖ Friction occurs because people create the fiction that they are on a particular side.
- ❖ Different people have different agendas.

Why Are There Funding Disputes?

- ❖ Some people like to hide things.
- ❖ Some people never get the word.
- ❖ Personality conflicts and stubborn people.
- ❖ Some folks get a kick out of fighting.

Points of Friction

- ❖ People do not take the time to learn the other person's position & point of view.
- ❖ Fire departments fail to define their role in the community.
- ❖ Local government is responsible for many things.
- ❖ Fire protection is but one part of the equation.

Points of Friction

- ❖ The actual budgetary process is misunderstood by fire people.
- ❖ Local government sometimes fails to fully explain their budgeting system.
- ❖ Some people on each side of the coin try to get slick with people on the other side.

Local Government Issues

- ❖ Offer to teach Fire Department the budget system
- ❖ Maintain open lines of communication
- ❖ Go to FD leadership for answers
- ❖ Do not start or listen to rumors
- ❖ Let the facts rule all interactions

Fire Department Issues

- ❖ What are the staffing problems?
- ❖ Are there fire service funding problems?
- ❖ What is the impact of demographics on service delivery?



Fire Department Issues

- ❖ You must be able to sell your FD in an honest and factual manner.
- ❖ Customer service and fire department product development
- ❖ Do not start or listen to rumors.

Fire Department Issues

- ❖ Let facts rule all interactions.
- ❖ They (???) are not the enemy.
- ❖ Have or be able to get answers for all local government questions.

The Budgeting Process

- ❖ Make the process known to all.
- ❖ Spell out requirements & give plenty of lead time.
- ❖ Set realistic dates for budget submission, review, and approval.



The Budgeting Process

- ❖ Be fair in sharing funds, or cuts
- ❖ Be strict once the funds are approved.
- ❖ Train your people on how to use the system.



Fire Service Funding Problems - Urban

- ❖ Businesses are leaving for lower cost, more attractive areas
- ❖ Declining housing stock is available to support tax costs
- ❖ Declining population remains to pay the taxes.

Fire Service Funding Problems - Urban

- ❖ Property tax abatements slow the revenue stream.
- ❖ Police and sanitation receive a high priority than fire protection.
- ❖ Fire **ALWAYS** happens to the other person.



Fire Service Funding Problems - Suburban

- ❖ Police and schools receive a higher priority
- ❖ Housing stock is growing faster than the fire department's ability to protect it.
- ❖ Industrial ratable are lost because they are perceived as dirty.

Fire Service Funding Problems - Suburban

- ❖ People expect & demand fire services.
- ❖ People do not always want to pay for fire protection: we may be viewed as a costly service with minimum daily usefulness.
- ❖ Fire ALWAYS happens to the other person.

Demographic Problems

- ❖ Population shifts
- ❖ Continued movement to suburbs
- ❖ Commuter population unavailable for bulk of day



Demographic Problems

- ❖ Society more mobile
- ❖ Population growing older
- ❖ Newcomers do not know about volunteer fire departments.



Strategic Planning: A Tool for Proper Fire Protection

- ❖ Discover what actually exists in your community - Identify your actual protection needs
- ❖ Develop an understanding of your actual FD capabilities
- ❖ Know where your community is **TODAY**

Strategic Planning: A Tool for Proper Fire Protection

- ❖ Develop a fire department which meets the actual community as you have defined it.
- ❖ Do research to tell you where you are headed.

Strategic Planning: A Tool for Proper Fire Protection

- ❖ This will allow you to exercise a bit of control over the future.
- ❖ You can move calmly and rationally.
- ❖ You will not be blown about like a leaf by the winds of change.

Who Are Your Primary Customers?

- ❖ Its not the FD
- ❖ People who live in your community
- ❖ People who work in your community
- ❖ People who are visitors or guests in your community
- ❖ People who just happen to be passing through your community

How Can You Get Your Community's Attention?

- ❖ Study your community - Know who you are and what you do.
- ❖ Discover your normal needs.
- ❖ Discover any hidden potential.
- ❖ Review your fire department's service delivery capability.

How Can You Get Your Community's Attention?

