


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: FEBRUARY 3, 2010

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF A GRANT APPLICATION TO THE PORT SECURITY GRANT PROGRAM, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY, FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

ISSUE: Consideration of a grant application to the Port Security Grant Program, U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Approve the submission of the grant application (due February 12, 2010); and
- (2) Authorize the City Manager to execute the necessary documents that may be required.

BACKGROUND: On December 8, 2009, FEMA opened the FY 2010 grant application period for the Port Security Grant Program (PSGP), which focuses on securing and guarding harbors and port areas for the protection of critical infrastructure from terrorism. Under the PSGP, funding is available to assist ports in enhancing maritime domain awareness and risk management capabilities to: prevent, detect, respond to and recover from attacks involving improvised explosive devices (IEDs), weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), and other non-conventional weapons; provide port security training and exercises; and implement Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) systems.

The City of Alexandria, particularly in light of its responsibility for providing part of the Fire and EMS protection of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge and the thousands of Alexandria citizens and visitors who cross that structure each day, also plays a vital role in ensuring that our waterways are protected against terrorism and other threats. This grant would allow us to strengthen our response capability for any incident on or adjacent to the Potomac River.

DISCUSSION: Alexandria Fireboat 201, the Fire Department's primary rescue/firefighting vessel, was procured for \$247,617 in December 2003 with money that came primarily from the Virginia Department of Fire Programs. The boat was purchased to replace an unsafe, older vessel

that had very limited rescue capabilities and no fire protection capacity. Fireboat 201, a 2004 MetalCraft 30' Firestorm, is modestly equipped for rescue and firefighting service, with Basic-Life-Support emergency medical equipment and a small inventory of emergency incident tools on board. This boat has only a 1500 gpm (gallon per minute) fire pump.

Over the past six years, Fireboat 201 has responded to many emergency incidents and has saved the lives of many persons on the Potomac River, often assisting the Alexandria Police Department and the Fire Department Special Operations Team. The boat has supplied water for Woodrow Wilson Bridge fires, aided vessels in distress in or near Alexandria's waterfront, provided medical care to passengers onboard the many cruise, tour, water taxi, and private vessels that travel the waterfront area, and contained environmental and Hazmat incidents at the City's marina. From 2007 through 2009, Fireboat 201 was dispatched 64 times for incidents that included 19 watercraft rescues, 10 water/ice rescues, nine Hazmat or combustible liquid spills or investigations, nine water searches, three fires, and three emergency medical services (EMS) incidents.

Occurrences necessitating fireboat response have increased over the past five years, and the Fire Department expects this trend to continue, especially with the opening of National Harbor and the expected completion of the Alexandria Waterfront Plan. Waterfront activity will be increasing with greater use of water taxis, dinner cruise vessels along the waterfront and slips in the marina. The new boat will enhance the Fire Department's response capability for accidents on the waterfront and environmental incidents such as oil spills affecting the Alexandria waterfront. The boat also will be used to support the Alexandria City dock standpipe system to fight vessel fires in the marina and augment the water supply to fire protection systems on larger vessels such as tour boats, cruise/ships, tall ships and Navy and Coast Guard vessels.

The new fireboat would also enhance the Fire Department's ability to respond to fires on the Woodrow Wilson Bridge. We have requested that the States of Maryland and Virginia improve the water pumping system designed for fire protection on the bridge. The current system uses a standpipe that can only be supplied with water from the Potomac River using a fireboat (from Alexandria, Prince George' County or the District of Columbia. We have proposed that an automatic pumping system be installed and fireboats used as backups. The Fire Department proposes to replace Fireboat 201, which pumps only 1,500 gpm, with a vessel that pumps a minimum of 3,975 gpm.

Fireboat 201 has twin inboard motors and two propulsion jets. Maintenance, retrofitting, and repair costs over the past six years have totaled almost \$49,000, and that amount would be higher except for the fact that Fire Department personnel performed much of the required boat maintenance. Engine repair or replacement is a concern because many boat components are no longer manufactured and parts are increasingly difficult to obtain. The Department is very concerned that Fireboat 201 soon could need costly engine, transmission, and propulsion jet repairs.

The proposed replacement for Fireboat 201 is a 44' all-hazard response vessel that will enhance Fire Department operational capabilities, provide a state-of-the-art platform to respond to Fire, Rescue, EMS and Hazmat incidents along Alexandria's waterfront, and reduce anticipated maintenance costs.

FISCAL IMPACT: The PSGP will provide funding to cover the purchase of a new vessel, specialized equipment needed and administrative costs. The City will request grant funding totaling \$1,417,500. No cost sharing is required from the City. We expect to dispose of our current fireboat, and the Department estimates the resale value of the existing vessel at \$200,000.

STAFF:

Adam K. Thiel, Fire Chief

John North, Battalion Chief

Rodney Masser, Fire Captain

James Lynch, Administrative Division Chief, Fire Department

Virginia Lester, Fiscal Officer, Fire Department