

Legally Integrating Part Time Employees Into the Mount Vernon Fire Department

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A research project submitted to the Ohio Fire Executive Program

15 July 2010

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that the following statements are true:

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ABSTRACT

There had been a disparity created at the Mount Vernon Fire Department between the number of emergency calls per day and the number of fire department members that constituted the daily staffing levels of the department. Budgetary constraints prevented the department from hiring any additional full time employees. The only economically feasible solution to the situation that existed was to hire part time employees.

The Mount Vernon Fire Department did not have a process in place to legally hire part time employees. This study was conducted using the action research method. Its purpose was to obtain data that could be transformed into policy that outlined a legal method of hiring part time employees. The research questions that were addressed in completing the research were:

1. What are the legal requirements that the MVFD must follow when creating the part time firefighter position?
2. How should management at the fire department negotiate an acceptable implementation of a part time workforce with the local firefighting union?
3. What processes, policies or procedures do other departments have in place to guide part time employment programs?
4. What have other departments experienced as problems and benefits of part time employees?

The study was conducted utilizing the descriptive research method. A survey was developed and distributed to twelve central Ohio fire departments that had similar demographic qualities of the Mount Vernon Fire Department. Interviews with chief officers and union officials were also conducted.

The study produced data that provided management of the Mount Vernon Fire Department the ability to develop a part time work program that was legally sound and departmentally acceptable. Recommendations for the policy formation and execution were centered on benefit packages and empowerment of the employee. Data gathered from the study illustrated that these two items combined with an aggressive wage package were key components of current successful part time programs in other departments. Additional studies were suggested to evaluate the longevity and the effect of turnover of the part time employee.

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

With emergency call volume constantly on the rise, fire departments must maintain an adequate balance between staffing levels and call volume in order to continue to provide sufficient and efficient services to their communities. The Mount Vernon Fire Department (MVFD) is one such organization. Since 1983, the call volume at the MVFD has tripled, however, the daily staffing levels have increased by only a single employee during the same period of years.

Currently, all members of the MVFD are full time employees of the city of Mount Vernon and receive benefit packages similar to all other full time city employees. It has become cost prohibitive to hire additional full time employees within the fire department. The hiring of part time employees into the fire department is a potential solution to the problem of disproportional staffing levels to call volume that has been created over the last two decades. *The problem that this study will address is that the Mount Vernon Fire Department does not have a process established to legally hire part time employees.*

The descriptive research method was used to conduct this research study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to produce data that could be used to create a policy and procedure for the hiring, compensating and utilization of part time employees within the MVFD. Information gathered from this study will be developed into a presentation for Mount Vernon city administration. Calculated timing of this presentation coupled with its thorough content,

may result in approval and subsequent implementation of a policy and procedure surrounding a part time workforce at the MVFD.

Research Questions

The research questions this study will investigate are:

1. What are the legal requirements that the MVFD must follow when creating the part time firefighter position?
2. How should management at the fire department negotiate an acceptable implementation of a part time workforce with the local firefighting union?
3. What processes, policies or procedures do other departments have in place to guide part time employment programs?
4. What have other departments experienced as problems and benefits of part time employees?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Today's fire service poses complex problems to all of its membership. Mastering critical decision making skills will enable the firefighter or paramedic to carry out their duties in a successful and safe manner. Complex situations do not just exist on the streets. Managers of fire departments, or chief officers, are faced with equally as challenging problems outside of the fire ground and must employ calculated strategies using specific tactics in order to overcome challenges created by these problems. Establishing adequate staffing levels is one of these problems. Management of the fire department is tasked with adequately staffing the vehicles that respond to an emergency call so that efficient care may be delivered to the general public in their time of need. However, the delivery of care cannot be delivered at the cost of safety of those providing the service. Inadequate or diminished staffing levels can lead to unsafe

situations and actions taken by the individuals on the emergency call potentially over extending their capabilities while attempting to render help to their community. Expanding staffing by using part time employees can bring the proportion of staffing levels and emergency call volume closer to nationally accepted standards and expectations, while reducing the cost of budgetary items associated with compensation of the employees.

Using the standards set forth by the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA), most chief officers can agree on what minimum staffing levels should be when combating a fire or assigning employees to an apparatus at night. However, the NFPA does not provide the funding that is to be used to compensate the employees that are needed to meet these expectations.

The MVFD was introduced to the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) side of the fire industry in 1983. The Knox Community Hospital dissolved its hospital based EMS transport service and seven of its paramedics applied for jobs at the fire department. Dual based fire and EMS workforces were becoming more and more common at that time. The leadership at the MVFD was progressive enough to evolve its service to the community by hiring the seven paramedics. Many changes were made within the organization to facilitate the transition to a dual service based department. Additional training and education was needed for all members of the department with the arrival of paramedics into their ranks. Each existing member became certified as an emergency medical technician basic (EMTB). A new EMS protocol was developed to help govern the department as they provided pre-hospital emergency medical care to their community. New emergency vehicles were purchased to transport the sick or injured patients to the hospital. What was not anticipated nor reacted to was the large growth in the emergency call volume.

