


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 5, 2008

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF A GRANT APPLICATION TO THE SAFER (STAFFING FOR ADEQUATE FIRE AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE) GRANT PROGRAM, THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY, FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

---

**ISSUE:** Consideration of a grant application to the SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response) grant program, U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Federal Emergency Management Agency.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council:

- (1) Authorize the submission of the grant application (due June 27, 2008); and
- (2) Authorize the City Manager to execute the necessary documents that may be required.

**BACKGROUND:** On May 27, 2008, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, opened the grant application period for the 2008 SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response) Program. SAFER grants provide financial assistance to help fire departments increase the number of frontline firefighters (EMS and other employees are excluded). The goals of SAFER are to enhance staffing and deployment capabilities as fire departments in order to respond to emergencies whenever they occur, and to assure that communities have adequate protection from fire and fire-related hazards.

The SAFER grants program assists local fire departments in addressing with staffing, response, and operational standards established by the National Fire Protection Association, and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

**DISCUSSION:** During the March 25, 2008, Council meeting, and the April 1, 2008, Budget Work Session on Public Safety, staff discussed and presented to Council a report prepared by J. Gordon Routley, an expert in the field of fire incident analysis. Mr. Routley presented a detailed review and analysis of the Fire Department's response to the August 25, 2007, fire at 6101 Edsall Road (Alexandria Knolls West). The analysis listed a number of serious issues that negatively affected the ability of the Department to handle the fire safely and effectively. In the FY 2009 Budget, Council allocated \$222,696 to the Fire Department in Contingent Reserves to begin addressing the issues noted in the report.

Among the recommendations in the Routley Report was an increase from 3 to 4 firefighters assigned to engine and truck companies. The Department proposes to apply for SAFER grant funds to partially offset the costs of hiring the three additional firefighters needed to provide one company with four firefighters per shift, a four-person minimum staffing program. SAFER grant funds partially cover costs of firefighter salaries and benefits over a five year period, thus reducing the City funding needed. As we discussed with Council this spring we will be coming to Council this fall with a multi-year plan to address firefighter staffing and other recommendations in the Routley Report. This grant, together with the use of some of the contingent reserves set aside for this purpose (see below) gives us the opportunity to obtain federal funds to begin that process.

Both Arlington and Fairfax Counties took a multi-year approach to increasing their firefighter staffing and also used SAFER grant funds to offset local costs.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** SAFER grants provide a maximum of \$108,380 per firefighter. Alexandria maximum allocation for three firefighters, if awarded, would be \$325,140 over the five-year term. The grant would provide \$117,045 the first year. This will decrease to \$104,025 in the second year, \$65,010 in year three, and \$39,060 in year four of the grant. After this all costs must be covered by the locality.

The total General Fund cost including benefits for three additional firefighters is estimated to be \$269,487 in FY 2009. The SAFER grant, if awarded, will pay \$117,045 of this total, and contingent reserves will be used for the remaining \$152,442. This will leave a balance of \$70,254 in the contingent reserve account. Council will have to address funding for future years (with rising City costs as grant revenue decreases) in the context of each year's budget.

There are no matching funds required.

**STAFF:**

Adam K. Thiel, Fire Chief  
James Lynch, Fire Department  
Virginia Lester, Fire Department  
Karen Winey, Grants Coordinator