

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 12, 2004

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *PS*

SUBJECT: SUBMISSION OF ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTERS GRANT APPLICATION TO THE OFFICE OF DOMESTIC PREPAREDNESS TO PURCHASE STAIR CHAIRS AND FITNESS EQUIPMENT FOR THE FIRE DEPARTMENT

ISSUE: City Council consideration of a grant application, in the amount of \$52,000, for Office of Domestic Preparedness's Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Approve the submission of an electronic grant application totaling \$52,000 to the Office of Domestic Assistance to purchase new stair chairs and fitness equipment for the Fire Department; and
- (2) Authorize the City Manager to execute all necessary documents that may be required.

BACKGROUND: The Assistance to Firefighters Grant program, formally known as the Fire Act Grant, is a program to protect the health and safety of citizens and firefighting personnel against fire and fire-related hazards. Restored by Congress in 2001 with \$100 million allocated, the program has since grown to a record high of \$750 million for the year 2004. The Assistance to Firefighters grant is administered by the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Domestic Preparedness. Three major categories are funded in this program: operations and safety, fire prevention, and firefighting vehicle acquisition. The grants are awarded on a competitive basis to fire departments that demonstrate financial need for assistance and illustrate how the funds will benefit the firefighters.

DISCUSSION: One of the Fire Department's biggest concerns is injury to emergency personnel. At any given time, 4% of the department's force is out due to injury and several are receiving regular physical therapy for chronic problems. Over the last three years, more than 40 employees have reported back injuries, two-thirds of which were due to patient lifting. New and

better equipment can help reduce the risk of back injuries and increase the level of fitness for emergency personnel. For the grant application, the Department requested funding for six treaded stair chairs and seven pieces of commercial-durable fitness equipment.

The grant money would help purchase six treaded stair chairs that are used in the industry for carrying patients down the stairs in a seated position. The tread feature of the stair chairs eliminates over 85% of the lifting involved with normal stair chairs, which helps to reduce the number of back injuries.

The grant money would also be used to purchase commercial-durable cardiovascular equipment: Five treadmills and two elliptical machines. The department has been unable to continue offering the high level of fitness programming and equipment of the past due to deteriorating equipment and budget priorities. The department needs to purchase five treadmills and two elliptical machines, to be split between two exercise rooms at Lee Center and Fire Station 208, in order to increase the fitness levels of the new recruits and active personnel.

FISCAL IMPACT: The Assistance to Firefighters Grant is designed to cover 70% of the total project budget. The total cost of the program would be \$52,000, including a federal share of \$36,400 and a local match of \$15,600. The proposed sources of the local match (non-federal resources) include two Fire Department State grants: \$3,600 from the Two-For-Life grant (Virginia Department of Health) and \$12,000 from the Aid-To-Localities grant (Virginia Department of Fire Programs).

In addition, the City is also responsible for normal administrative costs associated with this grant. These costs include financial and reporting oversight provided by the administering agency (Alexandria Fire Department) as well as the Office of Management and Budget and the Finance Department.

The Fire Department has submitted the grant application in order to meet the deadline of April 2, 2003, with the understanding that subsequent City Council authorization would be required to accept this grant award.

A copy of the electronically submitted grant application may be reviewed in the Office of Management and Budget, Room 3600, City Hall, during normal business hours.

ATTACHMENTS: None.

STAFF:

Gary A. Mesaris, Fire Chief
Virginia Lester, Fiscal Officer
Mark Penn, Emergency Management Coordinator
Laura Lind, Emergency Management Analyst