



To: East Greenwich Town Council
From: Gayle Corrigan, Town Manager
Re: **Fire Department Reorganization Proposals and Presentation of Immediate Action Plan**
Date: April 9, 2018

Fire Department Platoon Reorganization Proposals

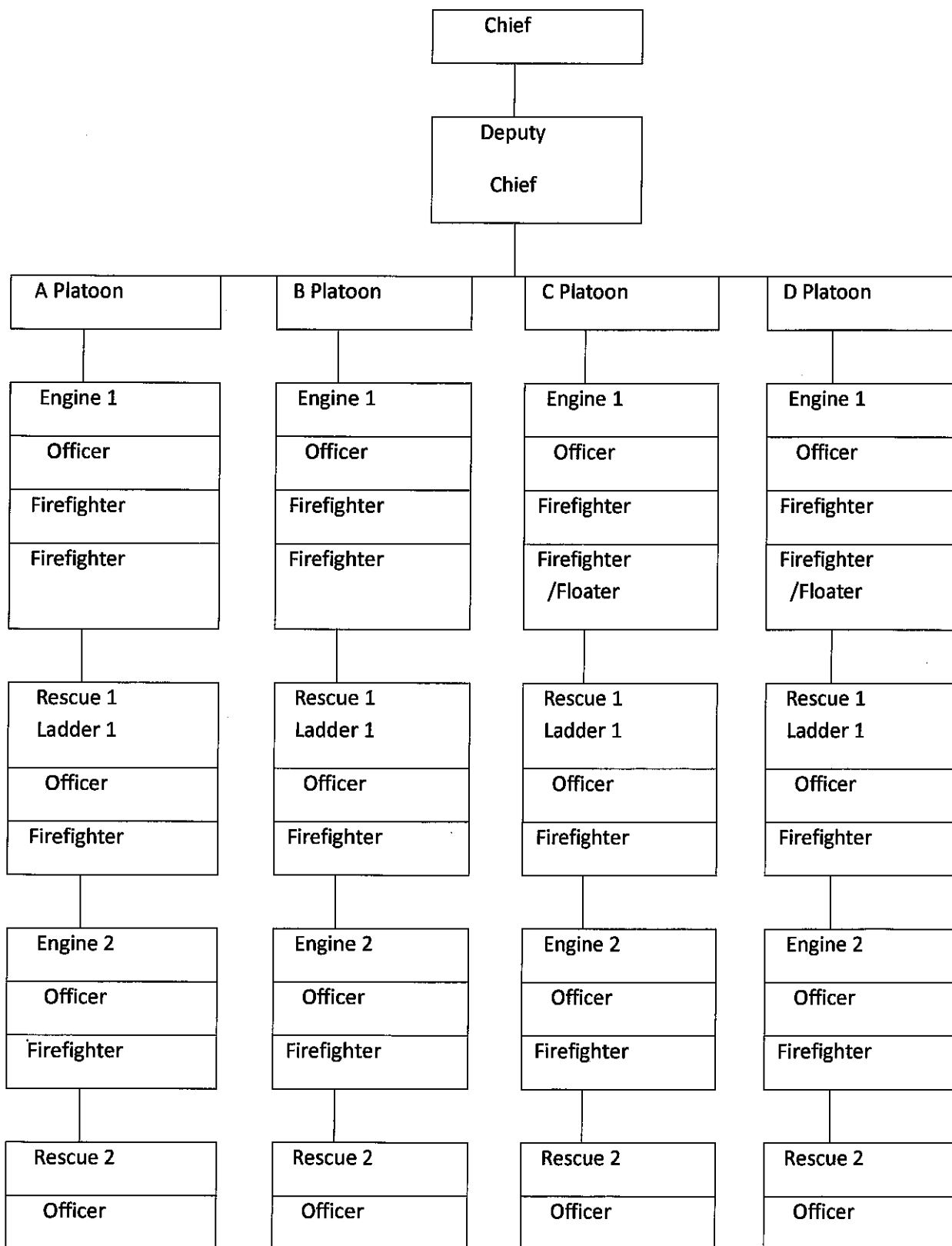
Current Four Platoon, 42-Hour Workweek Structure

