CITY OF COVINGTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

2020-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

FIRE

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CPSE

Center for Public Safety Excellence

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Message from the Fire Chief

I am proud to present our community-driven strategic plan for 2020-2025. The participation and feedback from the community not only provided the department with direction over the next five years, but also encouraged the department by showing the involvement, respect, and pride the community takes in the fire department. The strategic plan gives the department the direction needed to best meet the community needs.

I cannot express enough gratitude to Covington Fire personnel who participated in developing this plan. All ranks and personnel were allowed input and freedom to express their ideas to ensure the plan was driven by the community and will be executed by all members. Our most valuable resource is the men and women of the Covington Fire Department who serve each and every day.

We changed our motto a couple of years ago to "Do the Right Thing." Through a collaborative effort, we worked this motto into a new mission statement. The department will do the right thing in all aspects of life while providing quality and efficient service to all in the community. These are not just words, but this is something all members of the Covington Fire Department strive to accomplish.

Department members will work hard over the next five years to meet the goals established in this plan. Through service, respect, commitment, professionalism, and integrity expect great things from Covington Fire.

It is my privilege to present the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan for the City of Covington Fire Department.

Jeremy Holmes, J.D., CFO
Fire Chief

Introduction

The City of Covington Fire Department (CFD) provides an all-hazards approach to protecting the lives and property of the residents, businesses, and visitors of Covington, Georgia. CFD is consistently working to achieve and/or maintain the highest level of professionalism and efficiency on behalf of those it serves, and thus, contracted with the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) to facilitate a method to document the department's path into the future via a "Community-Driven Strategic Plan." The following strategic plan was written with a basis in the Commission on Fire Accreditation International's (CFAI) fire and emergency service accreditation model and is intended to guide the organization within established parameters set forth by the authority having jurisdiction.

The CPSE utilized the community-driven strategic planning process to go beyond just the development of a document. It challenged the department's members to critically examine paradigms, values, philosophies, beliefs, and desires, and challenged individuals to work in the best interest of the "team." It further provided the department with an opportunity to develop the organization's long-term direction and focus. Members of the organization's community and department stakeholders' groups demonstrated commitment to this important project and remain committed to the document's completion and plan execution.

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STRATEGIC PLAN
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CITY OF COVINGTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

Organizational Background

The City of Covington Fire Department was established on November 22, 1909. Over the years, the evolution of the organization changed from its original form by adding its first motor-driven fire truck in 1923, appointing the first full-time paid fire chief in 1957, and the progression from an all-volunteer department to a full paid department in 1969. The City of Covington Fire Department serves an approximate population of 14,000 residents. The department also provides emergency services to Newton County and surrounding areas through mutual aid agreements. The expected growth and increase in population have and will provide for specific risks for which the City of Covington Fire Department considers, prepares, and deploys its resources.

Today, CFD reflects on its history and remains committed to providing all-hazards emergency services and education to its community with flexibility, integrity, and accountability. The City of Covington Fire Department continues to honor its community, which is rich with history and tradition, by providing high-quality services through its proactive focus on risks and deployment from two stations that are located strategically throughout the 15.45 square miles of coverage area. Staffed to support the community, CFD embraces its future vision and excellence in service delivery.

Organizational Structure

```
                                    Fire Chief
        |                               |              |              |
   Operations                      Fire Marshal   Accreditation   Training Chief
     Chief                                          Manager
        |
   |         |          |               |
Battalion  Battalion  Battalion       FMO            FMO
 Chief A    Chief B    Chief C
   |
 |          |          |          |
Captain   Lieutenant  Lieutenant  Captain
(Truck 21)(Engine 21)(Squad 21)  (Truck 22)
 |          |          |          |
Engineer  Engineer   Engineer   Engineer
 |          |          |          |
Relief    Relief     Relief     Relief
Apparatus Apparatus  Apparatus  Apparatus
Operatior Operator   Operator   Operator
 |          |                     |
Firefighter Firefighter          Firefighter
```

All 3 Shifts are set up the same. Battalion Chief B and C have the same organizational structure that Battalion Chief A displays.

Community-Driven Strategic Planning

For many successful organizations, the voice of the community drives their operations and charts the course for their future. A community-driven emergency service organization is one that seeks to gather and utilize the needs and expectations of its community in the development and/or improvement of the services provided. To ensure that the community remains a focus of an organization's direction, a community-driven strategic planning process was used to develop this strategic plan.

A strategic plan is a living management tool that provides short-term direction, builds a shared vision, documents goals and objectives, and optimizes the use of resources. The process of strategic planning can be defined as "a deliberative, disciplined approach to producing fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization (or other entity) is, what it does, and why."[1]

Effective strategic planning benefits from a consistent and cohesively structured process employed across all levels of the organization. Planning is a continuous process, one with no clear beginning and no defined end. While plans can be developed on a regular basis, it is the process of planning that is important, not the publication of the plan itself. Most importantly, strategic planning can be an opportunity to unify the

[1] See Definition, Purpose, and Benefits of Strategic Planning (Bryson 8)

management, employees, and stakeholders through a common understanding of where the organization is going, how everyone involved can work to that common purpose, and how progression and success will be measured.

Community Stakeholders Work Session

The Community–Driven Strategic Planning Process Outline

1. Define the programs provided to the community.

2. Establish the community's service program priorities and expectations of the organization.

3. Identify any concerns the community may have about the organization, along with aspects of the organization that the community views positively.

4. Revisit the mission statement, giving careful attention to the services and programs currently provided, and which logically can be provided in the future.

5. Revisit the values of the organization's membership.

6. Identify the internal strengths and weaknesses of the organization.

7. Identify areas of opportunity or potential threats to the organization.

8. Identify the organization's critical issues and service gaps.

9. Determine strategic initiatives for organizational improvement.

10. Establish a realistic goal and objectives for each initiative.

11. Identify implementation tasks for the accomplishment of each objective.

12. Determine the vision of the future.

13. Develop organizational and community commitment to accomplishing the plan.

Process and Acknowledgements

The Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) acknowledges and thanks the community and department stakeholders for their participation and input into this community-driven strategic planning process. The CPSE also recognizes Fire Chief Jeremy Holmes and the team of professionals that participated for their leadership and commitment to this process.

