

City of Culver City, California
City Council Agenda Item Report

Meeting Date: 12/03/07		Item Number: <u>A-6</u>	
AGENDA ITEM: Discuss the Current Level of Service Provided by the Culver City Fire Department and Possible Funding Options for Fire Suppression and Emergency Medical Services .			
Contact Person/Dept.: Jeff Eastman, Fire Chief		Phone Number: (310) 253-5915	
Fiscal Impact: Yes ☒ No ☐		General Fund: Yes ☒ No ☐	
Public Hearing: ☐		Action Item: ☒ Attachments: ☒	
Public Notification: Master Notification List (11/28/07)			
Department Approval: Jeff Eastman (11/28/07)		City Attorney Approval: Carol Schwab (by H. Iker) (11/19/07)	
Fiscal Impact Review: Marlee Chang (11/28/07)		City Manager Approval: Jerry B. Fulwood (11/28/07)	
<u>RECOMMENDATION:</u> Staff recommends the City Council discuss the current level of service provided by the Culver City Fire Department, including factors that impact the current levels of service, possible funding options for emergency medical services, and direct staff as appropriate. <u>BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION</u> Over the past few years, the Culver City Fire Department (CCFD) has been facing a number of critical issues that could cause severe impacts to the levels of service the Fire Department provides to the community. Two of the more notable external issues are; continually increasing call volumes and fluctuations in emergency room capacity at local hospitals. The CCFD's staffing levels have not increased since the 1970's while over the past thirty-five years the number of incidents and many of the workload indicators have nearly doubled. The daily on shift staffing includes: three (3) three-person Engine Companies, two (2) two-person Paramedic Rescue Units, one (1) four-person Truck Company, and one (1) one-person Battalion Chief Command Vehicle. In early 2006, CCFD staff began developing a five-year projection and needs assessment to identify the issues and present a number of options to address these issues. This plan was outlined in the City's Comprehensive Financial Plan presented to the City Council on March 5, 2007.			

City of Culver City, California
City Council Agenda Item Report

The five-year projection and needs assessment identified: 1) statistical benchmarks and workload indicators to help determine system function and future needs; and 2) external factors that impact the CCFD's workload and availability, but are outside of the City's control. These external factors can have an immediate impact on levels of service.

Service levels are monitored using a number of essential statistical benchmarks and external factors. The statistical benchmarks include:

1. Number of incidents
2. Number of unit responses
3. Response times
4. Company out of service time
5. Number of concurrent responses
6. Number of patients transported outside of Culver City
7. Number of patients transported
8. Number of inspections performed
9. Number of continuing education hours
10. Number of general training hours
11. Number of hydrants serviced and flowed
12. Number of pre-fire plans completed
13. Number of public education hours

At this time, the CCFD is experiencing statistically significant increases in many of the identified benchmarked external factors. These increases will negatively impact the Fire Department's ability to retain the current levels of service.

External Factors

Hospital Availability

Hospital Capacity is a crucial factor in the deployment of CCFD resources. The capability of local hospitals to receive patients transported by CCFD directly impacts resource availability and response times. Any decrease in services provided by area hospitals (e.g. fluctuations in emergency room capacity) has a significant affect on the service provided by CCFD. Brotman Hospital is a key component of the local system. Approximately 50% of patients transported by CCFD are transported to Brotman Hospital. If Brotman Hospital were to close permanently, or significantly reduce services it would have a dramatic impact on the availability of the City's ambulance resources as patients would have to be transported to facilities that are further away. This would have a significantly negative impact to the CCFD's levels of service and would cause an immediate need for increased staffing.

City of Culver City, California
City Council Agenda Item Report

Another critical factor affecting Emergency Medical Service (EMS) in Culver City is the diversion status of area hospitals. Throughout any given day, local hospitals temporarily close as ambulance receiving facilities. This is known as diversion status. There are several categories of diversion status. Diversion status is initiated by an authorized hospital administrator and tracked by the Department of Health Services via the REDDINET. Reasons for diversion status include emergency department saturation, the absence of an available neurosurgeon, the lack of a CAT scanner, saturation of trauma or pediatric facilities, and internal disaster (bomb threats, power failure, etc.). A dramatic increase in the duration that hospitals are on diversion status would have a similar effect on CCFD resources and response times. Once again, as the frequency of diversion status increases, CCFD level of service are negatively impacted.

Government Mandates & Standards

Federal, State, and local government mandates can impact the services CCFD provides to the community. In addition to Federal and State mandates there are local regulations that CCFD is obligated to follow. The Los Angeles County Department of Health Services is the agency that regulates paramedic services locally. Changes promulgated by this agency can impact the delivery of EMS services in Culver City.

Traffic Flow

The increase in local traffic also increases CCFD response times. With the growth in the residential and business population, the development of LAX, West Los Angeles College, Playa Vista, Symantec, and development outside of Culver City, Culver City has experienced large increases in traffic over the past few years and the CCFD expects traffic increases to continue over the next few years.

City Growth

Continued growth and development in Culver City and surrounding areas impact CCFD levels of service. Daytime and nighttime population has been increasing due to construction of additional commercial and residential space in the area, which has an impact on traffic in the City. The CCFD will work with the Community Development Department to help forecast this growth and determine the impact on CCFD service levels.

System Demands

System demands are ever present, yet difficult to predict. They include patient insurance policy changes, age of population, homeless population, epidemic and pandemic illnesses, and terrorist threats. These are important factors that CCFD will continue to monitor as they can all impact our levels of service.