In 1982, staffing at the fire department consisted of 6 full time firefighters per day. A fire chief also worked Monday through Friday during normal business hours. Staffing increased by two members each day and by three on Friday, Saturday and Sunday when the fire department hired the seven paramedics from the dissolved hospital based Life Support Team. In 1982 the fire department responded to 389 calls for an average of 1.07 calls per day. The nature of the emergency calls that the fire department responded to during 1982 were fire based emergencies. Vehicle fires, house fires, automobile accidents, and fire alarms were typical incident types. In 1983 the fire department responded to 1,363 calls for an average of 3.73 calls per day. Adding to the incident types taken from previous years were incidents such as cardiac arrest, choking, traumatic injuries, substance abuse and medical illness. The influx of EMS calls added to the department's workload is very evident when contrasted to the call volume of those two years. The call volume at the MVFD has continued to grow, seemingly exponentially, over the last twenty five years with little adjustment to staffing levels. Table 1 illustrates the call volume by year and subsequent staffing level adjustments that were made to respond to the increased volume of emergency calls.

Table 1*Comparison Between MVFD Call Volume and Daily Staffing Levels*

	Call Volume per Year		Daily Staffing Levels	
	<i>F</i> ^a	<i>M</i> ^b	FF ^c	EMT-P ^d
1982	389	0	6	0
1983-1998	623*	1646*	6	1 OR 2
1999-2008	893*	2796*	6	2

Note. In January of 1999 minimum daily staffing was increased from 6 firefighters and 1 paramedic to 6 firefighters and 2 paramedics.

^aFire emergency calls

^bMedical emergency calls

^cFirefighting personnel

^dParamedics

* = Average call volume for this period

“The great risk of down-sizing and restructuring is that they’ll do nothing to change the way we work. Fewer of us will simply work harder” (Moore, 1996, p. xiii). Although fire department staffing did not actually downsize, by allowing the call volume to increase so drastically without reacting to it by increasing daily staffing levels, fewer men worked harder and harder with each passing year.

Staffing levels must be adjusted at the MVFD but the state of the economy has created a situation within the City’s budget that will prohibit the hiring of additional full time employees at the fire department in the near future. City Administration instructed fire department management to find an alternative solution to hiring fulltime employees to increase the daily

staffing levels. A trend that is currently occurring in the fire industry is the establishment and use of a part time firefighting workforce. Once trained, the part time employee can function in every capacity as a fulltime employee with less than half of compensation package. Medical insurance and benefits such as sick time and vacation time are not typically included in the part time employee's compensation package which has less impact on the City's budget. The establishment of a part time workforce will increase the daily staffing levels to a more adequate number. *The potential impact that this study could have on the MVFD is increasing daily staffing levels and subsequently improving the service that the fire department can provide for the community that it serves.*

It is important that this study be conducted to insure that proper procedures be followed when hiring part time employees. Mount Vernon is a statutory city governed by the Ohio Revised Code (ORC). Mount Vernon also follows Civil Service Law when appointing or promoting fire department personnel. Careful consideration must be taken to insure that the City is in compliance with both Civil Service Law and the ORC when hiring part time employees at the fire department. Consideration of the local firefighter's union must also occur. Thorough research will contribute to concise and accurate policy formation outlining a part time program. A sound, well explained and complete policy will more likely be accepted by the union as opposed to a haphazard and incomplete policy that is strung together in a make shift manner.

“Union contracts reflect the ongoing relationship between the employer and the employee. They define work rules, procedures to be followed in layoffs and promotions, safety standards, and so on. Union contracts are indicative of long-term relationships” (Mitchell, 1980, p.27). Management at the fire department must obtain union buy in for any policy in order to get it into the contract. Once the policy is in the contract, then it will have legitimacy among union

membership. It is important that the policy outlining the part time program is legitimate so that the part time employees will be accepted by the current MVFD workforce.

The significance of this study is that the workforce at the MVFD will be impacted with potential part time employees in the upcoming years. Data gathered will be applied and molded into a policy and procedure used to hire part time employees. Presentation of new policy and procedure will outline budgetary savings for the City as well as illustrate the conformity of our department with other fire departments of similar size and economic situation that are currently using a part time work force. Approval from City administration will be sought and subsequent implementation of the newly founded process will occur.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature examined for this study will be grouped into various categories relevant to their coinciding research questions. The first group of references provides information that was transformed into strategies that were utilized in negotiating the newly formed policy of a part time workforce with the local union. Stress was placed on inadequate work forces and their affect on proficiency and efficiency within an organization.

Moore (1996) attempts to offer perspective on the changing economy relative to the impact of the displaced worker and how cyclic an improper or inadequate workforce can become. Most of the data cited in his book is based on employment trending through the early 1990's, but is very much applicable to today's workforce. He stresses the importance of quality of employment and its relevance to social structure and societal stability. "We define who we are and what our place in society is by work that we do." (p.16)

Perlow (1997) explains a regularly occurring trend and belief in today's workforce. Many times, people who work the hardest expect to have bounding success within their workplace and the organization that allows this extraordinary work effort to occur, often feels it will benefit from its employees dedication and effort. The results are quite the contrary. Over worked employees will eventually slow and become discouraged and the organization will eventually experience a drop in production and morale.