The development of this strategic plan took place in October 2020, beginning with meetings hosted by a representative from the CPSE for members of the community (as named in the following table). The department identified community stakeholders to ensure broad representation. The community stakeholders were comprised of some who reside or work within the City of Covington Fire Department's coverage area, and some who were recipients of CFD's service(s).

City of Covington Fire Department Community Stakeholders			
Lee Aldridge	Paige Alexander	Skip Argo	Royce Baker
Melanie Bell	Chuck Berry	Angie Beszborn	John Beszborn
Bill Bray	Carli Cuendet	Rob Faulkner	Don T. Floyd
Serra Hall	Jennifer Hartman	Will Hinson	Wendy Jacques
George Jefferson	Susie Keck	Debra Lary	Duke McNary
Jason Norton	Maddie Powers	Tonya Redding	Tony Smith
Larry Stanford	Crystal Stevens	Juanita Thompson	Loy Turner	Bob Weir

Community Group Findings

A key element of the City of Covington Fire Department's organizational philosophy is having a high level of commitment to the community, as well as recognizing the importance of community satisfaction. Thus, the department invited community representatives to provide feedback on services provided by the department. Respondents were asked to provide a prioritized perspective of the programs and services provided by the department. Additionally, input was gathered during the meeting that revolved around community expectations and concerns (prioritized), as well as positive and other comments about the organization. Specific findings of the community stakeholders are provided in the appendix of this document. The department stakeholders utilized the full feedback from the community stakeholders in understanding the current challenges encountered within the organization. Additionally, the community stakeholders' feedback provided a process to ensure alignment with the work completed on the organizational mission, values, vision, and goals for improvement.

Community Priorities

To best dedicate time, energy, and resources to services most desired by its community, the City of Covington Fire Department needs to understand what the customers consider to be their priorities. With that, the community stakeholders were asked to prioritize the programs offered by the department through a process of direct comparison. The results were as follows:

Programs	Ranking	Score
Fire Suppression	1	192
Emergency Medical Services	2	173
Technical Rescue	3	163
Fire Prevention	4	126
Hazardous Materials Mitigation	5	124
Tactical Medic	6	121
Domestic Preparedness Planning and Response	7	116
Aviation Rescue Fire Fighting	8	73
Public Fire and Life Safety Education	9	64
Fire Investigation	10	62

See Appendix 1 for a complete list of the community findings, including expectations, areas of concern, positive feedback, and other thoughts and comments.

Community Stakeholders Work Session

Department Stakeholder Group Findings

The department stakeholder work sessions were conducted over the course of three days. These sessions served to discuss the organization's approach to community-driven strategic planning, focusing on the department's mission, values, core programs, and support services. Additionally, focus was given to the organization's perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The work sessions involved participation by a stakeholder group that represented a broad cross-section of the department, as named and pictured below.

City of Covington Fire Department Stakeholders			
Matt Bruno	Joe Doss	April Draper	Charles Drew
Jonathan Fuqua	Danny Garner	Ezra Griffith	Chandler Head
Jeremy Holmes	Bryan Jackson	Josh Johnson	Ben Landers
Josh Laster	Robert Ledford	Brett Madsen	Jeremy Mathis
Brian Moore	Scott Sewell	Alex Storz	Brian Thompson
Donnie Tudor	Adam Webb		Kevin Whitley

Department Stakeholders

Mission

The mission provides an internal aspect of the existence of an organization and, to a degree, an empowering consideration for all department members. The purpose of the mission is to answer the questions:

- Who are we?

- Why do we exist?

- What do we do?

- Why do we do it?

- For whom?

A workgroup met to revisit the existing mission and, after ensuring it answered the questions, the following mission statement was created, discussed, and accepted by the entire group:

> **The Covington Fire Department will do the right thing in all aspects of life while providing quality and efficient service to all in the community.**

Department Stakeholders Work Session

Values

Values embraced by all members of an organization are extremely important, as they recognize the features that make up the personality and culture of the organization. A workgroup met to revisit the existing values and proposed a revision that was discussed, enhanced further, and agreed upon by the entire group:

> **Service** – To provide effective, efficient, professional, and quality service.
>
> **Respect** – To respect each other and those we serve.
>
> **Commitment** – Committed to all stakeholders, both internal and external.
>
> **Professionalism** – Follow the highest standard of ethical conduct.
>
> **Integrity** – Do the right thing, even when no one is looking.

The mission and values are the foundation of this organization. Thus, every effort will be made to keep these current and meaningful so that the individuals who make up the City of Covington Fire Department are guided by them to accomplish the goals, objectives, and day-to-day tasks.

Programs and Services

To ensure a deeper focus exists in determining issues and gaps within an organization, there must be a delineation between core programs and supporting services. Core programs are those core deliverables provided by the department. Supporting services are all of the internal and external programs and services that help the CFD deliver its core programs.

The importance of understanding the difference is that issues and gaps may exist in core programs or supporting services, and the department's strategic approach may bring forth different considerations for improvement. Additionally, supporting services may be internal or external to the organization and requires understanding how the difference impacts their location within the analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats if identified. Finally, the department stakeholders must understand that, to deliver the identified core programs, many local, state, and national supporting services support its delivery.

Through a facilitated brainstorming session, the department stakeholders agreed upon the core programs provided to the community, as well as many of the supporting services that support the programs. This session provided the sought understanding of the differences and the important key elements of the delineation.

SWOT Analysis

Through a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats), an organization candidly identifies its positive and negative attributes. The SWOT analysis also provides an opportunity for an organization to evaluate its operating environment for areas in which it can capitalize and those that pose a danger. Department stakeholders participated in this activity to record CFD's strengths and weaknesses, as well as the possible opportunities and potential threats. Information gathered through this analysis guides the larger issues and gaps that exist within the agency. The information gleaned will assist the agency in finding its broader critical issues and service gaps.

Appendix 2 consists of the SWOT data and analysis collected by the department stakeholders.

Department Stakeholders Work Session

Critical Issues and Service Gaps

Following the identification and review of the department's SWOT, two separate groups of department stakeholders met to identify themes as primary critical issues and service gaps (found in Appendix 3). The critical issues and services gaps identified by the stakeholders provide further guidance toward the identification of the strategic initiatives, which will ultimately lend direction for the development of goals, objectives, critical tasks, and timelines.