Currently, the East Greenwich Fire Department's line firefighting personnel are organized into a four platoon, 42-hour workweek structure. The current four platoon structure consists of four platoons, or groups, of firefighters. Each of the four platoons is assigned to a non-overlapping, four-platoon work schedule that results in firefighters being on-duty for an average of 42-hours per week over the course of the year. The firefighters' current collective bargaining agreement ("CBA") contains the following four platoon work schedule:

The regular work schedule for employees assigned to the four platoon system shall be: ten (10) hours on duty followed by fourteen (14) hours off duty, followed by ten (10) hours on duty, followed by twenty-four (24) hours off duty, followed by fourteen (14) hours on duty, followed by ninety-six hours off duty. The ten hour day shift shall begin at 0700 hours and end at 1700 hours. The fourteen hour night shift shall begin at 1700 hours and end at 0700 hours.

Currently (fiscal year 2018), the Fire Department maintains eight firefighting positions plus one floater on two of the four platoons, and it maintains nine firefighting positions on the other two platoons. The current organizational chart within the four-platoon organizational structure is as follows:

East Greenwich Fire Department (4 Platoon System)



Firefighter

Firefighter

Firefighter

Firefighter

As documented in Chief Robinson's report to the Town Manager dated April 6, 2018, in fiscal year 2019 with the planned elimination of the two remaining floater positions, the Fire Department overtime expectation is \$1,200,880. This estimate is an increase over the current fiscal year budgeted overtime of \$650,000.

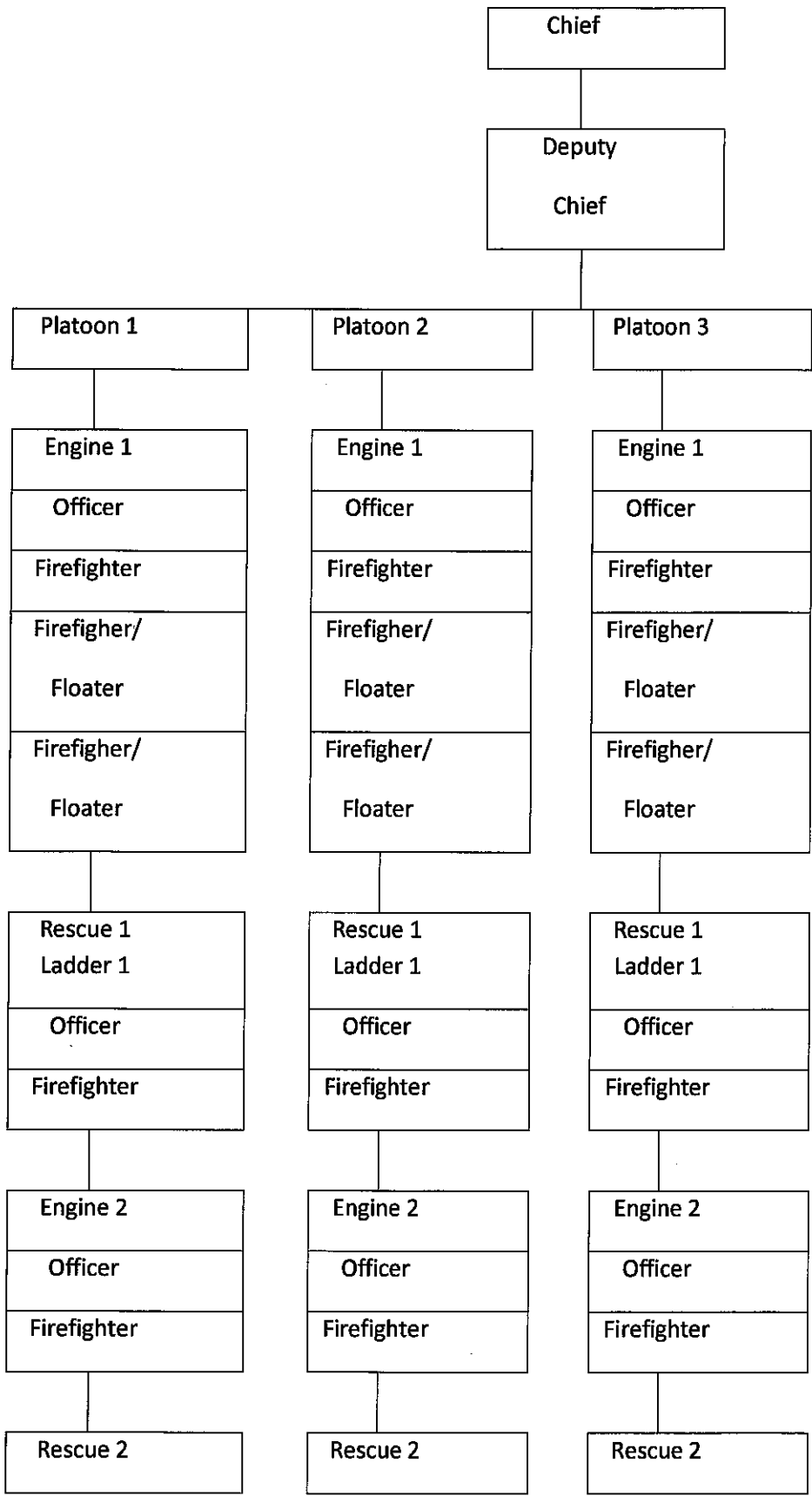
It is important to remember that overtime is not just a fiscal concern, but also a safety concern. With overtime expected to increase above the current levels experienced in the present fiscal year, which are already higher than budgeted, there are increased pressures on the firefighter personnel to continue to perform the essential job functions. It is well known from various reports from the Department of Health and Human Services section of the Center for Disease Control ("CDC"), and other agencies, that there is a connection between extensive overtime and long working hours and increased illness, injuries and performance issues. The current personnel structure of the Fire Department is simply not conducive to the maximum safety and performance of the Town's firefighting personnel.

