The Hiawatha City Council met in a work session in Conference Room C on the upper level of City Hall on December 19, 2018. Mayor Bill Bennett called the meeting to order at 6:15 P.M. Council members present: Dick Olson, Dennis Norton, Rob Archibald, Steve Dodson and Aime Wichtendahl. Staff present: City Administrator Kim Downs, Fire Chief Mike Nesslage, Deputy Fire Chief Training Matt Powers and Hiawatha Fire Members: Zach Brunscheen, Greg Brenneman, Brad Ransford, John Zlabek and Jed Hobbs. Guests: Daniel Hoffmann.

Olson moved the approval of the agenda, seconded by Dodson. Motion carried.

Presentation by Mike Tucker – Fire Department Master Plan
Mike Tucker presented results of the Fire Department Master Plan.

Executive Summary:
Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI) was engaged by the City of Hiawatha (City) to conduct a Master Plan in support of the City's fire/ambulance services. This master plan will assist the City and fire department in the future planning and provision of comprehensive emergency services to the citizens of Hiawatha. This report is organized as a manner that evaluates current conditions; projects future growth, development, and service demand; and provides recommendations to enhance current services.

ESCI thanked the City and members of the Hiawatha Fire Department for their outstanding cooperation in the preparation of this report. All involved were candid in their comments and provided a tremendous amount of essential information. The ability of the ESCI team to receive this valuable input and information was key to the development of this plan.

The master plan begins with a review of stakeholder input and review of the current service delivery provided by Hiawatha Fire Department programs, administration, management, service delivery performance, and financial condition. All areas are evaluated and discussed in detail, and specific recommendations are provided where applicable.

Stakeholder Meetings:
To successfully establish and implement an effective master plan, it is critical to understand the functions that are most desired by the customers being served. As a part of this project, a facilitated stakeholder meeting was utilized to obtain community perspective regarding operations of the Hiawatha Fire Department.

ESCI conducted an internal stakeholder meeting in the month of October in an effort to gain the feedback and input of all persons involved in providing services the citizens of Hiawatha.

As with any organization, there are challenges and weaknesses that must be addressed. During these interviews, employees/volunteers were very willing to share their observations with the ESCI team. The willingness to share this information is an additional indicator of a healthy organization as each member was very respectful in the process of sharing their individual observations. Environments in which staff feel confident and safe in opening up are not common in the fire service. Specific concerns among internal stakeholders included the current fire station's location and functionality. Members indicated an inability to utilize the station for training because of the fact that many spaces are being utilized for other purposes and training must be conducted outside or in the bay area when apparatus are pulled out. Additional concerns were raised in that the station does not support overnight facilities for a diverse volunteer workforce. The current overnight areas negatively impacted the training locations within the station.

Council Member Archibald asked how many people were interviewed during this process.

Mike Tucker answered dozens of people including citizens and employees.

The general belief is that turnover tends to create a skill gap between new members and seasoned members. Any breakdown in the ability to recruit and retain members could reasonably be expected to negatively impact the future quality and effectiveness of the services provided by HFD.

The members indicated a lack of confidence in their own individual knowledge, skills, and abilities as being one of the key factors. This is an issue that is not unique to HFD as many volunteer fire departments are experiencing this same

issue. Understanding these concerns will be a significant area of focus for HFD leadership. Chief Nesslage has a strong confidence in the abilities of those serving officer roles and those who are interested in an officer role.

Council Member Dodson asked what the reason for the down trend was.

Tucker said less and less people are willing to step up and take on those responsibilities and those weaknesses are not unique to Hiawatha.

Current Service Demand
Hiawatha Fire Department serves the 7.4 square mile municipal boundary of the City of Hiawatha and an additional 43 square miles outside of the municipal boundaries of Hiawatha. In addition to the City, HFD provides service to Fayette Township, Monroe Township, the City of Palo and the City of Shellsburg.

As with most fire departments across the United States, the location of Hiawatha's fire station resulted from decisions made years in advance of the city's current configuration and size. The location and potential relocation of fire stations will be an ongoing challenge for the city of Hiawatha due to availability of land and space.

During the year 2017, emergency medical calls comprised 74 percent of the activity of the department. Fires accounted for 4 percent of the department's activity during this same period. It is not unusual for a very large percentage of a fire department's annual calls to be EMS-related.

Archibald asked how many of the 74 percent EMS calls were inside city limits and how much did those increase.

Fire Chief Nesslage said he will go back to look at the numbers of what percentage were inside city limits and Area Ambulance is getting 7 – 10 percent of the runs as mutual aid runs decreased in 2017 because of that.

Council Member Olson commented how interesting it would be to see what the breakdown is between fire and EMS calls.

Archibald also commented it would be interesting to see what the Police Department numbers are.