Strategic Initiatives

Based on all previously captured information and the determination of critical issues and service gaps, the following strategic initiatives were identified as the foundation for developing goals and objectives.

City of Covington Fire Department's Strategic Initiatives		
Community Outreach	Training	Human Resources
Internal Communications	Physical Resources	Accreditation

Goals and Objectives

To continuously achieve the City of Covington Fire Department's mission, realistic goals and objectives with timelines for completion must be established. These will enhance strengths, address identified weaknesses, provide a clear direction, and address the community's concerns. These should become a focus of the department's efforts, as they will direct the organization to its desired future while reducing the obstacles and distractions along the way. Leadership-established workgroups should meet and manage progress toward accomplishing these goals and objectives and adjust timelines as needs and the environment change. Regular reports of progress and changes should be shared with CFD's leadership.

Goal 1	Increase the department's visibility, interaction, and outreach.

Objective 1A	Identify, design, and implement ways to increase our visibility within the community, maximizing technology use.
Timeframe	6 months - ongoing **Assigned to:** Operations Chief Donnie Tudor
Critical Tasks	• Develop a committee comprised of the operations chief, fire marshal office, and two personnel from each shift. • Committee meets to identify available platforms to disseminate information. • Determine relevant data to distribute through social media platforms. • Seek and secure funding through the budget process as needed. • Secure approval for all content to be disseminated on social media platforms. • Collect feedback to review and determine relevance. • Perform a monthly review of the process to determine effectiveness.

Objective 1B	Identify, analyze, and implement current educational trends within fire service public education programs.	
Timeframe	12 months - ongoing	**Assigned to:** Fire Marshal Joe Doss
Critical Tasks	- Review, revise as needed, and reload the current fire service educational program. - Utilize the Georgia Unified Command Risk Reduction Manual for implementation. - Seek approval for new programs. - Seek needed funding through the budget process to purchase educational material, props, and devices. - Implement new educational programs. - Review the educational programs for effectiveness.	

Objective 1C	Review, update, and develop fire prevention and enforcement procedures within the Covington Fire Department to reduce hazards in our community.	
Timeframe	18-24 months	**Assigned to:** Fire Marshal Joe Doss
Critical Tasks	- Review current fire prevention measures. - Review and revise, as needed, abilities to enforce local, state, and national ordinances. - Update the current inspection database to reflect current codes. - Develop a program to inform internal stakeholders of code enforcement and fire prevention procedures. - Ensure proper funding is available for internal education and training. - Develop and distribute a 'most frequent violations' checklist for businesses in the community. - Review and revise fire prevention enforcement procedures for effectiveness.	

Goal 2	Establish a developmental training plan for all members and programs of the department.

Objective 2A	Improve and enrich a firefighter development program to provide firefighters with a consistent career development path.
Timeframe	12-18 months **Assigned to:** Training Chief Danny Garner

Critical Tasks	• Establish a committee to include members from all levels to analyze and identify: o Training o Certification o Education o Credentialing • Create a committee meeting schedule. • Conduct committee meeting. • Develop committee meeting rules and procedures. • Identify current firefighter training requirements • Identify specific needs and aspects. • Research current firefighter qualifications, certs, and classes. • Develop a career path and departmental objectives. • Seek approval from the fire chief. • Establish a timeframe to implement the career path and departmental objectives. • Perform an annual review of the career path and departmental objectives. • Revise as needed.

Objective 2B	Improve and enrich an engineer development program with a consistent career development path.
Timeframe	12-18 months **Assigned to:** Training Chief Danny Garner

Critical Tasks	• Establish a committee to include members from all levels to analyze and identify: o Training o Certification o Education o Credentialing • Create a committee meeting schedule. • Conduct committee meeting. • Develop committee meeting rules and procedures. • Identify current engineer training requirements • Identify specific needs and aspects. • Research current engineer qualifications, certs, and classes. • Develop a career path and departmental objectives. • Seek approval from the fire chief. • Establish a timeframe to implement the career path and departmental objectives. • Perform an annual review of the career path and departmental objectives. • Revise as needed.

Objective 2C	Improve and enrich an officer development program to provide officers with a consistent career development path.
Timeframe	12-18 months **Assigned to:** Training Chief Danny Garner
Critical Tasks	• Establish a committee to include members from all levels to analyze and identify: ○ Training ○ Certification ○ Education ○ Credentialing • Create a committee meeting schedule. • Conduct committee meeting. • Develop committee meeting rules and procedures. • Identify current officer training requirements. • Identify specific needs and aspects. • Research current officer qualifications, certs, and classes. • Develop a career path and departmental objectives. • Seek approval from the fire chief. • Establish a timeframe to implement the career path and departmental objectives. • Perform an annual review of the career path and departmental objectives. • Revise as needed.

Objective 2D	Improve and enrich a chief officer development program to provide chief officers with a consistent career development path.
Timeframe	12 months-18 months **Assigned to:** Training Chief Danny Garner
Critical Tasks	• Establish a committee to include members from all levels to analyze and identify: ○ Training ○ Certification ○ Education ○ Credentialing • Create a committee meeting schedule. • Conduct committee meeting. • Develop committee meeting rules and procedures. • Identify current chief officer training requirements. • Identify specific needs and aspects. • Research current chief officer qualifications, certs, and classes. • Develop a career path and departmental objectives. • Seek approval from the fire chief. • Establish a timeframe to implement the career path and departmental objectives. • Perform an annual review of the career path and departmental objectives. • Revise as needed.

Goal 3	Establish a program to address hiring, retention, staffing, and health and wellness of personnel to promote a successful and positive work environment.

