



Office of the City Manager

04

CONSENT CALENDAR

April 25, 2023

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager

Submitted by: David Sprague, Interim Chief, Fire Department

Subject: Grant Application: Funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to hire additional firefighters to meet NFPA 1710 standards and recommendations from the City Gate, LLC Standards of Coverage and Community Risk Assessment

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution authorizing the City Manager to apply for and accept a grant, and any amendments, from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for up to \$5,093,748 with no matching City funds to hire six additional firefighters to help the City meet the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1710 *Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments* and to partially accomplish one of the recommendations from the City Gate, LLC Standards of Coverage and Community Risk Assessment.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

There are no matching funds required for this grant award.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

A grant award will provide funding for the City to hire an additional six firefighters and increase the staffing of two engine companies from three to four firefighters for the three years of the grant performance period.

The Berkeley Fire Department (Department) is not meeting nationally recognized standards that outline how many firefighters should arrive at an incident within a designated time following a 9-1-1 call. The Department's model for providing service has not kept pace with the increased calls for service and the City's substantial infill and growth. Efforts to make incremental changes to Department staffing and deployment over the past 40 years were not sufficient and the organization is now faced with a large gap between the existing community risk and Department capacity. The City contracted with Citygate Associates, LLC to complete a Standards of Cover and Community Risk Assessment study (SOC) to better understand this gap. Citygate offered several recommendations to bring the Department into alignment with the City's current and future service needs including a recommendation to up-staff six of nine fire companies from three to four firefighters.

Studies performed by the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) demonstrate that four-person firefighting crews are more efficient than three-person crews. A fire engine staffed with four people completed the same number of fireground tasks 5.1 minutes faster than the three-person crew. The four-person crews were able to complete necessary fireground tasks on a residential structure fire nearly 25% faster than the three-person crews.

The importance of shaving even seconds off the time it takes to assemble and complete firefighting and search and rescue of trapped occupants of a fire becomes clear when evaluating the data from the Underwriter Laboratory's (UL) Firefighter Safety Research Institute (FSRI) study "New Comparison of Natural and Synthetic Home Furnishings" which demonstrates that modern fires develop faster than legacy fires, leaving occupants under 5 minutes post ignition to escape vs over 30 minutes before.

Similarly, in emergency medical incidents, there are a significant number of actions that need to occur simultaneously and expeditiously in order to provide residents with the best chance of survival. The Department runs just over 16,000 incidents per year. Of those, approximately 700 patients were classified in a category where the time it takes responders to arrive on the scene, the swiftness with which that crew initiated critical medical interventions, or speed with which the patient is transported to the emergency department has a direct impact to outcome and survival.

The increased staffing this grant will provide in key areas of the City will decrease the amount of time it takes to assemble the necessary number of responders on the scene of an incident and reduce the amount of time it takes personnel to begin and complete critical interventions to mitigate the emergency.

BACKGROUND

Over the past 30 years, the Department contracted in size from 10 stations to 7; from 180 firefighters to 130; and from four firefighters to three per fire engine or ladder truck. During the same 30 years, call volume has increased from 6,500 to over 16,000 incidents per year.

The SOC states that Berkeley is undergoing an intensification of land uses and populations, making the city configuration more typical of the largest metropolitan cities. The Department must grow from a suburban agency to that of a major urban fire department in staffing, unit types, and facility locations. The SOC describes that population, density, and traffic congestion impacts the Department's ability to deliver the appropriate number of responders to an emergency scene within nationally recognized arrival times.

The City has responded to a regional affordable housing shortage by revising zoning standards and increasing the number of mid-rise and high-rise buildings. While Berkeley has a relatively small land area of 10.43 square miles, it has developed a metro risk profile

based on density, development, and congestion. Berkeley is already the second most dense city (behind only San Francisco) in the top 51 most populated cities in California. The projected growth over the coming years coupled with proposed traffic calming projects will only increase density, congestion and the time it takes fire apparatus to travel to an incident and then if necessary to the emergency department.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

There are no environmental impacts from this grant.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

The Department is responsible for evaluating the risk profile of the community to ensure it is operationally prepared to mitigate the types of incidents in ways that meet or exceed national recommendations, industry best practices, and community expectations.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

Submitting a budget request for six additional firefighters in the FY24 budget process.

CONTACT PERSON

David Sprague, Interim Fire Chief, 510-981-3473

Attachments:

1: Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

GRANT APPLICATION: FUNDING FROM THE FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (FEMA) TO HIRE ADDITIONAL FIREFIGHTERS TO MEET NFPA 1710 STANDARDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CITY GATE, LLC STANDARDS OF COVERAGE AND COMMUNITY RISK ASSESSMENT

WHEREAS, over the past 40 years, the Berkeley Fire Department (Department) contracted in size from 10 stations to 7, 180 firefighters to 130 and from four firefighters to three per fire engine or ladder truck; and

WHEREAS, during the same 40 years, call volume has increased from 6,500 to over 16,000 incidents per year; and

WHEREAS, subsequently the Departments model for providing service has not kept pace with the increased calls for service and the City's substantial infill and growth specifically with regard to capacity to meet nationally recognized standards that outline total response time and how quickly an appropriate number of firefighters should be assembled at an incident within a designated period of time following a 9-1-1 call; and

WHEREAS, the City contracted with Citygate Associates, LLC to complete a Standards of Cover and Community Risk Assessment study (SOC) to better understand this gap; and

WHEREAS, Citygate offered several recommendations to bring the Department into alignment with the City's current and future service needs including a recommendation to up-staff six of nine fire companies from three to four firefighters; and

WHEREAS, the SOC states that Berkeley is undergoing an intensification of land uses and populations, making the city configuration more typical of the largest metropolitan cities. It recommends the Department grow from a suburban agency to that of a major urban fire department in staffing, unit types, and facility locations; and

WHEREAS, the City has responded to a regional affordable housing shortage by revising zoning standards and increasing the number of mid-rise and high-rise buildings. While Berkeley has a relatively small land area of 10.43 square miles, it has developed a metro risk profile based on density, development, and congestion. The City is already the second most dense City (behind only San Francisco) in the top 51 most populated cities in California. The projected growth over the coming years coupled with proposed traffic calming projects will only increase density, congestion and the time it takes fire apparatus to travel to an incident and then if necessary to the emergency department.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that the City Manager or her designee is authorized to apply for and accept a grant, and any amendments, from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for up to \$5,093,748 with no matching City funds to hire six additional firefighters to help the City meet the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1710 *Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments* and to partially accomplish one of the recommendations from the City Gate, LLC Standards of Coverage and Community Risk Assessment.