

MINUTES OF A CONTINUED MEETING OF THE CITY
COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COEUR D'ALENE, IDAHO,
HELD AT THE LIBRARY COMMUNITY ROOM

February 23, 2026

The Mayor and Council of the City of Coeur d'Alene met in a continued session of said Council at the Coeur d'Alene City Library Community Room on February 23, 2026, at 12:00 p.m., there being present the following members:

Dan Gookin, Mayor

Christie Wood)	Members of Council Present
Dan Sheckler)	
Kenny Gabriel)	
Dan English)	
Kiki Miller)	
Amy Evans)	Member of Council Absent

STAFF PRESENT: Ron Jacobson, Interim City Administrator; Randy Adams, City Attorney; Tom Greif, Fire Chief; Streets & Engineering Director Todd Feusier, and City Engineer Chris Bosley.

GUEST: Richard Curtis, Senior Project Manager of Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI), former City Administrator Troy Tymesen, and former Fire Deputy Chief Jeff Sells.

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Gookin called the meeting to order.

Mayor Gookin noted that the purpose of the workshop was to provide an opportunity for Council to discuss the Fire Station Location/ Fire & EMS Deployment Study. If so inclined, the Council may wish to direct staff to negotiate with ITD for land identified in the study for placement of a future Fire Station.

FIRE STATION LOCATION/ FIRE & EMS DEPLOYMENT STUDY PRESENTATION: Fire Chief Tom Greif thanked the Mayor and City Council for their time and support of two major projects completed over the past three years, the customer-centered strategic plan as well as the station location and deployment study, both crucial to the Fire Department's future. He acknowledged the contributions of former City Administrator Troy Tymesen and retired Fire Deputy Chief Jeff Sells. Mr. Sells led the data preparation for the Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI) team. The strategic plan captured input from community members and internal and external stakeholders to guide the department over the next three to five years, while the deployment study provides technical, data-driven recommendations for future decision-making. He emphasized the value of using an experienced third-party consultant, noting ESCI's national expertise and past work with the City. Chief Greif stated that while the study offers tools and achievable recommendations, it does not resolve the broader challenge of sustainable public-safety funding. He added that the purpose of the presentation is to provide Council with a

usable, informative resource, and to support informed planning as the community grows and service demands increase.

Richard Curtis, ESCI Senior Project Manager, noted that ESCI, founded in 1975 and now the consulting arm of the International Association of Fire Chiefs, conducted the study with a full team supporting the work. The assessment examined Coeur d'Alene's fire and EMS service delivery across fire protection, countywide ALS ambulance service, ladder truck needs for high-rise growth, level of community risk, station locations, deployment models, staffing levels, response performance, GIS modeling, service-demand trends, and staffing relief factors. Key findings show the city's population and service demand are growing at an even faster rate, travel times exceed national standards, and EMS units are nearing peak utilization. Mr. Curtis highlighted increasing high-rise and commercial development, ongoing construction, and strong community support, concluding that these trends affirm the need for continued evaluation and planning.

Councilmember Wood asked how far the City's response times deviate from national standards. Mr. Curtis explained that performance is measured in three parts: dispatch processing time, firefighter turnout time, and travel time to the scene. He noted that Coeur d'Alene's average travel time is about 6 minutes, compared to the national standard of 4 minutes, which may indicate insufficient station coverage or challenges created by traffic congestion and the local street network. He added that dispatch processing time is unusually long, around 3 to 3.5 minutes instead of the recommended 60 seconds and needs to be investigated. He also noted turnout times are longer than expected, partly due to outdated station design, congested apparatus bays, and the physical layout requiring crews to move from upstairs living areas to the apparatus floor.

Councilmember English asked who provides dispatch services, and Chief Greif explained that the Kootenai County Sheriff's Office oversees communications. Councilmember English then asked whether the City has any leverage, and Chief Greif noted they do through an advisory board, although a lack of available data has been a concern. He added that while the Fire Department cannot control travel factors such as weather and road conditions, they can improve dispatch processing and turnout times. Councilmember English commented on the significant gap between current 6-minute travel times and the 4-minute standard and notes that delays accumulate across the entire response sequence.

Mr. Curtis noted service-delivery trends: about 75% of incidents are EMS calls, followed by canceled or good-intent calls, and then service calls at roughly 7.5–7.7%, which have increased notably over five years. Service calls include lift assists or water-leak help. Chief Greif added that assisted-living and skilled-nursing facilities account for approximately 23–24% of total call volume.

