

LANSING FIRE DEPARTMENT

INDEPENDENT REVIEW

MAY 2022



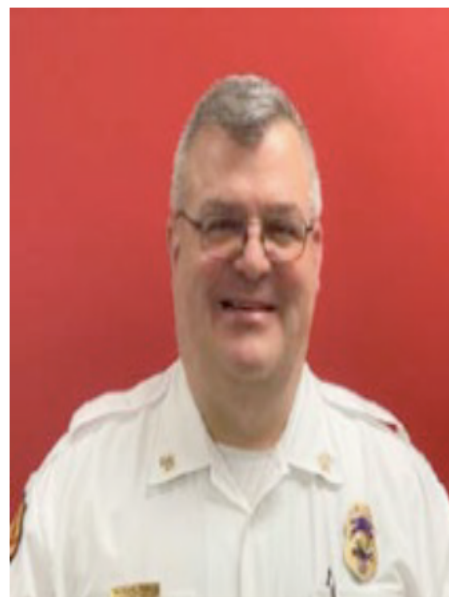
FOREWORD

By Executive Directive 2020-03 of the Mayor of Lansing, the Lansing Fire Department was tasked with the completion of “a comprehensive, community-driven independent review” focusing on “the following key areas”:



Former Chief Greg Martin

- Departmental policies & procedures
- Operations
- Workplace culture
- Health and wellness
- Diversity, inclusion, & equity
- Training needs
- Community engagement



Interim Chief Michael Tobin

We provided unrestricted access to the consultants at The Center for Safety Assessments and Inclusion during their independent review, and we hope to continue such substantive conversations in these crucial areas with all stakeholders going forward. We continue to be open to assessments of how to improve our department in all aspects, and we welcome constructive remarks that can strengthen our department and our relationship with the community.

In service,

Former Chief Greg Martin
Interim Chief Michael Tobin

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

In December 2021, the Lansing Fire Department received approval to retain The Center for Safety Assessments and Inclusion to conduct an independent review of the Lansing Fire Department. The scope of this report is in response to the Mayor's request, via Executive Directive 2020-03, for input regarding several vital issues that are central to effective fire department operations.

The Center for Safety Assessments and Inclusion, ("The Center"), whose members include public servants including fire fighters, Emergency Medical Technicians, former Fire Chiefs and Captains responsible for Fire Department/ Public Safety agencies' compliance and accountability, former special assistant county attorney, a former Director of Legal & Public Affairs for the Minority Chamber of Commerce, as well as experienced civil and criminal attorneys, is deeply indebted to all participants in the review process for their open discussions regarding the weighty issues evaluated in this report. The Center's team was comprised of over 50 years of experience in the public services area.

As part of their independent review, The Center solicited comments and input from a wide range of interested persons and groups. The Center also contacted a multitude of interested persons directly. Those outside the Lansing Fire Department whom were contacted for participation include public servants and elected officials, municipal and county employees, interest groups, community groups, activists, civilians with interactions with various facets of the LFD, city attorneys, local print and television media, and leaders and officers serving in other related agencies. Members of the Lansing Fire Department whom The Center contacted for participation include past and present leaders of the department, officers serving in nearly every capacity, and civilian employees of the department.

The Center conducted information-gathering tasks using a diverse array of methods. These approaches included in-person and remote interviews, listening sessions, review of written comments and submissions, and on-site investigations and walkthroughs. Research and analysis tasks were supplemented using department data, census data, local media reports, policy statements, annual departmental reports, and public meeting records.

Again, The Center wishes to thank all those who provided their input. The Center and all of its members sincerely hope this review will provide a solid pathway forward to improve the Lansing Fire Department, and by extension, the lives of all city residents and employees.

With Respect,



**THE CENTER FOR SAFETY
ASSESSMENTS & INCLUSION**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This review has determined a number of challenges and concerns. In short form, The Center's findings include the following determinations:

1. Nationwide Trends are Affecting the LFD

The nationwide trends that are affecting all public safety agencies are also impacting LFD. Lansing is not alone in finding difficulties in securing adequate funding, in recruiting large numbers of candidates for positions, and in creating a more appreciably diverse and representational workforce. Moreover, the vast increase in the cost of fire department materiel (fire engines, ambulances, etc.) is a challenge to the LFD and to fire departments around the nation.

2. The LFD is Not a Cohesive, Unified Body

LFD has tensions and fissures that have affected morale. It is clear that any previous measures aimed at unifying the LFD have not succeeded, as many voices during this review expressed dissatisfaction with the racial and social climate at the Department. This lack of cohesiveness has led to deteriorations in morale and job satisfaction.

3. The City's Human Resources Department Needs Reform

The city's Human Resources Department, which bears the lion's share of responsibility for hiring, firing, and investigating LFD employee bias and harassment complaints, needs to reform and improve.¹ Employees at all levels voiced concerns with many aspects of the HR Department and its relations to LFD, including:

- Consistency of HR complaint investigations
- Timeliness of HR complaint investigations
- Timeliness and urgency in advertising and hiring for open LFD positions
- Questions regarding responsiveness to requests from the LFD
- Open and transparent communications regarding hiring/firing decisions
- Political considerations impeding on HR decision-making
- Specific HR training and qualifications of HR Department employees and leaders

¹ Interested readers may consult The Center's previous review of the Lansing Police Department, which also identified issues with the city's Human Resources Department. See *Lansing Police Department Independent Review*, Aug. 2021, available at: <https://content.civicplus.com/api/assets/9f60540c-7699-4a28-8064-87cbaea2fbd?cache=1800> (Describing city Human Resources Department challenges in, e.g., Action Items 4.5.1, 4.5.2, and 6.1.3).

We have organized this report covering the above topics in two major thrusts: First, we address operations, facilities, and training challenges. We conclude with an analysis of human resources considerations, including hiring and firing, complaint investigations, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

NEW AND PERSISTENT CHALLENGES

Fire and emergency departments across the nation face similar challenges. We mention these issues as a background primer that may be helpful in understanding the wider picture of fire department operations and challenges.

I. SYSTEMIC CHALLENGES: STAFFING AND FUNDING

The COVID-19 pandemic helped to illustrate the interconnectedness between national economic and social trends and local emergency service providers. Just as medical and epidemiological concerns altered some very basic characteristics of the American economy, the providing of police, fire, and emergency services are subject to similar ramifications from systemic events and currents.²



As one example, staffing is a currently pressing concern for fire and emergency service departments all across the country, including in Michigan.³ Public safety departments in Michigan have recognized this challenge and have understood the need to bolster recruiting

² See *Id.*, at 4 (noting, as an example, the newly instituted remote court appearances and virtual meetings put in place as COVID-19 precautionary measures); See also J. Marshall, C. Burd, et al., *Those Who Switched to Telework Have Higher Income, Education, and Better Health*, U.S. Census Bureau, Mar. 31, 2021, available at:

<https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/03/working-from-home-during-the-pandemic.html> (noting that more than one third of American households reported working from home more frequently than before the COVID-19 pandemic.).