City Administrator said the Police Department numbers are pretty flat. Linn County is unable to document ambulance calls in addition to police dispatch.

Management Components
To be effective, the management of a fire department needs to be based on several components. One of the most significant management tools is the creation of a master plan. This plan is a roadmap for the future. It helps policymakers decide where the department desires to be in the long term. It is a strategic view that must be accepted and approved by the elected officials of Hiawatha.

To be effective an organization must have established appropriate documentation, policies, procedures, and identification of internal and external issues that affect the agency. Processes must be established to address the flow of information and communication within HFD, as well as with its constituents.

- The department has identified the increasing growth of the community as the most critical issue facing the department. Hiawatha has been experiencing increased growth. This growth has occurred as "in-fill" within the city's downtown area as well as the northwest portion of the city. The increased growth to the northwest is moving in a direction away from the City's existing fire station.

- The department has also recognized the issue of staffing as a critical issue facing the organization. As a combination fire department, Hiawatha is experiencing challenges with the retention of career personnel as larger neighboring departments have been successful in hiring Hiawatha's personnel.

- The current fire station has been identified as the third critical issue facing the organization. This has result in training areas being lost which has negatively impacted the ability of the department to conduct specific training activities.

- HFD has in place policies and procedures addressing documentation and recordkeeping. When properly administered by HFD personnel, this will ensure quality records are produced. As part of its official recordkeeping requirements, HFD has an established procedure for the public to access these records. This public access process has been reviewed by the City of Hiawatha's legal counsel.

- The City of Hiawatha has in place records retention policies to ensure this occurs. HFD provides for data security and long-term digital records retention through the City's MIS Department. The department also maintains specific records in a standard filing system within its offices.

- A review of Hiawatha's human resources processes and procedures indicates City leadership has continued to ensure these documents are current and relevant. The City recently updated (March 2018) and formally adopted the current employee handbook.

While the City does not recognize volunteer personnel as employees, the department has established certain benefits through to which volunteers are entitled. These benefits include education, training and a length of service program.

- HFD has not established an intentional recruitment program in an attempt to increase staffing levels among volunteer personnel. The formal process includes background checks, knowledge assessments, physical ability testing, and a multi-step interview process. Applicants also undergo a comprehensive medical physical prior to beginning to serve with the department.

Recruitment and retention of quality personnel was identified as one of the most significant issues facing the organization. It is recommended HFD continue to evaluate its recruitment and retention program and implement industry "best practices" as identified. This will be an ongoing issue for HFD and its leadership, but will prove to be highly beneficial as long as the community expects the department to operate a paid-on-call system.

- Need to implement an industry "best practices" in preventing fire fighter exposure to carcinogens.

Staffing and Personnel Management
The size and structure of an organization's staffing is dependent upon the specific needs of the agency. These needs must directly correlate to the needs of the community and a structure that works for one entity may not necessarily work for another agency.

This seven percent (7%) ratio represent the department's current administrative staffing levels compared to an existing operations staffing level of 56 emergency response personnel. For the purposes of this analysis ESCI allocates one human resources staff member to the department. The rationale for this allocation is due to the fact that the human resources function is not being managed within the fire department. Effective administrative staffing ratios range from 12 to 15 percent of agency totals. ESCI concludes that the number of FTEs assigned is low and the addition of specific FTE positions will be beneficial to the effective operation of the department.

Archibald asked if the seven percent administrative staffing could be defined.

Tucker said the actual physical people are the seven percent administrative staffing.

- The current number of positions assigned to this activity are below what is generally considered to be sufficient to meet these expectations. At the time of this report, Hiawatha was evaluating the feasibility of establishing the position of Fire Marshal to provide oversight to the department's fire prevention activities.

- The Hiawatha Fire Department does not employ any form of administrative support personnel. The absence of this function requires each of the chief officers to address various departmental demands that ultimately takes

them away from addressing other critical issues. The presence of an administrative support person allows for the department to more effectively address citizen inquiries, organize meetings, manage calendars, and facilitate access to chief officers with departmental personnel.

This system has worked well for Hiawatha, but has not been without its challenges. Because of increasing call volumes and challenges associated with volunteer personnel having the ability to consistently respond during "working" hours. This fact has required Hiawatha to add a small number of paid positions to the department and may be required to add further paid staff in the future.

The department has been able to hire one paramedic to cover a twenty four hour period with an attendant (i.e. driver) coming from part-time or volunteer members. This arrangement has allowed for the department to cover what most fire departments would consider the A-shift. The department then utilizes part time and volunteer paramedics to provide coverage for the B and C shift timeframes. While effective, the reliance upon chief officers to respond as members of an ambulance transport unit has negative impacts upon the work product of the individual, as well as program outcomes of the department.

