CITY OF TIFFIN, IOWA
FIRE DEPARTMENT

Interim Fire Chief Proposal

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Interim Fire Chief Strategic Plan – City of Tiffin, Iowa

Executive Summary

Tom Hartshorn is a proven command-level fire service leader currently serving as a Battalion Chief with the Iowa City Fire Department, with extensive experience in incident command, training development, and organizational leadership.

This interim plan is designed to provide immediate stability, rebuild response reliability, strengthen leadership accountability, and position the Tiffin Fire Department for long-term success. The focus is not on large-scale change, but on restoring consistency, improving communication, and reinforcing a culture of participation and professionalism.

Over a 3–6 month period, this plan prioritizes improving response rates, aligning officer expectations, enhancing training effectiveness, and creating a clear operational structure. The end state is a stable, accountable, and engaged department prepared for a successful transition to a permanent Fire Chief.

Strategic Priorities

- Stabilize leadership and rebuild trust
- Improve response rates and accountability
- Strengthen communication, internally and with city administration
- Assess personnel and leadership structure
- Create a unified vision, supporting a mission first culture
- Support strategic planning and transition

30-60-90 Day Action Plan

0–30 Days: Stabilize & Assess

- Establish leadership presence and clear expectations
- Conduct listening sessions with all members and officers
- Analyze response data, focusing on increasing response reliability
- Review command structure and expectations for officers
- Review policies and guidelines

30–60 Days: Build Structure & Improve Performance

- Align officer roles and expectations
- Implement consistent, hands-on training program
- Reinforce response expectations

- Identify organizational and leadership gaps
- Recognize high-performing members

60–90 Days: Strengthen & Transition

- Implement targeted improvements
- Facilitate strategic planning if City of Tiffin pursues it
- Improve operational consistency
- Support hiring process
- Prepare transition documentation

Key Performance Metrics

- Response participation rates
- Training attendance
- Member engagement
- Administrative efficiency

Interim Fire Chief Leadership Expectations – City of Tiffin, Iowa

Leadership Philosophy

Future – Growth – Engagement
To build a high-functioning department that sets the standard for operational response, training, and culture. These expectations are grounded in proven leadership principles and prior success in building successful teams.

What You Can Expect of Me

- Accountability and ownership
- Willingness to have hard conversations
- I will model the behavior and performance I expect
- Respect and fairness
- Intentional listening
- Transparency in mistakes and continuous growth

Department Expectations

Operational Excellence

- Train consistently and with purpose
- Set the operational tempo – response matters
- Take action when needed; we will learn and improve
- Prioritize response readiness

Culture & Accountability

- The standard is what we actually allow, not what we say
- Create an environment that is psychologically safe
- Own failures and build on success
- Support growth in others
- Hold each other accountable daily

Administrative Standards

- Reports completed accurately and on time
- Training documented thoroughly
- Equipment, apparatus, and station readiness maintained
- Attention to detail in all responsibilities

Officer Expectations

Accountability

- Own decisions and actions
- Hold others to the standard
- Address issues early

Competence

- Strong operational knowledge
- Understanding of modern firefighting operations
- Commitment to leadership and command development

Communication

- Keep leadership informed
- Clearly communicate expectations
- Address issues proactively
- Build trust and alignment

Consistency

- Fair and predictable leadership
- Steady demeanor
- Reinforce standards consistently
- Recognize positive performance

Closing Principle

What is your percentage of impact on this department? Every member contributes to the culture, performance, and success of the organization.

Interim Fire Chief Compensation Proposal – City of Tiffin, Iowa

Compensation Structure

• Monthly Retainer: $4,000
• Take home vehicle (command car)
• Structure reflects executive-level leadership responsibilities rather than task-based work
• No request for healthcare, pension, or long-term benefits
• Initial term 3-6 months, optional extension based on mutual agreement

Defined Scope of Work

• Stabilize department operations and leadership
• Assess personnel and organizational structure
• Strengthen communication and culture
• Support administrative functions and operational efficiency
• Strengthen relationships with mutual aid partners
• Assist with strategic planning and transition to permanent Fire Chief

Time Expectations & Availability

• Estimated commitment: 12–18 hours per week
• Includes in-station presence, meetings, training oversight, and leadership engagement
• Availability outside scheduled hours for:
  – Emergency response and incident command
  – Phone consultation, after-hours communication, and administrative work
• Ongoing accessibility to City leadership, officers, and personnel beyond office hours

Authority & Role Expectations

• Full operational authority consistent with the role of Fire Chief
• Alignment with City leadership on major decisions while maintaining day-to-day command authority

Summary

This compensation structure reflects the responsibility, accessibility, and leadership required to stabilize and guide the department during this interim period. The focus is on delivering immediate organizational impact, improving reliability and culture, and positioning the department for long-term success.