Executive Leadership

Assessing Hoover Fire Department Budget Appropriations with the Growth of the City of

Hoover, Alabama

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Certification Statement

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

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Abstract

The problem was the City of Hoover fire department’s budget appropriations did not seem to be keeping up with the department’s needs. The purpose of this research project was to determine if the Hoover Fire Department’s budget growth had matched the City of Hoover’s overall growth in development, population, revenue, and expenditures. Through the use of descriptive research, questions, a literature review, questionnaires, and discussions with subject matter experts, data was gathered to determine how the Hoover Fire Department compared over time with other city departments in budget allocations, compare to other fire departments appropriations, ascertain what other fire departments were doing to be successful at budget time, and to see what was the level of knowledge about the Hoover Fire Department’s services and needs among its constituents.

The results indicated the Hoover Fire Department’s growth in appropriations matched overall city growth in revenue; however the fire department was still lacking behind other city departments and still is not acquiring funding needed to meet the city’s growth and needs. Data gathered led to a list of recommendations to include the need of developing a strategic plan, begin marketing the Hoover Fire Department and to develop a formal marketing plan, and further establish relationships and trust between the city administration and fire administration.
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Introduction

The City of Hoover Fire Department has a well deserved reputation of being a progressive and effective emergency response agency. This viewpoint is shared by the citizens and businesses of Hoover and other fire departments throughout the region and state. However, due to annexations, urban sprawl, and fiscal competition from other city departments and local government priorities the Hoover Fire Department’s budget allocations have not met the needs of the Department.

The general population and elected officials of Hoover usually only hear about the Department and its operations when either something really bad happens or there is a complaint or when something really positive happens. The day to day struggles of constantly doing more and more with the same level of resources is not recognized thus giving the City a false sense of accomplishment and security. There is actually a lack of community awareness, including the elected officials and key decision makers in the City, of who the fire department is, what it does, and what it needs to consistently deliver a high quality level of service.

The problem was the fire department’s annual budget requests were continuously reduced in dramatic fashion leading to an undesired situation where the department was providing fire protection and advanced life support (ALS) services with eight stations when the recommended standard suggest eleven are needed (T. Bradley, personal communication, October 11, 2007).

The staffing level of the Hoover Fire Department does not meet recommended standards as well. National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1710 (2004) recommends the minimum manpower per engine and ladder company at 4 personnel but
out of 8 existing engine companies and 3 aerial companies only two apparatus meet this
requirement. One aerial is even operated by only two personnel.

The purpose of this research was to determine if the Hoover Fire Department budget
growth has matched the City of Hoover overall growth in development, population,
revenue, and budget expenditures. In addition, if the Department has indeed fallen short
in acquiring the necessary resources it needs to maintain a high quality level of service
delivery what can the Department do to increase the budget to a more appropriate level.

The descriptive research method was used along with questionnaires, discussions with
subject matter experts to answer the following questions:

1. How does the Hoover Fire Department compare over time with other City of Hoover
departments in budget allocations?
2. How does the Hoover Fire Department compare over time with other fire departments
serving various size populations relating to staffing, budget, per capita costs, mission,
revenue sources, call volume, and other services?
3. What are the differences between the Hoover Fire Department and those departments
that are more successful in increasing service levels through budget/revenues increases?
4. What is the level of knowledge about the Hoover Fire Department’s services and needs
among its key groups in the community such as citizens at large, elected representatives,
and influencers?
5. What strategies are used by other agencies to enhance budgets/revenues?
Background and Significance

The City of Hoover is the sixth largest city in the state of Alabama covering over 41 square miles with a population of 73,500. This number increases to 100,000 during working hours. The City was formed in 1967 with an area only 4 blocks and a population of only 410. Hoover is now an affluent suburb of the City of Birmingham and the Birmingham/Hoover metropolitan area, which includes seven counties, has a population of one million people. The city limits of Hoover extend into two counties, Jefferson and Shelby. Shelby County has been rated one of the ten fastest growing counties in the United States.

The City of Hoover has two major interstates, a railroad, three very busy highways, and a river within its city limits. Hoover is home to the Riverchase Galleria, the largest shopping mall in the state, the Birmingham Barons, which are the AA baseball team for the Chicago Whitesox, and hosts the Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament, as well as a stop on the Senior PGA Tour.

Hoover has several very large corporate offices. Blue Cross and Blue Shield have their headquarters in Hoover as does Regions Bank, and the Bellsouth Data Center which controls a large amount of the phone lines in the southeast.

Hoover has around 700 employees and an annual budget approaching $100 million. The Hoover Fire Department (HFD) currently has 8 stations with 152 personnel, a budget of $18 million, and an Insurance Service Organization (ISO) rating of class 2. The HFD operates 8 ALS engine companies, 3 aerial trucks, 3 ALS rescue units with transport capability, and 2 battalion chiefs/shift commanders daily. The Department also provides a hazardous materials team and state recognized heavy technical rescue team which is a
member of the Alabama Mutual Aid System and was deployed to assist with the aftermath of Hurricanes Dennis and Katrina. The HFD has automatic aid agreements with two neighboring fire districts.

Close analysis by the HFD administration over several years has identified three areas of the City that need additional fire stations in order to meet the response time guidelines established by NFPA 1710 (2004). These areas are distant from existing fire stations and put the community at risk due to long response times. Response times greater than four minutes can be equated with rapid fire growth in structure fires, and with a significant impact to patients requiring emergency medical services. Many of these areas identified by the Department’s analysis exceed five miles from the nearest fire station. If ISO were to re-inspect the City in these areas the rating would rise from a class 2 to a class 10 and cause a significant increase in insurance rates (T. Bradley, personal communication, October 11, 2007).

These long response times, in addition to increasing the risk to the citizens, increase the risk to the firefighters. They must drive that much further, the fire intensifies, and second-in companies arrive much later. Some areas have 10 minute response times for the first-in company.

Although the city is only 41.25 square miles it is spread out over a much larger area. The city is chopped up and depending on traffic it can take up to 45 minutes to reach one end of the city to the other. The HFD built four fire stations in the period 1985-1990 but had added only one station in the past 18 years despite constant growth. The department made 9,180 runs in 2007 up from 6680 in 2000 for a 37.42% increase (D. Agnew, personal communication, February 5, 2008). However in that same time period the
department has only increased personnel by 3 from 149 to 152 for a 0.02%. In addition, the city population grew by 25.64% in this same time frame from 58,500 to 73,500 according to the City of Hoover Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (2006).

Over the past five years the HFD budget requests have included these three additional stations and personnel to operate them but each time these requests have fallen on deaf ears. The City of Hoover has a Mayor/Council form of city government and over these past few years they have spent over $30 million on a Public Safety Center, plus construct parks, sidewalks, and a new senior citizen activity center yet say there is no money for fire stations or personnel.