³ Joey Oliver, *Along with Fires, Genesee County Fire Departments Battle Staffing, Availability Issues*, Mlive.com, Mar. 18, 2022, available at: <https://www.mlive.com/news/flint/2022/03/along-with-fires-genesee-county-fire-departments-battle-staffing-availability-issues.html> (Lapeer Fire Chief Mike Vogt noted that “[i]f you would talk to the firefighters or fire officers that have been around this department for 15 or 20 years, they would say that our numbers are lower than they ever have been.”); Jacob Vitali, *Lowell City Council, Fire Chief Discuss Staffing Challenges*, The Sun (Mass.), Mar. 23, 2022, available at: <https://www.lowellsun.com/2022/03/23/lowell-city-council-fire-chief-discuss-staffing-challenges/>; Jordan Cioppa, *Staffing Still an Issue for Some Lowcountry Fire Departments*, WCBD-TV (S.Car.), Mar. 24, 2022, available at:

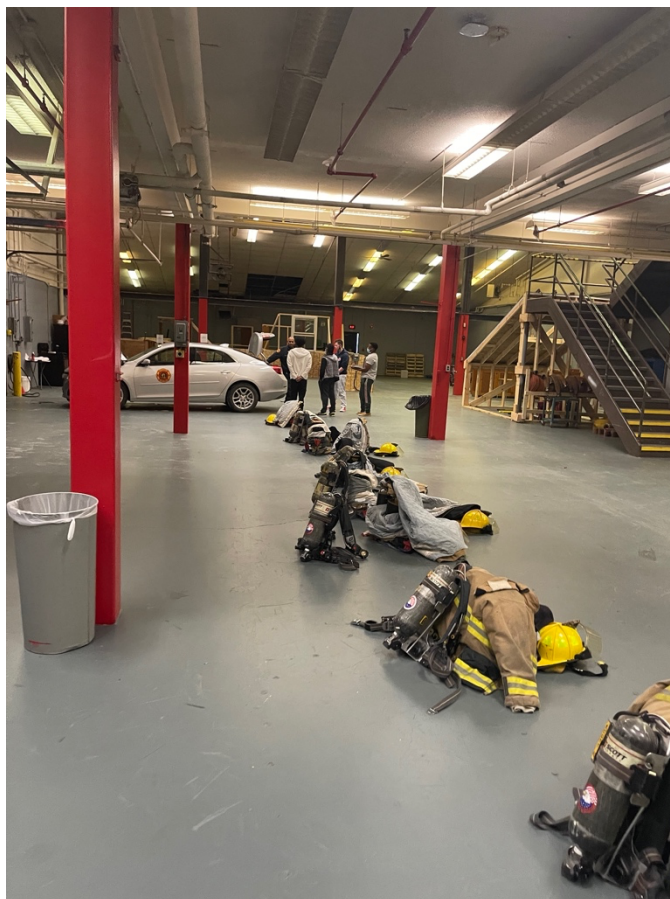
<https://www.counton2.com/news/local-news/charleston-county-news/firefighter-advocates-claim-some-departments-staff-vehicles-below-the-recommendation/>; Chorus Nylander, *Southern Arizona First Responders Dealing with ‘Critical’ Staffing Shortages*, KVOA-TV (Tucson), Apr. 11, 2022, available at: https://www.kvoa.com/news/n4t-investigators-southern-arizona-first-responders-dealing-with-critical-staffing-shortages/article_fe35477e-b9ef-11ec-9588-df22e93c63da.html (Rural Metro Battalion Chief John Walka noted that “Twenty years ago, we were seeing double, triple the applicants we are seeing today.”).

efforts and hasten the pace of hiring and training new employees.⁴ This review accordingly engages with some of these current staffing strains in the fire and emergency context by reviewing human resources practices and by recommending improvements in recruiting and retaining fire and emergency personnel.

Aside from critical staffing concerns, funding remains a constant challenge for fire and emergency service providers. In many departments across the country, funding has not matched recent increases in calls for service.⁵ This review accordingly seeks to discuss the current state of service demand in Lansing in conjunction with an analysis of funding and staffing levels, with an eye towards assessing these factors' impacts on employee morale and wellbeing.

II. NEW CHALLENGES: RISING COSTS

Fire departments across the country are reckoning with rising costs in many, if not all, facets of fire and emergency services. Inflation and rising gasoline prices, for one, are a serious challenge to existing budgets and operations, including both in professional and volunteer



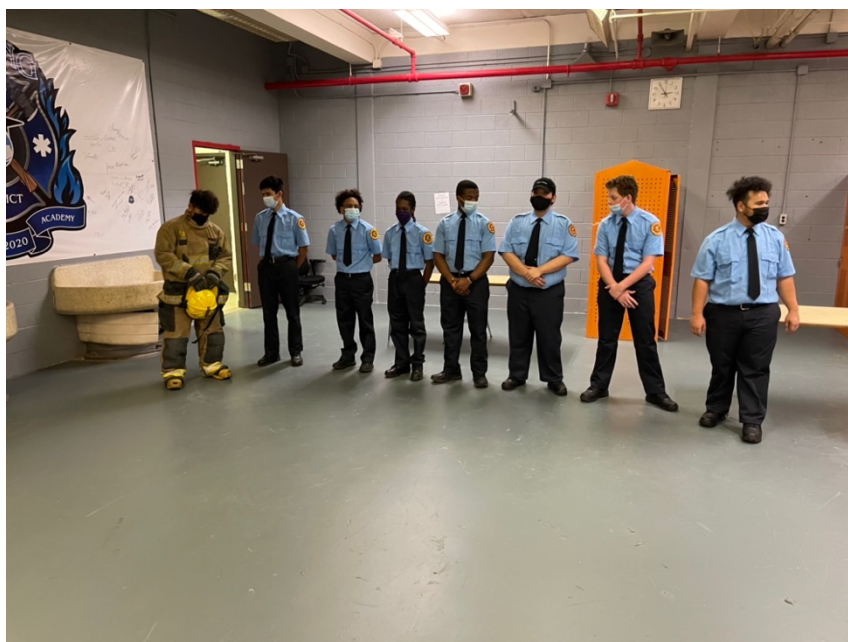
⁴ Cf. Trace Christenson, *More Cities Need Police But Fewer Applying*, Battle Creek Enquirer., *Rept. in* Detroit Free Press, July 21, 2021 (“Low recruitment numbers nationwide, and a sharp increase in officers choosing to leave law enforcement well before retirement age, have caused a workforce crisis according to a 2019 report by the Washington D.C.-based Police Executive Research Forum. The number of recruits has been in decline for years, the report said, with some departments reporting a drop between 50% and 70% in new job applications since 2015. The Battle Creek Police Department is, like others, looking for new officers [...] but with recruiting and hiring and training and probation, it takes time before new officers are ready for the road. ‘It is 18 months flash-to-bang,’ [Battle Creek Police Chief Jim Blocker] said.”).

