



CITY OF TOPEKA FIRE COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Date: January 21, 2021

Time: 6:00 pm

Location: Virtual

Commissioners present:

CM Sylvia Ortiz

CM C Valdivia-Alcala

Chief Craig Duke

Captain Jason Broadbent

City Manager Brent Trout

Deputy Chief Ty Christian

Sandra Clear

Pablo Martinez

David King

Christopher Sullivan

CM Mike Lesser

Commissioners absent:

Sandra Clear, Co-chair, called the meeting to order.

Ms. Clear asked if there were any corrections to the December 17, 2020 minutes. Ms. Clear also asked that numbers be spelled out and that we specifically identify titles of those making presentations. Ms. Clear called for a vote to accept the minutes. All in favor. Minutes accepted.

Ms. Clear referenced an email that had been previously sent to Commission members with the following questions to answer:

1. Do we want a fire service that responds to fire and medical calls? Ms. Clear polled the board and the answer was a unanimous yes.
2. What is the recommended targeted response time to any call for service? Ms. Clear asked City Manager Brent Trout if we had goals to consider. Mr. Trout responded that tonight's presentation would give us some goals to consider.
3. Is there merit in exploring the use of a sports utility vehicle to respond to medical calls versus a fire apparatus? Councilwoman Ortiz responded that in exploring these issues we will discover the fire truck is needed at all times. There is no time to change out vehicles, if they get another call.
4. Should we only send two firefighters on a medical call, so that in case a fire call comes in, the fire truck can still respond with one person and the medical call personnel can respond from their location directly to the fire?

Topeka Ambulance Service FIRST

Mr. Jon Antrim, Regional Director, Global Medical Response, presented an overview of subsidiary American Medical Response (AMR) including their history, coverage areas, contract specifics, response times, practices, equipment and economic impacts.

Questions for Mr. Antrim:

- Ms. Clear asked for a copy of the presentation and asked for clarification of response times.

Average response time: Nine (9) minutes emergency; Fourteen (14) minutes non-emergency

2018 Local response times: 5:47 emergency/7:36 non-emergency

2019 Local response times: 6:09 emergency/8:18 non-emergency

2020 Local response times: 5:58 emergency/7:36 non-emergency

- How many average number of ambulances are usually on the street?
Peak deployment is nine ALS (Advanced Life Support) and one BLS (Basic Life Support).
- How many times on average is an ambulance just sitting waiting?
AMR tries to keep ambulances busy. Frequently, more calls come in than there are ambulances available. AMR relies on response times and compliance to their contract as measurements.
- How many times has an ambulance been unavailable?
Mr. Antrim replied that he could get that answer.
- If no one is available, what happens?
There are strict protocols in place to be sure assistance is provided.
- Ms. Clear asked for data regarding how many calls have come in and no one is available to respond and what percentage of ambulances are usually busy. Mr. Antrim stated that he could provide that data.
- How much is a life care membership?
Information is available on the AMR website. The cost is \$65.00 - \$85.00 annually.
- How is recruitment going for paramedics?
AMR has taken steps to aid in recruitment. In January the salary was increased significantly. AMR also provides scholarships, training and partners with local technical schools such as Barton Technical College. There is a shortage of paramedics across the United States and recruitment is difficult.
- Councilwoman Valdivia-Alcala commented that she liked the presentation of innovative practices and believes this would be a good move to provide care for non-emergency calls. Mr. Antrim responded that education will be a key component to communicate that calling 911 would not result in a fire truck and ambulance each time.
- Councilwoman Ortiz asked about in-house training. Mr. Antrim responded that they had stopped in-house training and were partnering with technical schools so that they were not competing with the technical schools. Councilwoman Ortiz asked about the availability of scholarships. Mr. Antrim replied that AMR had budgeted funds and that collegiate assistance would also be available.
- Do you know how many units are on the street at one time?
Mr. Antrim replied that he could get those statistics.

A further inquiry was made regarding other counties where AMR operates and how many ambulances were available to Shawnee County. Mr. Antrim responded that there were nine ambulances available to Shawnee County and those resources were not shared with other counties except for the exception of the need for mutual aid.

- What about transfer services for hospitals?

Mr. Antrim responded that the priority is 911 calls. Yes, we do inter-facility transports, if we are not busy, but not more than one at a time. There are other agencies that provide inter-facility transport.