Proposed Three Platoon, 56-Hour Workweek Structure

Due to the recognized fiscal and, more importantly, health, safety and wellness concerns from such extensive overtime hours, I recommend that the Town reorganize the Fire Department into a three platoon, 56-hour workweek structure. Each platoon would be assigned to a non-overlapping work schedule that results in firefighters being on-duty for an average of 56-hours per week over the course of the year. The firefighters' current collective bargaining agreement does not contain a three platoon, 56-hour workweek schedule. Therefore, unless and until a different schedule is agreed to during effects negotiations, I recommend that firefighters assigned to the three platoon, 56-hour workweek structure be assigned to the following work schedule:

Twenty-four (24) hours on-duty, followed by forty-eight (48) hours off duty.

Within this structure, I propose maintaining eight firefighting positions plus two floaters on each of the 3 platoons (the floaters would fill in on any apparatus and station). The following is the recommended Fire Department organizational chart:



Officer
Firefighter

Officer
Firefighter

Officer
Firefighter

We have previously discussed the benefits of adopting this organizational structure. Most significantly, this structure gives management the flexibility to maintain eight firefighting positions per platoon plus two floater positions per platoon, while reducing the overall size of the firefighting staff from 36 to 30 personnel. In other words, this structure allows the Town to assign two firefighter/floater positions to each platoon, while reducing the total size of the department by six firefighters. Moreover, the proposed schedule is one of, if not the, most common work schedule among paid fire departments in the US. Although each firefighter's regular shift schedule will increase from 42-hours per week to 56-hours per week, firefighters are working those hours now, but they are doing so on an irregular and unpredictable basis. It is precisely the irregular and unpredictable schedule that forms the basis for increased health, safety and wellness concerns. A more predictable schedule, with increased opportunities for time off to recuperate, will result in a safer work environment and should improve overall operational readiness and effectiveness.

