

Portland Fire & Rescue

2010-2015 Strategic Plan Development



Steering Committee Meeting #2 Minutes

February 3, 2010
8:30 AM-1:00 PM

Members

Steering Committee Members

P	Doug Jones	P	Jim Fairchild	P	Glen Eisner	P	Kyle Wochnick
P	Scott Fisher	P	Elaine O'Keefe	P	Vince Wilson	P	Robert Kiningham
A	Sid Palmer	P	Nicolette Johnston	P	Jennifer Cooperman	P	John Klum
P	John Nohr	P	Mark Schmidt	P	Dr. Jon Jui	P	Erin Janssens
A	Aaron Johnson	P	Cindy Gaulke	P	Jack Graham		

Consultants

P	Geoff Guilfooy	P	Nanita Sammons				
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Steering Committee Support

P	Alisa Cour	P	Lyn Town				
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P = Present, C = Conferenced, A = Absent

Meeting Notes

WELCOME

1. Meeting Agenda and Purpose

Jack Graham opened the meeting and thanked committee members for attending. He emphasized the work session nature of the meeting and encouraged participation. Geoff Guilfooy reviewed the agenda, describing the purpose of each agenda section.

2. Timeline Review

Nanita Sammons reviewed the Strategic Plan timeline. She provided a high level overview of the work completed to date and the planned future work, describing the integrated approach being used throughout the process.

3. Steering Committee #1 Update

Nanita reviewed the work completed at Steering Committee Meeting #1 in November. She described the Strategic Plan research tasks completed since November. She outlined the ways in which the direction from the Steering Committee had been incorporated into the various tasks. All of the Steering Committee's recommended participants will be involved at the phase most suited to the information.

REPORT ON FINDINGS

4. Stakeholder Interviews

The Stakeholder Interview Summary Report was provided to the Steering Committee at the meeting.

Geoff provided an overview of the stakeholder interview role. He described the informed opinion nature of Stakeholder Interview input and connected this to the Environmental Scan, which will provide data to validate the interviews. He described the interview process and question categories used. He outlined the five general themes that emerged from the interviews. Geoff followed this by going through the report and discussing each topic area. There was interactive discussion with the Committee on several areas. During the discussions, Geoff noted that the public will participate in the Focus Groups.

Discussion on Response:

- There are two types of concern on response: 1) Those watching the General Fund budget: can PF&R sustain an adequate response for the City? 2) Those watching changes in the streets, etc: can PF&R function?
- The tension around hiring paramedics and maintaining certification was discussed. How to maintain an all ailments response without targeting hiring paramedics? The current goal is for all 31 stations to have one paramedic on each shift.
- Aging demographics and costs of health care degrade response reliability. The department is reaching 80,000 annual responses with status quo resources.
- The public has an obligation to get into better shape and prepare for catastrophic events. PF&R can do everything but can only do so much. Others have to do their part for total community preparedness.
- Response requirements shift as the city changes. Stations that were slow in the past are busy now. As the city grows, demands will be greater by the sheer number of calls. A response unit is out of service when on a call; they can't take another call.
- Concern around the perception of being an EMS organization was noted. Approximately 2,500 annual runs for fires was the norm years ago. PF&R does the same number of fire runs now but also provides other services for a total of 70,000+ annual runs. The department needs to get the message out on the higher value being provided.

Discussion on City bureau understanding of PF&R goals:

- City bureaus do understand PF&R, but there is opportunity for improvement. There is high awareness among the bureau directors that work directly on apparatus access issues (example PBOT and Environmental Services). However, extensive coordination is needed and this is a challenge. There is no single point of contact within any bureau for PF&R to express concerns. This will be compounded as the current veteran bureau directors retire. The next level of younger managers need to become informed on PF&R. The department needs to prepare for leadership turnover throughout the City.
- Political influences will still impact livability goals, such as bike lanes. PF&R needs to interject early in the process and participate in the up-front planning.
- Apparatus is aging and replacement equipment is larger and may not fit narrower streets. As equipment is purchased, PF&R needs to look 10 to 15 years out at the requirements for the replacement apparatus. For example, smaller rigs may be needed to act as point vehicles for the larger rigs.