Barker and Christensen (1998) summarize solutions to negotiation stalemates and pitfalls that hide within the negotiation process. Unions are fundamentally against part time workforces and care must be taken when bargaining for the positions.

The second grouping of literature used in this study addresses the pros and cons of the establishment and utilization of a part time work force. Authors describe and outline various

industries' perceptions from both the perspective of the employer and employee on common subject matter topics. Wages, benefits, distribution of workload, evaluations and promotions are all issues that will be evaluated in molding the new policy that will be formed at the MVFD.

Tilly (1996) focuses on the impact that the part time employee has within different industries. Most of his data were collected from 82 interviews conducted with employers, workers, union representatives and labor organizations in 1987 and 1988. He compared the information that he gathered to national trends to formulate strategies for the usage of a part time workforce. Offering a competitive wage can offset other benefits that part time employees do not receive.

Hewitt (1993) describes the mindset and flexibilities that exist within the part time employee. The typical part time employee will be juggling home life, personal development and career development at the same time as entering the workforce. Other more stable opportunities that present themselves will usually be capitalized on, leaving a vacancy in the organization that the employee was employed in a part time capacity.

Windisch and Crosby (2008) provide an all inclusive guide to managing and forming a part time workforce within the fire industry. Topics such as hiring, standardizing training, budgeting and justifying the part time workforce are discussed.

The final grouping of literature used in this study outline the legal components that had to be addressed when forming and implementing a new program at the MVFD. This grouping is comprised of literature describing the legal components of the process as well as references to current, established policies that are in place at other fire departments.

Steingold (2000) outlines the processes for hiring and firing of employees, as well as creating worker's compensation policies, personnel policies, wage and benefit packages and

discrimination considerations all specific to Ohio. Steingold's perspective is that of the employer and offers hard fast facts within the above categories all based on the law without the injection of opinions or hypothetical concepts. Legal and proven processes outlined by Steingold can be utilized in developing the fire department's process of hiring employees and subsequently dismissing them if needed.

Seigel and Stephen (2002) compile a practical guide for employers and their legal counsel covering a vast number of topics ranging from compensation packages to sick leave benefit policies. Their book explains not only what law dictates, but offers insight to its intent and direction that it is trending as it develops and subsequently changes.

Ohio Revised Code 123:1-9 lists the criteria that must be followed when preparing and utilizing an examination for the entry level firefighting position. A notice for a written examination must be posted prior to the examination date in all areas surrounding the hiring entity that strictly outlines the hiring procedure, any requirements associated with the written date and application instructions. Application deadlines are time sensitive and testing agencies must adhere to their time constraints. No visitors will be permitted to testing individuals during the examination. This piece of law also outlines the procedure for challenging or inspecting a completed test. Once completed, an individual will be allotted time to challenge answers given or the grading of the test. If an objection or protest is to occur, the examining student must follow the prescribed process in order to challenge his answer or situation.

Ohio Revised Code 123:1-15 explains the parameters that must be operated within when creating an eligibility that must be utilized in a particular method when hiring a firefighter. A candidate must pass a competitive written exam with a predetermined passing score and pass a

subsequent physical exam to be placed onto an eligibility list. Once on the list, the candidate will be subject to an interview with the hiring authority as further outlined in the code.

Ohio Revised Code 123:1-19 outlines the particulars of a firefighter's probationary period regarding length and union representation. The employer must provide a probationary period and the employee must meet the expectations placed upon him/her during this probationary period. The length of the probationary period is flexible, but the existence is mandatory. This section of code also gives the fire department the right to terminate employment of the individual if the individual's performance is deemed unsatisfactory at any point during this probationary period.

Ohio Revised Code 124.42 list the qualifications mandated by the State of Ohio to receive compensation as a firefighter. Age and physical capabilities must be evaluated to satisfy this legislation. This list of requirements, mandated by the state, can be listed as a prerequisite for hire by the fire department to ensure that a qualified employee will be hired.

Ohio Revised Code 505.38 lists the proper method for appointing firefighter personnel.

Ohio Revised Code 505.381 gives the hiring employer the right to complete a criminal background check on any potential candidate for hire. The MVFD does not want to be a victim of fraudulent documentation or application. A criminal background check will help alleviate any prior histories of part time employees becoming current problems with the fire department.

National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) 1001 outlines the requirements set forth as a national standard for professional firefighters.

PROCEDURES

The first item that the author addressed was the legality of a part time firefighter program as it applied to the City of Mount Vernon. The MVFD is an organization governed by Ohio Civil Service Law in regards to hiring, promoting and terminating employees. Thorough research of the Ohio Revised and Administrative Codes was conducted in order to ensure that the process that was established was legal. Once the legality of the process was determined, its practical development had to occur. Utilizing the data gathered through this research, management would be able to develop a process that met all necessary legal criteria. After this initial step, concentration could be placed on how to apply the newly formed hiring process and how to inject it into the current culture of the MVFD.