I recommend that the Town Council effectuate the reduction in force through a layoff pursuant to Section C-109.2(D) of the Town's Charter, which states:

"The Town Council, notwithstanding any of the foregoing provisions, has the right to decrease the number of firefighters on the permanent Fire Department for the purpose of remaining within appropriations currently available for the payment of compensation with the Fire Department. For this purpose the Town Council shall, without making any charges and without cause, have the right to remove a firefighter or officer who are members of the permanent Fire Department. In any such case or cases, the Town Council shall order the removal of the firefighter or officer having the lowest rank and seniority in service. Any officers so removed have precedence in the order of their seniority over all other candidates for future appointments to the permanent Fire Department."

This recommended platoon reorganization will result in the reduction of five firefighter positions and four officer positions from the eliminated D-Platoon. The reorganization will also create three new firefighter / floater positions (one per platoon), for a total net reduction of six positions. Pursuant to Section C-109.2 of the Charter, upon implementation of the platoon reorganization, I recommend that the Town Council notify the four most junior officers and the five most junior firefighters that they are subject to layoff. Per the Charter, the Town should then offer the three new firefighter / floater positions to the affected officers and firefighters in the following order: first to the affected officers, by seniority; then to the affected firefighters by seniority.

I recommend that the Town Council adopt this platoon reorganization plan so that I may commence effects bargaining with the affected employees' union. *In doing so, however, I*

recommend that the Town suspend the full implementation of the plan and the effects thereof to allow the Superior Court to issue a decision in the Town of East Greenwich v. Local 3328, C.A. No. KC-2017-1276.

One factor that will affect the feasibility of this reorganization plan is the current staffing level and the number of firefighters out of work for injuries or other reasons. As of April 6, 2018, there are 20 firefighters and 16 officers employed by the Department, and a total of seven members out due to injury: five are receiving Injured-On-Duty benefits, while two are out of work due to off-the-job injuries. ***Prior to implementation, I recommend that the Town Council assess the number of firefighters out of work due to injury or other reasons to determine the feasibility of this recommended organizational structure and staffing model.***

Other Reorganization Proposals

In case it is not feasible to implement the platoon reorganization due to the overall staffing levels taking into account the injured personnel, or in the event the Town does not receive a favorable decision from the Superior Court in Town of East Greenwich v. Local 3328, C.A. No. KC-2017-1276, I recommend that the Town Council consider adopting an alternate reorganization plan, with the following action items that will, among other things, help further the mission of the Fire Department by correcting the staffing imbalance that is currently causing firefighters and officers to work excessive amounts of overtime.

1. Provide the Fire Chief with the authority and discretion to adjust, from time to time, the Fire Department's night time staffing to such level(s) that he deems to be safe and in the best interests of the Fire Department, as the Department's records show that calls for service at night are much fewer than during the daytime hours and major incidents result in automatic calls for mutual aid. For example, the Fire Chief has recommended that moving from nine to eight firefighters assigned at night, whether temporarily or permanently, would help reduce excessive overtime hours and result in a safer working environment for Fire Fighters.
2. Explore the legal and practical feasibility of reorganizing the Department's fire service to one that is comprised partially or predominately of volunteers and/or call persons. Analyze the potential reduction in working hours that would result from such a reorganization and any related cost/savings implications.
3. Explore the legal and practical feasibility of subcontracting EMS services to private and/or public-sector entities. Analyze the potential reduction in working hours that would result from such a reorganization and any related cost/savings implications. This would include a review and analysis of the potential for shared-services agreements with neighboring municipalities/fire districts.
4. If options 2 and 3 appear to be feasible, that is if they result in a necessary reduction of working hours, and if they do not exceed a reasonable and appropriate budget allocation for the Department, then the next step will be to develop an outline of additional action

steps and a timetable for making one or both of the changes. If expert services are expected to be needed to effect one or both of the transitions, identify what those services would be, and the long-term and short-term costs/savings of effecting each conversion.

