

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 21, 2012

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: RASHAD M. YOUNG, CITY MANAGER *RM*

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF AN APPLICATION FOR AN ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTERS GRANT (AFG) FOR REPLACEMENT OF SELF-CONTAINED BREATHING APPARATUS (SCBA)

ISSUE: Grant application to the Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to replace 155 SCBAs to comply with the most recent National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Approve the submission of a grant application to replace 155 Fire Department SCBAs; and
- (2) Authorize the City Manager to execute the necessary documents that may be required.

BACKGROUND: The Fire Department currently maintains 215 SCBAs for personnel and training. The NFPA issues updated safety compliance standards (NFPA standard 1981) every five years for SCBAs to ensure that the latest technology and safety concerns are being met. The latest standard was issued in 2007 and before that in 2002. Of the Fire Department's 215 SCBAs, 110 of them are compliant only with the 1997 standard (not the 2002 or 2007 standards). The remaining 105 are compliant only with 2002 standards.

On June 11, the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) application was opened. This Grant, awarded by FEMA, is open to Fire Departments to apply for specific funding priorities as defined by the grant agency. This year, FEMA has determined only certain items will qualify as high priorities – those which will receive the most favorable reviews for funding. One of the high priorities is replacing SCBAs that are not in compliance with at least the 2002 version of NFPA standard 1981.

City staff will submit an AFG application to FEMA to replace 155 of the 215 SCBAs. (A federal funding cap limits applications to \$1.0 million based on population.) The Fire Department requests that 60 SCBAs be considered for funding by the City for the remaining AFD fire and

EMS units as part of the FY2 014 budget process. The FY 2013 Fire Department budget includes \$130,000 to begin City funding for the replacement of this equipment.

DISCUSSION: Approximately half of the 215 Fire Department SCBAs in use today were purchased through federal grant funding provided in response to events on September 11, 2001. There are currently insufficient non-personnel funds in the Fire Department operating budget to maintain optimum replacement cycles of equipment. At this time approximately half of the SCBAs have fallen three replacement cycles behind compliance. FEMA's definition of obsolete SCBAs is any unit older than two replacement cycles or 10 years old. Within the next six months, every SCBA unit the AFD owns will be obsolete.

The 1997-compliant City SCBAs are no longer supported with parts and inventory or manufacturer's warranty. The 1997-compliant SCBAs are working as designed; however, each new NFPA standard results in redesigned equipment with enhanced technology and safety features. The electronics on the 2007 NFPA-compliant equipment are required to meet durability and heat standards. The newer SCBAs include new warranties, locator systems for downed firefighters and event recorders similar to an airplane black box. The new 2012 NFPA standards will be approved in the fall of 2012 and the 2012 NFPA-compliant SCBAs will be released in the late spring of 2013 by manufacturers of SCBAs.

FISCAL IMPACT: This grant will replace equipment that the Fire Department has requested in previous budget processes and last year's AFG for which grant funding was not approved. Replacing only Fire Suppression SCBAs will cost a total of \$999,750. Since there is a 20% cash match associated with this grant (approximately \$200,000), the City will avoid a cost of approximately \$800,000 by replacing these SCBAs through this grant program. The \$200,000 City match would come from funds that are currently designated in Contingent Reserves in the Non-Departmental budget for Fire Safety Improvements. These available funds are to be carried over from the FY2011 budget as an incomplete project.

The Fire Department plans to submit a request as a part of the FY 2014 budget process to replace the remaining 60 Fire Department SCBAs at an estimated cost of \$387,000.

It should be noted that this docket item addresses only SCBAs in the Fire Department. The Sheriff and Police Department have approximately 105 and 30 SCBAs respectively, which are not eligible for funding through this grant but only meet the 2002 or earlier NFPA standards. We also will need to address their replacement during the FY 2014 budget discussions.

STAFF:

Adam K. Thiel, Fire Chief