Meetings and interviews with four chief officers, three union officials and five part time firefighters were conducted among other fire departments in central Ohio with similar demographic statistics as the MVFD. During these interviews standard questions were asked of each group of employee and are listed in Appendix 1. Standard questions were used so that multiple answers emitting from different mindsets could be compared and factored into the creation of policy and procedure outlining the part time program that was going to be implemented. Each individual interviewed represented a different status of employee within an organization, thus producing answers that reflect their particular needs. Comparing the answers from the different individuals interviewed within the same organization, would permit the formation of a policy that considered the opinions and needs of each group of employee and will have neither a management nor employee slant to its content and application.

A survey was developed and distributed to twelve fire departments in central Ohio. The survey is attached as Appendix 2 and the list of departments that were surveyed is attached as

Appendix 3. The departments that were surveyed were chosen because of their proximity to the MVFD, their similar or proportionately similar call volume to the MVFD and their tenure as fire departments that employ part time firefighters. Factoring this criteria into establishing a part time workforce at the MVFD will produce more efficient and proficient policy. Inventing or establishing unique policy will not be necessary when evaluating the data gathered from the surveys of these twelve departments. These departments have part time firefighters that are established as an integral part of their work force and add to the success of their organizations. The survey was distributed to all members of each department. Its intent was to collect data outlining common opinions on the questions asked. Patterns of support or positive feedback were compared against patterns of negative feedback in an attempt to create a policy that echoed positive components while negotiating negative pitfalls that existed in other systems. The survey was distributed in March of 2010 and collection of results stopped in April of 2010.

All interviews and survey distribution were completed by the author. Interviews were conducted during meetings, telephone conversations and email communications. Surveys were mailed to various fire departments as well as delivered by the author.

Limitations of the Study

The surveys were distributed to all of the agencies listed in Appendix 3. Members of each agency were given a choice to complete a paper based survey or an internet based electronic version of the survey. One hundred percent of the population of each fire department did not complete the survey.

120 surveys were completed. This represents approximately 40% of the 300 surveys that were distributed. Those completing the survey did so without supervision and on a volunteer basis.

All data that exist from survey evaluation is data based on the integrity of the individual employee at the individual agency that completed the survey.

RESULTS

The data of the research conducted are organized according to the research question that they addressed.

1. What are the legal requirements that the MVFD must follow when creating the part time firefighter position?

The MVFD is a statutory city and is mandated by Ohio Law to follow the Ohio Revised Code as well as Civil Service Law when hiring firefighters. The hiring process must insure that all candidates are between the ages of eighteen and thirty one within 180 days of appointment to the department. These candidates must pass a physical and written exam. The written exam must have a public posting outlining all details surrounding the testing procedures to include date, time and place of the examination as well as the dates associated with the application process. The exam must be competitive in nature and offer service credits to be added to the test score. These service credits include military time and current certification status as a firefighter or emergency medical technician. Not more than a 20% credit may be given to any one individual.

At the completion of the written exam, the passing candidates shall be ranked and sent for their physical exam. After completing the physical exam, the candidates will be ranked again and placed onto an eligibility for hire list that will remain on file with the City for no more than two years at the fire department . When a vacancy occurs, the department must interview the candidates as they are ranked on the eligibility list. Fifteen interviews must occur if hiring 2 to 4 employees. Twenty interviews must occur if hiring 5 to 8 employees. Twenty five interviews must occur if hiring 9 to 12 employees. Thirty interviews must occur if hiring 13 to 16 employees.

At the conclusion of the interview process, a fire department can hire the candidates that are most qualified and will fit the needs of the department. Fire departments are not mandated to hire the candidate with the highest overall score.

Questions one, seven and eleven of the survey provide additional data to help address this research question. Question one solicited the percentage of daily staffing that is comprised of part time employees. Eighty four percent stated between ten and twenty five. Nine percent stated between twenty six and fifty. Two participants stated between fifty one and seventy five and two participants also stated between seventy six and one hundred.

In question seven, firefighters were asked to describe the ratio between full time and part time firefighters utilized for daily staffing at their department. Twenty five percent stated that the ratio was 4:1. Eleven percent stated the ratio was 3:1. Five percent stated the ratio was 2:1. Fifty two percent stated the ratio was greater than 4:1.

Question eleven focused on the components of the hiring process that are utilized to hire a part time firefighter at their department. Seventy five percent of the firefighters answering the survey stated that there is a written test associated with their department's hiring process. Sixty eight percent stated that a physical agility test was a component of the hiring process. Ninety two percent revealed that a candidate had to interview with the hiring authority. Fifty five percent stated that an application and appointment process was followed at their department. Three percent answered that Civil Service Law governs their process.

2. How should management at the fire department negotiate an acceptable implementation of a part time workforce with the local firefighting union?

Survey question four attempts to gather data needed to answer this question. Forty six percent of the firefighters answering this question stated that a part time work force has always

been in place at their department. Two percent felt that a part time work program should be negotiated through a formal contract negotiation process. Fifteen percent answered in support of labor management meetings to establish a process and thirty one percent chose implementation without negotiating as a management right.

