



## CITY OF HARRISONBURG CITY MANAGER

409 SOUTH MAIN STREET, HARRISONBURG, VA 22801

OFFICE (540) 432-7701 • FAX (540) 432-7778

TO: Ande Banks, City Manager  
FROM: Matthew Tobia, Fire Chief *MSJ*  
DATE: 02/19/2023  
RE: FEMA SAFER GRANT APPLICATION

### **Summary:**

The purpose of this item is to seek formal support from City Council through a vote authorizing the Fire Department to pursue a SAFER grant to fund fifteen firefighter positions.

### **Background**

In January 2022, City Council voted to formally authorize the Fire Department to pursue a federally funded grant under FEMA, known as SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response) seeking funding for fifteen firefighter positions intended to staff Fire Station #5. The application was submitted timely in March 2022, and ultimately, (although judged competitive) was not funded under the program. FEMA received over 1500 applications seeking a combined \$5 Billion in funding requests however they only had \$560 Million in available funding. In January 2022, during a staff briefing to Council, the Fire Department committed to returning for additional guidance if the grant was not awarded. The grant cycle has re-opened, and we are seeking formal support from Council to apply for a SAFER grant in the current cycle.

Note: In the prior application, all fifteen positions were proposed for Fire Station #5. However, in the proposed application, twelve positions will be proposed for Fire Station #5 and three positions will be proposed for Fire Station #1 to consistently meet NFPA 1710, a key criterion in grant application grading. It is believed that this action will make the grant itself more competitive. The total number of positions being sought has not changed.

### **Key Issues:**

The value in being awarded the grant is that it offsets 95% of the financial cost of the new positions in the fire department for three years. If awarded, the personnel would be hired in the immediate next fiscal year (FY24) and the city would not have to begin funding the positions using local revenue streams until halfway through FY27, representing significant cost savings to the city.

**Environmental Impact:** None



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### **Fiscal Impact:**

Applying for the grant has no immediate fiscal impact. If the grant is awarded, it will represent a financial savings to the city of \$3.5 Million over the three-year lifespan of the grant. If awarded, the city will need to budget \$350,000.00 over the three-year lifespan of the grant to support non-eligible components of the hiring of personnel.

### **Prior Actions:**

The Fire Department applied for the same grant in March 2022, but was not successful in being awarded.

### **Alternatives:**

- (a) Approve the request as presented.
- (b); or choose not to apply for the grant and plan to fund the positions in FY25 operating budget.
- (c) Choose not to move forward with the Fire Station project.

### **Community Engagement:**

N/A

### **Recommendation:**

I recommend that City Council authorize the Fire Chief, through the City Manager, to submit an application to the FEMA SAFER grant program no later than March 17, 2023, for fifteen firefighter positions.

### **Attachments:**

### **Review:**

*The initiating Department Director will place in Legistar, in sequence of transmittal, the names of each department that must initial their review in order for this item to be placed on the City Council agenda. The completion of review only addresses the readiness of the issue for Council consideration. This does not address the recommendation for approval or denial of the issue.*