



# GARLAND

## MINUTES

The Fire and EMS Stakeholder Committee of the Public Safety Committee of the City of Garland convened a special meeting at 6:00 PM on November 12, 2025, in the Community Room at the Central Library, 625 Austin Street, Garland, Texas, with the following members present:

Present: Chair, Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Chris Ott  
Mayor Pro Tem Margaret Lucht  
Councilmember Carissa Dutton  
Matt Watson, Chief Financial Officer  
Allyson Bell-Steadman, Director of Budget & Financial Strategy  
Mark Lee, Fire Chief  
Tyler Little, Driver-Engineer  
Dr. Matthew Tice, Medical Director  
Melissa Garner, Community Leader  
Merill Balanciere, Community Leader  
Jason Collard, Community Leader

Staff Present: Letecia McNatt, Public Safety Committee Liaison

### **1. WELCOME & MEETING LOGISTICS**

The Chair opened the third meeting of the Fire and EMS Stakeholder Committee by restating the committee's purpose:

- Sustain essential Fire and EMS services for Garland citizens.
- Improve the lives and wellbeing of first responders.
- Achieve both goals in a financially responsible and sustainable manner.

It was noted that the committee is operating on a nine-month timeline to assess and prepare Fire/EMS services for the next 20 years. The Chair also noted that consultant Tim Nowak is no longer assisting the committee.

### **2. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Persons who desire to address the Committee on any item on the agenda are allowed three minutes to speak.

Speakers during Public Comments included:

- Mr. Chad Blunt
- Mr. Tommy Little
- Mr. Brain Harpster
- Mr. Robert Spears

### **3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion to approve minutes from the October 8, 2025, meeting: Unanimous approval

### **4. ITEM FOR INDIVIDUAL CONSIDERATION**

#### **a. Financial Overview - Current Costs, Revenue, and Budget Context**

## **Presentation by CFO Matt Watson and Budget Director Allison Bell Steadman Overview:**

- Citywide funding challenges affect Fire/EMS funding capacity.
- Stressed goal of identifying a path forward—no “no money” message.

### **Budget Structure:**

- Operating Budget: Annual (Oct–Sept), covering personnel, daily operations.
- Capital Improvement Program (CIP): Five-year plan, bond-funded, covers equipment and facilities.

### **General Fund:**

- FY26 General Fund budget: \$257.2 million
- Public Safety (Fire, Police, EMS): 67% of the General Fund
- Fire Department alone: Approx. \$49.1 million, or ~20% of General Fund

### **Key Revenue Sources:**

- Property tax: 30% (\$77.3M)
- Sales tax: 18% (\$45.7M)
- Landfill and GPNL ROI: 21% combined
- EMS fees: \$5.1M (ambulance billing) + \$2.8M (utility fee)

### **Revenue Constraints:**

- SB2 limits revenue growth from property taxes to 3.5% annually without voter approval.
- Garland has lower-than-average property valuations and relies heavily on residential tax base (60% vs. 50% norm).
- Limited commercial growth and aging housing stock constrain long-term revenue expansion.
- Sales tax growth has flattened after post-pandemic boom.

### **EMS Fee Structure:**

- Shifted to optimize Medicare/insurance billing and write off uninsured patient costs.
- Expected to generate \$760K in new revenue.
- Monthly EMS fee on utility bills: \$2.50 (raises \$2.8M annually).
- No statutory cap, but city will review legal risk of increases.

### **Staffing Costs:**

- 285 sworn civil service staff (plus 7 non-civilian).
- Total compensation package includes base pay, overtime, longevity/stability, paramedic pay, and assignment premiums.
- Employer pension contributions: 14% to TMRS; 2.75% to retiree stability fund.

### **Overtime:**

- Budgeted at \$1.5M but consistently overrun by ~\$1.3M annually.
- Covered using “salary savings” from vacancies citywide.

### **Comparative Data:**

- Garland Fire is:
  - 19% below average in cost per 1,000 population.

- 31% below in cost per call.
- 23% above average in calls per firefighter (106 vs. 86).

**Preliminary Cost Estimates for 24/72 Shift Transition  
Scenario A: In-House Ambulance Transport with 24/72**

- Estimated cost: \$13M–\$16M/year.
- 87 new positions needed.
- Total staff: 348.
- Estimated tax impact: 5–6 cents (\$133–\$160/year per average home).

**Scenario B: Contracted EMS Transport with 24/72**

- Estimated cost: \$0–\$5M/year.
- 5 new positions.
- Estimated tax impact: 1–2 cents (\$27–\$54/year).
- Would forfeit \$5.1M in EMS billing revenue.

**Ongoing Considerations:**

- Further analysis needed on overtime reduction savings, equipment cost reductions, and revenue tradeoffs.
- Transport partnership model introduces complexities around revenue loss and operational control.

**b. Questions & Discussion**

Committee members asked clarifying questions on staffing, facility use, and long-term budget impacts. City staff emphasized the complexity of funding options and committed to providing follow-up data to support ongoing discussions.

**5. ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:30 PM

**Submitted By:**

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**/S/ Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Chris Ott, Chair**

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**/S/ Letecia McNatt, Liaison**