

HIGH POINT CITY COUNCIL MANAGER'S BRIEFING
Monday, December 1, 2025 - 4:00 PM
Municipal Office Building
211 S. Hamilton Street
High Point, NC 27260

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Pro Tempore Moore called the Manager's Briefing to order at 4:00 p.m. and stated the following members were present:

Present: Mayor Pro Tempore Britt Moore, At-Large, Council Member Chris Williams, At-Large, Council Member Vickie McKiver, Ward 1, Council Member Tyrone Johnson (arrived at 4:23 p.m.), Ward 2, Council Member Monica Peters, Ward 3 (arrived at 4:03 p.m.), Council Member Patrick Harman, Ward 4, Council Member Tim Andrew, Ward 5, Council Member Michael Holmes, Ward 1

Absent: Mayor Cyril Jefferson

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Council Member Holmes made a motion, seconded by Council Member Andrew, to adopt the agenda as presented.

Motion carried with the following vote:

Aye: Mayor Pro Tempore Moore, Council Member Williams, Council Member McKiver, Council Member Harman, Council Member Andrew, Council Member Holmes

Nay: None

Absent: Mayor Jefferson, Council Member Peters, Council Member Johnson

PRESENTATION OF ITEMS

2025-486 **Fire Department Continuous Improvement Report**
Fire Chief Consulting will provide an overview of the Continuous Improvement Report detailing operational practices within the High Point Fire Department.

Tasha Logan Ford, City Manager, spoke on the Continuous Improvement Report and referenced public comments during the June 2025 Council meeting budget discussion, expressing concerns about Fire Department operations, and more specifically the response to the April 2025 Barbee Avenue Fire. She explained that City Council had asked staff to look into that incident and some other factors that were part of the discussion regarding fire operations. She stated staff took some time to develop a scope of work and that there were three components to the report: to conduct a post-incident analysis for that fire incident in addition to the internal review already

performed, benchmarking as to how many staff members they currently have in the department, and a look at the training records review. She spoke about retirements, additional overhire staff additions, and the application for the SAFER Grant for additional staffing. She indicated they had asked Fire Chief Consulting to come in with that scope of work and begin working with Chief Evans to gather information for Council. She pointed out that the department was currently going through the re-accreditation process and that there was a separate group conducting that process. She introduced Greg Grayson, Chief Officer at NC Fire Chief Consulting, to provide an overview of the report.

Mr. Grayson indicated he was a retired Chief, formerly of the Greensboro Fire Department, and said that most of his staff were also retired chiefs with years of experience managing fire departments in North Carolina local governments. He pointed out the company specialized and only served North Carolina local government agencies.

He spoke on the accreditation piece and said they looked at ways to improve the service level. He pointed out that it was important to note that the City of High Point Fire Department was an accredited department and recognized as an Insurance Services Office (ISO) Class 1 Department. He said that very few departments have both of these components, but he noted that there was always room for improvement. He explained that during the scope of work, the department was awarded the SAFER grant for 24 additional firefighters. He noted that the company had focused on the three areas mentioned by the Manager, including the Barbee Avenue fire incident, performance benchmarking, and training records review.

He shared some key takeaways from the Barbee Avenue fire, and pointed out that many of the operational aspects of the incident went well and that the department did what they needed to do. He noted that the internal review also determined the operational aspects were handled correctly. He shared that the company had the opportunity to speak with staff who responded to the incident, and that, although firefighters knew their mission at this incident, some responders became overwhelmed with multiple victims and some firefighters becoming disoriented. He said, because of turnover, many of the firefighters there had limited experience with these types of events. He highlighted some opportunities for improvement, including additional firefighter staffing, reinforcement of air management training, and the need for operational enhancements such as communications and incident command.

Chief Grayson moved on to performance benchmarking and said they looked at other jurisdictions, industry standards, and University of North Carolina (UNC) School of Government benchmarking when analyzing the data from High Point. He noted the review consisted of looking at over 82,000 incidents over a six-year period, including full-complement arrival to over 600 structure fires. He pointed out, that based on the incident data, the High Point Fire Department measured a 90 percent response rate, within six minutes and 30 seconds or less until the first fire department unit arrives, for all emergency events. He noted there were no concerns with those statistics, and that

it was consistent with industry and accreditation standards. He explained that the department was successful at placing the necessary number of firefighters on the ground in ten minutes and 10 seconds or less for a moderate structure fire, but would like to see that improve to eight or nine minutes. In response to Council Member Andrew, Chief Grayson explained there was no legal requirement for the eight or nine-minute response, but that it was industry standard and best practice.

He showed a graph outlining the total response time by fiscal year with data all the way back to 1920. In response to Council Member Andrew, he said there was not a significant deviation between 2024 and 2025.

He spoke on the "Two In, Two Out," federal legal requirement and noted the exception to the requirement if there is a known rescue. He pointed out that with current staffing, two High Point fire units must be on the scene before making interior entry under most conditions. In response to Council Member Andrew, Chief Grayson said it was an OSHA requirement for the legal requirement. In response to Council Member Peters, Chief Evans indicated the department typically sends more than one company to an incident. In response to Council Member Holmes, Chief Grayson noted that the requirement only addressed the inside of the structure.

