

# False Alarm Ordinance Changes

October 2020

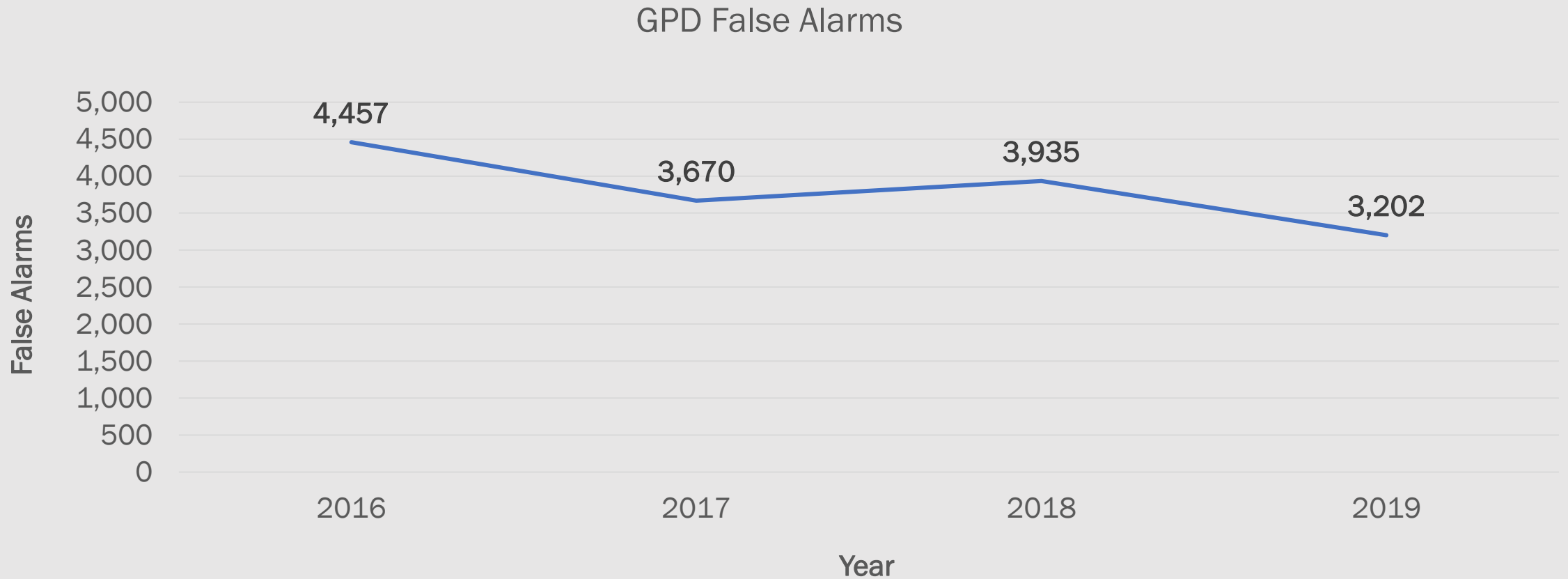
# Alarms / False Alarms

- Greenville PD/FD Communications receives alarms in two different manners:
  - Alarm companies reporting activation of a client's alarm system. 98% of these are false alarms.
  - Citizens calling in audible alarms in the area.
- As of September 14, 2020, there are 9,866 known intrusion alarmed locations within the City.
  - 6,293 residential (125 of those with 3 or more false alarms: 2%)
  - 3,868 commercial (611 of those with 3 or more false alarms: 16%)
  - 82 of those are on the non-response list (failure to register/unpaid previous fines)
  - 7% of false alarms are from non-registered users
- In 2019, emergency response to false police alarms cost the City approximately \$57,834.00. (2,142 manhours)
- There is a lost opportunity cost when officers and fire personnel respond to false alarms and are not available for legitimate threats to public safety or other duties.