Future of Fire Service and Medical Call Service

Presentation by Richard Sigle, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Division Chief and Craig Duke, City of Topeka Fire Chief.

There is currently a movement from service to a provider - reinventing the way of delivering service; becoming outcome focused and benchmarking. EMS Division Chief Sigle presented current Topeka Fire Department (TFD) EMS response times/travel times, TFD EMS benchmarks, a paramedic program update, and information regarding alternative response vehicles.

Average Response times (from dispatch to on scene)
2018: Average = 5:38 (8 min or less 88% of the time)
2019: Average = 5:42 (8 min or less 87% of the time)
2020: Average = 5:48 (8 min or less 87% of the time)

NFPA 1710 2020 Standards for Travel Time: BLS travel time of 4 minutes and ALS travel time of 8 minutes.

2018: Average = 3:57 (90th percentile was 6:29)
2019: Average = 4:05 (90th percentile was 6:36)
2020: Average = 4:10 (90th percentile was 6:40)

Wait Time (Time waiting for an ambulance) – 2020 average 4:58

Recommendations:

- Adoption or establishment of TFD EMS Benchmarks
- Adoption or establishment of TFD EMS response and travel times
- Adoption of a combination of ambulance and alternative response plan

Questions for Chief Sigle:

- What are the odds that all fire trucks would be out and a call would come in for ALS?
Topeka is unique. We are 100% dependent on ourselves. Our guys do a good job of prioritizing, redeploying and getting where they are needed. Additional ALS throughout the community would help.

- How many paramedics do we have?
Topeka has twelve paramedics. In the future, we will need to address the need for more paramedics as people retire and promote.
- What is the cost to implement everything that we need?
TFD has estimates. Fire Chief Duke and City Manager Trout will address that issue.
- How much money is needed for a paramedic unit?
City Manager Trout replied that we have been utilizing \$100,000 that was allocated for an ALS pilot program. Those funds have been depleted. Cost varies depending on equipment needed, supplies, and wages. A 2019 presentation to the City Council by EMS Division Chief Sigle would specify those numbers. This presentation was sent to the Fire Commissioners as supplemental material by Fire Chief Duke.
- Is our goal the continuation of our current program of ten active paramedics and two in administrative roles? Or what other additions?
Yes, we would like to continue the current program and possibly move forward adding more response vehicles – alternative vehicles or an ambulance. An ambulance would generate revenue.
- Do you have any recommendations regarding alternative response vehicles that were mentioned in the strategic plan?
We are looking for feedback from this commission.

Councilwoman Valdivia-Alcala commented that with the expansion of commission duties and the voluminous information received, the commission needs compact, concise information and guidance.

Ms. Clear responded that the questions that are being sent to the Commission are meant to act as a guide. There are four questions in front of the Commission at this time and we may need to be able to explain how we arrived at our answers to those questions.

City Manager Trout added that as the meetings continue, more questions will be added and the questions will be expanded upon.

Councilwoman Valdivia-Alcala asked when a hazard risk assessment would be completed. Fire Chief Duke responded that data collection would begin at the end of the month. The department has received a grant to help. Councilwoman Valdivia-Alcala asked when the study would be completed. Fire Chief Duke responded that it would be five to six months. Councilwoman Valdivia-Alcala asked if a study had been done in the past. Fire Chief Duke replied to his knowledge, a full study had not been done, but a county study had been done regarding hazardous materials being transported through the community and that study had been presented to Council last year. Councilwoman Valdivia-Alcala asked to be provided a copy. Fire Chief Duke replied that he would send it electronically.

Councilwoman Ortiz asked that the Commission meetings be placed on the website so that Commissioners and the public could listen to them at a later date and have a place to submit questions.

Ms. Clear asked the Commission to be sure and review the questions the Commission has been tasked with answering.

City Manager Trout stated that the Commission would receive any information one week before the meeting for review.

Errin Mahan, Interim Director, Shawnee County Emergency Management, stated that in the matters of hazard and risk assessment (Tier 2 reporting), Shawnee County does have some information to provide to Topeka Fire Department.

Councilwoman Valdivia-Alcala expressed concern that the Commission won't have all the necessary information by the time the Commission needs to give their recommendation to the City Council.

Meeting adjourned 8:00 p.m.

Next Meeting

Thursday, February 18, 2021, 6:00 pm. (Virtual Online)