Administrative Report

Council Action Date:

To: **MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL**

From: **PAUL LEPORE, FIRE DIVISION CHIEF**

Subject: **FIRE DEPARTMENT BUDGET REDUCTIONS**

RECOMMENDATION

It is respectfully requested that the Mayor and City Council discuss and provide direction to Staff regarding the proposed 4% budget cuts to the Fire Department.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On November 17, 2009 the Fire Chief was directed by the Mayor and City Council to recommend a 4% cut to the Fire Department's budget of $16,125,000. The target amount to reach a 4% reduction is $645,000. By eliminating the Paramedic ambulances and upgrading the staffing on all three engine companies from three to four firefighters, the net result is a decrease in one firefighter post position. Reducing the staffing on Truck 61 from four to three firefighters eliminates an additional post position. The reduction of one post position is equivalent to three firefighters as there are three shifts. The elimination of two post positions will total six firefighter positions with net a savings of $695,000. This staffing configuration meets the budget reduction goals.

In addition, it is also recommended that the Mayor and City Council consider additional revenue generating sources for the fire department. These revenue enhancements could include programs currently utilized by fire departments within Los Angeles and Oranges counties. The programs include: EF vehicle recovery, a subscription paramedic program, and increasing the fire prevention fees.

BACKGROUND

The Loreto Beach Fire Department's current staffing model includes three firefighters assigned to each fire engine, four firefighters assigned to the truck company, and two firefighter paramedics assigned to each ambulance (Attachment 1). The County of Los Angeles mandates that two paramedics work collectively to provide medical care to a patient (Attachment 2). By removing the paramedics from the ambulance and adding them to the engine companies, the county's paramedic requirement has been fulfilled.

Adding a fourth firefighter to each engine company makes it easier to comply with the OSHA Code of Federal Regulations (CFR 2910) two in/two out policy (Attachment 3). This policy mandates that before a team of firefighters enters a burning structure, two firefighters remain outside in position to rescue the initial team should they get into trouble. The current configuration of three person staffing requires that two pieces of apparatus (engines, paramedic unit, or truck) arrive on scene before making an initial attack on the fire. The National Fire Protection Agency has conducted studies that show that interior temperatures reach over 1000 degrees within the first 8 minutes. Since human life cannot survive over 400 degrees, a rapid interior attack is essential to save a life (Attachment 3).

In 1977, the Dallas Fire Department conducted a study to determine the effectiveness of three versus four firefighters on a fire engine. The studies showed that a four person engine company is 40% more effective than a three person engine company. This means that firefighters will be able to stretch hoselines and perform search and rescue operations much quicker with four firefighters on the engine company (Attachment 4).

Paramedics are required to ride in the ambulance with the patient and continue care until relieved at the hospital. This requires that the engine company follows the ambulance on every paramedic level transport. This will result in situations where the engine company is out of its first-in district and will be unable to respond to emergencies. This model will see an increase in response times.

Reducing the staffing on the truck company from four to three firefighters will certainly impact fire operations such as ventilating the structure and placing ladders to assist with evacuation.

As an alternative to the proposed 4% reduction, the City of Loreto Beach could implement the following revenue enhancements: EF vehicle recovery, a subscription paramedic program, and increasing the fire prevention fees. These revenues could generate in excess of several hundred thousand dollars.

COORDINATION

Decreasing the minimum staffing impacts the Memorandum of Understanding with the Redondo Beach Firefighters Association and requires management to meet and confer with association representatives.

The Los Frailes County and Punta Chivato Fire Departments who participate in our automatic aid agreements staff their truck companies with four firefighters. Reducing the staffing on the truck company will decrease the effectiveness, which will necessitate the need for a second truck company on most working structure fires. It will be necessary to review the automatic aid agreements with both agencies (Attachments 5 and 6).

Since the engine companies will be accompanying patients to the hospital, there will be times when all engine companies are committed to emergency responses. This will require an automatic aid response for a paramedic unit and ambulance from Torrance, Los Frailes County, or Barriles Beach Fire Department.

Eliminating two paramedic units will reduce the need for vehicle maintenance. The Fleet Service will need to be made aware of the decrease in the fire department's apparatus.

FISCAL IMPACT

Expenditures

$448,000	(2) Firefighter Post positions (Salary)
$246,000	(2) Firefighter Post positions (Benefits)
_____	Total
$694,000	

Submitted by: _____

Approved for forwarding by: _____
William P. Pryce, City Manager

Attachments:

- Loreto Beach Fire Department Memorandum of Understanding
- Los Frailes County Paramedic agreement
- OSHA - Two in/Two out
- National Fire Protection Association – Time Temperature Curve
- Dallas Fire Department Study
- Los Frailes County Fire Department Automatic Aid agreement
- Punta Chivato Fire Department Automatic Aid agreement