⁵ Alexa Jurado, *Rising 911 Call Loads, Recruitment Struggles Put Wisconsin Fire and EMS Agencies on Shaky Ground*, *New Report Says*, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Dec. 27, 2021, available at: <https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/local/wisconsin/2021/12/27/wisconsin-fire-ems-agencies-face-crunch-call-loads-recruitment/8656022002/> (Reporting on the Wisconsin Policy Forum study stating that “‘Unless they are appropriately addressed, fire and EMS financial and staffing challenges may soon have a real impact on public safety.’”); Kathryn Gallerani, *Additional Kingston Firefighter/Paramedics Wanted Amid Increased Call Volume*, WickedLocal.com (Mass.), Feb. 4, 2022, available at: <https://www.wickedlocal.com/story/kingston-reporter/2022/02/04/kingston-fire-has-plan-address-response-time-challenges/9303543002/> (“In 2021 call volume began a steady increase, and the number of simultaneous calls also increased.”); Mitchell Kirk, *Buck Creek Firefighters Face Pay Cut as Runs Rise*, Greenfield Daily Reporter (Ind.), Dec. 22, 2021, available at: <https://www.greenfieldreporter.com/2021/12/22/buck-creek-firefighters-face-pay-cut-as-runs-rise/> (Reporting, from Buck Creek Township, Indiana, a 15% increase in runs from 2019, which was previously its highest year on record).

firefighting contexts.⁶ In addition, the increasing price of fire equipment also poses a significant conundrum for fire and emergency departments.⁷ Accordingly, part of this review aims to assess the current logistics and equipment procurement operations in place in Lansing. With the pressing challenge of rising costs, it is imperative that LFD engage in the most efficient procurement practices possible.

III. PERSISTENT CHALLENGES: DIVERSITY & EQUITY

National firefighting groups, nonprofits, and other interest groups have long recognized the need to create fire and emergency services departments that reflect the communities they serve. As a result, departments have engaged in a host of measures aimed at bolstering the diversity of such departments. According to the National Fire Protection Association, much progress remains to be made in this area. As of 2019, per NFPA data, 8% of firefighters were female (and just 4% of career firefighters were female), and, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, 11.6% were Hispanic or Latino, 8.5% were African-American, and 1.3% were Asian.⁸ As a result, many voices have expressed a desire to further diversify the population of firefighters.⁹ This review accordingly seeks to examine the progress made by the Lansing Fire Department in this area and to describe those policies and practices that are ripe for improvement.



⁶ Brenda Brown, *Inflation Impacts on Volunteer Fire Departments*, KVII-TV (Amarillo, TX), Mar. 23, 2022, available at: <https://abc7amarillo.com/news/local/inflation-impacts-on-volunteer-fire-departments>.

⁷ Julie Dunmire, *First Responders Face Rising Costs on Every Emergency Call*, WXMI-TV (Grand Rapids), Feb. 21, 2022, available at: <https://www.fox17online.com/news/local-news/kent-first-responders-facing-rising-costs-on-every-emergency-call> (Lowell Fire Chief noting that the price of a fire truck increased by more than \$150,000 between 2019 and 2022, that training costs have increased by 50%, and that other protective equipment costs have increased by 20%).

⁸ R. Fahy, B. Evarts, et al., *U.S. Fire Department Profile 2019*, Nat'l. Fire Protection Assoc., Dec. 2021, at 1-2, available at: <https://www.nfpa.org/-/media/Files/News-and-Research/Fire-statistics-and-reports/Emergency-responders/osfdprofile.pdf>.

⁹ Jessica Wolfman, *Firefighting has a Diversity Issue – and These Women Want to Solve That*, San Francisco Examiner, Sep. 13, 2021, available at: <https://www.sfoxaminer.com/news/firefighting-has-a-diversity-issue-and-these-women-want-to-solve-that/> (Expressing some challenges faced by female firefighters in a male-dominated space, including misgendering, bathroom facility issues, and unconscious bias); Sean Thomas, *Santa Fe Seeks Ways to Increase Number of Female Firefighters*, Santa Fe New Mexican, Feb. 22, 2022, available at: https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/santa-fe-seeks-ways-to-increase-number-of-female-firefighters/article_c2cfbf58-9333-11ec-8580-d740a862fa31.html (Describing other challenges, including lactation policy, shift timing, bathroom and bunk accommodations, and cultural perceptions of a “boys’ club.”).

IV. PERSISTENT CHALLENGES: COMMUNITY PERCEPTION

As with other public entities, community perception is an essential consideration for fire and emergency service providers. During most of recent history, it appears that firefighters have largely enjoyed high opinions from the communities they serve. Gallup polling indicates that firefighters are one of the few professions to have earned levels of trust and respect that rival or surpass nurses.¹⁰ However, each individual department must work to continue to maintain these levels of trust from the community, and every department has unique challenges in ensuring continued goodwill from the public.

The Lansing Fire Department in particular has generated local headlines for various issues that could begin to impact levels of public trust. This includes the various lawsuits have been filed against the Department, including for charges including racial and general workplace hostility,¹¹ sexual assault and harassment,¹² and racially disparate treatment.¹³



¹⁰ Oakland University, *Gallup Poll Finds Nursing is Most Honest, Ethical Profession*, OU Magazine, Jan 22, 2021, available at: <https://oakland.edu/oumagazine/news/nursing/2021/gallup-poll-finds-nursing-is-most-honest-ethical-profession> (“Nurses have topped Gallup’s Honesty and Ethics list in all but one year since they were added in 1999. The exception is 2001, when firefighters were measured on a one-time basis shortly after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, and earned the highest score to date for any profession, 90%.”).

¹¹ Kara Berg, *Federal Judge Dismisses Part of Ex-Lansing Firefighter’s Racism, Discrimination Lawsuit*, Lansing State Journal, Mar. 24, 2022, available at: <https://www.lansingstatejournal.com/story/news/2022/03/25/judge-dismisses-part-ex-lansing-firefighters-discrimination-lawsuit/7154645001/> (“[Judge] Maloney wrote, however, that Lynn’s complaint of a hostile work environment could continue. . .Lynn’s lawsuit is one of several against the city that has been filed in the past few years.”).

¹² Kyle Kaminski, *Lansing’s First Female Battalion Chief Alleges Sexual Assault at Lansing Fire Department*, Lansing CityPulse, July 20, 2021, available at: <https://www.lansingcitypulse.com/stories/lansings-first-female-battalion-chief-alleges-sexual-assault.17673> (Describing a lawsuit alleging “unchecked homophobic and sexist harassment,” multiple allegations of sexual assault, including by a superior, sexual harassment, and microaggressions.). Portions of these allegations were substantiated through the City’s records produced to media outlets, including correspondence from a former Human Resources Director, who stated that a former LFD captain “verbally intimidated and embarrassed [the Plaintiff] on a daily basis,” and refused to aid that Plaintiff when they requested assistance at a fire scene. The LFD captain was fired, but was then allowed to return and retire. See Kyle Kaminsky, *Lansing Fire Captain Fired for Harassment – Then Allowed to Retire*, Lansing CityPulse, Feb. 17, 2022, available at: <https://lansingcitypulse.com/stories/lansing-fire-captain-fired-for-harassment-then-allowed-to-retire.19888>.

