

CITY OF ELDRIDGE
FAQ
Regarding Fire Protection Services

1. What is this document?

- a. This document has compiled frequently asked questions (FAQs) addressing fire protection services in the City of Eldridge.

2. What is the purpose of this document?

The purpose of this document is to provide the public with accurate information regarding fire protection services, the City's decision-making process and the creation of the City of Eldridge Fire Department. The City is aware that inaccurate and incomplete information has been publicly disseminated regarding these matters. This FAQ is intended to provide factual information, clarify the City's actions and address questions regarding the transition of fire protection services.

3. When did the Eldridge Volunteer Fire Company (“EVFC”) request the City create a City Department and assume the EVFC, its operations, assets and volunteers?

- a. Over a year ago, the EVFC requested that the City create a City Fire Department and absorb the EVFC.
- b. At an August 2025 joint meeting involving the City, Scott County and EVFC, EVFC representatives described the organization as being in a “dire” situation, explained that additional funding alone would not resolve its challenges and requested that the City create a municipal fire department and hire a City Fire Chief.
- c. Following that request, the City engaged in a fact-finding and due-diligence process regarding EVFC's operations, finances, staffing, call volumes, funding sources and other information relevant to determining the appropriate structure and needs of a municipal fire department.
- d. The City sought to fully understand EVFC's existing operational condition, including the significant challenges affecting its personnel and operations. This assessment was necessary to responsibly evaluate EVFC's request for a municipal fire department and to develop a sustainable City operation that addressed, rather than simply replicated, the challenges affecting the existing model.

4. What information was provided by the EVFC as the City was analyzing the needs of a City Fire Department?

- a. The EVFC shared information regarding its operations, assets, income and expenses, call volumes and incident types.
- b. The EVFC also shared that it had received a FEMA SAFER Grant as part of its funding and represented to the City that the grant funds would transfer directly to the City when it created a City department.

- 5. What did the City learn about the FEMA SAFER Grant that had been awarded to the EVFC?** (see *FEMA Grant Application* and *Grant Award Documentation*)
- a. The City learned that Keith Schneckloth had applied for a FEMA SAFER grant from the federal government on behalf of the EVFC.
 - b. The City also learned that the FEMA grant awarded \$721,431.35 required to be spent on new member retention and recruitment costs, PPE, insurance, a marketing program, tuition assistance, a stipend, a full-time administrator/manager salary and fringe benefits and training.
 - c. In order to evaluate the FEMA SAFER grant and its terms, the City requested additional information. The EVFC confirmed that part of the FEMA grant provided a \$50,000 salary to be paid to a “full-time” employee who worked in the administrator/manager position. FEMA requires documentation of hours worked be maintained. The City requested documentation of the hours worked and was told that the position was paid by salary and no records of hours worked were kept.
 - d. The City asked who was paid the \$50,000 from FEMA to perform the full-time administrator/manager work and the EVFC confirmed Keith Schneckloth was paid the \$50,000 in grant funds.
 - e. The EVFC then confirmed that Keith Schneckloth did not work full-time hours in that position but received and accepted the full amount of the grant funds. The salary payments for the full-time work included:
 - i. Year 1 Full-Time Salary: \$50,000.00
 - ii. Year 2 Full-Time Salary: \$51,500.00
 - iii. Year 3 Full-Time Salary: \$53,045.00
 - iv. Year 4 Full-Time Salary: \$54,636.35
 - v. Total Salary Payments for Full-Time Position: \$209,181.35
 - f. The FEMA grant also awarded \$20,000.00 in fringe benefits to the full-time administrator/manager.
 - g. It is the City’s understanding that the EVFC has taken no action to address the full-time salary payments made to Schneckloth, who acknowledged he only worked part-time in the administrator/manager position.
- 6. How did the EVFC respond to the City’s requests for clarification on the FEMA SAFER grant terms and transferability?**
- a. To evaluate whether the FEMA SAFER grant would transfer to the City department as suggested by the EVFC, the City requested the FEMA representative’s contact information.
 - b. In response, the EVFC stated they would schedule a joint call with FEMA to discuss the FEMA grant transferring over to a City department.
 - c. The EVFC notified the City that it reached out to FEMA to schedule a call and would let the City know when dates for the call were received. The EVFC never reached back out to schedule the call with FEMA.
- 7. Why was the EVFC’s FEMA Grant a topic of conversation?**

- a. EVFC represented that the FEMA grant funding would directly transfer to the City and could be used to support funding the City's own fire department.
- b. The City needed to verify if that was true and also review the details of the grant.
- c. Because the EVFC had identified the FEMA grant as a funding source that would directly transfer to the City created Fire Department, the information about the grant and its terms was directly relevant to the City's review.