Objective 3A	Improve the health and wellness program to ensure a fit and healthy workforce.
Timeframe	18-24 months **Assigned to:** Fire Chief Jeremy Holmes

Critical Tasks	- Fire chief to appoint a health and safety officer (HSO). - HSO establishes a committee comprised of members from all ranks. - Create a committee schedule. - HSO conducts meetings. - Develop committee rules and procedures. - Identify and analyze: - Previous injury and illness reports - Cancer initiatives - PTSD (CISD), suicide prevention, family counseling - Substance abuse - Firefighter fitness trends and nutritional programs - Annual physicals and requirements - Workplace safety - Develop an injury and illness prevention program. - Develop a monthly newsletter with resources for cancer prevention, PTSD, substance abuse, and nutritional information. - Develop departmental policies on physical fitness requirements. - Evaluate the efficiency of current annual physicals and provide recommendations on possible changes. - Cultivate a culture for workforce safety. - Establish a timeline for implementation. - Review the programs bi-annually on the effects of the initiatives and revise as needed.

Objective 3B	Conduct a workforce study to ensure the department is properly staffed to provide the services that address the community's needs.	
Timeframe	12-18 months	Assigned to: Fire Chief Jeremy Holmes

Critical Tasks	• Fire chief to appoint a designee for the workforce study.
	• Designee researches outside sources to conduct a workforce study.
	• Analyze the cost associated with the study.
	• Develop a comprehensive report of findings to submit to the fire chief for approval and funding.
	• Identify the areas to be included in the study, to include:
	    o Admin staff
	    o Operations staff
	    o Training staff
	    o Fire Marshal staff
	• Hire the selected company to perform the study.
	• Analyze the result of the study.
	• Prioritize the results.
	• Present the results to the fire chief and then the city council for approval.
	• Upon approval, create a schedule to implement findings and results.
	• Review and revise bi-annually.	

Objective 3C	Improve recruitment, selection, and promotion strategies that address the agency's needs while ensuring a diverse, productive, and well-trained workforce.	
Timeframe	12-18 months	Assigned to: Training Chief Danny Garner

Critical Tasks	• Establish a committee to address recruitment, retention, selection, and promotional processes.
	• Create a meeting schedule.
	• Conduct the meeting.
	• Develop committee rules and regulations.
	• Identify and analyze:
	    o Current promotional processes
	    o Promotional needs
	    o Recruitment needs
	    o Retention strategies
	• Research other agencies' processes.
	• Use MySidewalk to research CFD service area community demographics.
	• Develop a recruitment strategy for a diverse and talented workforce.
	• Submit findings to the fire chief for approval and funding.
	• Perform an annual review and revise as needed.	

Goal 4	Implement internal communications within the department at all levels.

Objective 4A	Evaluate existing methods of internal communications.	
Timeframe	3-6 months	Assigned to: Operations Chief Donnie Tudor

Critical Tasks
- Evaluate all inter-division communications.
- Evaluate the use of mail communications.
- Evaluate the distribution of department memos and directives.
- Evaluate shift, station, battalion, and staff communications.

Objective 4B	Improve the use of the emergency reporting system to file department memos and directives.	
Timeframe	6-18 months	Assigned to: Accreditation Program Coordinator April Draper

Critical Tasks
- Develop a memo in the emergency reporting system.
- Develop a directive tab in the emergency reporting system.
- Ensure all personnel have a username, password, library rights, and the knowledge and ability to log into the emergency reporting system.
- Train personnel on how to access the memo and directives tabs in the system.
- Establish a procedure on how to save memos and directives and determine the latest revisions.
- Ensure there is oversight and procedures for compliance in using the system.

Objective 4C	Improve the use of the emergency reporting system daily log, message board, internal and external email communications, and work orders.	
Timeframe	12-24 months	Assigned to: Operations Chief Donnie Tudor / Training Chief Danny Garner

Critical Tasks
- Ensure that all personnel have a username, password, rights, and the knowledge and ability to log into the emergency reporting system.
- Develop a memo instructing personnel on how to input pertinent information into the daily log, to include:
    - Staffing and shift change
    - Radio assignments
    - Special details
    - Visitors
    - Repairs to equipment or the station
    - Items found in need of repair
    - Special events for the day
    - Work orders- outstanding, updates, and completed
    - Roster
    - Training entered into the electronic reporting system
- Develop and present a class on creating, updating, and closing work orders in the system.
- Develop and present a class on sending messages and emails in the system.

CITY OF COVINGTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

Goal 5	Enhance physical and technological resources to provide quality service to our community and safe operation for our personnel.

Objective 5A	Improve fleet programs to provide excellent emergency response in the safest manner.
Timeframe	9 months - ongoing **Assigned to:** Operations Chief Donnie Tudor

Critical Tasks	• Utilize the apparatus committee or designee to prepare a study that includes:
	    ○ Functionality
	    ○ Age of the fleet
	    ○ Maintenance issues
	    ○ Safety features
	• Identify and prioritize the needs found in the study.
	• Develop a fleet replacement plan.
	• Review the current fleet maintenance plan for improvement.
	• The fire chief, or designee, will analyze the results to determine budgetary needs.
	• Submit to the city council for approval of the fleet replacement and maintenance program.

Objective 5B	Evaluate and enhance fire station coverage in the community.
Timeframe	Current - ongoing **Assigned to:** Operations Chief Donnie Tudor
Critical Tasks	• Appoint a designee to conduct a study of current coverage areas utilizing GIS, my sidewalk, emergency reporting system, NFPA, CRA, SOC. • Identify areas within the community that have high response times, high call volume, and potential growth. • Develop a plan for land acquisition and station development. • The fire chief, or designee, will analyze the results of the plan to determine budgetary needs. • Submit to city council for approval of land acquisition and fire station development plan.

Objective 5C	Enhance existing facilities to ensure optimal functionality for department personnel and access for community members.
Timeframe	6 months - ongoing **Assigned to:** Battalion Chief Ricky Tanner
Critical Tasks	• Establish a facilities committee of personnel from all levels to determine functionality and upgrade needs to existing stations and facilities. • Develop a facilities upgrade plan. • The fire chief, or designee, will analyze the facilities upgrade plan for budgetary needs. • Submit the budgetary requests to the city council regarding the facilities upgrade plan.

Objective 5D	Improve the information technology functionality to ensure the optimal performance of all hardware, software, and equipment to provide a reliable resource for all personnel.
Timeframe	6 months - ongoing **Assigned to:** Training Chief Danny Garner
Critical Tasks	• Establish a committee of personnel from all levels of the organization and the city information technology department to conduct a study of the current information technology program. • Identify information technology needs based on the study. • Develop an information technology replacement program. • Review the current procedure for information technology maintenance and updates. • The fire chief, or designee, will analyze the results of the study to determine budgetary needs. • Submit budgetary requests to the city council to support information technology needs.