In three separate articles in the Birmingham News the mayor stated that no new hires are projected nor are there any new capital projects. Cason (2007) mayor’s budget proposal anticipates little growth. In another article by Cason (2007) the mayor is quoted as saying department heads requested new hires but there is no money. Batson (2007) reports additional police officers still possible. The mayor and City Council expected there will be no new hires but the police department still hopes to add officers later in the year. Later the mayor even states that the city is in good shape as far as police officers go because over 20 officers have been added in the last three years. There is never any mention of the fire department.

This research project is related to the National Fire Academy’s Executive Leadership course in multiple ways. First, in Unit One a model of executive fire officer leadership addresses skills and action areas an executive fire officer should display. This research project will address the following skills and actions: ability to communicate, ability to influence, ability to build teams and network, ability to promote and manage creativity,
ability to manage change, the ability to decide and the decision making process, and the ability to negotiate, mediate, and promote consensus, and finally the ability to perform analysis and exercise judgment. Second, several of the case studies relate such as finding the courage to act-courageous leadership; decision making; influencing styles-logical persuasion, a common vision, and the development of participation and trust; using feedback to see how to improve areas of challenge or weakness to develop goals; and finally by exhibiting leadership through influencing others and transforming views into action and being a visionary.

This research relates to the United States Fire Administration (USFA) operational objectives 1-5. This research project will make all constituencies of the HFD aware of its mission, role, capabilities, programs, and continued needs in order to deliver effective and efficient services.

This research project will be used to determine the level of knowledge the HFD’s constituencies have of the department’s services, capabilities, and needs. By communicating and exchanging information with these parties the HFD and its governing body can determine why, if there has been, a shortfall in budget allocations to the HFD and what measures can be taken to meet the needs of the HFD and the community it serves. This will help meet all the operational objectives of the USFA by making the HFD better prepared to respond and reduce the loss of life in all age groups; reduce the loss of life especially to the firefighters who now cover an expanded area with less than desirable apparatus and personnel; promote a comprehensive plan reducing response times and manpower shortage; and meet a very timely need in the City of Hoover.
Literature Review

The literature review conducted included the traditional search of materials at the Learning Resource Center at the National Fire Academy, materials gathered from local libraries, Internet searches, discussions with subject matter experts, and from the author’s personal library.

Mikesell (2007) states that governments exist in order to provide certain valuable services that individuals or businesses are unable or unwilling to provide independently. These governments do not want to waste resources as they are scarce and should provide more back to the public than they cost the public. The values of government are executive leadership; representative ness; and technical, nonpartisan competence International City/County Management Association (ICMA) (2004).

Starling (2005) states in business managers look to make a profit while public administrators are more concerned with the common general welfare of the public. In other words, the private business is organized for the well-being of its employees and stockholders, while the public agency is there to serve the interests of the people outside itself.

All of this is accomplished by government through a process called public administration (Starling, 2005). Starling (2005) defines public administration as the process in which resources are arranged in order to contend with problems facing a political community.

One of the major problems facing communities today is urban sprawl. This has created a planning problem for many fire departments in that it is increasingly difficult to provide the same level of services with fewer resources because the community is spread
across a wider landscape (Coleman, 2007). This wide dispersal leads to an increase in response times which is one of the major benchmarks of fire protection. Communities with highly concentrated households and population can be served with minimum response times however; communities more spread out will have to deal with slower response times (Coleman, 2007).

Hickey (2002) states that built upon areas of the community should have a first-in engine company within 1.5 miles and a ladder truck within 2.5 miles. It has been determined that the normal expected rate of travel for both engine and ladder companies through large and medium sized cities is 35 MPH which translates to 9.2 minutes for a five mile response (Hickey, 2002).

Routley, Chiaramonte, Crawford, Piringer, Poche, Sendelbach (2007) were the members of a team assembled to conduct a post incident analysis and review of the furniture store structure fire where 9 firefighters lost their lives in the City of Charleston. They were given the assignment to recommend best practices of the fire services making references to model programs and national standards. Their recommendations emphasize firefighter health and safety as well as delivering high quality emergency services to the community. Among their recommendations is the requirement that apparatus should operate with a three person crew only as an interim step in reaching the desired crew level of four personnel per engine and truck company.

Statistics pulled from the United States Fire Administration website http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/statistics/quickstats/index.shtm on February 17, 2008 indicate that fire killed more Americans in 2006 than all natural disasters combined; 81% of all civilian fire deaths occurred in residences; and caused a property loss over $11.3 billion.
The state of Alabama ranks as the third worst state in the nation when it comes to fire deaths.

Starling (2007) states there are three resources essential to an agency accomplishing their mission: people, money, and information. People must be skilled, disciplined, and motivated, they must have the information to make intelligent decisions but they must also have an adequate flow of money. Money is the strength of public administration. ICMA (2004) states that cities that are most financially healthy are predominately middle-sized, but all communities regardless of size have had problems managing their finances. Many cities are experiencing difficulties in performing their traditional functions such as public works, police, fire protection, education, and water supply.

Mikesell (2007) declares that budgets are just simply plans translated into their financial implications. Budgets are developed in order to establish executive branch plans, requiring legislative branch approval of the plans, and to provide a control and accountability structure for implementation of the approved plans. The annual budget is essentially a forecast of expected revenues and expenditures (ICMA, 2004).

The most important fiscal role of local government is to determine the level and mix of taxes and expenditures that best match the preferences and needs of the local residents (ICMA, 2004). Many governments use what is called incrementalism. That is future budget decisions are based on what is already accepted policy. It is easier to negotiate with and obtain agreement when the proposed budget reflects very little change over the previous budget. This means next year’s level of funds is based upon this year’s, as this year’s was based upon last year’s budget (ICMA, 2004).
ICMA (2004) says the budget cycle involves four phases: (1) preparation, (2) adoption, (3) implementation, and (4) evaluation. It also involves four major political players: (1) the executive, (2) the council, (3) the departments, and (4) the citizens or customers affected by the public goods and services provided by government.

Mikesell (2007) states that Alabama’s budget cycle or fiscal year starts in October. Mikesell further explains that during the executive-preparation phase the chief executive provides general instructions to the various departments or agencies pertaining to budget submissions. These instructions are based upon revenue and expenditure estimates.

These instructions or projections were touched on earlier in the Birmingham News Articles. They are further addressed here. Cason (2007) states in his two articles that the mayor’s budget proposal anticipates little growth and the mayor’s budget proposal for fiscal 2008 calls for spending $94.9 million from the general fund and also calls for no new hires. Cason further states the budget is based on projected revenues of $96.5 million, which is a 2% increase from last year. Again the mayor calls for no new hires or capital projects. Batson (2007) reports that the police still hope to hire personnel even though the mayor has called for no new hires and points out that over 20 personnel have been added to the police roster in the last three years.