The call volume within the service area protected by Hiawatha service area has increased by an average of approximately 4% per year from 2013 thru 2017. It is reasonable to expect this level of increase to continue into the foreseeable future which will have an impact upon the department's ability effectively respond to calls for service. At the current level of approximately 1,200 incidents per year it will remain possible to expect volunteer members to support HFD's ambulance operations. However, it has been ESCI's experience that as departments begin to approach 1,500 calls for service annually volunteer members begin to experience increased difficulty in responding to emergency incidents. It is recommended that Hiawatha evaluate the addition of two paramedics to allow for 24 hour coverage seven days per week.

It is important to understand that the assembly of firefighters on an incident, also called an "Effective Firefighting Force" or "Effective Response Force," is a determination that is made at the community level based on risk, capability, and citizen expectations.

One of the future challenges facing Hiawatha is the ability to recruit and retain individuals willing to commit to the training and response requirements of being a firefighter. While the department has been working diligently to recruit and train individuals to bring volunteer membership to a maximum level the efforts have been relatively unfruitful. Hiawatha has an authorized volunteer level of 65 members, but at the time of ESCI's site visit Hiawatha only had a volunteer force of 50 members.

Fire and EMS Training Delivery

Providing safe and effective fire and emergency services requires a well-trained workforce.

For training to be fully effective, it should be based on established standards. Hiawatha utilizes the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) job performance requirements, International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA) training materials, and the Iowa Fire Service Training Bureau as the basis for its fire suppression training practices, and national Emergency Medical Services standards are used as the baseline for medical training coursework.

Hiawatha does not currently have a defined officer development program. It was understood that challenges exist in getting members to "step into" permanently assigned officer roles due to a lack of confidence in their individual experiences and training. It is recommended that the department establish a formal officer development program. The department should include a mixture of "tabletop" training programs as well as simulation based training whenever possible. Additionally, all officers should attend Fire Officer III and IV whenever possible.

To function effectively, a training program needs to be intentionally managed. Administrative program support is important, though often minimally provided. An additional element of effective administration is the development of program guidance in the form of training planning, goals, and defined objectives. Hiawatha has an established training program manager (Deputy Chief) responsible for program oversight. The training committee is an eight member team established to evaluate the department's training activities and establishing future training efforts. Hiawatha does not have established goals as part of its official training activities.

- It is recommended the department establish training goals and objectives to ensure the department is achieving its desired outcomes to function effectively, a training program needs to be intentionally managed.

In total the department has 16 certified instructors within the ranks of the department. In addition to in-house training programs, the department utilizes a simulation lab located at Kirkwood Community College on an annual basis to train and evaluate EMS skills.

Overall, the department places a high priority on training. Challenges do exist in ensuring departmental members attend training sessions.

- It is recommended Hiawatha Fire Department implement an accountability program designed to ensure all members of the department are held to an established standard relative to attendance at training sessions. Many departments have experienced success in the utilization of a "point system" to ensure members attend and participate in departmental training sessions.

- Hiawatha did not have an establish requirement for the number of hours required per member for either firefighter or EMS training. The only annual requirement for hours are those driven by the need to recertify EMS certifications. Training occurs within the "duty-assignment" environment. Without the presence of an established minimum number of training hours in place, the department will fail in holding individual members accountable for training activities.

    - Hiawatha utilizes formal lesson plans in the delivery of its training. Classroom training sessions are expected to culminate into students utilizing manipulative skills to demonstrate skill mastery. Lesson plans are based off of industry standards specific to the skill being taught (i.e. fire or EMS). Hiawatha also conducts night training on a monthly basis and multiagency training session occurring twice annually. It is worth noting that multiagency training drills occur with a limited number of mutual aid partners.

    - The department has an established schedule for conducting MCI and / or active shooter training. The department is to be commended for committing to these types of activities. Hiawatha Fire Department has also recently begun the process of conducting pre-fire plans as part of their training activities.

    - Relative to firefighter safety, Hiawatha Fire Department has in place key factors intended to improve the safety of its members. The department also has in place SOP 650: Critique of Emergency Operations which outlines the process of conducting after-action reviews.

    - Hiawatha Fire Department did not have a formal training manual in place. Without an adopted training manual each officer is left to deliver the training of a specific subject matter in the manner and technique of their choosing. It is important to ensure all "duty crews" are providing the same training.

- ESCI recommends the implementation of an online training program to further maximize the training opportunities of departmental members. While it is not possible to conduct all training in the online environment. This allows members to gain a general understanding of the training in an asynchronous manner and then further develop the skill. These online learning platforms also allow for new and updated policies / procedures to be distributed to all members of the department and ensure everyone reads and confirms receipt of the information.

Archibald asked if you would see the online training lessen the burden on volunteer time or as a replacement of other training.

Tucker answered it would lessen the burden of volunteer time and to replace some of the other training.

