


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 5, 2010

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF A GRANT APPLICATION TO THE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER (EOC) GRANT PROGRAM, THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY (DHS), FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (FEMA)

ISSUE: Consideration of a grant application to the Emergency Operations Center Grant Program, U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), with funding coordinated through the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM).

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Approve the submission of the grant application to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) (due January 13, 2010); and
- (2) Authorize the City Manager to execute the necessary documents that may be required.

BACKGROUND: The City currently does not have a dedicated Emergency Operations Center. When a disaster or major emergency occurs, Office of Emergency Management (OEM) personnel spend several hours setting up two classrooms at the Fire Department's Professional Development Center (PDC) at Lee Center, expending valuable time and resources that more appropriately should be allocated to planning and response efforts. When the EOC is set up, the Fire Department loses two-thirds of its classroom space, negatively affecting its ability to perform ongoing training and other activities. Along with Prince George's County, Alexandria is one of only two jurisdictions in the National Capital Region that do not have a dedicated Emergency Operations Center.

We propose to locate the City's new Emergency Operations Center in 8,700 available square feet at the Public Safety Center. This is a project that is proposed for the upcoming Capital Improvement Program. The grant funding would be used to provide for some of the costs of building build out, EOC technology, equipment, as well as to install an emergency generator, replace windows and to refurbish an elevator.

On December 21, 2009, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, opened the highly competitive grant application period for the FY 2010 Emergency Operations Center Grant Program. \$10.2 million is available nationwide for competitive awards. EOC grants provide financial assistance to help state, local, or tribal governments construct or renovate a principal emergency operations center.

DISCUSSION: Sometimes adequate notice is provided prior to a disaster or emergency. For example, in December 2009 the National Capital Region suffered its 6th worst winter storm since official recordkeeping began. Luckily, there was sufficient warning, and OEM staff was able to set up the EOC before the storm arrived.

Alternatively, Alexandria is home to many facilities that easily could become emergency incident sites without advance notice. For example, the City is responsible for assisting in the protecting of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, and numerous high-rise office and other buildings that house over 30,000 federal employees, and associated contractors. If a large-scale incident were to occur, all OEM staff will be needed for planning, coordination, and direct response activities. With a permanent EOC, all employee resources can be immediately dedicated to these vital tasks, rather than hours later after a temporary EOC is assembled and becomes operational.

The goal of the EOC grant is to improve emergency management and preparedness capabilities by supporting flexible, sustainable, secure, and interoperable emergency operations centers with a focus on addressing identified deficiencies and needs.

The EOC grants program recognizes the need for fully capable emergency operations facilities at the state and local levels. These facilities are essential in establishing a comprehensive national emergency management system and are necessary to ensure continuity of operations and government in major disasters caused by any hazard. The City of Alexandria, particularly in light of its location directly across the Potomac River from the District of Columbia, will continue to play a vital role in ensuring that our jurisdiction and this internationally important region are able to quickly and thoroughly address any human-initiated or natural disaster.

FISCAL IMPACT: The total multi-year EOC capital cost estimate is \$4 million, with \$250,000 to be proposed in the FY 2011 proposed CIP budget, and the balance (less any grant funds received) to propose to be programmed in FY 2012 or beyond. Proceeding with this project would be contingent on Council action on the CIP this spring.

EOC grant funding of up to \$1 million would be used to offset equipment and building build out expenses for a permanent Emergency Operations Center. Under the terms of the EOC grant program, Alexandria will contribute a 25% match from programmed Capital Improvement Program (CIP) monies of \$250,000 in FY 2011. This is a highly competitive grant program where the City will be competing against many applicants nationally with \$10.2 million to be awarded by FEMA. As a result the probability of receiving funding is uncertain.

STAFF:

Mark Penn, Emergency Management Coordinator

Adam K. Thiel, Fire Chief

James Lynch, Administrative Division Chief, Fire Department

Virginia Lester, Fiscal Officer, Fire Department