This is further verified through the City of Hoover Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006. This report indicates that in the three year period of 2004-2006 there were 46 full-time city positions added, of those 46 positions 26 were in Public Safety, only 3 were firefighters. An article from the Birmingham News January 23, 2008 it is reported that the city council accepted a bid to build Hoover’s ninth fire station and that it is needed because houses in the area are more
than five miles from the closest fire station. However, there will still be no hires; the 11 firefighters that will staff the station will be transferred from existing stations.

Mikesell (2007) points out that budgeting is not mathematics or accounting rather it is logic, justification, and politics. All three elements are critical since they give governments the “how much” and “what it does information” needed for successful public decisions. The request must describe and justify the plan and then the numbers will follow from that. Budget estimates must be prepared carefully due to the quality of presentation shaping the impression of the budget analysts. The budget proposal should coincide with current instructions, guidelines, and forms; provide supplemental documentation; and be consistent in presenting figures. Well developed justifications are the primary key to successful department request (Mikesell, 2007).

The justification must address the current situation, additional needs, and expected results. New services, enlarged services, improved services, or services to an expanded clientele should be identified and justified. In addition, clientele served by an agency may change and in order to maintain service levels the budget could need to increase (Mikesell, 2007). In addition, budget review analysts are most always less knowledgeable about an agency’s operations than those who prepared the budget. Therefore the budget proposal must be complete, explicit, consistent, organized, have balance, and make optimum use of quantitative data (Mikesell, 2007).

Starling (2007) believes that government and therefore public administrators, should be responsive, flexible, fair, accountable, and honest. Another word for accountability is answerability. The organization must be answerable to someone or something beyond itself. Starling (2007) further states that when applied to public administration honesty
has three implications. First is the obligation to avoid lying; second is the obligation to be truthful in presenting information to superiors and to the public; and third is the obligation to respect the ability of others to gather and present true information relevant to public policy. In other words, honesty would require that a public administrator does not prevent or hinder studies that challenge their own view.

Starling (2007) also implies that public administrators should study and practice ethics in order to make decisions that can be defended in public; be seen by employees as being fair and making consistent decisions, and when confronted by decisions involving conflicting values they will have already thought ahead and clarified their own values and not have to wonder what to do.

The literature review up to this point has discussed budget development, decision making factors in budget approvals, factors in budget development presentation and decision making in approvals, public administration and administrators, and the problem of fire department delivery matching city growth. The review will now reflect specifically on the City of Hoover.

The City of Hoover Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (2006) states that the City of Hoover annual budgets are adopted for all funds and that for capital project funds project length financial plans are adopted. The budget committee facilitates the budget process and prepares the mayor’s proposed budget and submits it to the city council. Department heads monitor the budget at the department level to ensure compliance within the individual funds by category level. These current categories are salaries and benefits, capital expenditures, operating expenditures, and other use funds. Encumbrance
accounting is conducting during the year, but appropriations automatically lapse at year end, except for capital projects.

The economic condition refers to an analysis that examines resources and claims on these resources. The financial condition of the local economy and government is strong. The City of Hoover’s overall total revenue increased by 7.41% in fiscal year 2006 from 2005. This equates to an increase of $6,860,677. The total revenue for fiscal year 2006 was $99,501,833. The two largest sources of revenue by major category are taxes and licenses which increased by 6.30% and permits which increased by 5.75% in FY 2006. Together these two comprise 85.03% of total revenues for FY 2006 (City of Hoover, 2007).

The two largest sources of tax revenue are sales and use tax revenue and property tax revenue. Both of these sources have continued to grow over the past 10 years and the local economy for the City of Hoover continues to prosper and remain strong. In relation to sales and use taxes the City’s total retail sales itself increased by 8.01% or $237,356,399 over the previous year for a total of $3,198,909,217.

Commercial expansion continues and has resulted in greater sales and use tax revenues in each of the last 10 years. In 1997 the sales and use tax revenue was $36,439,547 while the total revenue for all government fund types was $56,008,649. For FY 2006 the sales and use tax revenue was $59,153,632 while total revenue for all government fund types was $99,501,833 (City of Hoover, 2007).

In 1997 there were 623 building permits issued for new single family dwellings at a valuation of construction of $114,189,730 and 257 building permits issued for new commercial and tenant improvements for a valuation of $45,690,164. Ten years later in
2007 there were 605 building permits issued for new single family dwellings for a valuation of $156,550,482 and 227 building permits issued for new commercial and tenant improvements for a valuation of $81,115,731 (L. Lindsay, personal communication February 11, 2008).

The second largest revenue for the City of Hoover is property tax, which total 8.83% of total revenue for government fund types. It also has increased over the last 10 years from $4,328,109 in 1997 to $8,788,687 in 2006. Property tax revenue grew by 9.13% in 2006 over 2005. Hoover’s property tax is 6.5 mills for general government use.

In FY 2006 the City of Hoover had total revenue of $99,501,833 and total expenditures of $96,917,512 for an excess of revenue of $2,584,321 (City of Hoover, 2007).

The population growth over this same time frame has grown from 58,500 in 1997 to 73,500 for a 25.64% increase. The number of students enrolled in Hoover schools, the third largest school system in the state, has grown from 8,663 students in 1997 to 12,036 in 2006 for a 39% increase (City of Hoover, 2007).

As of December 7, 2007 the police department had 216 employees, fire department 153, park and recreation 45, and public works had 101 employees (M. Hinds, personal communication December 7, 2007).

Now that the growth and financial shape of the City has been analyzed let’s look at possible reasons why the HFD has not been more prosperous in budget appropriations and what literature says are methods for fire department’s to increase their exposure and budgets.
One common theme in the recent mayor’s race for the City of Birmingham was crime (Bryant, 2007). An article addressing the race for the Birmingham mayor states that a former Birmingham Fire Chief was running for mayor and wanted to lead his hometown in meeting its greatest challenges of crime and neighborhood deterioration. Even the ex-fire chief did not mention his former department or the fire service, his platform was crime reduction.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) (1998) states that the fire service must develop a new philosophy for the dynamic environment in which the fire service now operates. Fire departments must now more than ever market themselves in order to win support from the community’s decision makers. The fire service can do this by providing public information; public education; and public relations (FEMA, 1998).

Most decision makers do not fully understand the challenges facing fire departments today nor do they appreciate the scope of services the fire department provides to the community (FEMA, 1998).

Public information is the process of providing information to the public about the actions and operations taken by the fire department during emergencies. Public education is the process of changing people’s attitudes and behavior toward safety issues. Public relations is the process of developing a positive public image or perception concerning the department, its members, programs and services (FEMA, 1998).

Benefits of the fire department from these programs are: (1) increases the efficient use of existing resources by educating the public to prevent or properly respond to emergencies; (2) increase political exposure and support; (3) increase public support for additional resources; (4) improve morale through positive public and internal recognition.
FEMA (1998) states that fire service leaders will have to promote their vision of the fire service to elected officials, fire department employees, and to the citizens and businesses of the community. The fire problem is a community problem and by involving the community the fire department can get buy-in needed to support the organization. Further, if the fire department has high visibility it will thrive due to the community knowing what it does and how well it does it.

