



TRUCKEE MEADOWS FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT STAFF REPORT

Board Meeting Date: September 1, 2020

DATE: August 11, 2020

TO: Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District Board of Fire Commissioners

FROM: Charles A. Moore, Fire Chief
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SUBJECT: Recommendation to approve five (5) positions for one (1) Squad Boss with a salary range of \$54,184 to \$70,012 with Regular Nevada Public Employees' Retirement System (NV PERS) and four (4) Crew Members with a salary range of \$41,995 - \$54,496 with Regular NV PERS, which will add a third squad to the Fuels Reduction Program. (All Commission Districts) FOR POSSIBLE ACTION.

SUMMARY

Recommendation to approve five (5) positions for one (1) Squad Boss with a salary range of \$54,184 to \$70,012 with Regular Nevada Public Employees' Retirement System (NV PERS) and four (4) Crew Members with a salary range of \$41,995 - \$54,496 with Regular NV PERS, which will add a third squad to the Fuels Reduction Program.

This proposed third squad will be funded initially through NV Energy and the State of Nevada Division of Forestry (NDF). During the 80th Session of the Nevada Legislature, \$5 million for pre-fire suppression work across the State was allocated. Subsequently, NV Energy partnered with NDF and provided \$5 million in matching funds, creating a fund of \$10 million for pre-suppression work. TMFPD has been allotted \$1.2 million for TMFPD jurisdiction work. The District will seek proper approval from the Board prior to accepting any funds, and these positions will be filled until the funding is secured. Once funding is secured, the District will present a budget augmentation to the Board for a public hearing.

PREVIOUS ACTION

December 17, 2019, the Board approved the position of Division Chief of Fuels and Wildfire to oversee the Fuels Reduction Program.

January 21, 2020, the Board approved the positions of one (1) Squad Boss and four (4) Crew Members to create the first squad for the Fuels Reduction Program.

April 28, 2020, the Board approved a 3-year contract between the District and NV Energy for the purpose of eliminating fire hazards. This agreement pays the District on a "time and materials basis" for fuels reduction services. The contract included payment for the annual costs for the first squad of the Fuels Reduction Program and equipment to complete this work. The contract provided that, as additional

projects were identified, additional squads and equipment could be added. All the costs associated with completing the work on the NV Energy projects will be paid by NV Energy.

June 16, 2020, the Board approved the payment of up-front expenses in a total amount of \$249,200 for the purchase of one (1) Type V Engine, to be reimbursed by NV Energy pursuant to the above-referenced contract, which was needed to perform the hazardous fuels reduction under the contract.

July 21, 2020, the Board approved new positions to add a second squad to the Fuels Reduction Program, specifically one (1) Crew Boss, one (1) Heavy Equipment Operator, one (1) Squad Boss, and four (4) Crew Members.

BACKGROUND

Statutory Authority: NRS 474.500 authorizes a district fire chief to hire employees upon Board authorization and to coordinate fire protection activities within the District. NRS 474.470 authorizes the Board to provide for payment of salaries of personnel it authorizes. NRS 474.580 requires landowners to control and eliminate fire hazards on their property. If a landowner fails to do so, the District is authorized to remove the hazard and charge the landowner for the performance of that work.

Necessity and Benefits of Third Squad for Fuels Reduction Program: Prior to its consolidation with TMFPD, the Sierra Fire Protection District managed a 20+ person hand crew squad that conducted fuels management projects, including wildfire hand crew work. That program was tremendously successful and operated largely off grant funds. TMFPD is developing a similar, but more robust, Fuels Reduction Program to address the fire hazards within the wildland-urban interface that surround most of the District.

In the Fall of 2019, NV Energy began working with the State of Nevada and local government fire agencies to develop a program to reduce the risk of fires related to NV Energy's electrical infrastructure, such as removal of vegetation around power poles and within their easements as required by NRS 474.580. A long-term plan was established to identify areas of highest fire risk and prioritize elimination of fire hazards.

On April 28, 2020, the Board approved a 3-year contract between the District and NV Energy for the purpose of implementing the above-referenced plan by eliminating fire hazards by using the hand crews of the District's Fuels Reduction Program. The contract included payment for the annual costs for the first squad and equipment. The contract contemplated that, as additional projects were identified, additional squads and equipment could be added. All costs associated with personnel and equipment completing the work on the NV Energy projects will be paid by NV Energy. On July 21, 2020, The Board authorized positions for a second squad.

This proposed third squad will be funded initially through NV Energy and the State of Nevada Division of Forestry (NDF). During the 80th Session of the Nevada Legislature, \$5 million in matching funds for pre-fire suppression work across the State was allocated. Subsequently, NV Energy partnered with NDF and provided \$5 million in matching funds, creating a fund of \$10 million for pre-suppression work. TMFPD has been allotted for \$1.2 million was allotted for TMFPD jurisdiction work. The District will seek proper approval from the Board prior to accepting these funds.

It is the goal of the District to start the 2020 fall/winter seasons with three squads working in the Fuels Reduction Program. The Board approved the positions that will comprise the first squad on January 21, 2020 and the positions that will comprise the second squad on July 21, 2020. The District does not anticipate a need to expand the Fuels Reduction Program until late winter/early spring 2021. The addition of the third squad will put the District in a position to conduct effectively fuels management projects, including wildfire hand crew work.

FISCAL IMPACT

The salary range for the position of Squad Boss is \$54,184 to \$70,012 with Regular Nevada Public Employees' Retirement System (NV PERS). The salary range for the position of Crew Member is \$41,995 to \$54,496 with Regular NV PERS. The FY 20/21 cost is estimated at \$364,313 for salaries and benefits, which will be paid through NV Energy and NDF funding. None of these positions will be filled until the funding is secured. After funding is secured, the District will present a budget augmentation to the Board of Fire Commissioners for a public hearing.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended the Board approve five (5) positions for one (1) Squad Boss with a salary range of \$54,184 to \$70,012 with Regular Nevada Public Employees' Retirement System (NV PERS) and four (4) Crew Members with a salary range of \$41,995 - \$54,496 with Regular NV PERS, which will add a third squad to the Fuels Reduction Program.

POSSIBLE MOTION

Should the Board agree with staff's recommendation, a potential motion could read:

"I move to approve five (5) positions for one (1) Squad Boss with a salary range of \$54,184 to \$70,012 with Regular Nevada Public Employees' Retirement System (NV PERS) and four (4) Crew Members with a salary range of \$41,995 - \$54,496 with Regular NV PERS, which will add a third squad to the Fuels Reduction Program."