


City of Alexandria, Virginia

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: JUNE 18, 2009

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF A GRANT APPLICATION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY, FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY, NATIONAL ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTER GRANT PROGRAM, FOR FIRE STATION CONSTRUCTION

ISSUE: Consideration of a grant application to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), National Assistance to Firefighter Grant Program, offered under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), for fire station construction funds.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Authorize the submission of the grant application (due July 10, 2009), for up to \$10 million for renovation/reconstruction of Station 203 (Cameron Mills Road) and the construction of a new Station 210 (Eisenhower Valley); and
- (2) Authorize the City Manager to execute the necessary documents that may be required.

BACKGROUND: The Federal Assistance to Firefighters Fire Station Construction Grants (FSC) Program provides financial assistance directly to fire departments on a competitive basis to build new or modify existing fire stations in order for departments to enhance their response capability and protect the community they serve from fire and fire-related hazards. The authority for the FSC Grants Program is through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009. Congress appropriated a total of \$210 million for this program earlier this year as part of the omnibus stimulus package. The primary goal of the program is to help fire departments meet their firefighting and emergency response needs. FSC seeks to support organizations lacking the tools and resources necessary to effectively protect the health and safety of the public and their emergency response personnel with respect to fire and all other hazards.

Highlights of the FSC Grants Program follows:

- **Opening:** The application period for this special grant program opened on June 8, 2009.
- **Closing:** Applications must be submitted to DHS/FEMA by July 10, 2009.
- **Maximum Grant Funding per Application:** Funding for any one grant application (per locality) is \$5 million.

- **Maximum Grant Funding per Application Project:** DHS/FEMA has imposed a \$5 million funding limitation on each project, i.e., per station, within an application. In its application guidance, DHS/FEMA states that it anticipates awarding approximately 100 grants with the \$210 million of available funds. This equates to an average grant award of approximately \$2 million. Therefore, if the City receives a FSC grant we likely will receive less than the \$10 million requested for both stations.
- **FSC Grant Funds Availability:** DHS/FEMA must award all funds by September 30, 2010 (first quarter of the City's FY 2011).
- **Timeframe for Expenditure of FSC Grant Funds:** A successful applicant has 36 months after grant award to complete the construction project.
- **Expected Numbers of Applications:** DHS/FEMA expects 5,000 to 10,000 applications and over \$33 billion in requests, so the chances of the City receiving any FSC grant funds are speculative, but worthy of making a grant application effort.
- **Match Required:** No match is required. However, in assessing grant applications, priority will be given to those communities that provide financial contributions to station modification or construction.
- **DHS/FEMA Funding Priorities:** Examples include: economic stimulus; enhanced safety of firefighters and the community; communities of high joblessness rates; land owned or acquired; community financial contributions to the project; improvements to response times; and, high call volume and high population.
- **Application Requirements:** Applicants must describe or define: (1) the construction project and provide a statement of need; (2) the financial need of the applicant; (3) costs and benefits to be derived from the completed project; and (4) the positive effects on daily operations from the construction project.

DISCUSSION: Design Team Work Status: A design team, led by the Fire Department and the Department of General Services, along with the Offices of Building and Fire Code Administration and the Department of Planning and Zoning, has been meeting on a regular basis since April 2009 to define requirements for a renovated/rebuilt Station 203 (Cameron Mills Road) and a new Station 210 (Eisenhower Valley). At present, the design team has defined major, high-level requirements for which cost estimates (sufficient *only* to address FSC grant application requirements) have been developed. The projects are still in early concept development and have not developed to the point where specific designs could enable staff to engage in the community input process; however, community meetings are anticipated for early fall of this year.

Alignment with Approved FY 2010 CIP Budget: Preliminary budget estimates for Station 203 reconstruction on the existing station site total \$7.6 million. Of that amount, \$5.6 million is eligible for grant funding per the FSC Grant guidance; the remaining \$2.0 million is ineligible for grant funding and includes, for example, costs for an ambulance, space for public use (community meeting room), landscaping, and vehicle-mounted exhaust extraction systems. A successful grant application of \$5.0 million for Station 203 would require the current City commitment of \$2.0 million for the remaining costs of construction, ambulance, furniture, and contingency to support an approximate \$7.0 million estimated budget. This project will provide enhanced EMS service to the surrounding areas by providing space for a medic unit and staff.

Station 210 is proposed to be built on City-owned land that currently houses the City's impound lot. It is proposed that this property will be reconfigured and used as the potential site for the new fire station which would be co-located on the same parcel as the reconfigured impound lot. Preliminary construction cost estimates total \$10.1 million. Of this amount, \$8.0 million of costs are eligible for grant funding per the FSC Grant guidance and \$2.1 million of costs are ineligible for grant funding. A successful grant application of \$5.0 million for Station 210 would require a net City commitment of \$5.1 million. This net cost compares favorably to the \$8.3 million planned in the CIP for FY 2011 and FY 2012, even taking away an approximate \$1.2 million for the CIP built-in costs for a new engine and for station furnishings and equipment. The completion of Station 210 will provide for additional fire resources and faster emergency response times in the Eisenhower Valley and in adjacent areas.

FISCAL IMPACT: This grant has no match requirements; however, DHS/FEMA will give priority consideration to those grant applications that propose community cost sharing. In the context of the FY 2010 CIP, the Station 203 budget proposes the use of \$620,000 in prior year unallocated funds for the design of an expanded Station 203. In addition, \$2.0 million in funding has been budgeted in FY 2011 as a placeholder for the expansion. Updated estimates will be provided for FY 2011 CIP consideration in order to completely fund the project and adjust accordingly should the grant funding be awarded.

For Station 210 the FY 2010 CIP budget proposes the use of \$1.3 million in prior year unallocated monies for the design and other pre-construction costs associated with this new facility and \$8.3 million is budgeted over two years (\$6.14 million in FY 2011 and \$2.2 million in FY 2012) for Station 210 construction. Grant funding would lessen the City's burden for constructing this station.

The City will be responsible for normal administrative costs associated with this grant, including financial and reporting oversight, provided by the Fire Department, Office of Management and Budget, and the Department of Finance.

STAFF:

Adam K. Thiel, Fire Chief

Russell Middleton, Assistant Fire Chief

Andrew Snead, Assistant Fire Chief

John North, Battalion Chief

James Lynch, Administrative Services Division Chief, Fire Department

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