



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 7, 2023

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

THROUGH: JAMES F. PARAJON, CITY MANAGER /s/

FROM: COREY SMEDLEY, FIRE CHIEF

DOCKET TITLE:

Consideration of a Grant Application to the 2022 Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Grant Program from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency.

ISSUE: Consideration of a grant application to the (federal fiscal year) 2022 Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant Program.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Approve the submission of a grant application for up to \$6,785,655 to fund 25 additional firefighters for relief staffing for the Alexandria Fire Department (AFD); and
- (2) Authorize the City Manager to execute the necessary documents that may be required.

BACKGROUND: The federal fiscal year (FY) 2022 Staffing for Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant Program (hereafter referred to as the SAFER Program) is one of three grant programs that constitute the Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency's focus on enhancing the safety of the public and firefighters with respect to fire and fire-related hazards.

The SAFER Program provides funding directly to fire departments and volunteer firefighter interest organizations to assist in increasing the number of firefighters to help communities meet industry minimum standards and attain 24-hour staffing to provide adequate fire protection from fire and fire-related hazards, and to fulfill traditional missions of fire departments. Since 2005, the SAFER Program has awarded approximately \$5.2 billion in grant funding to provide critically needed resources to hire new, additional firefighters or to retain firefighters facing layoff, as well as recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters.

DISCUSSION: The goal of this grant application is to fund 25 new firefighter positions in the AFD. As part of the City's collective bargaining agreement, the department is transitioning from a 56- to 50-hour work week. Hiring up to 25 new firefighters will provide staffing relief and reduce the need for overtime with the goal of safer working conditions.

Previously, AFD has successfully used SAFER grant funding to achieve an industry standard of four-person staffing on engines and ladder trucks. A SAFER grant will pay for the salary and benefits of the positions for the first three years, then requires the locality to fully fund the positions in the fourth year. The City has applied for and received SAFER grants in 2012, 2017 and 2018.

FISCAL IMPACT: A SAFER grant will pay 100% of personnel costs for up to 25 Firefighter I positions each year for three years, though the locality must fund gear, uniform and training costs, and employee career ladder progression. The grant total is \$6.8 million over three years, or up to \$2.26 million annually. The City would need to pay for the 25 positions beginning in year four.

As noted above, the city will be responsible for gear and uniform costs associated with the 25 positions. These costs accrue as staff is hired and will be reflected in future budget requests.

STAFF:

Yon Lambert, Deputy City Manager