8. Why was Keith Schneckloth terminated from the City? (see [Termination Letter](#))

- a. Following an external report that a City police vehicle was unsafe to drive due to the condition of the tires, the City reviewed maintenance records. The records confirmed Mr. Schneckloth had failed to properly maintain the City police vehicle as the City's full-time mechanic. The records further disclosed that Mr. Schneckloth had purchased parts for a Tahoe he drove using City funds.
- b. An investigation was thereafter conducted. During the investigation, Mr. Schneckloth admitted he purchased parts for non-City vehicles using City funds and claimed he accidentally failed to select the single-digit code he claimed he always used for non-City purchases. It was later confirmed Mr. Schneckloth had never used single-digit codes in the account at any time and that his prior statements during the investigation were false.
- c. Mr. Schneckloth further admitted that he used the City account to purchase personal items, items used for farming and items for the Eldridge Volunteer Fire Company. He admitted that he spent his compensated work time as the City mechanic to submit these personal orders and purchases. Records confirmed personal purchases were submitted by Schneckloth during his scheduled shift as City Mechanic. Mr. Schneckloth thereafter reported this as time worked on his timecard and was paid for the same.
- d. Mr. Schneckloth further admitted that by using the City's account to purchase parts for his personal vehicle, he avoided having to pay sales tax on those purchased items (because of the City's tax exempt status).
- e. Lastly, Mr. Schneckloth falsely reported working a full day on October 1, 2025 on his timesheet. It was later confirmed Mr. Schneckloth had left work several hours before the end of his scheduled shift that day.

9. Did Keith Schneckloth deny that he purchased personal items with City funds?

- a. No, he admitted this.

10. Did Keith Schneckloth deny that he purchased personal items on the City account and therefore avoided paying sales tax on those personal items?

- a. No, he admitted this.

11. Did Keith Schneckloth deny that he reported he worked his full shift on October 1, 2025 on his timecard when he actually only worked a half day?

- a. No, he admitted this.

12. Did Keith Schneckloth tell consistent accounts during the investigation?

- a. No, Keith Schneckloth told conflicting accounts. For example, he claimed the personal purchases were made in error on the City account because he used single-digit numbers to identify non-City vehicles. After the City confirmed this was not true by reviewing the account, Mr. Schneckloth then admitted there were no single-digit numbers used on that account.

13. Did the City press criminal charges against Schneckloth?

- a. Not at this time but the statute of limitations has not expired to do so.

14. Did Keith Schneckloth file a grievance regarding his termination?

- a. No. He did not challenge his termination via the available grievance process.

15. Did Keith Schneckloth file for unemployment?

- a. Yes – Mr. Schneckloth filed for and was denied unemployment benefits.
- b. Mr. Schneckloth then appealed his unemployment determination and a hearing was held before an Administrative Law Judge (“ALJ”), who heard evidence from Mr. Schneckloth and the City.
- c. At the conclusion of the evidence, the ALJ ruled Mr. Schneckloth:
 - i. had engaged in theft from the City;
 - ii. used City funds to purchase parts for his personal vehicle;
 - iii. made personal purchases using the City’s account to avoid paying sales tax;
 - iv. purchased items for a tractor the City does not own;
 - v. falsely reported hours worked on his timecard;
 - vi. deliberately disregarded the City’s interests;
 - vii. knowingly violated the City’s policies;
 - viii. engaged in disqualifying misconduct even without prior warning; and
 - ix. engaged in “substantial” misconduct.

16. What happened with EVFC following Schneckloth’s termination? (see [Timeline](#))

- a. Following his termination, in December of 2025, the City was notified that Schneckloth resigned as Chief of the EVFC effective December 31.
- b. In January and early February, discussions then moved forward in a positive direction toward a transition to a municipal department. At the February 17, 2026 meeting, the City notified EVFC that Schneckloth would not be eligible for future employment with the City due to his termination. At that same meeting, the EVFC stated that it appeared Schneckloth would be reappointed Chief because no one else would step up.
- c. On April 8, 2026, discussions had reached a point of near agreement for EVFC to remain independent.
- d. At the conclusion of the April 8th meeting, the EVFC and the City were only \$50,000 apart on their budgets. The City invited EVFC to attend a City Council meeting to request the additional \$50k in funding they sought. EVFC never made this request to the Council.
- e. The City was told EVFC members would vote on whether to stay independent or become a municipal department at the April 8 meeting.

