

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS JANICE HAHN
AND KATHRYN BARGER

December 4, 2018

Public Outreach and Needs Assessment for the Los Angeles County Fire Department

The Consolidated Fire Protection District of Los Angeles County, also known as the Los Angeles County Fire Department (Department) provides 24-hour emergency response, including fire and paramedic services, to over four million people living and working in 59 of the County’s 88 cities, the unincorporated communities and the City of La Habra in neighboring Orange County. The Department’s vast 2,307 square mile jurisdiction also includes 72 miles of coastline. The Fire Chief is also the County’s Forester and Fire Warden, and as such is responsible for the fire protection of thousands of acres of the County’s brush and wildland.

In May 2018, the Board directed the Chief Executive Officer to study the equipment and infrastructure needs of the Department. The report indicated that many County fire stations are in dire need of repair and some are over 50 years old. The Department’s communication equipment is outdated - including their 911 system and their community emergency alert systems. The Department has aging fire engines –

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some of which are over 20 years old and exceeded their operational life expectancy – and must be replaced. Other vital equipment such as breathing apparatus also must be updated. The Department has articulated the need for additional firefighter, paramedic and civilian positions to reduce the strain on the current force and to meet national standards for emergency responses. They also need additional emergency vehicles – especially fire engines and helicopters – to support both day-to-day fire and paramedic services across the Fire District and year-round preparedness against large scale wildfires.

The recent Woolsey Fire is a textbook example of this extraordinary – and new - challenge our firefighters must confront. This devastating wildfire is the worst to hit Los Angeles County in modern history. It raged for almost two weeks, burning through 97,000 acres including pristine open space in the Santa Monica Mountains. It destroyed 2,000 structures and displaced thousands of residents. And it highlights the new reality for our Los Angeles County Fire Department: now they must constantly protect against wildfires due to drought conditions and prolonged periods of dry, windy weather – while still maintaining effective, everyday 911 fire and paramedic response to 59 cities.

According to the needs assessment performed earlier this year, the cost for replacing old fire engines, purchasing additional helicopters and replacing their communications system is over \$170 million. The cost for repairing fire stations – and in some cases replacing fire stations that are over 50 years old – is close to \$750 million. The Fire Department's current budget – which is funded primarily through property taxes – covers their operating costs but cannot pay for the significant costs associated with desperately needed infrastructure and equipment. The new challenges

that the Woolsey Fire has presented has only accentuated the urgency for additional revenue.

That is why it is essential for the cities and communities that are served by this valiant Department be offered a deeper understanding into this new reality, in particular how modernized equipment, updated, repaired and seismically safe fire stations, additional vehicles and firefighting helicopters as well as additional firefighters and paramedics would help the Department meet these challenges head on, and will cost more.

We cannot predict when the next devastating wildfire will strike, since the threat is now year-round. But we can help our Fire Department get ready for it while still remaining vigilant for all of the communities they are entrusted with protecting.

WE THEREFORE MOVE that the Board of Supervisors instruct the Fire Chief, in coordination with the Chief Executive Officer and County Counsel, engage a consultant to conduct a one-year public outreach project to:

1. Create awareness of the new realities the Los Angeles County Fire Department must be prepared for, including financial realities, and in particular the equipment, infrastructure and paramedic/firefighter staffing they need to both sustain their current level of readiness and be prepared to effectively deal with the ongoing threat of wildfires;
2. Gather input from residents about their experiences in recent fires – including the Woolsey Fire - as well as day to day 9-1-1 emergency medical responses in order to fully assess the expanded needs of the Fire Department; and

3. Educate residents and local community leaders within the cities and communities that are protected by the Fire Department about the challenges the Fire Department faces.

WE FURTHER MOVE that the Board of Supervisors approve the attached budget adjustment that transfers \$4,500,000 from Obligated Fund Balance Committed for Infrastructure Growth to the Services and Supplies Appropriation within the Fire Department's Special District Fund to finance the public outreach project, and that the Fire Chief provide a status report in six months as well as a final report at the end of the project.

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JH:ni

November 27, 2018
DEPT NO: 390-02

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

REQUEST FOR APPROPRIATION ADJUSTMENT

Department of FIRE

AUDITOR-CONTROLLER:

THE FOLLOWING APPROPRIATION ADJUSTMENT IS DEEMED NECESSARY BY THIS DEPARTMENT. PLEASE CONFIRM THE ACCOUNTING ENTRIES AND AVAILABLE BALANCES AND FORWARD TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER FOR HIS RECOMMENDATION OR ACTION.

ADJUSTMENT REQUESTED AND REASONS THEREFOR
FY 2018-19
4 - VOTES

SOURCES

USES

FIRE DEPARTMENT

DA1-3060
COMMITTED FOR INFRASTRUCTURE GROWTH
DECREASE OBLIGATED FUND BALANCE

4,500,000

FIRE DEPARTMENT - EXECUTIVE BUDGET UNIT

DA1-FR-2000-40100-40129
SERVICES & SUPPLIES
INCREASE APPROPRIATION


4,500,000

SOURCES TOTAL \$ 4,500,000

USES TOTAL \$ 4,500,000

JUSTIFICATION

Reflects the cancellation of \$4.5 million from Committed for Infrastructure Growth to the services and supplies within the Fire Department to fund public outreach consulting services.


AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE

ADRIAN LI, ASM III, FMD

BOARD OF SUPERVISOR'S APPROVAL (AS REQUESTED/REVISED)

REFERRED TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER FOR---

- ACTION
- RECOMMENDATION

AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

BY *Larson*

B.A. NO. 073

DATE Nov. 28, 2018

APPROVED AS REQUESTED

APPROVED AS REVISED

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Martha McDevitt

DATE Nov. 28, 2018