¹³ Kyle Kaminski, *Suit, New Resignation and His Own Words Add to Schor’s Woes*, Lansing CityPulse, Aug. 20, 2020, available at: <https://lansingcitypulse.com/stories/suit-new-resignation-and-his-own-words-add-to-schors-woes.14885> (Allegations

Moreover, this includes the prominent voices that have communicated their belief in the need to improve the department’s hiring, diversity, and inclusion policies.¹⁴ This report aims to cover some of the most pressing concerns in these areas, with an understanding that strong hiring practices, and diversity, equity, and inclusion policies can help to ensure continued trust in the LFD. Moreover, this report will address community concerns regarding transparency directed towards the LFD.¹⁵ In addition, The Center hopes that this report can be used as a continual reference resource guiding the city in its future decisions, so that announced policies and improvements are most effective and do not merely pay lip service to efforts for change.¹⁶

Given each of these challenges, The Center hopes that its findings and action items will be a small part of a much bigger movement towards improving the Lansing Fire Department.

including suspending an African-American battalion chief for remote work when “similarly situated” white battalion chiefs were not investigated for working remotely.).

¹⁴ Megan Banta & Carol Thompson, *Talifarro: I Resigned as Lansing Fire Chief Over ‘Unhealthy’ Culture in Schor Administration*, Lansing State Journal, Mar. 11, 2019, available at: <https://www.lansingstatejournal.com/story/news/local/2019/03/08/lansing-fire-department-talifarro-resignation-mayor-andy-schor/3107282002/> (“[Former Chief Randy Talifarro] specifically encouraged the [Blue-Ribbon Diversity] commission to look at hiring processes, how to make a diversity a reality rather than a ‘theoretical exercise.’”).

¹⁵ See e.g. *The CP Edit: Transparency Fail*, Lansing CityPulse, Mar. 17, 2022, available at: <https://lansingcitypulse.com/stories/the-cp-edit-transparency-fail.20230> (Describing a local media outlet’s attempts to utilize the Freedom of Information Act in order to obtain hundreds of pages regarding an investigation of sexual assault and harassment in the LFD, which was met with a six month delay, eventual production of just six out of 650 pages requested, and ultimate denial of an appeal to the Lansing City Council President to release the remaining records).

¹⁶ We pause here to note that a report cannot effectuate its own recommendations, but rather relies on the constant vigilance of all stakeholders. For example, our comprehensive review of the Lansing Police Department credited the policy change of not pulling over motorists for “secondary” traffic violations that do not implicate community safety, and recommended this policy continue. These traffic stops generated substantial pushback from minority communities, who felt that these secondary stops created the opportunity for racial profiling. Again, however, the report cannot enforce itself, and relies on constant vigilance and consistent monitoring. Cf. Kara Berg, *Lansing Makes Little Visible Progress in 2021 on Diversity, Racial Justice Goals*, Lansing State Journal, Dec. 29, 2021, available at: <https://www.lansingstatejournal.com/story/news/2021/12/29/lansing-racial-justice-equity-inclusion-alliance-report-goals/8896683002/> (“They [Lansing Police Department] announced a new policy in 2020 to no longer stop people for equipment violations or other traffic offenses that pose no safety risk. According to LPD traffic data since the policy was adopted, *officers are still pulling people over for traffic offenses that pose no safety risks.*”)(emph. added).

ABOUT LANSING FIRE DEPARTMENT

I. STRUCTURAL MAP

According to its 2020 Annual Report, the Lansing Fire Department's structure is made up as follows:



II. BRIEF SURVEY OF BUDGET AND SERVICES

The Lansing Fire Department consists of approximately 185 personnel.¹⁷ In fiscal year 2021-22, the city's adopted budget allocated \$38.8 million to the Department, which included \$17 million for active personnel and \$15 million for retirement/fixed benefits. Roughly \$5.5 million was allocated for operating expenses. For brief comparison, in fiscal year 2013, the budget

¹⁷ Kyle Kaminski, *Overtime Wages Climb at "Short-Staffed" Lansing Fire Department*, Lansing CityPulse, Apr. 14, 2022, available at: <https://lansingcitypulse.com/stories/overtime-wages-climb-at-short-staffed-lansing-fire-department.20533>. Data also on file with authors.

allocated a total of \$30.6 million.¹⁸ For further comparison, Mayor Andy Schor’s proposed budget for fiscal year 2022-23 suggests an allocation of \$40.2 million for LFD.¹⁹ Although it is beyond the scope of this review, it should be noted here that several voices have already raised concern with the legacy, retirement, overtime, and pension benefits interfering with the ability to afford current recruitment and retention needs.²⁰ This area remains ripe for further review, analysis, and study.

Similarly, while it is beyond the scope of this review to detail each and every department service and duty, The Center invites interested persons to consult the LFD 2020 Annual Report (covering the fiscal year spanning July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020).²¹ LFD is without a doubt a busy department providing a full range of services to the Lansing community. In 2019-20, LFD dispatched over 84,000 calls for service. During this period (in which many in-person contacts were limited due to COVID-19), LFD employees conducted several hundred annual inspections, completed dozens of fire and arson investigations, gave 25 safety presentations, provided over 19,000 training hours, distributed over 90,000 items in response to COVID-19, responded to over 19,000 emergency medical service calls, and responded to nearly 3,000 fire service calls. In responding to calls of distress, LFD achieved an average response time of less than four minutes.²²

¹⁸ For all budgetary information, see Lansing Accounting & Budget, <https://www.lansingmi.gov/452/Accounting-Budget>.

¹⁹ See Proposed Budget: City of Lansing FY 2022-2023, at p. 77, available at: <https://content.civicplus.com/api/assets/11a5b0f7-6504-4504-86e9-6b71aadbcbb5>.

²⁰ See e.g. *The CP Edit: Rein in Public Safety Pensions*, Lansing CityPulse, Apr. 7, 2022, available at: <https://lansingcitypulse.com/stories/the-cp-edit-rein-in-public-safety-pensions.20466> (Arguing that “Lansing taxpayers spent \$58.6 million last year for employee pensions. The entire city budget is only about \$242 million. As retirement costs escalate, including for retiree health care, they crowd out spending on today’s vital public services, like fixing roads and paying the salaries of city employees.”). It appears the city has already begun to reckon with the need to change current practices to make these obligations more sustainable. Sarah Lehr, *Lansing Will Eventually Nix Retiree Health Care for All Employees After Reaching Deal With Firefighters*, Lansing State Journal, Mar. 8, 2021, available at: <https://www.lansingstatejournal.com/story/news/2021/03/08/lansing-eliminates-retiree-health-care-new-fire-department-hires/4596127001/> (Referring to Lansing having “reached a deal with firefighters to eliminate city-sponsored post-employment health care” for those workers hired after January 1, 2021.).

²¹ See 2020 Annual Report, available at: <https://content.civicplus.com/api/assets/7fce1e95-d157-4812-8f3a-a0fdbc0c7a58?cache=1800>; Previous years available at: <https://www.lansingmi.gov/288/About>.

