


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: AUGUST 31, 2009

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: GRANT FUNDING FOR PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE) TO PURCHASE SURGICAL MASKS FOR ALEXANDRIA'S EMS PROVIDERS

ISSUE: Consideration of a grant application to the Virginia Department of Health Office of Emergency Medical Services to procure surgical masks for use in the event of a State-declared pandemic (i.e., Swine-origin Influenza A (H1N1) Virus Infection event).

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council authorize the City Manager to:

- (1) Submit the grant application to procure surgical masks that would be worn by the Fire Department's EMS providers if a State-declared pandemic were to occur in Northern Virginia; and
- (2) Execute all grant-related documents that may be required.

The City was notified on July 10, 2009 that grant funds were available. The grant was submitted by the August 7 deadline contingent upon Council approval in September.

BACKGROUND: The Novel H1N1 (referred to as Swine Flu) is a new influenza virus that was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. In early June, the World Health Organization (WHO) raised the H1N1 virus phase of pandemic alert to a global pandemic (Phase 6).¹ Since that time, the virus has continued to cause illness, hospitalization, and death in the U.S. during the (normally) flu-free summer months. Already, as noted in news releases, the Northern Virginia Region has experienced two

¹ Phase 6 is a pandemic phase characterized by community level outbreaks in at least one other country in a different WHO region in addition to the criteria defined in Phase 5. Designation of this phase indicated that a global pandemic was under way.

H1N1 deaths, including the death of a man in the Arlington Health District on July 1, 2009, and the death of a woman in the Prince William Health District on July 22, 2009.

The Mayor's Pandemic Flu Task Force developed a draft plan for addressing flu concerns and the Alexandria Health Department has led an effort with City department representatives to plan for H1N1 in Alexandria. Dr. Lisa Kaplowitz and Chief Adam Thiel will update Council on these efforts at the September 8 legislative meeting.

DISCUSSION: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have expressed concern about the contagiousness and spreading of the H1N1 virus. The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America (SHEA) and CDC Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee (HICPAC) have recommended to the CDC that surgical masks be used by individuals, such as EMS providers, who are in close contact with infected patients and who must care for the sick public. As a follow-up and because of illness and death in the Commonwealth, the Virginia Department of Health, Office of Emergency Medical Services notified EMS agencies about the availability of grant funding to procure surgical masks, which will help to protect EMS providers. Localities throughout the Commonwealth must purchase these masks as soon as possible, before the on-set of fall, when swine-flu illnesses are expected to increase.

FISCAL IMPACT: The exact amount of grant funding for the Commonwealth's jurisdictions has not been announced by the Virginia Department of Health; however, the Fire Department has requested financial support to purchase 151,080 one-time use masks to prepare for a potential H1N1 pandemic .

There is no requirement for the City to provide a cash-match for this grant. The City is responsible for the normal administrative costs associated with this grant. These costs include financial and reporting oversight provided by the administering agency (the Fire Department), as well as by the Office of Management and Budget and the Finance Department.

STAFF:

Adam K. Thiel, Fire Chief
Andrew Snead, Assistant Fire Chief, Alexandria Fire Department
Charles McRorie, Emergency Planning Coordinator, Alexandria Fire Department
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