



City of Columbia

701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201

Department Source: Fire

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: June 5, 2023

Re: Hold Harmless Agreement for Fire Training in Acquired Structures

Executive Summary

Staff has prepared for Council consideration a bill authorizing the City Manager to execute a hold-harmless agreement between the City and legal owners of properties to allow the fire department to have access to buildings slated for demolition for the purposes of realistic training.

Discussion

As a key component of America's first line of defense, today's fire service faces many challenges. Due to societal changes, the Columbia Fire Department has had to shift our more traditional training model of hands-on, practical training and focus more on classroom-type areas such as technical rescue, hazardous materials responses and preparing for incidents of mass violence. As a result, firefighters' application of basic skills has become challenged.

Firefighters are able to learn only so much from textbooks and online sources. Hands-on training presents our firefighters with opportunities to apply and master techniques learned in the classroom and sharpen their skills. Techniques such as teamwork, stretching hose lines, forcible entry through doors, windows and walls, ladder skills, fire extinguishment, ventilation and tool handling are among the many skills firefighters are able to refine during practical skills training.

The Columbia Fire Department currently operates a pre-engineered concrete and steel building used for skills development and simulated fire training. Our firefighters perform frequent training in this building and are completely familiar with its layout. Having knowledge of the building layout lessens a portion of the value of training in this structure.

From time to time, the Columbia Fire Department is made aware of possible training opportunities in various buildings within the City of Columbia which are slated for demolition. Access to these buildings would allow our firefighters to have opportunities for trainings in buildings that, while not actually on fire, would provide the most realistic opportunities for refining basic and advanced skills and techniques.

Time frames for access to these buildings are typically very brief and are short-notice in nature, making our ability to evaluate the buildings, create and execute training plans in a timely fashion very critical. The current process of granting authority for the City Manager to execute a hold harmless agreement typically places the approval process outside of acceptable time constraints for property owners.



City of Columbia

701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201

Staff is requesting Council consideration to authorize the City Manager to execute hold harmless agreements with property owners when these training opportunities arise.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: None

Long-Term Impact: None

Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Public Safety, Secondary Impact: Operational Excellence, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Not Applicable, Secondary Impact: Not applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Legislative History

Date	Action
N/A	N/A

Suggested Council Action

Staff recommends approval of the use of this agreement when properties are identified as suitable training grounds for the fire department.