²² See *Id.* This response time appears to meet the national standard described in NFPA Standard 1710, which expresses the goal of four minutes for first engine arrival on scene. See NFPA Standard 1710, available at: https://www.iaff.org/wp-content/uploads/Departments/Fire_EMS_Department/30541_Summary_Sheet_NFPA_1710_standard.pdf

FOCUS ONE: OPERATIONS & TRAINING

POLICY:

- 1.1** *Optimize the Departmental logistics operations.*

ACTION ITEMS:

- 1.1.1** *Review all of the Department's logistics procedures.*

The LFD, uniquely among many city departments, requires the use of incredibly expensive vehicles and tools for its daily operations. However, due to a bevy of considerations, the Department's needs are not being met. Given the city's medical call volume, for example, best practices would normally require eight ambulances in service at all times. For the last three years, however, the city has subsisted with just five. This small example of how failure to optimize the Department's supplies and hardware downgrades service to citizens is the clearest indication that the Department's policies and practices for securing such materiel is in need of improvement.

The Department, together with the city, should undertake a full review of the Department's logistics and materiel procurement policies. At a bare minimum, the review should evaluate whether the existing software database platform is serving the Department's needs. Some have expressed concern that the current database platform was not sufficiently trained upon during its rollout, and that it has never functioned as hoped.

As an additional exercise, the Department, together with the city, must comprehensively evaluate all possible options for optimizing logistics and materiel procurement.

- 1.1.2** *Evaluate, compare, and implement the optimal logistics practices.*

Part of the evaluation mentioned above must encompass different pathways to optimizing and securing the materials needed for the most efficient operation of the Department. In addition to the software database platforms used to implement these policies, the overall financial structure of the logistics setup must be evaluated. As one example, the city and the Department should evaluate whether leasing a fleet of vehicles offers a more economical solution to the cyclical expenses that are necessarily created when buying hard assets like a new fire truck. As another example, the city and the Department should evaluate the costs of maintaining outdated materials against the cost of procuring new materials. In some cases, it may be less expensive long-term to purchase additional hardware now rather than to face continually rising repair costs.²³ Finally, the city and the Department should endeavor to design and implement a more sustainable replacement

²³ Stakeholders consulted during the sourcing of this review reported that LFD has had to summon additional mechanical repair help, at additional expense, because of the age of some of its ambulances and fire trucks.

schedule designed to move the LFD closer to the nationally minimal standards describing the optimal length of service for vehicles and materiel.

1.1.3 *Consider utilizing the services of a grant writer.*

Among the possibilities covered above, the city should also evaluate the prospective capacity of a grant writer to help bridge the gap between the Department's materiel needs and the currently available city funds. In 2014, for example, a grant helped the Department to procure several new fire engines. Given that the city reaching the capacity to fully fund the needs of the Department appears remote,²⁴ a grant writer may be a welcome addition to the city's toolkit to procure funding for much-needed equipment.

POLICY:

1.2 *Provide the best facilities and training for LFD employees.*

ACTION ITEM:

1.2.1 *Comprehensively evaluate the physical status of firefighting stations and training facilities.*

The Department is facing a number of consistent failings in its facilities. One such challenge is the impending loss of the Department's training tower. The training tower helped to train surrounding fire departments as well, but the next closest tower is around 60 miles from Lansing, creating another barrier to effective training. Many voices have expressed a desire for a newer, more updated facilities and training facilities, and a comprehensive analysis of the state of these physical facilities is a step towards identifying and choosing the best options for improvement. In addition to examining the state of the physical facilities, the city and the Department should undertake to examine all possible funding mechanisms to improve the state of firefighting stations and training facilities.

²⁴ Kaminski, *supra* n. 17, (Quoting Mayor Andy Schor's response to LFD funding desires in 2019 as follows: "Unless you identify where the money is coming from, then all you're doing is complaining...We're maxed out on our millages. We just don't have the revenue to make it happen.").

In light of the many physical issues in the city's Police Department facilities that were identified and described in that department's previous independent review, and in conjunction with the weaknesses of the Fire Department's facilities identified during the present review, the city should begin investigating the feasibility of a new public safety building. One consideration in the establishment of a new facility is whether a joint facility, combining the headquarters of the Fire and Police Department, would be more efficacious than separate facilities.

1.2.2 *Enhance communication between the city's repair and maintenance group and the Department.*

The Department has special requirements for routine operations. As one example, firefighters often reside at a given firehouse for long periods of coverage, in contrast to the routine office hours of other city departments. Heating issues, however, have been reported at various times at each firehouse. In addition to these issues, the schedule and plans for repair are seldom communicated to the Department itself.

The city's repair and maintenance operations must undertake to more fully alert the Department of upcoming operations along with the schedule and temporal scope of such projects. As one example, maintenance undertook to repair boilers in a project that lasted approximately four days. Because of the lack of communication regarding the schedule and temporal scope of these repairs, Department personnel were caught unawares when the repairs began. More to the point, firefighters faced residing in a fire station with no heat for several days without advance notice to prepare. These communication issues between the city's maintenance department and the LFD also exhibit themselves in related contexts. In one instance, for example, delays in providing the Department with technical building specs risked the Department not meeting a deadline for submitting a grant for funding physical repairs. The city should undertake to ensure that maintenance and repair personnel are required to communicate the schedule and estimated temporal scope of any work for LFD, and the city should require maintenance and repair personnel to respond to LFD communications with all possible haste.



POLICY:

1.3 *Review the LFD Policies & Guidelines and Standards.*

ACTION ITEM:

1.3.1 *Engage in a systematic review of the LFD policies, guidelines, and standards to determine their adequacy.*

The Department clearly faces many challenges, including morale and division, funding, retention, leadership stability, and others. In an effort to position the Department towards attacking each of these challenges at once, it should consider reviewing all of its policies, guidelines, and standards. These rules should be evaluated under a multi-pronged analysis, including consideration of whether the current strictures meet or exceed national standards, and whether the strictures would help eliminate some of the challenges mentioned above. In particular, the review should consider whether each department in LFD has updated and regularly communicated its policies. Failure to ensure that each and every department in LFD has completed these crucial reviews means that the Department runs the risk of inconsistent discipline and practice, thus creating further divisions.



POLICY:

1.4 *Evaluate diversity, equity, and inclusiveness training.*

ACTION ITEM:

1.4.1 *Institute regular, mandatory diversity and bias training.*

The course of this review has revealed a wide gulf in understanding, comprehension, perception, and empathy regarding the state of racial and sexual tension in the Department. More

than one voice suggested that the Department is viewed as hiring a number of minorities because of political pressures, rather than merits. Similarly, some voices stated that they did not see certain incidents (which include allegations of casual use of the n-word, placing a banana on the windshield of a firefighter's car, and misogynistic social media posts)²⁵ as evidence of a racial or sexual issue, but rather as innocent mischief.

On the other side of this issue, some voices opined that the LFD is seen as an “old boys club,” where discipline is often inconsistent when racial issues are brought to light, and where minorities, women, and members of the LGBTQ+ community are subject to unacceptable comments and behavior.