Chief Grayson showed a graphic outlining the service delivery implications of 3-person companies in High Point. In response to Mayor Pro Tempore Moore, he indicated that the department was performing very well in the overall response time with the first unit arrival.

He moved on to the Benchmarking Methodology analysis component of the study and provided a list of resources, including comparable North Carolina municipalities, High Point growth data, and the UNC School of Government benchmarking analysis of a number of cities. He commended the city for the overhire initiative and noted that the data did not reflect the 24 positions from the SAFER grant. In response to Council Member Andrew, Chief Grayson indicated that the number of people on staff reflected full-time equivalency employees.

He spoke on the key operational recommendations, including increasing daily company level staffing, continuing to update critical task analysis, continuing to work through the accreditation process, incident management support, additional staff and firefighters, consideration of traffic signal pre-emption systems, reinforcement of air management training, and further development of the city's fire training facility.

In response to Council Member Andrew, Chief Grayson said the current training facility could be modernized, and Chief Evans mentioned the Conex box concept. City Manager Ford noted that there were fire stations that were built around the same time as the training facility that needed to be invested in as well. In response to Council Member Holmes, Chief Evans said it would be about \$1.5 to \$2 million dollars to update to the Conex box concept training center. Chief Grayson spoke about other municipalities in the area, including Greensboro, which have new training facilities, and

pointed out that you receive the best ISO ratings when your training facility is located in the same municipality. In response to Council Member Holmes, City Manager Ford noted a station location analysis needed to be performed to determine priorities regarding updating fire stations and the training center to ensure the stations are placed in the correct location before updating.

Chief Grayson spoke on training records, the last component of the study, and said there was still room for improvement even though the city performed well in the last evaluation regarding training. He went over the ISO fire training components and offered some key recommendations for enhanced training, including adding more hours in fire suppression and fire behavior training, optimizing the training curriculum, documentation enhancements, and the strengthening of audit readiness and scoring. He spoke on multi-company training and training with neighboring municipalities. In response to Mayor Pro Tempore Moore, Chief Grayson noted that multi-company training would not throw off response times because other staff would be assigned to those areas. In response to Council Member Holmes, Chief Evans said they had two systems in place to maintain records. In response to Council Member Williams, Chief Evans said there was a minimum of 20 hours of training per month.

Chief Grayson spoke on the next steps for elected officials, including support of the SAFER grant and the 24 positions by looking at incremental staffing for the upcoming five to seven fiscal years. He shared a suggested timeline for significant enhancements for this fiscal year and the following, plus recommendations for the next 3–5 years and 5–7 years and beyond.

In response to Council Member Andrew, he indicated that the current state of fire equipment was not part of the analysis performed by Fire Chief Consulting. In response to Council Member Holmes, Chief Grayson said that having three firefighters per apparatus would not affect ISO ratings, but it was best practice. In response to City Manager Ford, Chief Evans said the first time they were accredited was ten years ago, and we were accredited with the current staffing structure. Chief Grayson pointed out that the accreditation process involves looking at future growth and improvements. In response to Council Member Williams, City Manager Ford said the SAFER grant was specifically awarded for the 24 additional positions. She explained that the award was for a three-year period, and that once that was over, the city needed to be in position to absorb the cost of the grant, which was roughly \$5 million. She said staff was preparing now to ensure the city was able to absorb the positions at the end of the grant period. In response to Council Member Williams, Chief Evans said he did not currently have the cost per person for training numbers, but indicated he could provide those numbers at a later date.

In response to Council Member Harman, Chief Grayson said they did look specifically at the Barbee fire incident as well as all structure fires in the city. He indicated that the interviews with fire personnel were not anonymous and that staff could reach out to the facilitators individually if needed. In response to Council Member Andrew, he said that the January Pegram fire was included in the data gathered over the six-year time

period. In response to Council Member Johnson, Chief Evans said there were 72 firefighters per shift. City Manager Ford noted that as part of the report, the city asked the firm to look at where it would be best to place additional staff to prioritize improvements on response time. Chief Grayson pointed out that it will take some time to see improvements once additional staff has been hired. In response to Council Member Holmes, City Manager Ford said the station location analysis could help to determine placement of stations to improve response times. She spoke on the closed station and how it could have affected those numbers.

In response to Mayor Pro Tempore Moore, he said the ISO and accreditation processes occurred every five years, but they were not synced. City Manager Ford responded to Mayor Pro Tempore Moore's question regarding pre-empted signals and indicated it takes a level of coordination and can be something to look at and evaluate. She noted that it would probably not be the highest priority based on the findings of the report. Chief Grayson said those types of signals helped you maintain a certain level as your community grows by looking at major corridors with a high level of travel.

Mayor Pro Tempore Moore pointed out that the \$5 million to absorb the SAFER grant positions would probably be more than \$5 million in five years and spoke on the costs of making sure we maintain a safe city. He thanked Chief Grayson for the report and said he was encouraged by the positive comments about the High Point Fire Department operations.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the City Council, the meeting adjourned at 5:11 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Britt Moore, Mayor Pro Tempore

Attest:

Alison Glynn, Deputy City Clerk