Aurnhammer (2000) says the fire service has been the “silent service” for way too long and that of all the services provided by local government, the fire service continues to be the most misunderstood. Aurnhammer further declares that the average citizen has no idea who the fire department is or what the fire department does other than show up when a house is on fire or someone is hurt.

Laskey (2005) states the fire service needs to go out and tell the public we are not just sitting around the fire station waiting for the alarm to go off. Tell them everything we are about, who we are, what we do for them, and be honest in telling them what we need and where we are lacking in resources and funds. We must brag about everything we do and what an asset to the community we are because no one else is going to do it. We must be everywhere, get involved and be at every event and function because the police are.

Laskey (2005) further declares that it is very important to develop relationships with the public, schools, organizations, and businesses but even more so to develop a relationship with the decision makers in city hall. We must ask ourselves what kind of relationship we have with the city manager, mayor, and council. If your department is continually cut in the budget process or you get beat down no matter how good an idea is,
ask yourselves what kind of relationship do you have with the people who control the purse strings and you’ll get your answer.

Robertson (2002) points out the fact that the fire service faces daily uphill battles with local government officials who are consistently looking for ways to trim the budget. The fire department competes with other municipal agencies and not only are we going to have to fight for what we want or need but also for what we already have.

Laskey (2005) states that unfortunately most finance directors have no clue as to what we do or what we need to serve as an effective fire department; and in many cases this same lack of knowledge is seen at the mayor, city manager, and city council as well.

St. John (1994) states that fire fighting is more than a service, it is a business and as such must market itself in order to be successful. Every consumer, every taxpayer wants to know what’s in it for me? The marketing message must tell them who we are, what we do, what we need, and what it will do for them.

May (2003) defines “the purpose of marketing is to uncover needs, fill the needs, and demonstrate to the public that this is, in fact, what is occurring”. (p.29) May also states that the fire department must always balance the community’s needs with the department’s capabilities.

May (2006) states that how well we are known to the public will determine the support we receive. As firefighters, we are watched by the public all the time and when we appear in uniform our citizens know we are going to take care of their needs. However, all the marketing in the world will not successfully convey a service or value that will not or cannot deliver on its promises.
May (2005) points out that the public sees the fire service as one of the most trustworthy and admirable professions in the country and it is our responsibility to maintain that standard. We maintain that standard by doing the big things like extinguishing fires and performing rescue and EMS but it is also the little things like how we treat the public in person.

May (2003) further emphasizes how the public already views our profession when he refers to a poll taken by USA Today that the citizens trust the fire service and firefighters second only to immediate family.

May (2006) May conducted an interview with Fresno Fire Chief Randy Bruegman who states that he is successful at budget time because he involves all levels of his department in formulating a five-year plan. This produces buy-in from the department, who then goes out and explains it to everybody else. Bruegman further states that he develops alliances on many levels. This includes local business people, by reaching out through the Chamber of Commerce, Lions and Kiwanis, and Rotary Clubs. He gets his fire department message out.

Ridenhour (2003) says that there are several things her department does to be successful at budget time. First, is to keep the budget simple, explain analyses and use tangible examples. Second, the budget process is a year long process, not a one-shot deal. Take the opportunity throughout the year to make the council aware of the department’s needs. Third, include current activity level and status, develop forecasts and projections, and make clear all implications of budget decisions. Show what the impact of not funding an item or project would be.
Literature Review Summary

The literature review provided the author a comprehensive look into the role of government, budgeting, administration, and politics. Mikesell (2007) described the role of government and the budget being used as a financial plan for the city as well as to the budget process and makeup of budgeting. Starling (2007) defined the role of public administrators and the resources essential in an agency accomplishing its mission. He further discussed the importance of public administrators being honest and answerable for their decisions. ICMA (2004) identified the value and fiscal role of government in the budget process as well as identifying the role of incrementalism. The City of Hoover (2006) Comprehensive Financial Report gave a detailed look at the financial condition and recent hiring pattern of the City.


Procedures

Research Methodology

The problem statement was developed from a discussion with the Fire Chief and fellow chief officers following another budget year projecting no new stations and no additional personnel. Each chief officer realized the needs of the fire department were not being met by city administrators.

This research project employed a descriptive research methodology, through a literature review, discussions with several city officials and subject matter experts, and
through three separate questionnaires to determine (a) the citizens and businesses of Hoover knowledge and impression of the HFD; (b) how the HFD compared with other fire departments both within and outside the state of Alabama relating to budgets, cost per capita, and what methods they found effective in being successful and budget time; and (c) what the knowledge and impression of the HFD was by the elected officials and key decision makers in the City of Hoover.

Literature Review

The initial part of this research began with a literature examination in the Learning Resource Center (LRC) at the National Fire Academy in August 2007 and focused primarily on fire department marketing. Subsequent literature review consisted of Internet searches, materials gathered from local libraries and City of Hoover documents, and the author’s personal library and addressed the topics of budgets and finance, public administration, politics, and an overview of the City of Hoover’s financial and employment status.

The following is a list of personal contacts and subject matter experts that assisted the author. These contacts were chosen due to their familiarity and expertise with the HFD, budgeting and marketing.

Dennis Agnew: Mr. Agnew is an employee of the HFD and works in fire administration overseeing our records and reports.

Tom Bradley: Tom Bradley is the Fire Chief for the HFD

Jim Coker: Mr. Coker is a captain with the Hoover Police Department and is their public information officer. He provided the author information to their recruiting and marketing efforts which have been very successful.
Mary Hind: Mrs. Hind is employed in the Human Resources Department of the City of Hoover.

Melinda James: Mrs. James is employed in the Finance Department of the City of Hoover.

Lisa Lindsay: Mrs. Lindsay is employed in the Building Inspections Department of the City of Hoover.

Ed Paulk: Mr. Paulk is the Alabama State Fire Marshal

The final part of the research process consisted of developing three separate questionnaires. The first questionnaire, Appendix A, was given to citizens and businesses within Hoover. The second questionnaire, Appendix B, was provided to fire departments both within and outside the state of Alabama. The third questionnaire, Appendix C, was provided to the elected leaders and key decision makers controlling the purse strings for budget appropriations.

The citizen groups chosen were a random selection of various Homeowner Associations spread throughout the City of Hoover from end to end. The businesses selected were the largest employers within the City as well as businesses that contribute the most tax dollars. The questions used in this instrument were chosen in order to gage the public’s knowledge and impression of the HFD. This questionnaire, as with all three, were reviewed by the fire chief and other chief officers in order to make certain the information being sought would be provided.

