



TRUCKEE MEADOWS FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT STAFF REPORT

Board Meeting Date: October 6, 2020

DATE: September 16, 2020
TO: Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District Board of Fire Commissioners
FROM: Alex Kukulus, Deputy Fire Chief
THROUGH: Charles A. Moore, Fire Chief
Phone: (775) 328-6123 Email: cmoore@tmfpd.us
SUBJECT: Recommendation to accept a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant award, # EMW-2019-FF-01534, in the estimated amount of \$1,038,799.62 for the purpose of hiring three (3) additional Firefighter/Paramedic positions to enhance the District's current staffing levels and authorize Finance to make appropriate budget adjustments. (All Commission Districts) FOR POSSIBLE ACTION

SUMMARY

This item is a recommendation to accept a FEMA SAFER grant aware, # EMW-2019-FF-01534 in the estimated amount of \$1,038,799.62. The grant period is for 36 months and will pay for three full-time firefighter paramedics.

Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District applied for a FEMA SAFER grant for the purpose of adding additional firefighters to maintain staffing levels on the District's aerial apparatus, currently located at Station 33. On September 16, 2020 FEMA notified the District that it had been selected to receive a grant award to fund the above program in the estimated amount of \$1,038,799.62.

The grant will allow the District to consistently staff at a level of four personnel at fire station 33 (Foothill).

BACKGROUND

FEMA SAFER grants are intended to "assist local fire departments" with staffing and deployment capabilities to respond to emergencies and assure that communities have adequate protection from fire and fire-related hazards. Local fire departments accomplish this by improving staffing and deployment capabilities, so they may more effectively and safely respond to emergencies. With enhanced staffing levels, recipients should experience a reduction in response times and an increase in the number of trained personnel assembled at the incident scene."

Every year, FEMA offers a grant opportunity to fund personnel and associated costs to enhance fire & EMS services throughout the country. The total available funding for this program in Federal fiscal year 2019 was \$350,000,000. In May, 2020 TMFPD submitted an application for approximately

\$1,045,549.62 to fund the salary and benefits for three (3) additional Firefighter/Paramedic positions. On September 16, 2020 FEMA notified the District that the application had been awarded at a slight reduction to that requested due to a change in allowable benefit costs. The award amount is \$1,038,799.62.

The District applied for these three positions at approximately the same time that the District was preparing to place its new aerial apparatus (Ladder 33) into service. In negotiations with IAFF Local 2487, the District agreed to maintain a crew size of 4 on the aerial apparatus when it is in service (with certain exceptions). This unit was placed in service in June of this year and the station was subsequently “up-staffed” from three persons per shift, to four persons per shift. This additional staffing has been maintained through additional use of overtime, and/or unassigned “floater” firefighters.

Three additional firefighter/paramedics will supplant the floater and overtime for this piece of apparatus and will return our staffing model with all required station positions filled, plus three floater positions per shift.

Due to the impacts of the current pandemic, FEMA approved several economic hardship waivers including no required cost share by the District, position cost limits were waived, minimum budget commitments were waived, and supplanting was allowed. At the conclusion of the performance period (three years), the District intends on absorbing these additional positions, either through attrition of other positions, or through the possible growth of the District’s revenues during that period of time.

Following the notice of award, FEMA allows 30 days from the award notification date (September 16, 2020) to formally accept the award. If the award is accepted, the District will then have 180 days from the award date to recruit and hire the three grant funded positions. If the District should suffer from any unintended negative financial impacts during the performance period, the District may apply for further economic hardship waivers as described below.

SAFER Grant Post-Award Recipient Responsibilities:

Once awarded, recipients under the Hiring of Firefighters Activity must submit a pre-SAFER roster listing paid operational/firefighting personnel, in support of NFPA 1710 or NFPA 1720, who are employees at time of application. FEMA compares the pre-SAFER roster to names submitted for SAFER-funded positions, to ensure that the SAFER-funded firefighters are new employees. Vacant operational positions (funded in the department’s budget and which when filled will support NFPA 1710 or 1720 compliance) will be indicated on the pre-SAFER roster and are included in the overall operational staffing. FEMA must include vacant positions as described above to ensure the non-supplanting requirement is met.

The SAFER Program Office will work with recipients to establish the correct staffing maintenance numbers, which combine the number of pre-SAFER (filled and vacant positions) and SAFER-funded operational positions. Once this is established, recipients must agree to maintain this number throughout the period of performance by taking active and timely steps to fill any vacancies.

Recipients under the Hiring of Firefighters Activity who lay off any operational personnel during the three-year period of performance will be considered in default of their grant and the award will be terminated. In those situations, recipients may be required to return the federal funds disbursed under the grant award.

Recipients who are unable, due to documentable economic hardship, to backfill non-SAFER operational positions vacated through attrition (e.g., resignation, retirement) after receiving an award may petition

FEMA to waive the staffing maintenance requirements. Approved waivers allow recipients to decrease and reestablish the staffing maintenance numbers agreed to at the time of award by the number of positions that recipients are unable to fill. To qualify for this waiver, the economic hardship must affect the entire public safety sector in a recipient's jurisdiction, not just the fire department. FEMA will not grant waivers for SAFER-funded positions. Recipients who fail to maintain the required level of staffing risk losing federal funds awarded under this grant.

FISCAL IMPACT

The estimated salaries and benefits for the three positions included in the grant award are \$147,000 for fiscal year 20/21 and \$1,138,000 over the three years of the grant. Costs not funded include overtime. It cannot be precisely determined the amount of overtime the three positions will accrue, however overtime for these positions is expected to stay within the approved FY20/21 overtime budget. After funding is secured, the District will present a budget augmentation to the Board of Fire Commissioners for a public hearing.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation to accept a FEMA SAFER Grant award, # EMW-2019-FF-01534, in the estimated amount of \$1,038,799.62 for the purpose of hiring three (3) additional Firefighter/Paramedic positions to enhance the District's current staffing levels and authorize Finance to make appropriate budget adjustments.

POSSIBLE MOTION

Should the Board agree with staff's recommendation a possible motion would be:

"I move to accept a FEMA SAFER Grant award, # EMW-2019-FF-01534, in the estimated amount of \$1,038,799.62 for the purpose of hiring three (3) additional Firefighter/Paramedic positions to enhance the District's current staffing levels and authorize Finance to make appropriate budget adjustments."