Mr. Curtis explained that service demand peaks in July and August due to tourism and again in December because of winter-related incidents. Surprisingly, weekdays show the highest call volumes, indicating strong commuter activity in the city. He reviewed data showing average emergency travel time is 6 minutes 6 seconds, above the 4-minute national standard, likely due to street-network challenges and congestion, suggesting the potential need for additional stations. He also described analyses of population density versus incident density, noting that actual call density more accurately reflects service demand, especially in the central core near Stations 1, 2, and 3.

He outlined projected incident-growth rates, which climb faster than population growth, reaching around 3.6% annually. The deployment study compared ten scenarios, including the role of Kootenai Fire & Rescue Station 4, which was included because of its strategic proximity. Councilmember Wood inquired about its historical use, and Chief Greif explained that it has been a mutual-aid and coverage partner but not part of auto-aid.

Mr. Curtis explained that the study evaluated ladder-truck coverage using four scenarios across both existing and potential station sites, factoring in four-minute travel times, incident capture rates, structural square footage, and jurisdictional coverage to generate comparative scores. The team also assessed ALS unit deployment through seven scenarios, assuming Med 34 operates full-time to standardize mapping and focused on optimizing regional four-minute travel coverage while balancing call loads among units nearing peak demand. Mr. Curtis noted that existing stations capture about 64% of incidents and 82% of structures, while including Kootenai County Fire & Rescue Station 4 increases that to 71% of incidents and 91% of structures. Of the ten overall scenarios studied, the top recommendation is Scenario J which adds a fifth station to the south and relocates Station 2 north, offering the best community coverage, while a more financially realistic option is Scenario F which retains four stations but relocates Station 2 to Marie and Ramsey, improving capture rates to 83% of incidents and 92% of structures.

Councilmember English asked about Indian Meadows, and Mr. Sells explained that there was no data that they could submit about the Coeur Terre area. Mr. Curtis noted that there was no usable data because the area is largely undeveloped and lacks a street network. Mr. Sells added that the outlined portion along Huetter Road gives a general idea of how service coverage may eventually extend as development occurs. Mr. Curtis confirmed that Station 4 would effectively cover the Coeur Terre area within a four-minute travel time.

Mr. Curtis explained that the study assessed ladder-truck coverage, noting that the City's only ladder truck at Station 1 currently protects just 39% of the community, leaving 61% outside the Idaho Survey & Rating Bureau's recommended 2.5-mile ladder-truck coverage area. Because many local buildings exceed the 3,500-gallon-per-minute fire-flow threshold and because the city's built-up area surpasses the standard for needing a second ladder truck, the study evaluated additional placement options. Scenario C, which places a second ladder truck in the northern part of the city, provided the strongest coverage. Mayor Gookin asked why the study did not evaluate a scenario in which the City's existing ladder truck is moved from Station 1 to Station 2 to see how overall coverage might change. Mr. Curtis explained that while such a scenario could be analyzed, it would not change the fundamental need for a second ladder truck. National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) guidance recommends having two ladder companies available for communities with high-rise structures, and Coeur d'Alene has significant high-rise development in its downtown core. Because of this, the ladder truck at Station 1 should remain positioned to serve the high-rise district, even though it could technically be relocated and still fall within required travel distances. Regardless of its placement, the City still requires a second ladder truck to meet protection standards.

Councilmember Wood asked whether the City currently has only one ladder truck and whether a backup still exists. Chief Greif explained that a new ladder truck has been ordered, and when it arrives in about three years, the existing truck will become the reserve unit. He also noted that the

City planned ahead by including a second in-service ladder company in the impact fee study, anticipating future needs identified during the Idaho Survey and Rating Bureau (ISRB) evaluation. He added that Kootenai County's Ladder 13 is included in their response package for high-rise fires. Mr. Curtis clarified that while Kootenai's ladder can assist operationally, it does not count toward the City's ISO credit for ladder-truck coverage. Councilmember English noted that while the City cannot immediately build a new northern station, it would be wise to identify and secure property to prepare for future needs.