The fire departments selected within the state of Alabama were the 22 largest municipal fire departments in the state. These departments were: Alabaster, Bessemer, Birmingham, Calera, Cullman, Decatur, Dothan, Florence, Fort Payne, Gadsden,
Homewood, Huntsville, Jasper, Madison, Mobile, Montgomery, Mountain Brook, Pelham, Prattville, Trussville, Tuscaloosa, and Vestavia. The author emailed the fire department questionnaire to the National Society of Executive Fire Officers, the Southeastern Association of Fire Chiefs, and to departments in the states of Tennessee and Georgia.

The questionnaire sent to the City of Hoover elected officials and key decision makers was provided to the mayor, city executive director and his assistant, city council, and finance director.

Assumptions and Limitations

The first noticeable limitation was the failure of some questionnaire recipients to complete and return the questionnaire. The questionnaire sent to the Home Owner Associations had a return rate of 16 out of 20 for 80%. The questionnaire sent to the businesses had a return rate of 17 out 20 for 85%. The 22 fire departments within the state returned 13 questionnaires for 60%. This was despite multiple phone calls and emails. The departments that replied were: Alabaster, Bessemer, Birmingham, Decatur, Dothan, Gadsden, Huntsville, Jasper, Pelham, Prattville, Trussville, Tuscaloosa, and Vestavia. It is unknown how many departments actually received the questionnaire outside the state but 26 were returned.

The questionnaire distributed to the elected officials and key budget influencers returned zero. The author presented the research project to the mayor, city executive director, city council, and finance director at a council work session meeting on December 13, 2007. The following week the city attorney met with the author and fire chief and said these parties would not be taking part in the project or answering the
questionnaire. The mayor’s office also contacted the City of Hoover Chamber of Commerce and advised them not to participate either.

This obviously left a hole in the final analysis as part of research question #4 specifically targeted elected representatives’ knowledge of the HFD. Also by eliminating the Chamber of Commerce the author was unable to distribute mass mailings or contacts and thus had to initiate all contact personally with each business selected. This made for a smaller research group however, one that reflects the major businesses in the City.

An assumption from the study is that all questionnaires returned were completed accurately and without bias. Replication of this research project may be accomplished by making contact with the sources named and through utilization of the references cited.

Results

The research, which included personal contacts and questionnaires, provided the author with information to answer the five research questions.

Answers to Research Questions

Table I will address how the HFD has compared to other City departments in relation to budget appropriations over the past five years. In order to get the figure in the final column (Last 5 Years) the FY 2007 figure was divided by FY 2002, not shown, in order to get a true five year period. This figure shows the true % of increase or decrease over the five year period.

From this table you can see that the city’s general fund revenue have increase 41.75% over the five years and the HFD expenditures have increased by 42.64% during this same time indicating the HFD has fared comparably with the City. However, the police and
parks and recreation have far exceeded the City and the HFD with increases of 52.39% and 60.41% respectively.

Fire Department Expenditures Personnel, Operating, and Capital
The City of Hoover, Alabama
General Fund Only

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of increase or decrease</th>
<th>FY2003</th>
<th>FY2004</th>
<th>FY2005</th>
<th>FY2006</th>
<th>FY2007</th>
<th>Last 5 Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of increase in fire expenditures</td>
<td>10.53%</td>
<td>12.92%</td>
<td>0.90%</td>
<td>6.37%</td>
<td>6.49%</td>
<td>42.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General fund revenues % increase in revenue</td>
<td>9.29%</td>
<td>9.75%</td>
<td>7.47%</td>
<td>7.16%</td>
<td>2.62%</td>
<td>41.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police(excluding dispatch) %</td>
<td>6.31%</td>
<td>10.80%</td>
<td>15.28%</td>
<td>12.36%</td>
<td>.12%</td>
<td>52.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks and Recreation %</td>
<td>11.58%</td>
<td>4.82%</td>
<td>9.65%</td>
<td>23.42%</td>
<td>1.36%</td>
<td>60.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Works %</td>
<td>-7.76%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>5.10%</td>
<td>7.62%</td>
<td>5.30%</td>
<td>13.16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1
Source: City of Hoover Finance Department (2007)

In determining how the HFD compares with other fire departments a questionnaire was distributed to departments within and outside the state of Alabama. Here is a summary of the responses.

Departments in Alabama that replied ranged in size from 3 stations and 29 personnel to 31 stations with 706 personnel with 12 departments being fully career and one being a combination department. Their populations ranged from 14,000 to 242,000 and served areas ranging from 19 square miles to 215.

Their budgets ranged from $1.65 million to $52.3 million with a per capita cost ranging from a low of 113 to a high of 353. In comparing the police departments to the
fire departments, these respondents indicated the police budgets were always larger. The 
police budgets ranged from a low of $3.65 million to a high of $82.8 million.

A summary of fire department revenue indicated sales tax, license fees, user fees, 
transport fees, grants, reimbursements, and ambulance franchise contracts as their sources 
of revenue.

In determining if their fire departments budgets have matched city growth 7 indicated 
yes and 6 no. The 7 stated they were successful due to property tax increases; 
progressive fire chiefs developing relationships and coalitions; the department having a 
“PAC” fund and are politically active; detailed explanations to elected officials during 
budget planning process; having a willing and proactive mayor willing to keep the fire 
department up to speed; have developers build your fire station; and finally the fire chief 
must hold the mayor and council accountable for any emergency service delivery 
shortfalls and be willing to fight and make needs publicly known, the chief must plant the 
seeds in their minds and let them take credit.

Eight of the thirteen respondents have no marketing plan. Those that do provide 
monthly reports to the council and use public speaking venues such as neighborhood 
associations and the chamber of commerce as well as websites to keep up to date. In 
addition they provide annual reports to the elected officials; have developed long range 
development committees, as well as providing one day training sessions to the public and 
elected officials on fire department operations.

Eight of the thirteen departments felt their public, elected officials, and businesses did 
not fully understand who the department is or what the fire department does or needs.
Two indicated the elected officials are aware of their services but not of their needs and this can be due to being pulled in different directions or from complete apathy.

The departments outside the state were 22 career and 4 combination with personnel ranging from 45 to 860, stations from 2 to 26, populations 7,900 to 162,000, and areas served ranging from 17 to 240 square miles. Their budgets ranged from a low of $600,000 to a high of $72 million with a per capita range of $100-$200. As with the Alabama departments the police budgets were always larger ranging from $650,000 to $111 million.

In addition to the revenue sources used by the fire departments in Alabama hazmat permit fees, false alarm fees, 911 fees, code enforcement fines, plan reviews and building impact fees were used for revenue. Eighteen of the twenty six departments felt they had not matched overall city growth. Sixteen had no formal marketing plan but the other ten did use citizen academies, civic meetings, newspapers, public education officers, strategic plans, and closely developed relationships with city leaders as tools for budget awareness. Eighteen of the twenty six felt the public and elected officials were not fully aware of the departments’ services and needs.

