

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 19, 2008

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 8

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF A GRANT APPLICATION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY (DHS), FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY'S (FEMA) NATIONAL ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTER (AFG) GRANT PROGRAM, FOR THE PURCHASE OF A PORTABLE INCIDENT COMMAND TRAINING SIMULATION (PICTS) SYSTEM

ISSUE: Consideration of a grant application to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) National Assistance to Firefighter Grant (AFG) Program, for the purchase of a Portable Incident Command Training Simulation (PICTS) system.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Authorize the submission of the grant application (due April 4, 2008), up to \$150,000; and
- (2) Authorize the City Manager to execute the necessary documents that may be required.

BACKGROUND: On February 27, 2008, the U. S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), opened the application period for the 2008 National Assistance to Fire Fighters Grant (AFG) Program. This Program allows for localities to purchase equipment, hold training sessions, modify fire stations and facilities or purchase firefighting vehicles.

One of the key roles for those charged with ensuring the public safety of City residents is the ability to respond to routine and major incidents efficiently and effectively. Although a mass casualty incident such as September 11, 2001 is rare, it taught the country that multi-jurisdictional and cross-departmental preparation for large scale incidents requires specialized, practical training. Closer to home, last summer's Edsall Road fire emergency, and resultant injuries to four Alexandria fire fighters, was a wake-up call for focused, situational training. Classroom training alone is no longer sufficient.

To address this need, an electronic Portable Incident Command Training Simulation (PICTS) system is available on the market to provide life-like training for small- and large-scale disasters that may include single-family home fires, low-rise and high-rise apartment and office building fires, hazardous material spills, mass casualty incidents, naturally occurring disasters and terrorist attacks. Like airline pilots who are provided life-like training on simulators prior to flying large commercial planes, a PICTS system could provide real-time disaster scenarios that will enable participants to truly experience the simulated emergency, make adjustments to successes and challenges, and without any detrimental consequences to the public.

DISCUSSION: The Fire Department has identified the need to provide practical incident command system training for all disciplines including law enforcement, public works, fire, EMS, Public Health, emergency management, and senior City staff.

The Fire Department is currently providing classroom instruction, which is lacking practical, scenario application. The Portable Incident Command Training Simulation system will allow for hands-on, practical experience on how to deal with a large-scale emergency.

This training would be used by Fire, Police, EMS, the Health Department and senior City staffs. This system will be made available to our response partners across the Northern Virginia Region to promote joint training opportunities that mirror our response plans.

FISCAL IMPACT: This grant requires a 20% match by the City. City staff will administer the grant. The City is also responsible for the normal administrative costs associated with this grant, including financial and reporting oversight provided by the Fire department, as well as the Office of Management and Budget, and the Finance Department. Of the maximum \$30,000 grant match, \$10,000 will be paid out of the Fire Department's existing training budget and if we get the grant we will request that Council designate \$20,000 in Contingent Reserve for this purpose. While this grant match request to Council is somewhat outside of the normal process of requesting funds, it is an opportunity to obtain a critical piece of training equipment.

STAFF:

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