- f. The City received no additional communication until the EVFC initiated a social media campaign through a paid third-party and sent a demand letter to the City on June 12th with a nearly-doubled proposed budget.

17. What did the EVFC demand of the City in the June 12th letter? (see [Demand Letter](#))

- a. The June 12th letter now demanded that the City provide a budget of \$766,516.
- b. The budget proposed by the EVFC just 60-days earlier was \$476,670. (see [Prior Budget Request](#))
- c. At the conclusion of the June 12th demand letter, the EVFC stated that if the City did not agree with the budget – the EVFC was demanding that the City take immediate action to absorb the EVFC as a City Department no later than October 1st.
- d. The following is a snapshot of the final language in the demand from the EVFC:

In the event the City does not support the independent model or the required budget, we ask that the City expedite the necessary measures to absorb the EVFC as a City department, effective no later than **October 1, 2026**, ensuring there is no disruption to fire and emergency services for our community.

We look forward to your response and continued partnership in serving the residents of Eldridge.

Sincerely,

Bryan Yanke Secretary, *Eldridge Volunteer Fire Company*

- e. The City adopted its FY27 budget which is certified by the State of Iowa on April 20th. It included funds appropriated to the Fire Department in the amounts of \$364,406 (this combined with annual funding from Scott County Benefited Fire District #3 would total approximately \$424,406) for operations. This is an increase of \$95,406 over last year. An additional \$120,000 for capital expenditure was also approved. This is the budget that the City intends to adhere to for operations in FY27 once the transition to the municipal fire department is complete. This is the same budget that was discussed with the EVFC representatives on April 8, 2026. These numbers are comparable to other similar sized departments in Iowa.

18. What did the City do in response to the EVFC demand to create a City department if it disagreed?

- a. The City evaluated the various options and unanimously voted to create a City Fire Department and hire a City Fire Chief, as requested by the EVFC, on July 20, 2026.

19. What did the EVFC volunteers do following the City Council vote to create a City Department?

- a. On July 27, 2026, the EVFC publicly stated that all 20 volunteers were declining to serve as volunteers for the City Department, effective October 1.

20. What is the City doing to ensure there is no disruption in fire protection services?

- a. The City's highest priority is ensuring uninterrupted fire protection and emergency response for the community.
- b. The City has begun establishing the City Fire Department, posted and is actively recruiting for the Fire Chief position and opened applications for current and new volunteer firefighters.
- c. The City is also coordinating with mutual-aid partners and neighboring communities to ensure continuity of fire protection during the transition, if needed.
- d. The City has been in consultation with area fire departments who have transitioned from independent to municipal departments and also a respected consultant.
- e. The City will continue taking all necessary and lawful steps to ensure residents remain protected.

21. Will the new City department be a hybrid model? If so, how will it work?

- a. Yes, the City's plan is to structure the department similar to the LeClaire fire department model with a paid chief and paid by call volunteers. They along with other departments have provided the City with their SOPs, SOGs, policies, ordinances and budgets.
- b. Volunteers will still have the opportunity to raise funds in the form of donations to purchase items not traditionally included in City budgets.
- c. The Mayor has invited any volunteers wishing to be a part of the new department to contact him so that they can be involved in meetings discussing the transition.
- d. The Mayor has also offered to include up to two volunteer members wishing to be involved in the new department to be a part of the interview team that will select the new chief. There may be further opportunities for other department volunteers to evaluate the top candidates.

22. Where can someone get information about the Fire Chief or volunteer firefighter applications?

- a. Information regarding the posted Fire Chief position and the Volunteer Firefighter positions can be found on the City's website at: [Job Openings](#)

23. What is the County's stance on this issue?

- a. The County has told the City that they are not taking sides on this issue, but if the City passes an ordinance and establishes a fire department that is willing to provide fire protection to Benefited Fire District #3, the County will proceed to sign a 28E Agreement with the City and have the City Department provide fire protection for the residents of Benefited Fire District #3.