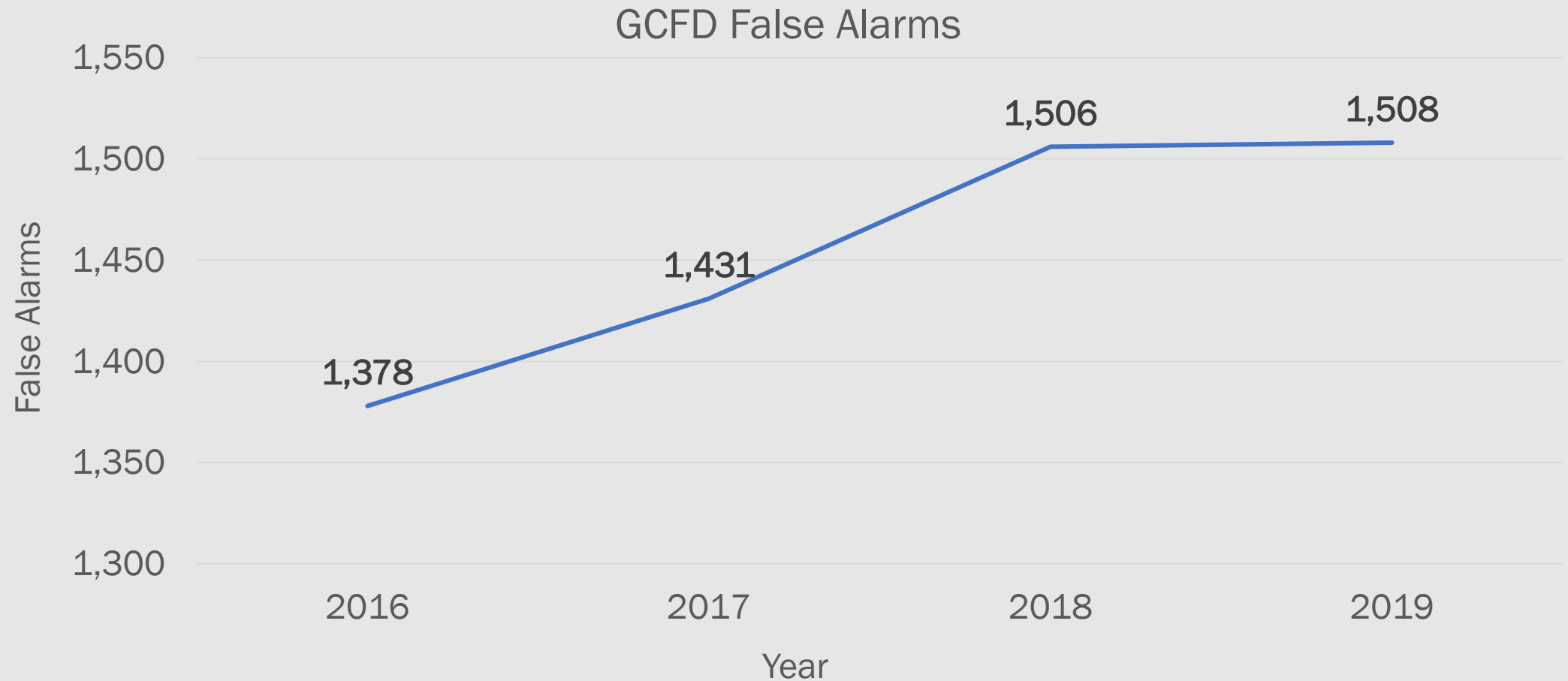
# Greenville False Alarm Ordinance- Current

- 2018: Burglar alarm ordinance was updated from the older 2011 version.
  - Focus on alarm user
    - Alarmed locations will be allowed two (2) false burglar alarm responses per alarm permit year.
    - User must register alarm system
    - Civil fines assessed to the alarm user
  - Maintains criteria for temporarily suspending emergency response if the user does not pay fines or take corrective action.
    - Only burglar alarm response is suspended; panic and hold-up alarms still receive a response regardless of account status.
  - Requires alarm companies to inform users of the City's ordinance; however, no fines against alarm companies for repeated false activations.

# False Alarm History: GPD



# False Alarm History: GCFD



# Challenges

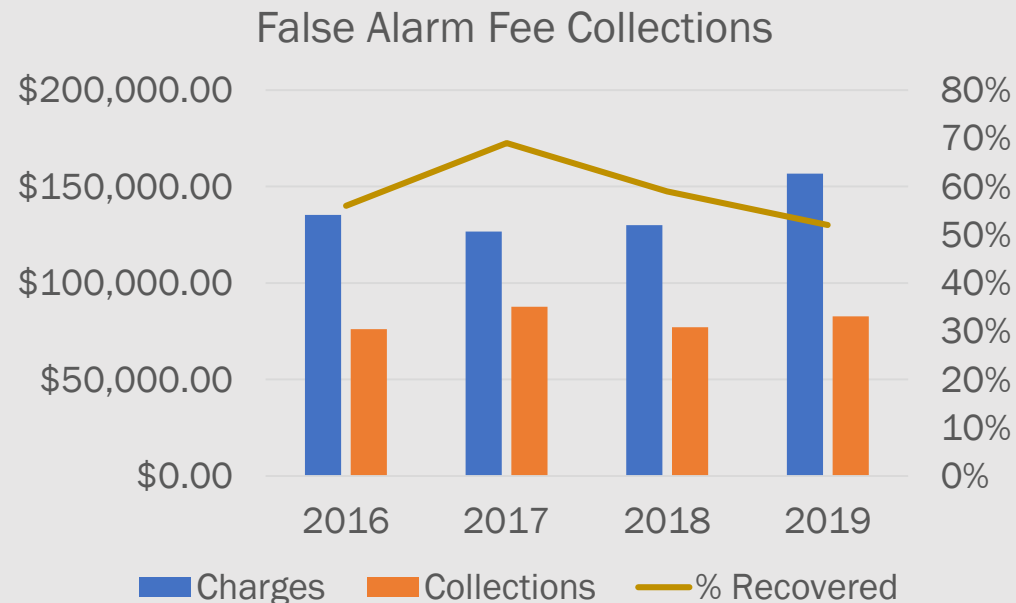
- Alarm registration lists are not complete
  - Alarm companies own their customer lists and do not share updates
- Number of false alarms
  - Alerts received by monitoring centers indicate an activation at the site- not verification of an actual emergency.
  - Current 2-call verification by alarm company has not produced a reduction in false alarm calls to Comm Center. (98% are false)
- Some alarm companies charge residents to inspect and/or repair malfunctioning alarm equipment.