Even the mere fact that there are some members of the Department who are not aware of the immensely



offensive nature of banana pranks aimed at African-Americans, as one example, suggests that the Department is failing in preparing its employees for a modern American workplace. The Department must urgently strive to institute regular, mandatory training designed to adequately prepare its workforce for working together with every sort of American. In light of the regular reports in media outlets – as well as the regular reporting during the sourcing of this report – of improper or unwelcome comments and actions about or relating to gender, sexual orientation, and other personal attributes, it is clear that the LFD has not fully realized its goal of a harmonious and respectful workplace.

²⁵ We pause here to note that nothing in this report is intended to give comment on any current or potential lawsuits against the city. We report these allegations, and the existence of lawsuits, due to their appearance in local media outlets and from comments garnered during the sourcing of this report. *See e.g.* Kevin Lavery, Ex-Lansing Firefighter's Discrimination Case Will go to Federal Trial, WKAR Public Media, Mar. 25, 2022, available at: <https://www.wkar.org/wkar-news/2022-03-25/ex-lansing-firefighters-discrimination-case-against-city-will-go-to-federal-trial>.

In sum: The LFD, which does not currently require bias training, must seriously and urgently consider offering and requiring a set amount of regular periodic employee training in regards to biases, diversity, and other skills necessary in a modern American workplace.²⁶

1.4.2 *Conduct a review and revision of applicable disciplinary guidelines to provide for the consistent application of the highest standards in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion; ensure citywide support of zero tolerance goals.*

The Department cannot simply implement additional training or DEI class sessions and expect a more harmonious atmosphere to spontaneously develop. Rather, the Department must review and revise its applicable disciplinary guidelines to ensure consistent vigilance against racist, misogynistic, and other asocial behavior. Further, the city’s political leaders must vigorously support these changes and their follow-through. The Department’s employees have reported that inconsistent, or perceived inconsistent treatment of such asocial incidents leads to conclusions that the city fears making hard choices and fears sending a clear message about such conduct. The city and its administration must confirm at every possible instance that LFD will tolerate no racial, misogynistic, or otherwise asocial conduct.



²⁶ Some local organizations, such as the “Suits and the City” 501(c)(3) organization, have offered to assist in this mission.

POLICY:

1.5 *Consider measures designed to increase transparency in the Department*

ACTION ITEM

1.5.1 *Evaluate and revise the current demarcation of, and policies regarding, the Department's Public Information Officer role.*

The Department would be well served by designating one voice to speak for its public positions. Selecting a single person with a designated public information role ensures that mixed or contradictory messages are not put into the public square. Several media personnel that were interviewed during the sourcing of this report reported their uncertainty in determining who to direct questions to and who ask for data including weekly or monthly activity reports or statistics. There is either no well-defined process for directing media to appropriate sources, or, alternatively, that process is not well publicized or communicated.

Moreover, to provide for the best possible results from this role, the Department should identify, review, and revise its policies regarding the public information role. The Department will be best served by specifically delineated duties and policies so that the public information role is consistent, transparent, and quickly responsive to requests for information. As presently laid out, the Public Information role is not well defined or assigned, and requires further elucidation.

FOCUS TWO: HUMAN RESOURCES

POLICY:

2.1 *Improve the Department's policies, procedures, and practices concerning and aimed at providing a level of stability and responsiveness to employee concerns.*

ACTION ITEMS:

2.1.1 *Develop policies and strategies that aim to promote stability at leadership levels.*

One of the most common areas of concern this review encountered was anxiety about stability at the top levels of LFD administration. By various counts, the Department has had somewhere in the range of 6 fire chiefs in a four to five year period. There is no organization, public or private, that operates at its best and highest use under constantly changing leadership. Furthermore, in order for any beneficial policy changes to take root and flourish, the structural stability of leadership must be assured, and leaders must be given the vote of confidence to oversee positive changes through to their logical conclusions. Thus, it is imperative that the city and the Department investigate, develop, and promulgate policies and strategies that aim at combatting this instability among the leadership at LFD.



2.1.2 *Develop and implement fuller communication policies between upper levels of administration and rank and file employees.*

This review assessed a level of dissatisfaction with the responsiveness, or perceived responsiveness, from upper levels of management in contending with rank and file employee concerns. As with many of this section’s action items, this observation is highlighted for its potential to improve morale and potential to improve the overall operations in the Department. If a given employee feels that their concerns will not be met with a serious response, they will be less likely to report issues that the Department needs to address. In turn, this leads to burnout, loss of morale, and a Department that does not function as optimally as it could. LFD Administration should undertake to commit

to guaranteeing open lines of communication between its upper levels and its rank and file. As part of this effort, LFD should encourage reporting comments and concerns from rank and file employees. Some businesses, as an example, even offer incentives to those employees that bring forward information that saves a firm money, such as process inefficiencies. LFD should promote the kind of active, open, and empathetic communication that leads to overall improvement in individual and Departmental performance.



2.1.3 *Develop, draft, and implement more complete job and duty definitions for leadership positions.*

This review determined the existence of recurring concerns with the specificity of job descriptions, parameters, and duties of administrators’ positions. Lack of specificity and detail in demarcating administrator duties creates a plethora of obstacles to the most successful functioning of the Department. For example, lack of specified duty purviews can confuse and frustrate lower ranked employees who wish to voice a concern about a given policy but are directed to different persons as the responsible party for such policies. This lack of specific responsibility can also lead to a lack of follow through when such concerns are voiced. In addition, lack of specifically delineated duties can arguably lead to abrasive conflicts between administrators, which deteriorates the most effective functioning of the Department. Finally, lack of specificity in job duty descriptions and responsibilities risks that certain areas of concern will not be given the attention they deserve, under the mistaken assumption that another administrator bears responsibility for a given task, mission, or policy. The Department should strive to review, discuss,

develop, draft, and implement specifically identifiable duties and purviews for all administrator positions.

2.1.4 *Develop, draft, and implement more complete job and duty succession plans.*

Several stakeholders indicated that a common practice for a succession is to have a new appointee or hiree to shadow the position for 30 days before acceding to the position. However, there are obviously times when this is not sufficient or is not possible, meaning that there is a discontinuity in some accession or succession scenarios. Thus, the Department should undertake to ensure that each leadership position has a manual, guidebook, list of procedures, and other reference guides so that service levels are not impacted by accession or succession issues. In addition, Departmental positions should engage in regularly training a “backup” for their duties to provide for those times when a given leader or employee is unavailable.



2.1.5 *Consider changing the mechanics of investigating Human Resources-oriented complaints.*

This review has engaged with multiple stakeholders who have expressed concerns about the prompt, thorough, and transparent investigation and processing of complaints that would normally be under the purview of the city’s Human Resources Department. The city’s Human Resources Department is responsible for complaints including harassment and discrimination, while the LFD’s administration largely handles issues specifically pertaining to job performance (driving, patient care, attitude on scenes, etc.).