Mr. Curtis explained the EMS deployment analysis, stating that the best configuration is Scenario F - to move Station 2's EMS unit to the Marie site and relocate the ALS unit from Station 1 to Station 3, which would improve overall coverage and capture about 68% of EMS incidents. Mr. Curtis then described the staffing-relief analysis and noted that firefighters average 646 hours of leave annually, which must be backfilled through overtime, additional personnel, or a combination of both. Because peak absences, such as disability or surgery, exceed the average, he recommends the City's Finance Department conduct a deeper evaluation of staffing, overtime use, and the cost-benefit balance to maintain consistent service levels.

Councilmember Wood noted that constant staffing was the City's largest budget expense last year and asked for an update on staffing plans after finance reviewed the issue and the Mayor recommended hiring additional personnel. Chief Greif explained that although the department initially hired two extra firefighters in anticipation of planned retirements, a retirement-incentive program triggered several departures, effectively eliminating that surplus. Additional planned retirements are scheduled throughout the year, and with two employees currently out on injury or medical leave, Chief Greif estimates the department will need to hire eight new firefighters in the fall, five to replace unplanned retirements and three to staff the full-time ambulance beginning in January, with a potential ninth hire if an internal candidate becomes Fire Chief. Even with these hires, staffing will only return to baseline levels, leaving no cushion for injuries or additional leave. Councilmember English commented that some temporary savings may occur as new, lower-step employees replace retiring higher-paid staff.

Councilmember Miller inquired that earlier recommendations suggested hiring two additional staff to reduce the 646 hours of leave that must be backfilled, but current projections now show the department will need about eight new hires in the fall, which includes replacing staff lost through unplanned retirements. Chief Greif explained that although two extra positions were approved last year, those gains were immediately offset by unexpected retirements and created a ripple effect through promotions. This creates added pressure on maintaining enough firefighter-paramedics to meet the City's ALS ambulance staffing requirements, particularly with a third full-time ambulance coming online. Because it takes two years to train a new paramedic and 6–9 months for a lateral hire to become fully independent, Chief Greif stressed the need to forecast promotions and attrition carefully to stay ahead of staffing shortages.

Mr. Curtis explained that while the department currently has 21 personnel assigned to maintain a constant-staffing minimum of 19, that margin is quickly consumed by employees out on disability or other leave. He stressed the need for the City to reassess how many positions are truly required per shift to reliably cover average and peak leave periods without forcing firefighters into unsafe levels of overtime, such as working multiple consecutive 24-hour shifts. In conclusion, the study's

key recommendations are: decide between a four-station or five-station deployment model including KCFR Station 4; add a second ladder company at Station 2 and ensure ladder companies are staffed with at least four personnel; move the Battalion Chief to a more central response area; relocate Medic 31 from Station 1 to Station 3; work toward staffing Medic 34 fulltime; reevaluate the staffing-relief (constant-staffing) needs; and establish Auto Aid with all countywide agencies to dispatch closest and appropriate resource based on unit location.

DISCUSSION: Councilmember Wood asked why there is no automatic-aid system noting that citizens care only about receiving timely help, not which agency provides it. Chief Greif explained that while mutual aid happens daily and high-acuity calls often receive multi-agency responses, automatic aid across jurisdictional boundaries is emotionally and politically difficult. Departments take pride in serving their own communities, and responding outside their borders can feel like yielding responsibility. Budget strains across all agencies further complicate cooperation, though Chief Greif noted that shared resources are becoming increasingly important. The best practice, widely used nationwide, is for the closest capable unit to respond, but Chief Greif emphasized that while everyone knows it is the right approach, overcoming turf boundaries remains challenging. Councilmember Wood expressed concern that this can sometimes overshadow what is best for taxpayers, making it difficult to justify such practices to the public. She stated that she sees no compelling argument against adopting automatic-aid models that prioritize the fastest response time rather than jurisdictional boundaries.

Councilmember English commented that resolving the automatic-aid issue may ultimately fall to elected officials, who need to engage directly with neighboring governing bodies to pursue a mutually agreed-upon approach. Councilmember Gabriel explained that Kootenai County Fire & Rescue built a fire station within Coeur d'Alene's boundaries. He stated that decisions such as purchasing property for a future station hinge on whether neighboring agencies are willing to participate in automatic aid, since their deployment plans and call volumes are still unknown. He also pointed out that automatic aid could result in Coeur d'Alene units being sent far outside city limits which could lengthen in-city response times. He added that under Scenario F, the closest-unit model would place new responsibilities on the City's resources, raising additional questions about impacts on coverage and service levels.