In comparing the departments to Hoover three of the Alabama departments were very similar in size to Hoover as were four of the departments outside the state. In Alabama Hoover’s cost per capita is $214 while theirs were $120, $147, and $240. Their individual budgets are larger than Hoover’s by $3 to $6 million. The four outside Alabama all had per capita cost under $200 but three of the departments had larger budgets by $1 to $3 million.
Those that were more successful than Hoover were attributed to having marketing programs; closely developed relationships with elected officials; keeping the public and officials fully informed through reports and newspapers; having public education officers and using public forums as avenues of getting the message and needs out; and having citizen fire academies and/or ride a long programs for key decision makers that control the purse strings.

A questionnaire was used in order together data from citizens, businesses, and elected officials and key decision makers in order to ascertain their knowledge of the HFD’s services. The elected officials refused to participate therefore no data were gathered from this group. There were a total of 33 responses from citizen groups and businesses.

Of the 33 responses from the citizens and businesses all 33 recognized the department has being a full time career department and only one did not know what fire station would respond if they had an emergency. The department was rated as meeting or exceeding expectations in fire fighting, EMS capabilities, training and proficiency, competency, dependability, importance to the community, and overall rating. About 1/3 of the respondents were neutral in indicating the department had the appropriate number of stations and staffing level.

Services the department is providing that a majority of respondents are not aware of are MDA fill the boot and burn camp participation; Meals on Wheels, technical rescue, automatic aid agreements, fire prevention activities such as pre-incident planning, plans review, planning and zoning participation; Safe Place operations; and fire explorer program.
They indicated there are no services not being provided that they would like to see added and 25% have not utilized the department’s services while 75% had. 60% were not aware of the number of fire personnel assigned to the apparatus or if the department worked 8, 12, or 24 hour shifts.

From the questionnaire responses and personal contacts with Captain Coker of the Hoover Police Department and Alabama State Fire Marshal Ed Paulk it has been emphasized that in order to be successful at budget time the department must be more vocal, visible, develop relationships and trust, and hold decision makers accountable.

Discussion

The results of this research indicate the HFD is receiving budget appropriations comparable to overall city revenue growth however; these appropriations have not met the need of the HFD. Urban sprawl has led to three areas within the city limits of Hoover where residences are more than five miles from the closest fire station (T. Bradley, personal communication, October 11, 2007).

Although the true city limits are only 41.25 square miles the city is spread out over a much broader area representing a low density population by creating a market that is mostly single family dwellings.

These distances equate to longer response times and less effective or efficient services to the citizens affected. Coleman (2007) states that response times are a major benchmark in fire protection. Shouldn’t all citizens receive the same level of service? They certainly pay the same taxes and can have just as much influence with their voice and vote.
Starling (2007) stated there are three essential resources needed for an agency to accomplish their mission: people, money, and information. The HFD has been failing on all three. The money has not been provided in amounts necessary to acquire the people. The problem is information or lack of it. The HFD needs to provide the decision makers with more information and/or provide this information to the citizens in order to make them more aware of the department’s needs.

As ICMA (2004) indicated many governments use the process of incrementalism in budget development. Next year’s budget is based on this year’s and this year’s on last. But what happens when last year’s, this year’s, or next year’s do not meet the fire department’s needs? Do you continually fall short? If the city grows and the number of incidents continue to increase as does the area and population, do you continually fall short?

Mikesell (2007) emphasizes that the clientele an agency serves may change and in order to keep pace or increase service levels an increase in budget appropriations must take place. He further points out that most budget analysts know very little about fire department services and needs therefore it is all the more important for the HFD to explain the current situation and justify the need for expanded resources. Starling (2007) goes one step further in stating that the decision makers must be held accountable for their decisions. They must answer to someone other than themselves. This is one area the HFD could address as an entity themselves and/or with the backing of an informed citizen group or even the media.

ICMA (2004) pointed out the four phases of the budget cycle as preparation, adoption, implementation, and evaluation as well as four major political players in the budget
process, the executive, council, departments, and citizens. The cycle may have four phases and the fiscal year for Alabama may begin in October but as Ridenhour (2003) pointed out her department has been so successful fiscally due to presenting information and needs to the council all year long, not just at the budget presentation. Her department provides constant flows of current activity, needs, and makes clear the implications of budget decisions.

City of Hoover (2007) reports a steady increase in revenue, construction, school and general population increases, and that the financial condition and local economy as strong. In the three year period of 2004-2006 the city hired 46 new full time personnel. Only 3 new hires came to the HFD despite consistent requests for many more. The Hoover Police acquired 20 officers. Why? We do not want to pit the police and fire departments against each other yet they are acquiring far more resources. What is the reason for this?

There can be numerous reasons but the author will address two here. One, the police do a better job of marketing their agency. They have been aggressive in recruiting, marketing, developing relationships with the decision makers, and making their needs known. Second, the police in general do a better job than the fire service in publishing records and reports (Ed Paulk, personal communication, February 14, 2007). The police use crime and the threat of crime as scare tactics to increase appropriations. Why doesn’t the fire service do the same thing in referring to fires, injuries, deaths, firefighter health and safety?

Aurnhammer (2000) states the fire service has been the “silent service” too long. The author agrees with this statement. Laskey (2005) and May (2003, 2005) both strongly
emphasize that the fire service needs to get their message out. Go to the people, who trust and respect us second only to family members, and market the fire service. The HFD and the fire service in general must inform the citizens and decision makers of who we are, what we do, and what we need. The HFD and the fire service in general must let the public and decision makers see and hear from us at other times besides making an emergency response otherwise they may get the impression that if we aren’t responding we are just sitting around waiting on the next incident.

The results shown in Table 1 (City of Hoover, 2007) that the HFD is very close in receiving budget appropriations to overall city growth in revenue and is within 10% of the police and park and recreation appropriations however; the HFD is still not receiving the amounts necessary to fully meet the needs of the department or citizens as there are still three major areas within the city with residences beyond five miles.

The fire departments in Alabama as well as those outside the state are like the HFD as in all police budgets exceed fire budgets. Comparing like size departments, the HFD is still behind in budget appropriations by amounts of $1-$3 million and was attributed to a failure to market the department and its services as well as a failure to hold decision makers accountable. One other notable difference in departments receiving adequate appropriations was their effort to develop relationships with elected officials, key citizen groups, and present their ideas and request all throughout the year and not just at budget time. The HFD cannot rest on reputation or past successes.

One other benefit of marketing the HFD may be an increase in morale due to the HFD receiving positive exposure, increased visibility, community support and public
awareness of the department’s services and abilities as well as possibly an increase in promotion possibilities instead of just promotions due to retirements of current personnel.

The citizens and businesses of Hoover gave very positive ratings in the areas pertaining to the HFD’s dependability, competence, and importance to the community yet; many were not aware of many services the HFD provides, the number of firefighters per apparatus, the number of hours shift personnel work, or even where their closest fire station was located. This is due to the HFD not marketing to its customers.

