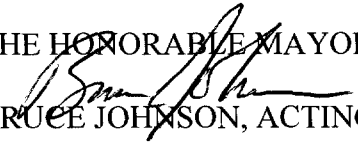


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: SEPTEMBER 6, 2011
TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL
FROM:  BRUCE JOHNSON, ACTING CITY MANAGER
SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF APPLICATION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY, FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY FOR ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTERS GRANT FUNDS TO REPLACE ALEXANDRIA FIRE DEPARTMENT SELF-CONTAINED BREATHING APPARATUS

ISSUE: Grant application to the Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency to replace 110 SCBAs to comply with most recent standards.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Approve the submission of a grant application for \$626,440 to replace 110 SCBAs;
- (2) Authorize the Acting City Manager to execute the necessary documents that may be required; and
- (3) Approve the release of \$156,610 from Contingent Reserves to pay the City match for this equipment if the grant is approved.

BACKGROUND: The Fire Department currently maintains 215 SCBAs for personnel and training. The National Fire Protection Association (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 only compliant with the 1997 standard (not the 2002 or 2007 standards). The remaining 105 are only compliant with 2002 standards. Replacement of this equipment in FY 2012 with City funds was considered as one of many action items to further the Public Safety Strategic Plan objectives, but ultimately they were not included in the City Manager's proposed budget.

On August 15, the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) was opened. This grant, awarded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (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 1981 standard.

This grant was originally due on September 9, but FEMA has extended the deadline to September 16 due to Hurricane Irene. City staff will submit an application through the AFG to replace 110 of the 215 SCBAs since these would all qualify as high priority projects. The remaining 105 would not qualify as high priority and would unlikely be funded.

DISCUSSION: The 215 SCBAs that the Fire Department currently owns were originally purchased through grant funding as part of the grants released 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 cycles behind compliance.

The 1997 compliant SCBA are no longer supported with parts and inventory or manufacturer's warranty. Although the SCBA are working as designed, each new standard offers technology and safety enhancements. The newer SCBA offers a new warranty, a locator system for downed firefighters and an event recorder similar to an airplane black box. The electronics on the 2007 standards are required to meet durability and heat standards.

FISCAL IMPACT: This grant request will provide funding to replace equipment for a total cost of \$783,050. There is a 20 percent match associated with the grant, or \$156,610. The City will be able to leverage those funds to obtain \$626,440 in grant funds. The 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 FY 2011 budget as an incomplete project.

It is important to note that all SCBAs should be replaced to ensure that all personnel are using the same SCBA in the field that they train with. The estimated cost to fund a six-year replacement cycle of the City's 215 SCBAs is approximately \$250,000 per year. To replace the remaining 105 Fire Department SCBAs would cost approximately \$750,000. It should also be noted that there are SCBAs in both the Sheriff and Police Departments; however, they are not eligible for funding through this grant. The Sheriff has approximately 105 SCBAs and the Police Department currently has 30 that are also at the 2002 or earlier standards and will need replacement. Through the FY 2013 budget process, we will be considering the replacement of the remaining units, as well as the establishment of a replacement fund. Although the grant funds, if received, will alleviate pressure in FY 2012 on the general fund by enabling the City to replace non-compliant equipment, grant funding may not be a reliable source of funding to replace the SCBAs in the long term.

STAFF:

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