All four chief officers polled using the interview questions in Appendix 1, answered in support of implementing a policy without negotiating as a management right. The fire chiefs were in agreement that the more attempts made to satisfy members of the department the more possibility for disappointing the members of the department would be created. They also stated that to negotiate, both sides of an issue had to be willing to compromise. In their opinion, there is no compromising with part time employment. They stated that a department either utilizes it or it does not.

The three union officials interviewed using the questions from Appendix 1 were in support of labor management meetings to come to some sort of understanding of how the process will work and how part time employees will impact daily staffing levels. Their main concern was part time employees filling a slot in minimum daily staffing levels established through negotiations with management of the fire department. They were also slightly concerned that if a part time firefighter program was implemented without dialogue between the union and management, then an easy transition into a complete part time work force would be created and would eventually translate into the elimination of the full time employee.

3. What processes, policies or procedures do other departments have in place to guide part time employment programs?

Survey questions six, eight and nine was used to gather data for this question. How training of the part time employee was regulated was the topic of question six. Ten percent

stated that mandatory monthly trainings occurred. Two percent stated that mandatory quarterly trainings occurred. Twenty two percent stated that training was mandatory but at some other interval not specified by the survey. Twenty seven percent stated that their department utilizes volunteer monthly trainings. Less than one percent stated that their department held volunteer quarterly trainings. Twenty six percent held volunteer trainings at some other interval not specified on the survey.

The hourly rate of part time employees was explored by survey question eight. Four percent stated that part time employees on their department were compensated under \$10.00 per hour. Eighty four percent stated that part time employees on their department were compensated between \$10.00 and \$15.00 per hour. Five percent stated that part time employees on their fire department were compensated between \$15.00 and \$20.00 per hour. Less than one percent stated their part time employees were compensated more than \$20.00 per hour.

Question nine on the survey produced data on what the type of benefits that are given to part time employees. Ninety three percent stated that part time employees were not awarded sick time. Ninety three percent stated that no compensatory time was given to part time employees. Fifty seven percent stated that part time employees were given holiday pay. One hundred percent stated that no funeral pay was granted to part time employees. Eighty nine percent stated that no bereavement leave was given to part time employees. Forty eight percent stated that part time employees were given a uniform allowance. Sixty seven percent stated that a personal protective equipment stipend was given to part time employees. Sixty five percent stated than no reimbursement for expenses surrounding continuing education units is given to part time employees. Ninety two percent stated that no personal time was given to part time employees. Ninety three percent stated that no vacation time was given to part time employees.

4. What have other departments experienced as problems and benefits of part time employees?

Survey questions five, ten and fifteen were drafted to obtain information for this research question. Participants completing the survey were asked to comment on the positive impact that does or does not occur relative to the part time program present at their department on various concepts in question five. Ninety one percent of the participants stated that part time employees have a positive impact on the staffing of emergency vehicles. Ninety four percent stated that completion of the daily station chores are impacted positively by part time employees. Permitting the usage of benefit hours by full time staff members was not impacted positively according to fifty eight percent of the survey participants. Seventy percent stated that no positive impact was made on creating more time in the daily routine for fire prevention activities to be completed. Seventy eight percent stated that a positive impact could be measured on the department's participation in civic and public recognition projects. Ninety percent stated that a better candidate for full time employee was impacted positively. Increased proficiency and efficiency of emergency care was noted as being impacted in a positive manner by seventy six percent of the participants.

Survey question ten reveals the perception of departmental employees on numerous topics. Seventy seven percent of the participants state that part time employees add to the success of their fire departments daily routine. Eighty six percent stated that by employing part time firefighters, the daily workload is distributed more equally. Eighty percent stated that the part time work force is accepted and appreciated by the majority of the personnel on their department. Forty nine percent felt that part time employees are a way for management to control overtime expenditures. Eighty one percent of the participants stated that the part time

firefighter programs at their fire departments are viewed positively by the majority of their personnel. Seven percent stated that part time employees are viewed as having negative impact on their department.

Question fifteen on the survey is a very concise statement that participants could answer true or false. Eighty five percent of the survey participants felt that there are more pros than cons when describing the part time program at their organization is a true statement.

Survey question twelve produced the data that eighty six percent of the survey participants are full time employees. Eighty five percent of the survey participants stated that part time workforces are a trend that will continue to grow within the industry in question fourteen.

The preceding data along with the information extracted from the Ohio Revised Code and the books noted in the reference section of this study, created a knowledge base that was utilized to form a policy at the MVFD surrounding a part time workforce. Although the policy was not implemented at the time this study was completed, its formation was part of a strategic plan to increase daily staffing levels at the MVFD. A draft of the policy that will be created is attached as Appendix 4.

The policy that will be created encompasses all aspects of the part time workforce that will be utilized at the MVFD. The main concepts that are outlined in the policy are legally hiring the employees, interjecting them into the daily staffing of the department with the acceptance of the current workforce, compensating the employees in a competitive manner to include certain benefits, outlining training guidelines and creating a positive impact on the daily routine at the fire department.