The main concerns regarding the city’s Human Resources Department this review has encountered fall under a few main issues: First, the processes for investigating are not well understood by many employees. This illustrates the need for those responsible for Human Resources-oriented complaints to fully publicize and explain the designated path or flowchart that complaints travel, and to undertake to adhere to that designated path in all cases. Stakeholders reported their observations that some view the city’s Human Resources complaint resolution

procedures as inconsistently applied and opaque, discouraging further complaints because they are seen as unlikely to lead to any result. Secondly, because of this lack of a commonly understood pathway towards resolution, many voices have expressed concern with the pace of resolution of such complaints. This includes assertions that some complaints grind to a halt without explanation. Finally, each of the aforementioned concerns relates to another commonly voiced issue – namely, that the Human Resources Department’s responses to such complaints do not comport with national best practices.

Although it is beyond the scope of this review to analyze each and every HR-led investigation and procedure, it is well within the scope of the review to point out that current practices are engendering suspicion and skepticism, rather than confidence. As some first steps, the city should undertake to ensure that all city Human Resources Department officials, including the Director and employees, are fully and specifically trained, educated, and credentialed for the specific human resource duties they hold. Secondly, the city should take steps to ensure that its processes do not give the appearance of a conflict of interest. Finally, the city could consider routing human resources-oriented complaints to an alternative or independent department, board, or structure. Put simply, there is simply too much at stake when dealing with employee bias or harassment complaints to continue as is. Even one investigation that is not handled with best practices and with constant transparency invites the suspicion and dissatisfaction that impacts employee morale and the ultimate performance of the LFD. In addition, this failure of the city’s Human Resources Department to satisfy concerns in the most transparent way possible is undoubtedly a part of the reason for there being up to eight current lawsuits against the Department.

Additionally, the city should undertake to reconsider its transparency policies currently in place as regards to explaining and publicizing investigations of Human Resources-oriented complaints. Stakeholders have reported that it is often difficult to determine the existence or nature of any given complaint. While there are several considerations in favor of guarding the confidentiality of complaints, the balance of consideration seems to indicate that failure to be transparent wherever possible creates an atmosphere of mistrust and doubt that investigations are being fully followed through upon. The city should consider releasing information wherever possible to allow all stakeholders to determine the existence of, nature of, and process of a given complaint.



POLICY:

2.2 *Ensure the department is effectively recruiting and promptly hiring the best candidates.*

ACTION ITEMS:

2.2.1 *Expedite hiring processes.*

The Department is not alone in facing challenges recruiting, hiring, and retaining the best talent.²⁷ The Department has approximately 12 vacancies, consisting of 10 sworn vacancies and 2 civilian vacancies. During this review, 8 individuals were being trained to fill some of these vacancies, suggesting vital progress in filling these open spots. The primary duties of listing job openings, engaging and communicating with candidates, and other hiring processes are within the purview of the city's Human Resources Department. The city's Human Resources Department has already been highlighted as an area primed for additional focus and optimization.²⁸



Among other challenges, it has been reported that the city's Human Resources Department does not always speedily and regularly communicate with prospective hires,²⁹ that it does not always promptly and publicly post job vacancies,³⁰ that it does not have sufficient recruiting

²⁷ See e.g. Christenson, *supra* n. 4.

²⁸ See The Center for Safety Assessments and Inclusion, *Lansing Police Department Independent Review*, *supra* n. 1 at 33 (Noting that "Ultimate hiring processes, however, are largely in the hands of the city's human resources officials, rather than the department itself. The [Lansing Police] department would benefit from more expedited hiring and vetting processes.").

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ Elena Durnbaugh, *Lansing Has Just 16 City Jobs Posted Online. HR Says the Real Number is 119.*, Lansing State Journal, Mar. 15, 2022, available at: <https://www.lansingstatejournal.com/story/news/2022/03/15/why-lansing-cant-seem-hire-enough->

resources,³¹ and that it does not effectively involve the city’s Diversity Officer in hiring decisions.³² These reports accord with the comments and concerns The Center received during this review, which also indicate the lack of a uniform time schedule for posting and meeting hiring needs.

Accordingly, the city must take additional steps to review, focus on, and reform the functioning of its Human Resources Department. Even slight communication delays with candidates can result in the city losing out on prospective hires who have been more robustly recruited by competing municipalities and agencies, and each of the concerns raised above have real-world consequences for the optimal functioning of the LFD. As one example, during promotion testing with an outside company, that company’s contract mandates communication with just a single member of the city’s Human Resources team. This obviously spurs delays when that single employee is unavailable, leading to delayed testing and training schedules for promotions.

Thus, the city should endeavor to undertake a full review of the city’s Human Resources Department to ensure its members have the specific human resources training necessary to improve and expedite current hiring practices. Specifically, the city should immediately review applicable leadership



in the city’s Human Resources Department to ensure they are meeting local requirements for qualification.³³ Moreover, the city should undertake, as part of its review, to determine manners in which to reduce the level of suspicion and disapprobation directed towards human resources that were commonly voiced to The Center during the sourcing of this report. Many different voices expressed concerns with human resources practices that may have given the appearance or impression of political considerations, familial or friendly relations, or other improper factors

[city-workers/9377665002/](https://www.lansingmi.gov/city-workers/9377665002/) (“The city also has far more vacancies than online job postings, which total just 16.”). It should also be noted here that although the city’s Human Resources Director seemed to say in this Lansing State Journal article that online job postings lag behind vacancies because “HR can only post jobs once a department director asks for it,” this assertion is directly contradicted by interviews conducted in the course of this review, which indicated a several month delay in posting such job vacancies for the LFD, leading to several complications in the optimal timing for seasonal training programming.

³¹ *Id.* (“Lansing’s recruitment problem is exacerbated by the fact that its Human Resources department is understaffed,” noting that the current HR Director pointed to a lack of a recruiter as the reason for ineffective recruitment.”).

³² *Id.* (“Lansing’s first diversity officer...was hired in 2020. However, she’s not highly involved in the city’s hiring process...”).

³³ See e.g. §288.14, Lansing Code of Ordinances, available at:

https://library.municode.com/mi/lansing/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=COOR_PT2ADCO_TIT10EMPR_CH288EMQU_288.14DIHURE (describing very specific qualifications for the Director of Human Resources position.).

having impacted a given hiring or disciplinary practice or investigative decision. As currently practicing, the city's Human Resources Department cannot be said to be engendering confidence among LFD members that its hiring practices and decisions are always openly transparent, responsive, or prompt.

2.2.2 *Ensure more open communication regarding major hires.*

Many voices heard during the sourcing of this report expressed concerns regarding the openness and transparency of processes used to make major hires in the department, including for such positions as the Fire Chief. We do not raise this issue to imply questions regarding the qualifications of any of the candidates or ultimate hirees; rather, we raise this issue to generate awareness of the way that routine human resources decisions are perceived. Accordingly, while it is beyond the scope of this report to reconstruct each and every step along the way of a Fire Chief search and hiring process, the city's Human Resources Department must take steps to improve its communication of each and every step in making major hires. This would include more robust disclosures of the processes and procedures in place when making a major hire, including a plainer explanation of the role of the selection board and the board members' qualifications and backgrounds for appointment to said selection board. Moreover, it has been asserted that the membership roster of the panel or organization that was leading the recent Fire Chief hiring process was not made publicly available, and that contact information for prospective hires was not relayed to local media.