- ❖ Look at the actual risk presented by your community.
- ❖ Create a reasonable plan to deliver fire protection in your community (EMS too, if that's what you do)
- ❖ Gain support (Facts/Figures/Friends)
- ❖ Sell it to the community.

*Remember the Fire
Service Delivery
Equation*

People + Equipment + Labor =
Service to the Customer

Where Do We Get Our Staff?

- ❖ Relatives of existing members
- ❖ Friends of existing members
- ❖ People who are recruited
- ❖ People who come in and ask us if they can join.
- ❖ Any one we can lay our hands on.

How Do We Keep Our Staff?

- ❖ Treat them right
- ❖ Provide meaningful work
- ❖ Provide exciting training
- ❖ Say thanks a lot
- ❖ Do not be selfish

Some Fire Protection Service Delivery Findings

- ❖ High senior citizen population
- ❖ A large low-income population
- ❖ A high level of transient rental properties
- ❖ Topography problems
- ❖ Climate problems

Fire Protection Service Delivery Findings

- ❖ Deteriorated housing stock
- ❖ High level of CO detector alarms
- ❖ High level of smoke detector alarms
- ❖ Health-related problems for those departments delivering EMS
- ❖ Heavy industry and Haz-Mat

Fire Protection Service Delivery Findings

- ❖ A large number of poorly-staffed units
- ❖ A few well-staffed units
- ❖ A few poorly-staffed units
- ❖ A mix of the above
- ❖ Lots of nice equipment; with no one to operate it

Fire Protection Service Delivery Findings

- ❖ Not enough people coupled with the potential for a big fire
- ❖ No plans for using a few people to attack a large fire
- ❖ Inability to develop strong initial or sustained fire attack
- ❖ Not enough people to meet 2-in/2-out.

Fire Protection Service: What You Should Be Looking For

- ❖ FD has customer as primary focus
- ❖ FD that trains customers to live safely
- ❖ FD that trains its staff
- ❖ FD that is tailored to the actual needs of the community
- ❖ FD that has created a strong client support base

Create a Reasonable Plan for Community- Based Service

- ❖ Department meets actual, identified needs of the community
- ❖ Look to professional standards and literature for support and guidance
- ❖ Use reasonable growth and demographic projections

Create a Reasonable Plan for Community- Based Service

- ❖ Base your plan on reasonable income and cost projections
- ❖ Create your plan with help from the world of politics

Create a Reasonable Plan for Community- Based Service

- ❖ Create your plan with help from the world of local government
- ❖ Create your plan with help from the actual stakeholders: the citizens

Gain Community Support

- ❖ Gather your facts
- ❖ Gather your figures
- ❖ Gather your friends
- ❖ Memorize your facts and make them a part of your inner being -
Never be far from a fact in anything you do

Gain Community Support

- ❖ Get off your butt, go out into the community and make a lot of new friends
- ❖ Be honest
- ❖ Be reasonable



Gain Community Support

- ❖ Tell your story in a calm and reasonable manner - let the others rant & rave
- ❖ Let the other side throw the rocks



Sell It Like Your Life Depended on It!



- ❖ Meet with community groups
- ❖ Meet with local government leaders
- ❖ Meet with political leaders

Sell It Like Your Life Depended on It!

- ❖ Brief old and new friends
- ❖ Keep the story the same for all groups
- ❖ Always take the high road



Important Staffing and Funding Facts

- ❖ Fire suppression and protection are extremely labor intensive
- ❖ Labor has a price (career or volunteer)
- ❖ No fire was ever extinguished solely by bright red fire engines
- ❖ People = Dollars in every case

Important Staffing and Funding Facts

- ❖ If at first you don't succeed; try, try again (And again and again - if necessary)
- ❖ The customer always comes first
- ❖ Someone will always be needed to deliver the service

In Conclusion

- ❖ Take the overall view of operations (big picture)
- ❖ Create the story of your agency, add a cost factor, and then sell it to your community.
- ❖ All sides should listen carefully.

In Conclusion

- ❖ Remember to share the good and the bad.
- ❖ Remember: Words spoken in anger can never be returned.

*You All Have To Be On
The Same Sheet of
Music*

