SMITHVILLE missouri	**STAFF REPORT**
Date:	April 6, 2026
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Subject:	Smithville Plaza Fire After Event Review

Staff have received a number of questions relating to Monday's fire at Smithville Plaza. These questions relate primarily to the inspection and maintenance program for fire hydrants and the development review process relating to fire protection. City and Smithville Area Fire Protection District (SAFPD) staff met to debrief after the event. City staff conducted a review of the inspection processes. Background information on the inspection and maintenance process, the development review process and an overview of Monday's fire and areas identified for improvement are outlined here.

Inspection and Maintenance Process

- Approximately 550 public fire hydrants
- Goal is to test all 550 hydrants at least once annually
- Approximately 250 of these hydrants are flushed 4 to 5 times annually because they are on dead ends of lines – this is a new process which began about 6 months ago to address taste and odor issues
- GIS system is updated with the most recent information – does not retain historical information on hydrants
- City staff contacts SAFPD to alert them to issues with hydrants as they are discovered
- SAFPD updates their computer systems with city information on hydrant status to allow analysis and response enroute to fire calls
- Currently 15 of the 250 hydrants need repair or replacement
- Once a hydrant is noted to have issues, it should be tagged as inoperable
- Once aware of an issue, City staff assess the issue to determine if repair or replacement is needed
- The City maintains an inventory of repair parts, allowing repair relatively quickly if weather permits; replacements are scheduled as time allows

Development Review Process

- All review is based on current code; compliance with current code would be required with changes requiring construction permitting or plan review processes.

- SAFPD review of residential and commercial development (subdivisions)
    - Preliminary Plats
        - General layout
        - Number of entrances
    - Final Plats
        - Verify layout still complies with fire code
    - Construction Plans
        - Water line sizes
        - Hydrant location, number and distances
        - Conduct hydrant flow test of nearby hydrants for engineering purposes in design to verify pressure and flows are sufficient to protect not only the building, but also to support building protection systems (sprinkler systems where they are required and installed)
        - Determine if auto-turn examples are required
            - Auto-turn is a computer program that visualizes the tire tracking of a vehicle (in this case, SAFPD's largest apparatus) through any access point and parking lots
            - Usually not required in residential as all access is generally through public streets, which meet code requirements for emergency access
- SAFPD site plan review (may be independent review or reviewed as part of a Conditional Use Permit or Conceptual Plan Overlay)
    - Includes building review as well as subdivision plans above
    - Level of requirements may change based upon the proposed use type
    - Applies to commercial or R-3 uses (higher intensity of use or density)
    - Requires more specific auto-turn examples: turns through parking lots, between buildings, etc. – varies by type of use
    - Hydrant locations for access to buildings based on use type
    - Sprinkler system requirements: pressure and flow based upon use
    - If no building sprinkler systems are required by code, additional hydrants may be required outside near buildings based upon use

Smithville Plaza Fire – Monday, March 30

- Initial emergency call indicated there was a fire but believed to be extinguished
- Fire Chief and Deputy Chief reported smoke and flames visible from the building while conducting inspection at a different location in the area
- At the time of initial entry by Fire Chief and Deputy Chief, the ceiling was collapsing
- Initial attack by SAFPD included use of pumper containing 1,000 gallons of water to initiate immediate attack

- While establishing water supply, crews discovered the closest hydrant, located near Pack's Hardware was inoperable
- Fire crews were successful in establishing water supply from a newer hydrant located in front of Casey's, this hydrant is connected to a larger water line
- SAFPD personnel were aware due to prior communications that the valve at the southernmost hydrant serving Napa had been shut off due to a leak this winter which caused icing situations. While this hydrant was not available, fire crews did connect to a hydrant north of that one.
- An estimated 200,000 gallons of water were used, while maintaining over 90 psi, to fight the fire
- City staff worked with Water Supply District #8 to request that they not fill their tower so that the north booster station could be shut off and that water sent to the central portion of town.
- Smithville Plaza was constructed in 1983, before current codes were in existence. If the development were reviewed today, city code would include the following requirements:
    - City development codes outline that hydrants are required a minimum of 300 feet from a building. Construction type and use may trigger lower requirements.
    - Building type and use may require sprinklers
    - Firewall design requirements are based on size, type and use

Review Following Incident

- With knowledge of the malfunction of the hydrant located in front of Pack's Hardware, staff reviewed information, and it was discovered that the hydrant had been inspected in December and found to be malfunctioning, but was not properly identified as such. SAFPD was not informed of this malfunction.
- Based on review, the following areas of improvement have been identified:
    - Develop a comprehensive hydrant inspection program.
    - Revise current inspection SOP to clarify steps for reporting and documentation.
    - Review the GIS layer for fire hydrants to ensure past inspection information is retained
    - Work with SAFPD to develop a cooperative agreement clarifying roles and responsibilities regarding hydrant inspection, flushing, testing and maintenance as well as communication of these functions.