Vision

On the final day of the process, the CPSE presented a strategic plan vision of where the organization will be in the future if the strategic plan is accomplished. This is not to override the department's global vision but rather to confirm the futurity of the work that was designed by the department stakeholders. This vision is intended as a target of excellence to strive toward and provides a basis for its goals and objectives.

> "Vision is knowing who you are, where you're going, and what will guide your journey"
>
> Ken Blanchard

The City of Covington Fire Department's 2025 Vision

is to continue to fulfill our personal and organizational commitment of earning trust through transparent efforts that enhance the lives of those we serve. This vision, our true futurity, will become a reality by striving to accomplish our goals and objectives. We will transition into this future by:

Committing to the innovative management of our physical resources to make sure we are prepared now and in the future. We will always respect those resources entrusted to us, with the understanding that we must be ready to meet the challenges set before us and provide the best possible service to our community. Through these efforts, we will establish transparent internal communications systems and processes designed to enhance the quality of life of those we serve.

Formulating processes to ensure we are appropriately staffed with the best trained and diverse human resources to meet the needs of the community. As an accredited fire agency, our emphasis on respect, professional training, and career development will ensure the future provision of world-class services. These efforts will highlight our integrity, professionalism, and our devoted call to service.

Dedicating every ounce of our efforts as we work towards strengthening our community outreach with partner agencies to generate improved efficacies in service delivery. Together we will continuously do what is best for our community while honoring our history through the prism of the future. We commit to personify our passion for what we do as we hold each other accountable for fulfilling our mission, living our values, accomplishing our goals, always doing the right thing, and making this vision a reality.

Performance Measurement

To assess and ensure that an organization delivers on the promises made in its strategic plan, the organization's leaders must determine performance measures for which they are fully accountable. As output measurement can be challenging, the organization must focus on assessing progress toward achieving improved output. Organizations must be prepared to revisit and revise their goals, objectives, and performance measures to keep up with accomplishments and environmental changes.

To establish that the department's strategic plan is achieving results, performance measurement data will be implemented and integrated. An integrated process, known as "Managing for Results," will be utilized, which is based upon:

- The identification of strategic goals and objectives;

- The determination of resources necessary to achieve them;

- The analyzing and evaluation of performance data; and

- The use of that data to drive continuous improvement in the organization. A "family of measures" typically utilized to indicate and measure performance includes:

  - **Inputs** - Value of resource used to produce an output.

  - **Outputs –** Quantifiable units produced that are activity-oriented and measurable.

  - **Efficiency** - Inputs used per output (or outputs per input).

  - **Service Quality** - The <u>degree</u> to which customers are <u>satisfied</u> with a program, or how <u>accurately</u> or <u>timely</u> service is provided.

  - **Outcome** - Qualitative consequences associated with a program/service, i.e., the ultimate benefit to the customer. Focused on the "why" of providing a service.

> • **If you don't measure the results of your plan, you can't tell success from failure.**
> • **If you can't see success, you can't reward it.**
> • **If you can't reward success, you're probably rewarding failure.**
> • **If you can't see success, you can't learn from it.**
> • **If you can't recognize failure, you can't correct it.**
> • **If you can demonstrate results, you can win public support.**
>
> <u>Reinventing Government</u>
> David Osborn and Ted Gaebler

The Success of the Strategic Plan

The department has approached its desire to develop and implement a strategic plan by asking for and receiving input from the community and members of the organization during the development stage of the planning process. To assist in developing this plan, the department used professional guidance to conduct a community-driven strategic planning process. This strategic plan's success will not depend upon the implementation of the goals and their related objectives but on support received from the authority having jurisdiction, the members of the organization, and the community-at-large.

Provided the community-driven strategic planning process is kept dynamic and supported by effective leadership and active participation, it will be a considerable opportunity to unify department and community stakeholders. This can be accomplished through a jointly developed understanding of organizational direction, focusing on all vested parties working to achieve the mission, goals, and vision. Further consideration must be made on how the organization will measure and be accountable for its progress and successes.

Glossary of Terms, Acronyms, and Initialisms

Accreditation   A process by which an association or agency evaluates and recognizes a program of study or an institution as meeting certain predetermined standards or qualifications. It applies only to institutions or agencies and their programs of study or their services. Accreditation ensures a basic level of quality in the services received from an agency.

CFAI   Commission on Fire Accreditation International

CISD   Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

CPSE   Center for Public Safety Excellence

CRA   Community Risk Assessment

Customer(s)   The person or group who establishes the requirement of a process and receives or uses the outputs of that process; or the person or entity directly served by the department or agency.

EAP   Employee Assistance Program

Efficiency   A performance indication where inputs are measured per unit of output (or vice versa).

EMS   Emergency Medical Services

Environment   Circumstances and conditions that interact with and affect an organization. These can include economic, political, cultural, and physical conditions inside or outside the boundaries of the organization.

FEMA   Federal Emergency Management Agency

GEMA   Georgia Emergency Management Agency

GIS   Global Information System

GPSTC   Georgia Public Safety Training Center

IAAI   International Association of Arson Investigators

Input   A performance indication where the value of resources is used to produce an output.

Mission   An enduring statement of purpose; the organization's reason for existence. Describes what the organization does, for whom it does it, and how it does it.

NAFI   National Association of Fire Investigators

NFA   National Fire Academy

NFPA   National Fire Protection Association

Outcome   A performance indication where qualitative consequences are associated with a program/service, i.e., the ultimate benefit to the customer.

Output   A performance indication where a quality or number of units produced is identified.

PTSD   Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

SOC   Standards of Cover

SOP   Standard Operating Procedure

Stakeholder   Any person, group, or organization that can place a claim on, or influence the organization's resources or outputs, is affected by those outputs, or has an interest in or expectation of the organization.

Strategic Goal   A broad target that defines how the agency will carry out its mission over a specific period of time. An aim. The final result of an action. Something to accomplish in assisting the agency to move forward.

Strategic Objective   A specific, measurable accomplishment required to realize the successful completion of a strategic goal.