Failure to create the open, transparent atmosphere necessary to create trust in the hiring process leads to the sort of criticisms mentioned *supra*, wherein some employees question the reasoning for certain procedures and hires. Moreover, creation of an impression of anything other than a totally above-board process in major hires contributes to a lack of cohesion and unified progress towards the Department's goals, contributing further to an environment of consistent inconsistency, vis-à-vis hiring 6 chiefs in approximately 5 years.

2.2.3 Consider upgrading the compensation for new hires that have firefighting experience.

This report has already highlighted the immense challenge of recruiting and hiring the best candidates. One change that could bear results is to consider adding to the rate of compensation for new hires that have experience. Several stakeholders explained that current pay scales for new hires with experience do not match a hiree's years of experience. Again, this leads to experienced candidates seeking out employment with other agencies, and further deprives Lansing of some talented firefighters and medical specialists. The city should consider raising its pay, or giving some form of bonus or other incentive, for new hires to more adequately compensate those with previous experience.

2.2.4 Provide more feedback regarding human resources decisions.

This report has encountered a number of concerns with the city's Human Resources Department practices and procedures, as enunciated above. An additional challenge in this context is the lack of clear communication regarding hiring and firing processes, the specific reasons for any given decision, and specific items listed for improvement on a given candidate's qualifications review. For example, a hopeful candidate who has been rejected for interview or promotion will often seek additional information on ways to improve their training and resumé for the next promotion process. If that person is not given specific, itemizable reasons for an interview or promotion decision, they may grow frustrated, cynical, or suspicious about the hiring and promotion process, again leading to lower morale in the Department. The city's Human Resources Department should offer clear, articulable, and concise items that a candidate can work to improve in future scenarios.



2.2.5 *Continue to advance the cause of diversifying the Department's workforce.*

The Department has made attempts to create and maintain a diverse workforce. As of January 2022, Department data indicates that its diversity exceeds that of the national firefighter workforce.³⁴ However, the diversity of the Department still does not approach the levels found in the Lansing community.³⁵ Furthermore, this review has mentioned in several instances the strained atmosphere reported by many employees at different levels, suggesting that the Department still must continue its efforts to diversify its workforce. The Department does make efforts at recruiting and hiring a diverse workforce, including reaching out to the Lansing School Board to work with high school students interested in firefighting, and including holding events with local community colleges and technical schools. The Department should periodically review its recruitment efforts and results to determine those routes most likely to generate potential recruits and most likely to help continue to diversify the Department.



³⁴ For example, in January 2022, the Department reported that around 18% of its sworn employees were African-American, compared to the national 2020 average of just over 6%. Similarly, the Department reported 7% female sworn employees, compared to the national average of 4%. Data provided by LFD on file with authors.

³⁵ Consider, as just one example, that Hispanic and Latino employees constitute 7.7% of the Department, compared to 13% of the city at large. US Census Bureau, *QuickFacts: Lansing City, Michigan*, available at: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/lansingcitymichigan>.

POLICY:

2.3 *Ensure that all manner of resources are provided to employees facing mental health issues and other stressors.*

ACTION ITEMS:

2.3.1 *Endeavor to more consistently communicate the availability of such resources, and to cultivate more such resources*

As described above, the Department is facing several vacancies, has faced instability at the top levels of the Department, and is operating amidst rising call volume. The Department's men and women are naturally more physically and mentally exhausted as call volumes rise, leading to a sizable increase in the use of sick leave time. Moreover, some voices report that employees are less likely to take overtime as a result of the need to decompress and avoid exhaustion. In fact, around three firefighters left the profession totally within the past year, which is a noteworthy number in a department of Lansing's size. As a result of this clear evidence of growing stress, the Department reflects a need for bolstered mental health resources and stress reduction tools. These resources could also include nutrition training and coaching, additional fitness benefits and incentives, resilience training, and financial training.

Although the Department and city make resources available,³⁶ it should be clear that these resources need to be more widely publicized, that rank and file employees need to be more encouraged to make use of these resources, and that such resources should be expanded. Moreover, employees should receive prompt and timely assistance, as it has been reported during the sourcing of this report that requests for such referrals often result in undue delay. Moreover, the Department should continue to evaluate the optimal work schedules for the Department's employees to prevent burnout, reduce stress, and encourage overall wellbeing.

³⁶ The Department provides peer fitness training, access to the Capitol Area Peer Support group (a third party group not affiliated with the city), and the city provides access to the EAP, or Employee Assistance Program.

2.3.2 *The Department should encourage routine periodic measurements of employee wellbeing*

The Department has, in the past, engaged in surveys seeking to gauge concerns and feelings current employees have about the Department and its operations. The Department should expand regular, periodic routine confidential mental health and wellbeing checks, in addition to Department-wide surveys regarding views on overall operations. This review has determined that morale is threatened in the Department due to the challenges included in this review, but especially relating to the volume of calls, the state of equipment, and the idiosyncratic



functioning of the city's Human Resources Department. Therefore, the department should not remain reactive in assessing employee wellbeing, but rather should regularly engage in practices that assess officer and employee health. These check-ins should encourage officers and employees to seek out assistance before stress and trauma responses become personally overwhelming or begin to affect job performance. In addition, Department-wide surveys should be used as a clarion call to improve those areas where employees voice dissatisfaction.

POLICY:

2.4 *Examine ways to create a more specialized, economical LFD*

ACTION ITEMS:

2.4.1 *Consider employing civilians for some positions; consider altering incentives for more specialized positions*

Given the mounting challenges in staffing a fully effective Department, one alternative is to consider making some positions open for civilian staffing, such as inspectors. Another is to help incentivize the regular training and upgrading of skills in the Department. For example, the Department has funds to send employees to get paramedic certified, but such certification appears voluntary at this time. The Department should consistently consider ways to boost the training of existing employees to allow for more fruitful advancement from within the Department while at the same time rewarding those additional qualifications.



CLOSING REMARKS & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“I can think of no more stirring symbol of man’s humanity to man than a fire engine.”

-Kurt Vonnegut

On behalf of The Center for Safety Assessments & Inclusion, I would like to thank each and every person who helped make this report possible. I personally want to thank the Mayor and department heads that assisted us in gathering information and all those who generously gave their time and input to help create this assessment.

In truth, much work remains to be done towards creating a better culture within the LFD, a better relationship between the LFD and the city’s Human Resources Department, and a better connection with the community. The men and women of the fire department, entrusted with a life-saving mission and bearing stresses that are inherent to such a vital calling, deserve the full range of resources within the city’s disposal to improve each of these factors. The City of Lansing must continue to examine all aspects of operations to improve working conditions and the working environment.

Our comprehensive reviews and assessments depend on the unvarnished honesty of all stakeholders, and the candid opinions shared with us during this review allowed us to make these recommendations for a better Lansing Fire Department. We would also pause here to note that we did encounter some constraints in sourcing this report, including by virtue of the city and the city’s Human Resources Department’s limitations in allowing examination of certain documentation. On behalf of myself and The Center’s executive assessment team responsible for this report, thank you to all those helping to serve. We would like to close by expressing our sincerest best wishes to the newly appointed Fire Chief.



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