Formulation of the drafted policy will permit management of the MVFD to proceed with the strategic plan towards implementation of a part time workforce. This research and consequent drafting of policy will be utilized during meetings to be held with City Administration and members of the Local 3712 Firefighter's Union to discuss the details and timely activation of a carefully written policy that will permit the usage of part time employees at the MVFD.

DISCUSSION

The literature that was reviewed for this study produced data that concentrated the author's efforts in elaborating on three key elements of a part time workforce. A legitimate, departmentally acceptable policy had to be created. The policy had to be centered around the empowerment of the individual. And lastly, an aggressive wage and benefit package had to be offered to attract the correct candidate during the hiring process. Additional data that was needed to make conclusions on each of these topics were collected through the use of a survey.

“The concept of job security is embedded in cultural assumptions about what society owes us in return for our labor, and those assumptions are changing” (Moore, 1996, p. xvi). Today's employee understands the volatility of employment. The fire service has evolved not only in its technical and practical application of service provided to the public, but also in its membership. Candidates seeking to make a career out of being a member of the fire service are willing to accept part time employment as an initial starting point. Moore explains that people at one time wished to complete daily tasks with a good work ethic and subsequently be compensated both with money and the security that they are a permanent part of their industry. Society has changed and job security is not guaranteed by a simple strong work ethic. Industries have adapted and streamlined themselves to meet increasing budgetary constraints and the part time workforce has become an integral part of all job markets. The fire service is no exception.

Data gathered from the survey attached as Appendix 2, illustrates with an 85% certainty that part time employment is a trend that will continue to grow within the fire service. Further survey data indicated that part time employees have a positive impact on the daily workload as well as more pros than cons exist when describing part time programs at other fire departments. The MVFD can take advantage of this trend and overall acceptance of a part time workforce.

Employing part time employees should become a legitimate means to increase daily staffing levels. With daily staffing levels increased, the MVFD can distribute the daily workload in much more equal proportions.

The interviews that were conducted with chief officers produced sound advice for policy and procedure implementation. Initiating a part time workforce is a management right and no negotiations are required with the local firefighting union. However, dialogue can be initiated to allow the concerns of union members to be voiced and explained. The MVFD can utilize sessions of dialogue to further explain the intent and benefits of a part time workforce and illustrate the immediate positive impact that a program will have on their daily routine and workload. Members of the local firefighting union will more readily accept a new part time program if they feel that they have had a hand in developing the policy.

Further evaluation of the survey produced additional examples that part time employees will have an immediate positive impact on the manner in which business is conducted at the MVFD. Staffing on emergency vehicles will increase which will reduce the stress and workload on each employee answering an emergency call. More individuals on the call will also equate to an increase in proficiency and efficiency of the emergency care that is delivered. Better and swifter care can lead to positive feedback from the community to the City Administration. City Administration's opinion of the MVFD can continue to improve and this may be reflected in approvals of future budgetary items.

With more employees on duty, fire prevention activities such as fire inspections and safety lectures can be completed without interruption. These activities play a vital role in the education of our community on fire prevention topics. The MVFD will be permitted to offer additional CPR and fire extinguisher classes. School tours and civic events could be scheduled.

Education is the key to fire prevention and home safety. Additional daily staffing will create opportunity for fire department members to take part in the above mentioned activities that are necessary components of public education.

“Instead of individuals making unilateral decisions about how to use time, employees will need to work collectively to determine how each person’s time use can best benefit the group” (Perlow, 1997, p. 131). Time management is a critical component of the success of any team. Currently, the MVFD operates more in a reactionary state rather than a systematically planned or anticipated fashion. Because of this, the organization has limitations to its progress and proficiency. Additional staffing will increase the opportunity for employees to work together and plan out activities that can benefit the department and not just their daily productivity. Over time, proficiency in time usage should improve and the overall efficiency of the department will increase.

Equally useful to time management and workload distribution is the data surrounding the quality of a potential full time employee. Ninety percent of the survey participants stated that a better candidate for full time employment is created by employing part time employees. Working in the confines of a small department with a limited number of staff members on duty, the MVFD cannot hide a poor employee. All employees on staff must complete their allotted portion of the daily workload. Inadequate employees have an immediate and detrimental effect on the success of task completion. A part time firefighter program will permit the MVFD to complete on-the-job analysis of an employee and provide invaluable data concerning the employee that can be factored into any full time hiring decisions.

The compensation package that would be offered to part time employees at the MVFD would fall in line with what seems to be acceptable in other departments with a part time

program. A competitive wage, uniform stipend, PPE stipend and holiday pay would be given to part time employees. Modeling itself after the survey data, the training regimen of the part time employees at the MVFD would consist of mandatory attendance to continuing education and training classes that are offered while the part time employee is on duty and encouragement of the part time employee to attend similar classes on their off days to further develop their skills and knowledge.