OVAP   Occupancy Vulnerability Assessment Profile

Strategic Plan   A long-range planning document that defines the mission of the agency and broadly identifies how it will be accomplished, and that provides the framework for more detailed annual and operational plans.

Strategic Planning   The continuous and systematic process whereby guiding members of an organization make decisions about its future, develop procedures and operations to achieve that future, and determine how success is to be measured.

Strategy   A description of how a strategic objective will be achieved. A possibility. A plan or methodology for achieving a goal.

SWOT   Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.

Vision   An idealized view of a desirable and potentially achievable future state - where or what an organization would like to be in the future.

Works Cited

Bryson, John M. *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations: A Guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement.* Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2018.

Appendix 1

Community Expectations

Understanding what the community expects of its fire service organization is critically important to developing a long-range perspective. With this knowledge, internal emphasis may need to be changed or bolstered to fulfill the community's needs.

Respondents were asked to list, in priority order, up to five subjects relative to the expectations they have for the City of Covington Fire Department. Responses were then analyzed for themes and weighted. The weighting of the prioritized responses was as follows: if it was the respondent's first entry, it received five weighted points. Weighting gradually decreased so that if it was the respondent's fifth entry, it received one weighted point. The weighted themes were then sorted from the highest cumulative weight to the lowest cumulative weight and listed below. The numbers in the parentheses are the cumulative weighted value that correlated with the theme identified. While the themes are listed in prioritized, weighted order, all responses were important in the planning process. The following are the expectation responses of the community stakeholders:

Community Expectations of the City of Covington Fire Department (in priority order)

1. Low response times; quick response times; fast, friendly service for emergency services; timely response to emergencies; response times - quick! Low response times for medical calls. (123)

2. Highly trained, motivated, and well-staffed department; skilled/properly trained staff/accredited; knowledgeable firefighters; proper staff (knowledgeable); knowledge of emergency procedures. (62)

3. Community outreach/involvement; community involvement; educating the public on fire safety; educating public/businesses on basic fire safety; work proactively with the community on fire safety; be present and active in the community; continue to educate the public on all fire department services - that most are unaware of. (39)

4. Well-equipped fire department; proper equipment for each emergency and type; equipment necessary on site; fire department has all equipment necessary to fulfill needs; updated equipment. (39)

5. Safety inspections and investigations; ensure a safety plan; improve public safety; they would provide safety for our community. (16)

6. Adequate staffing; sufficient number of responders for natural disaster or mass casualty response; fully staffed shift. (15)

7. Knowledge about community threats (hazardous materials, etc.); knowledge of locations; community experience/familiarity; constant surveillance of potential hazards. (10)

8. Courteous/helpful; have a pleasant demeanor at all times; employees are willing, caring, and helpful. (8)

9. Fighting fires successfully; put out fires. (7)

10. Transparent and communicative oriented (law enforcement, etc.); communication with business owners. (6)

11. Work with industry for training; planning time - to review industrial sites and plan for disaster response. (6)

12. Diversity. (5)

13. When I call, they answer my phone calls, even on their cell phones. (5)

14. Growth over the next five years. (5)

15. Deliver a high standard of care and response to the emergency. (4)

16. Rescue ability. (4)

17. They would hire people who truly wanted to be a firefighter. (4)

18. CPR and other certifications up to date. (3)

19. Deliver a high standard of professionalism. (3)

20. Friendly and customer service-oriented workers; service with a smile. (3)

21. Maintain or improve the ISO rating. (3)

22. Fitness training. (3)

23. Have a great attitude. (3)

24. Open door policy. (2)

25. Availability. (2)

26. Work closely with law enforcement; well-organized communication with other community safety services like EMS. (2)

27. Since the department has been accredited since 1983 (sic) - maintain accreditation. (2)

28. Strong strategic mission and vision for department and community. (1)

29. Willingness to learn/grow professionally. (1)

30. Experienced leaders. (1)

31. Provide quality of service to all members who are in the community, whether visiting or living. (1)

32. Enjoy what they are doing and have gratitude for the department they have. (1)

Areas of Community Concern

The planning process would be incomplete without an expression from the community stakeholders regarding concerns about the organization. Some areas of concern may, in fact, be a weakness within the delivery system, while some weaknesses may also be misperceptions based upon a lack of information, understanding, or incorrect information.

Respondents were asked to list, in priority order, up to five concerns they have about or for the department. Responses were then analyzed for themes and weighted. The weighting of the prioritized concerns was as follows: if it was the respondent's first entry, it received five weighted points. Weighting gradually decreased so that if it was the respondent's fifth entry, it received one weighted point. The weighted themes were then sorted from the highest cumulative weight to the lowest cumulative weight and listed below. The numbers in the parentheses are the cumulative weighted value that correlated with the theme identified. While the themes are listed in prioritized, weighted order, all responses were important in the planning process. The following are the concerns of the community stakeholders prioritized and weighted accordingly:

Areas of Community Concern about the City of Covington Fire Department
(verbatim, in priority order)

1. Equipment ownership/availability to meet community needs; is there adequate equipment for emergencies? Effective, up-to-date equipment; outdated equipment. (36)

2. Adequate staffing; shortage of manpower; staffing shortages; not having enough people to provide adequate protection of the community; lack of employees. (30)

3. Firefighter retention and hiring; retaining high-quality employees; retaining high-quality employees; staff retention. (23)

4. Available funding resources for budgetary needs; adequate funding/resources; funding; I have no concerns about the City of Covington Fire Department. Any concern that I would have for the fire department would be of the city leadership to provide the funding the FD needs. (22)

5. Lack of talent pool in area for hiring; availability of qualified candidates; pay scale not at market rate to recruit and retain qualified employees; attracting the best employees. (19)

6. Response times as city grows; not enough stations as the community grows; not enough fire stations; Lack of ample stations to meet response times (18)

7. Knowing streets/locations in the city; lack of knowledge of facilities. (14)

8. Good community awareness about fire safety; awareness and training for adults; possibly improve public education. (13)

9. Bilingual/ diversity - are there firefighters on staff from various backgrounds who could assist in different cultures? Lack of diversity; a fire department that does not match the demographics of my community. (13)