I will provide the Council with a progress report on all of the above reorganization proposals on June 11, 2018.

Immediate Action Plan

Appointment of an Interim Deputy Fire Chief

The Deputy Fire Chief position is the second in command at the Fire Department. This chief officer position is an essential position that comes with significant responsibility. The Deputy Fire Chief must be able to take the lead in the absence of the Fire Chief, which includes the necessity to be able to handle administrative tasks as well as field operations. Given the various elements contained in the current CBA, the Deputy Fire Chief is responsible for coordination of the Wellness Initiative [CBA, Section 43]; administration of Collateral Duties [CBA, Section 7]; and training. We know from Interim Fire Chief Olsen's report and subsequent reports by Interim Fire Chief Robinson, that training records have been lacking, which not only creates practical safety concerns for fire suppression and EMS operations but can negatively impact the Town's ISO ratings.

Notwithstanding the fact that all firefighters should be conversant with the National Incident Management System ("NIMS") Incident Command System ("ICS") established by FEMA, the designated chain of command within the East Greenwich Fire Department contemplates both a Fire Chief and a Deputy Fire Chief. Under the CBA, "when the Chief and/or Deputy Chief(s) are not present at the scene of an emergency, the permanent captain shall be in command of the emergency until such time as the Chief and/or Deputy Chief(s) arrive at the scene." [CBA, Section 6-2 (n).] The CBA contains a similar provision guiding the role of Lieutenants: "When the Chief, Deputy Chief(s) and Captain(s) are not present at the scene of an emergency, the permanent lieutenant shall be in command of the emergency until such time as the Chief, Deputy Chief(s) or Captain(s) arrive at the scene." [CBA, Section 6-3 (c).] Despite these specific provisions that incorporate the NIMS/ICS protocols as part of the chain of command, there have been complaints from the firefighters that the Interim Fire Chief was unavailable for some incidents that occurred at time when he was not in Town. By having an Interim Deputy Fire Chief available for operational emergencies when the Interim Fire Chief is not available, the firefighters' stated concerns can be addressed. It also rounds out the overall management of the Fire Department by having a fuller compliment of administrative personnel.

I will make a recommendation for the appointment of an Interim Fire Chief at the May 14, 2018 Council meeting.

Rescue Run Billing

It is critical that the Town develop a complete analysis of the rescue recovery obtained through third-party billing for services rendered by the Fire Department. There are several variables that go into this analysis. The rates set for services should be standardized and should reflect similar rates from neighboring communities. Collections policies and the efficacy of collection should be scrutinized to ensure that the Town is achieving the maximum but most reasonable (i.e. collectable) recovery for services rendered that may be billed. Part of the immediate action plan is for a RFP to be issued to evaluate the best third-party rescue recovery billing provider for the Town's benefit.

I will present a report and make a recommendation for an award of bid to a rescue recovery third-party billing provider at the May 14, 2018 Council meeting.

Analysis of Incidents to Achieve Actionable Information

As noted in the Town Manager's Report from March 26, 2018, when the Town-District merger occurred, a notable change in the way incidents were classified changed. The only discernable reason for the reclassification of certain service calls was to increase incident volume statistics at a time when incidents were decreasing (i.e. when Potowomut was no longer serviced by East Greenwich).

Whatever the reason for the reclassification, it is clear that a thorough review of incidents; incident volume; and how certain calls for service (including alarm re-sets; alarm testing; mutual aid; false alarms; etc.) are classified is necessary. The Interim Deputy Chief would take this analysis and reporting on as an essential administrative function designed to provide the Town with accurate, real-time information about service needs of the community. This reporting would also involve an analysis of the service capacity and efficacy of having more than one station staffed at all times. A natural progression of this drill-down for information would include analysis of staffing and capacity to determine whether shared service agreements would be more beneficial to fire suppression and EMS service staffing in the Town.

I will provide the Council with a report on the Fire Department's incident analysis on June 11, 2018.