# False Alarm Reduction Efforts

- In 2018, the alarm ordinance was updated to meet Security Industry Alarm Coalition (SIAC) standards.
- In November 2019, general and burglar alarms without audio/visual burglary indicators were downgraded to a priority 3 response.
  - This allowed the alarm companies 15 minutes to locate a keyholder for verification prior to the Comms Center dispatching the alarm to responders.
- Top false alarm offenders are called by the Alarm Coordinator to discuss alarm challenges and seek ways to reduce additional false alarms.

# Collections

- The alarm fee collection process has never been used as a revenue generation source; the purpose is to encourage responsible alarm management.
- Alarm fee collections vary between 52%-69%.





# Proposed Revised Ordinance

- Enhance responsibility of the Alarm Company
  - Ensures that alarm companies and their customers are registered with the City
  - Fines the alarm company for non-compliance
- Establishes *True Verification* of alarms:
  - Confirmation by alarm user at alarm site or via self-monitored audio/visual equipment
  - Confirmation by a private security responder at the alarm site
  - Audible and/or visual evidence provided by a monitored alarm system, audio/visual evidence is made available to the emergency communications center no more than 24 hours after the request of dispatch of the City's public safety departments.
- Additional provisions to increase the safety and reliability of alarm systems:
  - Prohibiting single action non-recessed buttons on panic & hold up alarms
  - One (1)-year period for equipment compliance

# Why the Shift in Responsibility?

- Alarm Companies are private companies
  - Installs the alarm system and provides monthly monitoring for a fee to its customers
  - Depends on Public Safety personnel to provide response services
  - Current system places burden/costs of system and ordinance compliance on the Public Safety departments
- Shifting responsibility to the Alarm Company
  - Ensures all monitored alarms are registered
  - Places responsibility for equipment maintenance and proper usage with the alarm company and its customers
  - Alarm company has choice to share burden of cost for false alarms with its customers

# Working Towards a Solution

- Discussion regarding internal processes between PD, FD, Revenue, and Legal.
- Meet with representatives from SIAC to discuss new ordinance proposal.
- Meet with alarm company representatives to inform about new alarm management process.
- Inform alarm users about the updated alarm ordinance and implementation time frames.
- Consolidate Police and Fire false alarm billing into a central process.

# New Ordinance Implementation

- Alarm Company must register their alarm company: Permit number issued
- Alarm Company must apply for sub-permits for each of its customers (alarm users)
- If an Alarm Company doesn't provide a permit number for the user when calling Comms, the Company is fined.
- Alarm Company must provide audio or video verification when calling or Company fined.
- If public safety resources are dispatched to calling address and find no basis for dispatch, Alarm Company is fined.
- After three (3) false alarms from an alarm site within a 12-month period, will result in a 6 month suspension of response to burglar alarms.

# Fine Schedule Updates

## Existing Fine Schedule

Police False Alarms	
Alarms 1-2	No Charge
Alarms 3-4	\$50.00
Alarms 5-6	\$100.00
Alarms 7-8	\$250.00
Alarms 9+	\$500.00
Failure to Register	\$100.00

False Fire Alarm	
Alarms 1-3 (quarterly)	No Charge
Alarms 4+ (quarterly)	\$50.00

GCFD response to all fire alarms. There are no “suspended” response designations.

## New Fine Schedule

Excessive Police or Fire False Alarm	
False Alarm 1	No Charge
False Alarm 2	\$10.00
False Alarm 3	\$25.00

Administrative Fines	
Failure to register alarm company and/or provide the City with a list of all current alarms in operation within city limits	\$50.00
Failure to notify City prior to placing an alarm into operation	\$25.00
Failure to notify the alarm administrator of changes to list of alarm users in a timely manner	\$50.00
Failure to verify activated intrusion alarm	\$250.00
Failure to provide dispatch w/ permit #	\$50.00
Failure to maintain or present records	\$50.00
Installation of non-recessed holdup alarm button	\$50.00

# Appeals

- Established appeals processes are in place
- Unique circumstances are taken into account (i.e., severe weather events)

# Next Steps

- City Council Work Session: September 28
- Proposed Effective Date: January 1, 2021
- Roll-out to include:
  - Messaging
  - Press releases
  - Meetings with alarm companies
  - Implementation into current alarm billing processes

# Questions?