10. Changes to the square slowing response times; reaching those in need in a timely manner. (10)

11. Budgets limited staffing and equipment; lack of needed funding; not having enough funds to run the department. (10)

12. Mental strength to move from hardship; adequate support/counseling for PTSD, short and long-term. (10)

13. Continuity of service during pandemic; I am concerned about exposure to the virus and having to wait the 14 days for those exposed. (9)

14. Maintaining high levels of training and expertise; professional development of staff (6)

15. Hazmat response. (5)

16. Lack of joint regional engagement with other fire departments; partnership with county EMS. (5)

17. Making sure they are being paid to today's standard in order to get great services. (5)

18. Lack of communication in alarm response times. (5)

19. Stations not close enough to my home. (5)

20. Support from the community. (5)

21. Financial impact to the citizens. (5)

22. Showing up for false alarms more than once. (5)

23. Mass casualty response/natural disaster response. (4)

24. Safety of firefighters on/at emergency situations; personal safety of first responders; the staff's safety after and during their service. Growing concerns for cancer risk in the field. Consider high-level decon procedures and even a separate decon room from any living or working spaces. (4)

25. NIMS/ICS training; are the emergency techs trained enough for any response? (4)

26. Lack of caring. (4)

27. Can we reach fires/people in high rises? (4)

28. Fire pre-plan frequency for industry. (3)

29. Adequate support from city council. (3)

30. Are there enough fire hydrants in town for a major issue? (3)

31. Having the right people to call for a facility if there was an incident (contacts for each facility). (3)

32. Golf cart storage/safety (3)

33. Fire inspection frequency. (2)

34. Community participation in evaluations. (2)

35. Is the fire department keeping up with environmental issues that could cause fires? (2)

36. Overworked/stressed-out employees. (2)

37. Enough space at the physical house for all members of staff to live and work while they are on shift, including females. (2)

38. Family stability. (1)

39. Politicizing. (1)

Positive Community Feedback

The CPSE promotes the belief that the community's view on the organization's strengths must be established for a strategic plan to be valid. Needless efforts are often put forth in over-developing areas that are already successful. However, proper utilization and promotion of the strengths may often help the organization overcome or offset some of the identified weaknesses.

Positive Community Comments about the City of Covington Fire Department (verbatim, in no particular order)

- Accreditation.
- Community involvement.
- Citizens fire academy.
- Great working relationship.
- Leadership has grown from the ranks.
- Great response times.
- ISO rating.
- Friendly, well-traveled staff.
- Excellent team culture.
- Showing their friendly faces in the community.
- Everyone I know in the CFD are friendly, kind, and professional.
- Open door policy.
- Their charitable work.

- Our fire department has come to our hotel to train for issues that could happen…this proactiveness is reassuring.
- I love that our fire department participated in a TV show. It really helped to promote community involvement.
- Personable to the community.
- They project professionalism.
- They take pride in what they do.
- Move to act without regard for Safety.
- They act as a team.
- They have been informative during regular fire inspections.
- I am able to call at any time to ask questions.
- I see them at events for the community and children.
- Community involved.
- Good training facility.
- Friendly staff.
- Excellent public outreach-students, community events, smoke detectors, 5K.
- Lack of turnover-especially compared to the county.
- Good response times.
- Extremely open and helpful chief.
- Attentive staff during a response call.
- Community outreach is important to the department.
- Ongoing training is important to the department.
- Partnering with the local schools to train future fire cadets.
- A fire chief who seems to have an open-door policy. He is always looking for ways to improve.
- Social media presence.
- Friendly and helpful.
- Quick response times. Attentive.
- Well equipped.
- Supportive of the community.
- Working with industry for training and response needs (fire extinguisher, CPR, AED, first aid, confined space rescue) - excellent job!

- Low response times.

- Good communications with industry.

- Community involvement.

- Willing to help when asked.

- Great feedback when questions asked by phone/email.

- Very well educated.

- Dedicated to the community.

- Up-to-date equipment.

- Very well staffed.

- They are very supportive of other community organizations and groups.

- Strong history in the community.

- Response times are always good.

- Great group of folks dedicated to their job and Covington.

- Fire Chief is awesome.

- Council supports the fire department.

- Firemen appear fit.

- Firemen have always been courteous in person and on the streets.

- CFD is very professional and community-driven.

- They are always looking for areas to improve.

- They are quick to respond and exceed expectations.

- When I text or call, they get back to me quickly.

- I feel I have a good rapport with the fire department.

- Everyone at the fire department seems to be on the same page for what they are trying to accomplish.

- Care about the community they live and work in and represent.

- They are planning and thinking ahead as the community continues to grow.

- Collect data and information about the department and calls.

- The staff values their accreditation.

- I personally have had two experiences with CFD. I was pleased both times.

- My honest opinion is CFD is doing exceptionally well.

- Handles the community with respect and love.

- Fire department personnel are extremely knowledgeable and are able to offer expert counsel.

- Life safety walk-through requests have always yielded positive and useful results.

- The department has a good reputation in the community.

- The people who work at the department are good people.

- The department appreciates all that is done for them.

- The people in the department are friendly, helpful, and knowledgeable about the job they are doing.

- Always looking for areas to improve.

- Very transparent.

- Quick response.

- Lower insurance rates.

- 24-hour, 7 days a week responsiveness.

- Multiple incident responsiveness.

- Fire prevention.

- Forward-thinking fire chief. Dedicated employees.

- Backing of the city council.

- Improved equipment.

Other Thoughts and Comments

The community was asked to share any other comments they had about the department or its services. The following written comments were received:

Other Community Comments about the City of Covington Fire Department (verbatim, in no particular order)

- Great format for the meeting.

- So far, I find the fire department to be a great organization in Covington, GA.

- Well managed, good leadership.

- Would it be possible to include a safety plan for newly opened businesses? Made as part of permitting or mandatory when opening. Operating extinguishers properly, evacuation plan, prioritizing each department with tasks to safely get everyone out, and hopefully minimize damage.

- Enjoyed lunch and fellowship! Thank you!

- Extremely capable and hardworking staff!

- Great work for all involved. Thanks for the invite.

- Thank you for strategic planning! Great leadership! Be out more in the community and businesses.

- As a business owner, I would like to have you come out and help to explain new techniques on putting out fires and safety measures.