Councilmember Wood commented that in an emergency, the priority should be getting the closest capable unit on scene until the appropriate agency arrives. She maintained that citizens deserve the fastest response regardless of jurisdiction. Councilmember English noted that political considerations, leadership changes, and property-ownership issues all complicate regional cooperation. However, he emphasized that strong working relationships among frontline responders often help overcome these challenges.

Mayor Gookin noted that discussions with Kootenai Fire & Rescue and Northern Lakes are underway, and Chief Greif explained that progress is slowed by a technology issue involving GPS tracking systems. He added that partner agencies support automatic aid for high-acuity calls, not for all calls, and do not expect Coeur d'Alene units to cover distant areas like Wolf Lodge when their own crews are available. The intent is to share urgent calls while preserving each district's ability to serve its own residents.

Mayor Gookin explained that several key decisions must be aligned before moving forward, including whether the City will formally incorporate KCFR's Station 4 into its deployment model. If so, the City could relocate Station 2 from its current site at Kathleen and Ramsey to a portion of the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) owned property, likely through a lease rather than a purchase.

Councilmember Wood inquired if there is a need for a concrete agreement with Kootenai Fire and Rescue, understand what kind of calls, and specifics on the lease, before Council takes action. Mr. Tymesen explained that discussions with ITD have been extremely positive, noting that ITD is open to leasing the City approximately two acres of undeveloped land. He also mentioned ongoing work to resolve technical issues with GPS tracking systems as part of broader efforts to support potential automatic-aid coordination.

Councilmember Miller commented that the Station 2 relocation plan depends heavily on establishing an automatic-aid agreement and asked whether the Council should act before that component is resolved. Chief Greif responded that the technical challenges, mainly GPS and tracking issues, are close to being resolved, meaning the remaining obstacles are emotional and political. He explained that acceptance will be needed from all agencies to treat KCFR's station as an integrated part of the response system. While he believes the region is close to agreement if all parties can align on what best serves residents in that area, he acknowledges that this has been a long-standing challenge and that human factors, not technology, have been the primary barrier.

MOTION: Motion by English, seconded by Wood, to direct staff to move forward with negotiations with ITD for land identified in the study for placement of a future Fire Station.

DISCUSSION: Councilmember Gabriel asked whether it would be worthwhile to look at a countywide deployment and mutual-aid study. Mr. Curtis explained that ESCI has already discussed such a regional EMS deployment assessment with Northern Lakes, Kootenai County, and Chief Greif, and a proposal and scope of work have been submitted, though no follow-up has been received. Councilmember Gabriel inquired about the project timeline, and Mr. Curtis estimated it would take about six months. Chief Greif added that delaying Station 2 relocation by six months to wait for regional clarity has financial and operational implications, emphasizing that moving Station 2 south without an automatic-aid agreement would create a coverage gap in the northern area, potentially leaving the City in a worse position than it is today. Chief Greif reiterated that auto-aid and station-placement decisions are tightly linked, and the department will continue pushing forward on auto-aid discussions.

Councilmember Miller stated that given the City's positive progress with ITD and the limited remaining steps to secure a lease for the proposed Station 2 site, it may make sense to proceed with a motion to continue negotiations hoping that auto-aid agreements advance along a similar timeline. Mr. Tymesen explained that, in addition to negotiating the land lease, the City would also need to begin developing plans for a new station on the site, which would allow Station 2 personnel to remain in place during construction. He added that auto aid would significantly improve nighttime coverage in the northern area.

Mayor Gookin asked who will take over negotiations and Mr. Tymesen confirmed that he will return as a consultant for the City, the interim City Administrator, and the City's strong leadership in the Fire Department.

Councilmember Gabriel asked about the potential cost of leasing the ITD land, and Mr. Tymesen noted that the City hopes the lease will be free, with the City providing intersection and access improvements in exchange. Mayor Gookin asked where funding for those improvements would come from, and Mr. Feusier confirmed that impact fees could be used for necessary stormwater work, signal adjustments, and intersection modifications to accommodate ITD's large plow trucks.

Councilmember Wood commented that the motion under consideration would simply authorize staff to continue negotiations and not commit the City to final decisions.

ROLL CALL: English Aye; Sheckler Aye; Wood Aye; Miller Aye; Gabriel Aye. **Motion carried.**

ADJOURNMENT: Motion by English, seconded by Sheckler that there being no other business, this meeting be adjourned. **Motion carried.**

The meeting adjourned at 1:15 p.m.