



Conor M. Baldwin
Chief Financial Officer

Allison Chamber
Deputy CFO

MEMORANDUM

TO: Eileen M. Donoghue, City Manager *EMD*

FROM: Conor Baldwin, Chief Financial Officer *CB*

CC: Phil Charron, Fire Chief

DATE: February 1, 2021

SUBJECT: MOTION RESPONSE: 1/26/21 - C. Mercier - Req. City Mgr. Provide A Report And Update Containing A Plan On Fire Station Closings With An Objective To Reduced Closures In Furtherance Of Public Safety.

MOTION RESPONSE: 1/26/21 - C. Rourke - Req. City Mgr. Have LFD Chief Provide An Update Regarding Brownouts In The City.

In response to the above referenced motions, the finance department has generated an analysis, using data from the city's MUNIS system regarding some of the financial factors which impact company closings in the Lowell Fire Department. These factors include overtime, accrued P.T.O. (vacation, sick, etc.), the department's annual budget appropriation, as well as any supplemental funding which may be available through grants. A copy of the financial report is attached. The Fire Chief, who will be available to address any questions from the Council, has affirmed that the department will be able to reduce the number of company closings, moving forward.

At its peak in the late 1980s, the Lowell Fire Department ("LFD") employed 256 firefighters. Multiple staff reductions since then, including 32 firefighters being laid off in 1992, have reduced the staffing level significantly. The department staffing actually fell as low as 185 firefighters in the mid to late 1990s. For several years the staffing level was at 201, however, in 2015 the LFD received federal funding to hire 12 new firefighters, bringing the total of firefighters to 213. It is important to note that despite the new hires, the staffing level is still 17% lower than the peak staffing level of 256 firefighters. These staffing issues have constrained the department's ability to keep a maximum number of companies open. However, despite the loss of the federal funding that allowed the city to bring the number of budgeted firefighters to 213, the City Council and Administration have continued to fund the department at the 213 level each fiscal year through to the current FY2021 budget.

The Lowell Fire Department has also faced staffing challenges associated with the COVID-19 public health emergency. Through November of FY2021, 45 firefighters had to quarantine due to testing positive or being exposed to the virus. At one point in this time period, the LFD had 17 firefighters out at the same time. The Department has responded to this challenge by scheduling more overtime shifts. Although staffing shortages have posed