Discussion on regional partnerships:

- Progress on establishing partnerships was noted. Pressure comes from other fire organizations worried about their own sustainability. They will look for PF&R to do more for them.
- PF&R needs to look out over the next 10 years for regional initiatives, such as the regional radio system. The bureau may want to expand on the regionalization and inter-operability fronts.

Discussion on information technology:

- The need for outcome data was noted. It would be helpful for BTS to dedicate resources for fire, search & rescue, and EMS data support.
- The extensive and broad workload of BTS was acknowledged. The issue centers on how to keep PF&R high in the BTS priority.
- A desire for BTS to consider other models for achieving their goals was expressed, such as third party contracts. They try to do everything and work piles up.
- The BTS budget process was outlined. BTS would like to anticipate PF&R's needs but the budgeting process limits their ability to do so. BTS recoups the actual cost of providing service. This makes it difficult to create new services. There is an opportunity to use PF&R's strategic planning to help drive BTS's forecasting and budgeting. BTS is working to tie the various bureau planning efforts to BTS budget development.
- The long-term impact of code change requests was described. Change requests need to be simple and cost effective for a long time. System users have a responsibility in this.
- PF&R's use of information technology is increasing. The department experiences a lag of 5 to 10 years in moving to new technology. Would it be possible to allow sourcing external to BTS so the changes can be done faster? Currently, new computers can be purchased for less than what PF&R pays BTS for existing equipment. Productivity is suffering from the lag in hardware and software upgrades.
- The strategic planning process provides an opportunity in setting goals, objectives and strategies. BTS will be invited to the Task Force Work Sessions to participate in realistic expectation setting. PF&R will also better understand BTS constraints. The department hopes to improve the goal setting partnership with BTS.

Discussion on organization development:

- The issues noted in the report extend well beyond PF&R. They involve several bureaus.
- The average firefighter length of service and retirement guidelines were discussed. The department is in a phase of high retirement rate. The strategic issue will be leadership and experience capacity at all levels.

At the conclusion of the report review and discussion, the Steering Committee accepted the report as completed.

5. Environmental Scan

Nanita described the major issues, discussion points and strategic planning implications in the Environmental Scan. There was discussion on the department's support for working with people who don't speak English well. Access to Rosetta Stone software and BOEC interpreters was noted. The funding pressures created by major deferred maintenance in water, sewer, road and bridges was discussed, noting the interconnected nature of funding that comes from the City population paying taxes or rates. Additional information on commercial buildings and businesses in the city was requested. This will be done along with the remaining work to incorporate current PF&R information and national trends. The discussion concluded by noting that the Environmental Scan establishes a current baseline. Looking forward, PF&R needs to determine how change or status quo in any area will affect the department. The Strategic Plan will incorporate needed responses to environmental trends.

In the subsequent Focus Group discussion, it was recommended that Seattle and Phoenix be contacted. They are doing similar work and should be able to provide significant information.

PROPOSED APPROACH WORK SESSIONS

6. SWOC Overview

The meeting agenda shifted to work sessions on upcoming planning phases. Nanita reviewed the purpose and elements of the SWOC and Balanced Scorecard analysis frameworks. These frameworks have been and will continue to be incorporated in the information gathering phases.

7. Focus Groups Approach and Work Session

Geoff recapped the SWOC analysis method, emphasizing how this method will feed into the Focus Groups and subsequent planning work. Geoff reviewed the Focus Group overview and the proposal for 10 Focus Groups.

External Focus Groups:

The proposed external groups were reviewed. The possibility of merging neighborhood and school constituencies was outlined. Other potential groups were described.