“Most managers employing part time workers agreed that such part timers are less productive than full time workers. The reason most commonly cited for this reduction in productivity is commitment” (Tilly, 1996, p. 77). The chief officers as well as union officials that were interviewed offered opinions on part time employees that support the viewpoints of Tilly. Both groups of individuals interviewed also offered the same advice to combat this problem. Both parties encouraged the MVFD to create an environment where the part time employee would feel empowered and actually part of the team. With empowerment comes ownership. Ownership will lead to commitment and subsequent better productivity. Including the part time workforce in departmental functions that are held for both professional and social development will help in their perception of group acceptance. Part time employees who have shown promise and have exhibited strong drive, integrity and competence could be placed in some type of organizational or leadership role overseeing a training or event. Placing this responsibility on the employee will add to their feeling of involvement and ownership.

The drawback to part time employment that was mentioned the most by Moore (1996), Tilly (1996) and the individuals that were interviewed for this study is turnover. No true solution to this problem was able to be ascertained through the research that was conducted. Strategies to combat this problem include offering an aggressive wage, encouraging benefit packages,

organizational ownership and positive feedback toward the part time employee. The part time program developed by the MVFD will address these topics and attempt to create an atmosphere that will be desirable for employees to remain with some longevity.

The research conducted clearly indicates that an individual's employment status has a dynamic impact on that individual as a person.

“The work role provides the basis for the temporal organization and routines that give coherence and meaning to daily life; it sustains social contacts and interaction within the workplace and in non work life; and it confers social standing and a sense of self worth” (Moore, 1996, p. 46).

The fire service is filled with traditions such as pride, courage and integrity. Coupling these traditions with a well developed part time work program should create an environment where employees will feel welcome, productive and worthy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The MVFD does not have a procedure in place to hire part time employees. The research conducted for this study has produced sufficient data to address this problem. A policy used to hire part time employees can be developed that meets all requirements set forth by the Ohio Revised Code and Civil Service Law. Implementation of this policy should occur with or without the local firefighter's union support. It is a preferred strategy to gain union support of this newly created program, but ultimately not necessary.

The policy drafted should define the part time employee's requirements on various topics such as the staffing of emergency vehicles, participating in daily station chores, completing continuing education and training classes, conducting fire prevention inspections, leading station tours and demonstrating safety practices associated with public education. The wage and benefit package for the program should follow established and widely used practices that are explained in this study.

Constant scrutiny of the part time program should be completed by management at the MVFD to evaluate the impact that the program is having on the department. Positive impact is the desirable occurrence, and any data that supports a negative impact should be addressed immediately by the department. The longevity of the program will eventually depend on its acceptance by the organization itself. The part time program should help the MVFD complete its mission.

The recommendations listed above, if executed correctly, will potentially solve a riddle that has plagued the MVFD for over two decades. How can daily staffing increase within budgetary constraints to a level that will place more employees on a particular emergency scene? The answer is simple, legally integrating part time employees into the MVFD.

Additional research that could prove to be supportive to a part time program would be research surrounding longevity of part time employees. Greater concentration on turnover and its effect on the organization as well as the individual could produce data that could redefine or establish policy associated with a part time workforce.

Another interesting study would occur if management at a fire department would identify to their employees the interest in increasing daily staffing within the confines of a given budget. Management would then request possible solutions to the staffing problem dilemma. Each solution given should be submitted in comprehensive policy format with an associated cost analysis.

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APPENDIX 1 – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Should management negotiate with the local firefighting union on the implementation of a part time workforce?
2. If yes, how and if not, why?
3. What procedure does your department follow when hiring part time employees?
4. What requirements does your department mandate for part time employees?
5. How does your department manage the part time workforce?
6. What benefits are gained by your department in employing part time firefighters?
7. What problems are created on your department by employing part time firefighters?
8. Have you ever been a part time employee at a fire department?
9. How long have you been in the fire service?
10. What is your current position with your department?

APPENDIX 2 – FIRE DEPARTMENT SURVEY**Part Time Firefighter/Paramedic Employment Survey**

Please choose the answer that best agrees with your organization.

1. How much of your department's daily staffing is made up of part time employees?
 - a. 10% to 25%
 - b. 26% to 50%
 - c. 51% to 75%
 - d. 76% to 100%

2. How many years has your department utilized part time employees?
 - a. Less than 5 years
 - b. 5-10 years
 - c. 11-15 years
 - d. 16-20 years
 - e. More than 20 years

3. Does your department have a union?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

4. How did management begin the part time employment process?
 - a. It has always been in place
 - b. Through contract negotiation
 - c. During labor management meetings
 - d. Implementation without negotiating as a management right

5. At your department, do part time employees positively impact the following:
 - a. Staffing of emergency vehicles Y or N
 - b. Completion of daily station chores Y or N
 - c. Permitting the usage of benefit hours by the full time staff Y or N

- d. Creating more time in daily routine for fire prevention Y or N
 - e. Active participation in Civic events and PR projects Y or N
 - f. Create a better candidate for full time employment Y or N
 - g. Increase proficiency and efficiency of emergency care Y or N
6. How do you regulate training levels of your part time workforce?
- a. Mandatory monthly trainings
 - b. Mandatory quarterly trainings
 - c. Mandatory trainings at some other interval
 - d. Volunteer monthly trainings
 - e. Volunteer quarterly trainings
 - f. Volunteer trainings at some other interval
7. Regarding your daily staffing, what is the ratio between full time and part time employees?
- a. 4 : 1
 - b. 3 : 1
 - c. 2 : 1
 - d. Greater than 4:1
8. What is the average hourly rate of a part time employee?
- a. Under \$10.00 per hour
 - b. \$10.00- \$15.00 per hour
 - c. \$15.00- \$20.00 per hour
 - d. Over \$20.00 per hour
9. Do part time employees receive any of the following benefits?
- a. Sick time Y or N
 - b. Compensatory time Y or N
 - c. Holiday pay Y or N
 - d. Funeral pay Y or N