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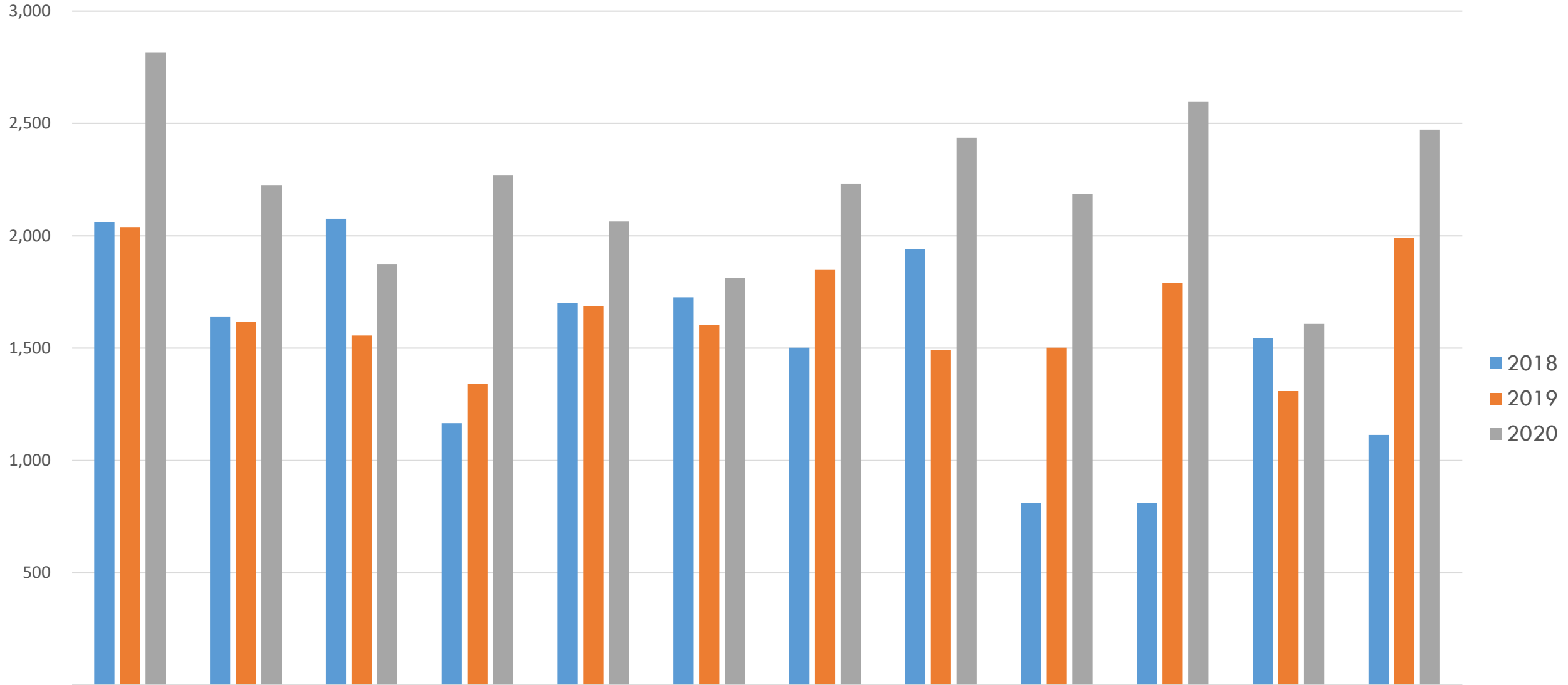
challenges, the COVID-19 impact has put an extra strain on available overtime funding available to cover sick time, vacation and injuries. In the past, limitations on overtime resulted in 651 brownouts in FY15 and 669 brownouts in FY16. As a result of the added staffing and the funding provided by EOPSS through the Massachusetts Municipal Staffing Grant, there were only 266 brownouts in FY17, 362 in FY18, 321 in FY19, and 324 in FY20. Despite this 60% reduction in the number of brownouts between FY16 and FY17, there was a 36.1% increase in FY18. In FY19, the number of brown outs decreased compared to FY18, however only by 11.3% this time. There was a 0.93% increase in the number of brownouts between FY19 and FY20.

In the current fiscal year, however, the City is able to use available CARES Act funding to assist with funding overtime directly related to COVID-19. In December, Congress extended the deadline for use of CARES Act funding from 12/30/2020 to 12/31/2021, which will allow the City to use unspent federal dollars to assist in the effort to keep stations open and reduce company closings by hiring additional staff on overtime.

As of the date of this memorandum, the Fire Department has only expended 34.9% of its annual appropriation for overtime. The use of CARES Act funding has afforded the department the ability to reduce the reliance on its General Fund overtime appropriation, which should be sufficient to sustain the reduced number of closings through at least the end of the current fiscal year. Additionally, because of vacancies and retirements, the current rate of spending in the LFD budget account for permanent salaries & wages is indicative that a surplus will be available in that account by year-end, which may be available to supplement any overtime needs, should they arise, without impacting the overall bottom-line for the department budget in FY2021.

Please let me know if there are any questions.

2018 - 2020 IAFF SICK TIME USAGE (HOURS)



	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
2018	2,060	1,638	2,076	1,166	1,702	1,726	1,502	1,940	812	812	1,546	1,114
2019	2,036	1,616	1,556	1,342	1,688	1,602	1,848	1,492	1,502	1,791	1,309	1,990
2020	2,816	2,226	1,872	2,268	2,064	1,812	2,232	2,436	2,186	2,598	1,608	2,472

FY2020 LFD OVERTIME AND SICK LEAVE USAGE (HOURS)



FIRE DEPARTMENT BUDGET – EXPENSE & PERFORMANCE

EXPENSE DETAILS

<u>FIRE DEPARTMENT - 220</u>	<u>FY18 Actual</u>	<u>FY19 Actual</u>	<u>FY20 Approved</u>	<u>FY21 Request</u>	<u>FY21 Manager</u>
<u>Personnel</u>					
Salaries & Wages -Perm	15,355,519	15,842,281	16,291,267	17,741,894	17,738,063
Apparatus Detail Pay	32,103	31,142	41,200	41,200	41,200
Overtime	841,600	791,600	741,600	800,000	750,000
Overtime - Public Education	15,914	15,914	15,914	15,914	15,914
Overtime/Holiday	220,888	224,876	218,000	237,522	237,522
Holiday	970,693	1,014,430	1,028,632	1,115,803	1,115,803
Longevity	5,965	6,385	9,000	7,000	7,000
Court Time	2,200	238	2,200	2,200	2,200
Out of Grade Compensation	137,387	143,837	137,387	148,853	148,853
Hazardous Material Compensation	(492)	(1,387)	35,000	35,000	35,000
Buy Back Vacation (IOD)	30,095	111,283	50,000	120,000	75,000
Outside Funding			(317,892)	(102,629)	(252,629)
Total	17,611,873	18,180,599	18,252,308	20,162,757	19,913,926