Extensive discussion on optimal structure for the focus groups followed. The need for the output from the groups to be useful in the strategic plan development was emphasized throughout the discussion. Key points from the discussion included:

- Support for merging the proposed schools and neighborhoods groups to add a prevention group. Schools need to include more than Portland Public Schools.
- A significant level of interaction with businesses is based around regulation. Other groups, such as schools, also have a high regulation interaction.
- Schools also have significant operations interaction and need to be included in a group such as neighborhoods.
- The difficulty in distinguishing the business group from the prevention group. Other areas difficult to align were education and outreach.
- The need for each focus group to have a clear marketing purpose.
- Another group possibility: Technology Partners.

- Pros and cons of different organizing methods: service based (examples: prevention, education), constituent based (examples: other fire departments, neighborhoods), relationship based (examples: regulations, response), issues based (examples: multi-lingual ethnicity, sustainability).
- As a separate issue, it was noted that the policy discussions on the AMR contract with Multnomah County should be done at the county level. The county regulates EMS.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the following external Focus Groups were established.

- Public Education – neighborhoods, schools, business, media, hospitals, public health, religious organizations.
- Regulation – permit customers, code enforcement, special events, all businesses, schools, multi-family, hospitals.
- Other Area Fire Departments – State Fire Marshal, Port of Portland, Gresham, Tualatin Valley, Clackamas, Lake Oswego, Clark County, Columbia County, NFPA (Dan Rossos).
- Emergency Response – Healthcare, Red Cross, Coast Guard, MSSA, DMAT, AMR, OHSU, Legacy, Providence, VA, the hospital group that represents all the hospitals, Multnomah County Health, Multnomah County Sheriff, Mercy Corps, Northwest Medical Teams, FBI, ATF.
- Sustainability (hybrid internal and external) – BDS, bike groups, walker groups, BES, Water, DEQ, PBOT, TriMet, EPA, DEQ, Superfund internal to Portland, Clean Rivers (semi attached to BES), Portland Office of Planning and Sustainability, Metro.
- Immigrant and Minority – IRCO, other cultural group organizations, connect with stations that have large underserved populations to see what they know and how handling.

The proposed approach for conducting the External Focus Group meetings was approved. The proposed meeting agenda was modified to 30 minutes for the first section and 90 minutes in the second section.

Question categories for each of the Focus Groups were established. Questions will be asked in a way that moves the group discussion toward what is needed in the future.

- Public Education: what topics are needed for education; how good a job is PF&R doing with education; how can the messages get out more effectively; what messages are being received; what are their perceptions of the messages; what are their perceptions of PF&R services; what are the important things that are needed going forward; how can PF&R serve them better?
- Regulation: ditto to above; do they understand why they are regulated; is PF&R communicating that effectively; communicating the basis for regulation; understand and accept the fee structure; focus on the professionalism of the services provided: on time, professional demeanor, do the inspectors know what they are talking about when they show up on the job site; do they see value in services provided?
- Other fire departments: efficiencies; interoperability; response integration; training at same levels; what do they need from PF&R; what can PF&R get from them; can we improve training; regional training, collaboration and drills; barriers that exist or not between governmental entities; major initiatives in their departments – what are their plans in the next 5-10 years?

- Emergency Response: how do they interact at emergency or disaster scenes; when they deal with each other at high consequence/low frequency event, how coordinated are we; what do they need from PF&R, other issues we can partner with them on beyond emergencies; defining roles for regional coordination; what are their plans in the next 5-10 years?
- Sustainability: where are they heading in 2 years, in 5 years; impact on response time and accessibility; what are their initiatives that will affect PF&R; how to mutually be part of each other's processes; where are they headed with regulations; what big projects are anticipated; if initiatives are saving money, where do the savings go?
- Minority/Immigrant: how to better serve you; what do you want PF&R to know when we come to your house; how can your sons and daughters be encouraged to join; had any good experiences, bad experiences; know how to access the system; what do you expect to happen; how should PF&R communicate with you?