- e. Bereavement leave Y or N
- f. Uniform allowance Y or N
- g. PPE stipend or supplied Y or N
- h. CEU reimbursement Y or N
- i. Personal time Y or N
- j. Vacation time Y or N

10. The part time workforce at my department:

(Please circle all that apply)

- a. Adds to the success of the daily routine
- b. Helps distribute the daily workload
- c. Is accepted and appreciated by the majority of personnel
- d. Is a way for management to control overtime expenditures
- e. Is viewed as positive by the majority of personnel
- f. Is viewed as a negative by the majority of personnel

11. How do part time employees become members of your department?

(Please circle all that apply)

- a. Written testing procedure
- b. Physical agility test
- c. Interview process
- d. Application and appointment only
- e. Civil service law governs process

12. Are you a part time employee? Y or N

13. How long have you been a member of this fire department?

- a. Less than 5 years
- b. 5-10 years
- c. 11-15 years
- d. 16-20 years
- e. More than 20 years

14. Part time workforces are a trend that will continue to grow within our industry.

T or F

15. There are more pros than cons when describing the part time program at your fire department. T or F

APPENDIX 3 – FIRE DEPARTMENTS SAMPLED

Alexandria Fire Department. Alexandria, Ohio.

BST & G Fire Department. Sunbury, Ohio.

Central Ohio Joint Fire District. Centerburg, Ohio.

Eastern Knox County Joint Fire District. Danville, Ohio.

Genoa Township Fire Department. Galena, Ohio

Heath Fire Department. Heath, Ohio.

Orange Township Fire Department. Lewis Center, Ohio.

Plain Township Fire Department. New Albany, Ohio.

Truro Township Fire Department. Reynoldsburg, Ohio.

Violet Township Fire Department. Pickerington, Ohio.

Washington Township Fire Department. Dublin, Ohio.

Westerville Division of Fire. Westerville, Ohio.

APPENDIX 4 – PART TIME FIREFIGHTER POLICY

This policy is intended to guide management of the fire department through the process of hiring and utilizing part time employees as part of the daily staffing. This policy will be transformed into an S.O.G. once approved by City Administration and discussions are complete with the Local 3712 Firefighter's Union. It is organized in its current format to solicit understanding during presentation to both of the above entities.

Implementing the Program

- Chief officers will meet with the Mayor and the Safety Service Director to outline the entire program concentrating on budgetary savings and the increase of productivity and efficiency that will be gained with employing part time firefighters.
- Chief officers will meet with the union in its entirety. It is important that all members of the union are given the facts surrounding the part time program including its intent so that its acceptance will be more positive and widespread throughout the ranks.
- Chief officers will not negotiate implementation of this program but will entertain discussions and make slight adjustments to the policy prior to final implementation.
- Chief officers will present an overview of a finalized part time work program to City Council and solicit their support for additional funding in specific line item budget categories.

Hiring the Employee

- Part time employees will be hired using the same process that is currently being used to hire the full time employees. All employees will be hired from a certified eligibility list.
- Approximately fifteen part time employees will be hired making it necessary to interview no less than thirty candidates.

- Part time employees will have Firefighter II and Paramedic certification prior to being hired.
- Part time Employees will be compensated \$12.00 per hour. Each part time employee will be assigned to a shift and work every other shift day not to exceed one thousand two hundred forty eight (1248) hours per year. The employees will not be given funeral, bereavement, sick, personal or compensatory time as part of their benefit package.
- Part time employees working on contracted holidays will receive adjusted wages to reflect holiday pay.
- Part time employees will be provided with a full set of NFPA approved PPE as well as three duty uniforms to include a coat and belt.

Training the Employee

- Part time employees will be mandated to participate in on duty continuing education and training classes as well as invited without compensation to attend off duty classes held at the MVFD.
- Any specific training that is mandatory for full time employees will also be mandatory for part time employees.

Utilization of the Employee

- Part time employees will fill and add to staffing positions on both the medic and fire units
- Part time employees will take part in all daily chore and routine station duties.
- Part time employees will share in the workload of civic and public recognition events such as but not limited to parades, station tours, safety lectures, CPR demonstrations and fire extinguisher trainings.

- Part time employees will accompany other shift members and help complete fire inspections, arson investigations and any other aspect of the fire prevention bureau.
- Part time employees will be encouraged to attend departmental functions intended for both professional and social development.
- Part time employees will have additional credits given to them when competing for full time employment through the hiring process. Evaluation of the part time employee in all aspects of integration into the MVFD will be completed to further insure that the MVFD is hiring the best candidate possible for full time employment.