- Thanks for the invite!

- Fire department becoming more proactive instead of reactive.

Community Stakeholders Work Session

Appendix 2

Strengths

It is important for any organization to identify its strengths to ensure that it can provide the services requested by the community, and that strengths are consistent with the issues facing the organization. Often, identifying organizational strengths leads to the channeling of efforts toward primary community needs that match those strengths. Programs that do not match organizational strengths or the organization's primary function should be seriously reviewed to evaluate the rate of return on staff time and allocated funds.

Through a consensus process, the department stakeholders identified the department's strengths as follows:

Strengths of the City of Covington Fire Department			
Strong leaders	Talented personnel (trade skills)	Training budget	
PPE/equipment	Highly skilled EMS providers	Personnel/number of people/close-knit family	
Workout equipment	Faith-based		
Well trained personnel	Buy-in from mayor and council	Servant leadership	
Accreditation	Networking	Institutional knowledge	
Use of data management software and systems	Partnerships	Good interoperability with other agencies	
	Instructors in many disciplines		
Moving towards sustainability	Special ops /dive, cadet, ESU, etc.	Community risk reduction	
Progressive	Separate sleeping quarters	Involvement for all levels	
Family-based	Admin support	Leadership is receptive to ideas	Inclusive

Weaknesses

For any organization to either begin or to continue to move progressively forward, it must be able to identify its strengths and those areas where it functions poorly or not at all. These areas of needed enhancements are not the same as threats to be identified later in this document, but rather those day-to-day issues and concerns that may slow or inhibit progress. The department stakeholders identified the following items as weaknesses:

Weaknesses of the City of Covington Fire Department	
Lack of additional resource matrix	Communication between shifts
Large age gap	Few promotional opportunities
Long retirement age	Lack of consistency in shift operations
Budget and staffing	Aging apparatus (E-One)
Department size	Inadequate radio systems
Lack of diversity	Lack of coverage to service community
Lack of college degrees and education	Code enforcement
Inadequate pre-fire plans	Lack of social media presence
Use of chain of command	Lack of SOP's and SOG's
Continuity of data and maintenance of equipment	Petty gripes and micro-managing
Focus on the negative	Acceptance of constructive criticism
Communication between admin and suppression	

Opportunities

The opportunities for an organization depend on identifying strengths and weaknesses and how they can be enhanced. The focus of opportunities is not solely on existing service but on expanding and developing new possibilities both inside and beyond the traditional service area. The department stakeholders identified the following potential opportunities:

Opportunities for the City of Covington Fire Department	
Grant access	Fire officer credentialing
College reimbursement	State pension
Pay study every two years	Access to GPSTC and NFA
Supportive community	Resources from GEMA, FEMA
Automatic aid agreements	Mutual aid agreements
Local resources	Local colleges and universities for fire programs
Land opportunity on the south side	Host more training
CPSE strategic plan meeting	Incentive pay
Blue card	Lexipol
IAFF, IAFC, NFPA, IFSTA, NAFI, IAAI	Community involvement in training
Access to nationally recognized conferences and training	

Threats

By recognizing possible threats, an organization can reduce the potential for loss. Fundamental to the success of any strategic plan is the understanding that threats are not completely and/or directly controlled by the organization. Some of the current and potential threats identified by the department stakeholders were as follows:

Potential Threats to the City of Covington Fire Department		
Public perception	Privatization of fire services	Airport
Growth – population vs. resources	Pandemic	Low median income
Department funding through the tax base	Interstate highway	Lack of qualified applicants
Being generalized as other agencies – EMS, fire	Retirement age policy	Social media
Mass casualty, active shooter, etc.	Lack of a diverse hiring pool	Fake news
Opposing governmental structures (city vs. county)	Inexperienced automatic aid	Lack of employee training
Impact of losing certifications (CPR, EMS)	Civil unrest, riots	Inadequate staffing at dispatch
Hazards in high risk facilities (OVAP)	Lack of experience	

Appendix 3

The following information is the raw data comprised from the deliberation of the two workgroups. Each table's information is linked to a strategic initiative that the overall group, by consensus, determined that the department should pursue for change and continuous improvement.

Critical and Service Gap Issues Identified by the Department Stakeholders		

Initiative Link	Group 1	Group 2
Community Outreach	Community Outreach o Social media o Education of the public o Safety inspections o Transparency o PIO	Community Outreach o Involvement o Social media presence o New stand-alone website o Public education o Partnerships o Inspections and pre-fire plans o Build relationships

Initiative Link	Group 1	Group 2
Training	Training o Props; car, dumpster, standpipe, etc. o Training center and rooms o EMS/paramedic training o Pre-fire plans	Training o Higher-level training o Officer development o Live fire training o Props o Blue Card o Certification levels o Credentialing

Initiative Link	Group 1	Group 2
Human Resources	Human Resources o Staffing o Diversity within the department o Hiring process o Revamp the promotion process o Counseling and support for difficult response calls	Human Resources o Recruitment and retention o Retirement process o Diversity o Pay o Advancement o Disciplinary issues o Health and wellness o EAP

Initiative Link	Group 1	Group 2
Internal Communications	N/A	Internal Communications o Departmental Directives o Use of memos o Email communications o Consistency of pass-on at all levels o Communication between different generations

Initiative Link	Group 1	Group 2
Physical Resources	Physical Resources o Fleet o Stations o Small equipment o Remodel of stations o Electronics o Radio system	N/A

The following information is the raw data comprised from the deliberation of the two workgroups. The information in each table is not linked directly to a strategic initiative, but remains important. The department is best served to understand and embrace this other information as it moves forward for deliberative purposes and consideration of support of the strategic initiatives.

Critical and Service Gap Issues Identified by the Department Stakeholders

Initiative Link	Group 1	Group 2
Service Delivery	Service Delivery o Coverage – able to get to all areas of the city o Response time to calls o Auto-aid with other agencies o EMS – highest level possible o Matrix revamp	Operations o Response times o Equipment and apparatus o Staffing at stations o Special teams; Dive, ESU, technical rescue o EMS o Domestic preparedness

Initiative Link	Group 1	Group 2
Information Technology	Information Technology o Electronics o Databases o Phone system o Website interoperability	N/A