The elected officials and key decision makers did not even participate in the research. There was no one specific reason given other than them possibly being held liable. Yes, they are liable and accountable for their decisions and/or failure to address the fire department’s and target citizen group’s needs. This past budget year the fire department did not even get a chance to present its budget proposal to the mayor, council, and finance director instead they just accepted the proposal document with no presentation or opportunity for justification. In future such instances the department must get union and media support in addition to making the public aware.

It will take a concerted effort by the HFD, the elected officials and key decision makers to begin to address the shortcomings in the current process. Perhaps in the future a level of trust and respect can be established between the fire department and city administration.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were derived as a result of the research conducted for this project. The suggesting author, personal contact or department is noted in parenthesis.
1. The HFD must initiate a formal marketing program directed at the elected officials, key decision makers, citizens, and businesses within Hoover. (May 2003 2005)

2. The HFD should begin to provide the elected officials and key decision maker’s accurate and timely reports, perhaps on a monthly basis, of the HFD’s activities, programs, and needs. (Ridenhour 2003) (May 2006)

3. The HFD and the city administration need to develop a positive and trusting working relationship. (May 2003, 2005)

4. The HFD cannot remain the “silent service” any longer. The department must gather support from the citizens, businesses, and media. (Aurnhammer 2000)

5. The HFD must target in the marketing plan the public and tell them everything about who the HFD is, what the HFD provides, and what the HFD needs. (Laskey 2005)

6. The HFD needs to establish formal public education, public information, and public relation programs. (FEMA 1998)

7. The HFD must begin compiling, publishing, and broadcasting data from the records and reports. This data will include response times, fire origin, number of fires and their costs, EMS data, inspections, prevention, services provided and delivered, etc. (FEMA 1998) (Ed Paulk)

8. The HFD needs to look at possible sources of revenue besides the general fund. These sources could include plan review and impact fees, code enforcement fines, false alarm. (Franklin, Tennessee) (Eaton, Ohio)

9. The HFD should develop an orientation package provided to all newly elected officials and key decision makers. This package would give a complete overview of fire
department staff, services, activities, and needs. (Cobb County, Georgia) (Franklin, Tennessee)

10. The HFD should look into the possibility of conducting a citizen fire academy along with taking the elected officials and decision makers to training exercises and/or ride along with the department. In addition, make the mayor and council member whose district is affected aware of special or major incidents. (Franklin, Tennessee) (Orlando, Florida) (Tuscaloosa, Alabama) (Decatur, Alabama)

11. The HFD should look into developing a strategic plan before developing a marketing plan. (Tuscaloosa, Alabama) (Orlando, Florida) (Dothan, Alabama) (Alabaster, Alabama) (DeKalb County, Georgia)

12. The HFD should look into developing a webpage. (Jim Coker, Hoover Police) (Alabaster, Alabama) (Pelham, Alabama)

This list of recommendations is quite extensive and obviously must be addressed in a well planned and thought out manner. These recommendations have proven useful to other agencies and should be considered for the HFD.
References


May, B. (December, 2003). The brand: fire department. The brand is us, the brand is you. *Firehouse*, 122-125.


Appendix A
Citizen/Business Questionnaire

Dear Questionnaire Participant,

My name is Rob Trautwein and I am a Battalion Chief with the Hoover Fire Department. I am participating in the Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy. A requirement of the program is to develop an applied research project and implement the results in my department. My research topic addresses our fire department budget allocations.

I am sending this questionnaire to various citizen groups and businesses throughout the city in an effort to gather data pertaining to your knowledge and impression of our services. Your input will assist the department in developing a plan to increase both the publics’ knowledge of our services and needs as well as to develop methods to increase our marketability and funding.

Please complete the questionnaire and return to me either by email, or via fax. If you have any questions please let me know. Thank you for your time and effort.

Sincerely,

Rob Trautwein MPA, CFO
Battalion Chief
Hoover Fire Department
2020 Valleydale Road
Hoover, AL 35244
205-739-6907 office
205-739-6727 fax
trautwer@ci.hoover.al.us
1. Do you know if your fire department consists of full-time career firefighters, volunteer firefighters, or is a combination of both?

Full-time ( ) Volunteer ( ) Combination ( )

2. If you had an emergency in your home or business, do you know the location of the fire station that would respond first?

YES NO (Please Circle One)

3. Please indicate your impression of the Hoover Fire Department using the scale below:

1=Beyond Expectations
2=Fully Meets Expectations
3=Neutral
4=Below Expectations
5=Unknown

Ability to fight fires.................................................1 2 3 4 5
Emergency medical services capability......................1 2 3 4 5
Appropriate number of fire stations.........................1 2 3 4 5
Appropriate staffing.............................................1 2 3 4 5
Level of training & proficiency..............................1 2 3 4 5
Competency.......................................................1 2 3 4 5
Dependability.....................................................1 2 3 4 5
Importance to community......................................1 2 3 4 5
Fiscally worthwhile.............................................1 2 3 4 5
Overall rating.....................................................1 2 3 4 5
4. Did you know the Hoover Fire Department provides the following services:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fire emergency response</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical emergency response</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Life Support Transport</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazardous Materials/WMD response</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical rescue response</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disaster/weather emergency planning and response</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in automatic aid agreements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide EMS coverage for special events</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire/Arson investigation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend city planning and zoning meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire code enforcement/plans review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-incident planning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business inspections</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School fire safety education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire extinguisher education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Smoke detector installation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach CPR, AED, and first aid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carseat installation inspections</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe Place operations program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood pressure screenings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in MDA fill the boot drive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in Burn Camps</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in Meals on Wheels program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in Fire Explorer program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide Santa Run on Christmas Eve</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Are there any services we currently do not provide that you would like us to?

YES        NO      (Please Circle One)

If YES, please specify what services you would like to see

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

6. Have you ever utilized the City of Hoover Fire Department’s services?

YES        NO      (Please Circle One)
7. Are you aware of how many firefighters staff a Hoover Fire Department fire truck?

2  3  4  5   (Please Circle One)

8. The Hoover Fire Department firefighters and paramedics work:

8 hour shifts  12 hour shifts  24 hour shifts   (Please Circle One)

9. Upon calling 911, how long do you believe it should take the fire department to respond to your home or business?

1-3 minutes   4-6 minutes   7-9 minutes   (Please Circle One)
Appendix B
Fire Department Budgetary Questionnaire

Dear Questionnaire Participant,

My name is Rob Trautwein and I am a Battalion Chief with the Hoover Fire Department. I am participating in the Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy. A requirement of the program is to develop an applied research project and implement the results in my department. My research topic addresses our fire department budget allocations.

I am sending this questionnaire to various fire departments throughout the state of Alabama and to other states as well in an attempt to gather data pertaining to fire department budget allocations. The purpose of the research project is to determine if the Hoover Fire Department budget growth has matched the City of Hoover overall growth in development, population, revenue, and budget expenditures. If we have fallen short what can we do to increase the budget to a more appropriate level. Your input will assist us in developing a plan on how to increase our budgetary allocations.