Historically, Hiawatha Fire Department has conducted nearly all training activities at its fire station. However, due to the need to utilize existing space for other activities training space has become very limited.

In addition, Hiawatha must leave its response area whenever the need arises to conduct live fire training activities. To accomplish this, the department must utilize facilities at Kirkwood Community College, Cedar Rapids Fire Department, or Coralville Fire Department.

- It is recommended Hiawatha Fire Department explore the feasibility of establishing a training location within the City. In recognizing there may ultimately be a need for a second fire station within the City, a potential training facility could be located on that site until service demands increases to the point a fire station is warranted.

Archibald asked if he would see a city of 7,000 have their own live fire training facility.

Tucker said it is not uncommon to see cities of this size to have their own live fire training.

Hiawatha Fire Department has transitioned all training record keeping activities to Emergency Reporting records management system. As a result, all records are maintained in a digital format and can be easily accessed for analysis and reporting.

Fire Prevention and Public Education:
From interviews conducted during the site visit, it was clear that City officials and fire department leadership (1) are committed to the department's fire and life safety programs, and (2) clearly understand the significance of having a valid, credible, and high-quality fire prevention and education program, as discussed here. It is imperative that the City and Department continue to work together to ensure seamless and consistent regulatory review, code enforcement, and fire investigation activities.

Best practices dictate that the best way to effectively increase life safety is to prevent fires and other emergencies rather than respond to them.

Requirements for automatic fire detection, notification, and protection systems (FPS) have been adopted as part of the city's building and fire codes.

Providing fire and life safety education to the public to minimize the number of emergencies while training the community to take appropriate actions when an emergency occurs is essential.

- Public education and outreach is assigned to the Fire Marshal; the Department has not established a full-time Community Risk Reduction Specialist/Public Education Officer position within the organization. This role is filled currently by volunteers and part-time personnel who are normally assigned to other duties. This program has worked well and that trend is expected to continue. However, the Department should have one or more people trained and certified in accordance with the requirements of NFPA 1035 to receive full prevention staffing credit from ISO.

- HFD does not conduct any origin and cause investigations; likewise, no personnel are currently trained and certified in accordance with the requirements of NFPA 1033.

- It would be beneficial for all fire officers to be competent and able to conduct an initial investigation to determine the origin and cause (O & C) of all fires. For this to occur, all fire officers and the Fire marshal would require appropriate training and certification in accordance with NFPA 1033 and NFPA 921.

In June 2018, the City of Hiawatha was assigned an ISO classification of Group 3/3X. The City of Hiawatha is one of 36 communities out of 1,715 communities surveyed across the State of Iowa to achieve a Class 3 rating. As such, Hiawatha ranks in the top 4 percent of all communities surveyed.

Emergency Communications:
Emergency communications is an integral part of every first responder system. It is important to recognize the vital role that communicators play in operational efficiency and the delivery of services.

Archibald asked what can't Linn County provide us and what are the percentages that are in town and out of town

Nesslage said Linn County is unable to document times due to an older system that has their data in it. We have not figured out how to pull that data yet.

Archibald asked what NFP says for turnout times.

Tucker answered they don't address turnout times.

- Olson commented it wouldn't hurt to show this data to Cedar Rapids as they don't have a fire station over here and have Cedar Rapids build the station and have a 28E Agreement with them.

Tucker said he would encourage Council to have those conversations with surrounding areas.

Capital Assets and Assessment of Current Infrastructure:
The mission of the department has changed since that time to include emergency medical services and the need to have members occupy the facility for 24 hour operational periods. It is also important to note that the station's apparatus bays are considered "back-in" and poses a significant safety concern for firefighters when units return to the station.

- It is recommended Hiawatha conduct an analysis of the existing facility using NFPA 1500: Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety, Health, and Wellness Program, and NFPA 1720: Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments as guiding documents. It is also recommended Hiawatha utilize these same documents in planning for any future facilities.

- The department has a fire engine (E285) that is approaching 30 years in age and an aerial (T1) that is 18 years in age. The ages of these two units are in excess what is consider to be acceptable.

Future System Demand and Models:
Hiawatha can expect to experience 1.5% increase of calls with the majority attributed to emergency medical calls.

Development of Response Standards:
ESCI analyzed the response coverage for a four-minute travel time from the existing station. The process of setting response time performance objectives will include two primary questions:

- What are the expectations of the community and elected officials regarding initial response times of the fire department to an emergency incident? What is the public's perception of quality emergency services where response time is concerned?
- What response time performance would be reasonable and effective in containing fire, stopping the loss, and saving lives when considering the common types of incidents and fire risks faced by Hiawatha Fire Department?

There being no further discussion, Archibald moved to adjourn at 7:38 P.M., second by Wichtendahl. Motion carried.

_____
Bill Bennett, Mayor

ATTEST:

_____
Kari Graber, Deputy Clerk