City of Culver City, California
City Council Agenda Item Report

- Patient insurance policy changes: As coverage changes, there can be an increase in patient transport requests out of the City.
- Age of population: Approximately 43% of CCFD patients are over 60 years old. As our population continues to age, call volume will also increase.
- Homeless population: This past year there was a 91% increase in calls for homeless persons. This is a high risk population. They place additional demands on local hospital beds causing our ambulances to have to transport other patients out of the area.
- Pandemic and Epidemic illnesses: Based on history, experts believe another influenza pandemic is only a matter of time. A severe pandemic could change the patterns of daily life for some time. An influenza pandemic is expected to last 1-2 years. Although much less dramatic but very likely, an influenza epidemic significantly impacts call volume and local hospitals, again increasing transport times.
- Terrorist threats: In the current world climate, terrorist threat is a constant strain under which everyone must live and work. This threat requires the CCFD to diligently train, prepare and staff in order to respond to such incidents.

DISCUSSION

Due to the increases in external factors currently facing the CCFD, including the status of Brotman Hospital, CCFD is recommending a change to the current level of staffing. In order to maintain the existing service levels, CCFD is proposing the **addition of one Paramedic Rescue**.

The addition of a third Paramedic Rescue will not only relieve many of the negative impacts affecting service levels, it will also have a positive impact on the City's budget. The Department may experience an increase in ambulance revenues based on the ability to capture transports that are currently being lost. The Department experiences a decrease in ambulance revenues when private ambulances are utilized in place of a CCFD Paramedic Rescues.

The following sections describe a few financing options that may be used to fund the proposed additional Rescue.

Community Facilities District (CFD)

The Mello-Roos Community Facilities Act of 1982 allows the funding of the construction or acquisition of real or tangible property with a useful life of five years

City of Culver City, California
City Council Agenda Item Report

or more such as streets, sewers, etc. It also allows financing of police and fire services to accommodate the growing needs of developing areas.

A CFD tax is a special tax levied annually on each taxable parcel in the CFD district and may be used to finance fire protection and emergency medical services to the extent that they are provided in addition to those services provided in the CFD area before the CFD was created. The revenue generated by this special tax must be used to fund the service for which it has been levied and cannot be used for general purposes.

Voting for a CFD is done by mail-in ballot and requires approval by a super majority (67%) of returned ballots. All registered voters within the boundaries of the district are eligible to vote.

Special Tax for Emergency Medical Services

A Special Parcel Tax is a tax levied annually on each parcel and, similar to the CFD tax, may be used to finance fire protection and emergency medical services; however, unlike a CFD, it does not need to be directly connected to an additional service. The revenue generated by this special tax must be used to fund the service for which it has been levied and cannot be used for general purposes.

Despite the similarities between a CFD Tax and a Special Parcel Tax, there are a few important differences between the two funding mechanisms. First, a CFD is a mail in ballot of all registered voters in the district (in this case, the district would be the entire City), which provides some flexibility in regards to election timing. A Special Parcel Tax must be voted on at a general City election. Second, a CFD is actually a lien on the subject property; a Special Parcel Tax is not. Therefore, payment of the CFD tax is a much higher priority in the event of a property foreclosure proceeding. Lastly, a CFD has a separate appropriation limit. A Special Parcel Tax does not and, consequently, is included in the City's Gann Limit calculation.

To comply with Proposition 218, voting for a Special Parcel Tax is done at a General Election and requires approval by a super majority (67%) since the revenue would be specifically earmarked for emergency medical services.

FISCAL ANALYSIS:

The costs for the proposed staffing level and equipment needs are identified below:

City of Culver City, California
City Council Agenda Item Report

Add one additional Paramedic Unit:

	One- Time	On-going	TOTAL (one-time+on- going)
6-Firefighter/Paramedics (Salary+Benefits)		\$957,000	\$957,000
6-Safety equipment	\$100,000		\$100,000
Constant Staffing for Paramedic School (for 6 Paramedics)	\$360,000		\$360,000
Continuing Ed & Quality Assurance		\$25,000	\$25,000
1-Rescue Unit	\$176,000		\$176,000
Amortization (Paramedic Truck)		\$24,150	\$24,150
Maintenance & Fuel		\$8,000	\$8,000
TOTAL	\$636,000	\$1,014,150	\$1,650,150

The total start-up costs for the proposed additional unit are estimated to be \$1,265,150. The annual ongoing costs for the proposed staffing level listed above are estimated to be \$989,150 in fiscal 2007/08. NOTE: Projected ongoing personnel costs are projected to increase approximately 5% annually (any increase above 5% is not reflected in this figure) and O & M costs are projected to increase approximately 3% annually.

Funding

The funding mechanisms described in this report can be used to fund all, or a portion, of the proposed staffing level and additional equipment identified above. Based on the estimated costs above, the assessment would be approximately \$103 per parcel in the first year and approximately \$65 in subsequent years (subject to an annual escalator).

It is important to note that costs may increase annually due to salary and benefit cost increases. The identified funding sources should have a built in escalator to avoid future impacts to the General Fund.

Each of the funding mechanism in this report, can have an annual escalator built in when it is voted on initially. Therefore, the voters give their approval to increase the tax annually without having to vote on it annually. The recommended escalator should include the CPI increase plus the Safety Salary Initiative increase.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Community Facilities District
2. Special Tax for Emergency Medical Services

City of Culver City, California
City Council Agenda Item Report

MOTION:

That City Council:

Discuss the current levels of service provided by the Culver City Fire Department, the factors that impact the current levels of service, possible funding options for emergency medical services and direct staff as appropriate.