Internal Focus Groups:

Geoff reviewed the proposed five internal Focus Groups. Discussion included diversity representation, including radio shop and fleet personnel, purchasing and BGS, participants for the two groups of other sworn personnel and the basis for promotion issue noted in the Stakeholder Interview Summary Report. The external to PF&R and internal to the City constituencies will be represented on the Task Force. This will be similar to inviting BTS to participate in the Task Force. The Internal Focus Groups were approved as presented.

Geoff reviewed the proposed Focus Group participation guidelines. No changes were requested.

The Steering Committee reviewed preferences for focus group meeting times. The department will provide refreshments for the evening meetings.

- Public Education: week night
- Regulation: week day
- Other Fire Departments: week day
- Emergency Response: week day
- Sustainability: week day
- Minority & immigrant: week night
- Internal groups: determine based on schedule to minimize overtime

8. External Surveys Approach and Work Session

Geoff described role of surveys in the strategic planning process. He outlined the elements of designing surveys to optimize response. He reviewed the proposed approach. The approach was approved.

Geoff reviewed the proposed groups for survey participation. Cindy Gaulke described the groups that were surveyed in the last strategic planning process. Jack discussed the random selection process based on using codes in the data. Various approaches for surveying the general public were discussed. To date, a feasible method has not been found; research on options is ongoing.

There was discussion on the proposed survey participants. It was suggested that a survey of the sustainability group participants prior to the group meeting could help direct the group discussion. The proposed participants were approved.

Geoff reviewed the proposed question categories. Cindy described the rationale for the survey categories coming from the stakeholder interviews and environmental scan. Questions will be posed within the broad category. Hiring and diversity may be a better category for external recipients than succession planning. Response time questions need to be crafted carefully as perceptions without the data are often different from actual occurrence. Added categories: how do people learn about PF&R and what our message is; how did they experience PF&R (call to the house, public information); awareness of PF&R's role in EMS. The question categories were approved with these modifications and additions.

The surveys will be specific to the audience.

9. Internal Surveys Approach and Work Session

Geoff reviewed the role of internal surveys in the strategic planning process and the proposed approach. There was discussion on how to handle station personnel without email accounts and the security of email invitations and avoiding duplicate responses. No changes were requested in the proposed approach.

Geoff reviewed the proposed participant approach. Classification identification for non sworn personnel will be consistent with the cultural assessment survey options.

The proposed question categories were reviewed. The proposed categories were approved with one addition: demographic information such as age, time in bureau.

10. SWOC Analysis Approach and Work Session

Geoff reviewed the proposed SWOC Analysis approach. There was discussion on the financial analysis incorporating the data in the environmental scan, complimenting the financial analysis done within PF&R. No changes to the proposed approach were requested.

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

11. Discussion

Cindy reviewed the proposal for keeping the External Stakeholders and Environmental Scan participants engaged. Jack emphasized that the plan implementation will be communicated to make clear that the Strategic Plan is the starting point, not the end of the process.

Cindy described the progress to date on the website and blog communication methods being used.

There was discussion on the purpose and benefits of keeping plan participants informed and engaged. The contact list for marketing the website will be expanded to include the focus groups and survey participants.

No changes were requested in the proposed communication approach.

NEXT STEPS

12. Timeline Review

Geoff reviewed the timeline and tasks to be completed by the April meeting. He reviewed the deliverables and meeting timeline leading to the 2010-2015 Strategic Plan document presentation in July.

13. April Steering Committee Meeting Planning

Geoff reviewed the proposed agenda for Steering Committee Meeting #3.

14. Questions and Closing Remarks

Chief Klum summarized the planning progress to date as being on the right track. He emphasized the importance of the process and the opportunity to do a baseline check. He thanked the committee for a good discussion that captured the areas PF&R needs to consider. A critical component of the Strategic Plan will be implementation. Much hard work remains to be done. He thanked the committee for the time taken to attend and expressed the hope that they can see how important the planning process is. PF&R is good on following through on the direction set. This is a testament to the value the organization places on everyone's input.