PERFORMANCE METRICS

Measurement	Prior Year Actuals		YTD ⁵³	FY21
	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	Target
Fires, Total	397	374	234	351
- Building Fires	69	76	37	56
- Vehicle Fires	31	30	18	27
- Cooking Fires	159	142	87	131
- Other Fires	138	138	97	146
Rescues/EMS Calls, Total	10,376	9,865	6,451	9,677
- Med Assist, assist EMS crew	9,051	8,543	5,599	8,399
- Motor Vehicle Accidents	1,051	1,028	655	982
- Other Rescue	274	294	197	296
Hazardous Conditions Calls	823	721	410	615
Service Calls	1,436	1,214	859	1,288
Good Intent Calls	757	777	468	702
False Calls, Total	2,665	2,718	1,911	2,867
- Malicious Calls	84	83	58	87
- Other False Calls	2,581	2,635	1,853	2,780
Other Calls	275	81	36	54
TOTAL CALLS	16,729	15,041	10,369	15,553
Company Closings (Brownouts)	362	321	257	427
Number of inspections performed by Fire Companies	660	660	376	660
Number of inspections performed by Fire Prevention Inspectors	3,442	3,359	2,387	3,581
Number receiving fire safety instruction (Adults & Children)	21,341	9,692	4,013	6,019

FY2021 OT BY DEPARTMENT (General Fund OT - ONLY)

DEPARTMENT	2021 Original OT Budget	2021 Revised OT Budget	YTD Spend	Percent Spent
LOWELL POLICE DEPARTMENT	\$ 900,000.00	\$ 900,000.00	\$ 443,788.55	49.3%
LOWELL FIRE DEPARTMENT	\$ 1,003,436.00	\$ 1,032,436.00	\$ 348,693.24	33.8%
DPW - SNOW AND ICE	\$ 200,000.00	\$ 183,167.00	\$ 80,328.22	43.9%
DPW - L&B	\$ 125,000.00	\$ 125,000.00	\$ 44,280.89	35.4%
DPW - PARKS	\$ 116,438.00	\$ 116,438.00	\$ 37,494.92	32.2%
DPW - STREETS	\$ 21,000.00	\$ 21,000.00	\$ 32,207.13	153.4%
DPW - ENGINEERING	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 13,655.21	91.0%
DPD - ISD	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 8,015.75	40.1%
DPW - CEMETERY	\$ 18,125.00	\$ 18,125.00	\$ 6,139.02	33.9%
MIS	\$ 6,500.00	\$ 6,500.00	\$ 2,247.72	34.6%
MANAGER - CASE	\$ 19,000.00	\$ 19,000.00	\$ 1,263.74	6.7%
HHS - HEALTH	\$ 1,540.00	\$ 1,540.00	\$ 842.84	54.7%
ELECTIONS	\$ 14,001.00	\$ 14,001.00	\$ 677.48	4.8%
HHS - REC	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,000.00	\$ -	
HHS - COA	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ -	
Grand Total	\$ 2,464,040.00	\$ 2,476,207.00	\$ 1,019,634.71	

LFD COVID-19 OT COSTS = \$258,643.83 (as of 1/17/2021)
Charged to Special Revenue Fund # 1931, pursuant to DOR guidance

CITY OF LOWELL – FIRE DEPARTMENT COMPANY CLOSINGS A.K.A. “BROWN OUTS”

FY2015	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021*
651	672	266	362	321	324	492

Data Source: Fiscal Year Budget, as reported by Lowell FD

In January of 2021, The Council accepted a grant from the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security regarding the FY2021 Municipal Staffing award in the amount of One Hundred Thousand (\$100,000.00) Dollars over a one year period which will enable the Fire Department to provide funding to schedule overtime shifts, to help cover firefighters who are out injured, sick or on vacation. Additionally, this will help decrease the amounts of brownouts (closing of a fire company).