Please complete the questionnaire and return to me via fax or email. If you have any questions please let me know. I will be happy to provide you with a copy of the final paper if you so desire. Thank you for your time and effort.

Sincerely,

Rob Trautwein, MPA, CFO
Battalion Chief
Hoover Fire Department
2020 Valleydale Road
Hoover, AL 35244
205-739-6907 office
205-739-6727 fax
trautwer@ci.hoover.al.us
1. Type of department: Career ( ) Combination ( ) Volunteer ( )

2. Total number of personnel

3. Number of Stations

4. Number of Runs

5. Total Population Served Total Square Miles Served

6. Estimated Annual Budget (fire department) (police department)

7. What is your per capita cost for fire department services?

8. What are the sources of revenue for the fire department?

9. Has your fire department budget increased proportionally with city/district development, population and area?
   YES     NO  (Please Circle One) If YES, please explain how your department is so successful:
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________

10. Does your department have a marketing plan designed to educate your governing body, citizens, and businesses about your department?
    YES     NO  (Please Circle One) If YES, please explain your plan:
    ___________________________________________________________
    ___________________________________________________________
    ___________________________________________________________
    ___________________________________________________________

11. Do you believe your city/district key stakeholders such as citizens, businesses, elected officials, and major influencers are fully aware of your department’s services and needs?
    YES     NO  (Please Circle One) Please explain:
    ___________________________________________________________
    ___________________________________________________________
    ___________________________________________________________
    ___________________________________________________________
Appendix C  
City Of Hoover  
Fire Department Budget Project  
City Official Questionnaire

Dear Questionnaire Participant,

I am participating in the Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy under the United States Fire Administration. I recently attended the Executive Leadership course, the final course of the 4 year Program, and now must complete an applied research project addressing a topic relevant to the course and my home department. The topic I will be addressing is exploring Hoover Fire Department’s budget allocations over the past several years.

The purpose of this research project is to determine if the Hoover Fire Department budget growth has matched the City of Hoover overall growth in development, population, revenue, and budget expenditures as well as to determine if the department has indeed fallen short in acquiring the necessary resources it needs in order to maintain a high quality level of service delivery what can the department do to increase the budget to a more appropriate level.

You have received this questionnaire due to your knowledge, position, and experience with subject areas pertinent to this project. I am asking for your help in answering this questionnaire to the best of your ability. I will be glad to share the data and final paper with you. If you have any questions please let me know. Thank you for your time and assistance.

Sincerely,

Rob Trautwein, MPA, CFO  
Battalion Chief  
Hoover Fire Department  
205-739-6907 office  
trautwer@ci.hoover.al.us
1. If you had an emergency in your home do you know the location of the fire station that would respond?

   YES    NO    (Please Circle One)

2. Are you aware of how many of each type apparatus the department operates on a daily basis:

   Engine Companies__________
   Aerial Trucks______________
   Rescue Units_______________
   Battalion Chiefs___________

3. Are you aware of how many firefighters staff a Hoover Fire Department fire truck?

   2    3    4    5    (Please Circle One)

4. The Hoover Fire Department firefighters and paramedics work:

   8 hour shifts   12 hour shifts   24 hour shifts   (Please Circle One)

5. Upon calling 911, how long do you believe it should take the fire department to respond to your home or business?

   1-3 minutes   4-6 minutes   7-9 minutes   (Please Circle One)

6. Do you know how many runs the department made in 2006?

   YES    NO    (Please Circle One)

7. The Hoover Fire Department’s current Insurance Service Organization (ISO) rating grade is ____________.
8. Please indicate your impression of the Hoover Fire Department using the scale below:

1=Beyond Expectations  
2=Fully Meets Expectations  
3=Neutral  
4=Below Expectations  
5=Unknown

Ability to fight fires........................................1 2 3 4 5  
Emergency medical services capability...............1 2 3 4 5  
Appropriate number of fire stations..................1 2 3 4 5  
Appropriate staffing level..............................1 2 3 4 5  
Level of training & proficiency........................1 2 3 4 5  
Competency..................................................1 2 3 4 5  
Dependability..............................................1 2 3 4 5  
Importance to community...............................1 2 3 4 5  
Fiscally worthwhile......................................1 2 3 4 5  
Overall rating..............................................1 2 3 4 5

9. Did you know the Hoover Fire Department provides the following services:

Fire emergency response  YES  NO  
Medical emergency response YES  NO  
Advanced Life Support Transport YES  NO  
Hazardous Materials/WMD response YES  NO  
Technical rescue response YES  NO  
Disaster/weather emergency planning & response YES  NO  
Participate in automatic aid agreements YES  NO  
Provide EMS coverage for special events YES  NO  
Fire/Arson investigation YES  NO  
Attend city zoning & planning meetings YES  NO  
Fire code enforcement/plans review YES  NO  
Pre-incident planning YES  NO  
Business inspections YES  NO  
School fire safety education YES  NO  
Fire extinguisher education YES  NO  
Smoke detector installation YES  NO  
Teach CPR, AED, first aid YES  NO  
Carseat installation inspection YES  NO  
Safe Place operations program YES  NO  
Blood pressure screenings YES  NO  
Participate in MDA fill the boot drive YES  NO  
Participate in Meals on Wheels program YES  NO  
Participate in Fire Explorer program YES  NO
10. Are there any services we currently do not provide that you would like us to?

YES    NO  (Please Circle One)

If YES, please specify what services you would like to see

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

11. Have you ever utilized the City of Hoover Fire Department’s services?

YES    NO  (Please Circle One)

12. Below is a short list of job qualifications/requirements for HFD employment. Please indicate by circling YES or NO if you are aware of the requirement:

A. 400 hours fire recruit training (rookie school)               YES    NO
B. 6 semesters of paramedic school plus math, English, & anatomy  YES    NO
C. EMS credentialing, constant updates on EMS protocols and drugs  YES    NO
D. Hazardous Materials Technician certification and Annual refresher  YES    NO
E. NIMS/ICS certification                                         YES    NO
F. Safety& Wellness. Physicals, random drug screening, Job task evaluation, physical training program  YES    NO
G. Apparatus driving certification for engine pumper and aerial apparatus  YES    NO
H. ISO training-20 hrs. per month per man; night & multi-company drills  YES    NO
I. Knowledge of territory including streets, hydrants and fire department connections  YES    NO
J. Career Development Program for promotion eligibility  YES    NO

13. In your opinion, do you believe the public is aware of all the services we provide?

YES    NO  (Please Circle One)

If NO, what do you believe the public is unaware of?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
14. In your opinion, do you believe the Hoover Fire Department could do more to market itself?

YES  NO  (Please Circle One)

If YES, what suggestions would you make?

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____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________