



CONFIRE

STAFF REPORT

DATE: 11/24/2021

FROM: Art Andres, Director

TO: CONFIRE Administrative Committee

SUBJECT: STAFFING REPORT

RECOMMENDATION

Authorize a side letter agreement with Communications Workers of America for the Emergency Services Unit MOU regarding Equity Costing.

BACKGROUND

CONFIRE hired Mission Critical Partners to conduct a comprehensive analyze of the staffing needs for the Emergency Communications Center. The Administrative Committee adopted the study during the November 2020 meeting and CONFIRE staff has used the information to guide staffing decisions. There were 35 distinct recommendations broken in to 8 separate categories. To date we have implemented or accomplished 23 of the 35 recommendations. Several highlights include: Automatic Voice Dispatch, Quick Launch, Auto Dispatch of high acuity calls along with implementation of the Emergency Communication Nurse System.

Staffing remains CONFIRE's number one priority and operational concern. Authorized staffing includes 38 radio dispatchers and 6 call takers. In the period since adopting the staffing study, we have hired 13 and promoted 4 dispatchers to supervisor. Unfortunately, 6 did not complete training and we experienced the departure of an additional 6 personnel including a supervisor and assistant communications manager. We are currently 20% below authorized staffing. Overtime combine with the quantity of force overtime remain at unacceptable levels, above industry standards of 4%:

2018 = 6.1%
2019 = 11.5%
2020 = 7.9%

Recruitment and retention historically are a challenge in the telecommunications profession. The staffing report is a useful guide, but we have been unable to obtain the desired outcome of

full staffing. Several factors limited our ability to attain our strategic management goal of full staffing by the end of calendar year 2021. Contract negotiations have been affected by multiple issues. The current Emergency Services Unit Memorandum of Understanding represented by Communications Workers of America was approved June of 2017 and expired June of 2020. Delays have become a hinderance for increasing compensation for current as well as future employees. Recruiting new quality employees will require appropriate compensation in alignment with other telecommunications professionals in the region. Several additional strategies are being used separate from the staffing report recommendations. We have begun to utilize the San Bernardino County Work Force Development Board and Economic Development Agency to create pathways. In addition, we have been meeting with Victor Valley College to develop curriculum for public safety personnel to create a talent pool of telecommunications staff for both police and fire dispatch centers in the region.

The Board of Directors authorized CONFIRE to dual fill positions in December 2020. We currently have an open recruitment and are waiting for a certified list to schedule interviews. We anticipate increasing the number of academies and remain focused on the vertical alignment to better utilize our resources. Current authorized call takers will increase from 6 to 12 to cover all shifts in both dispatch centers. The time required to train a call taker is typically 3 months vs 10 months for a dispatcher. Historically a fully trained call taker requires less time to become a competent dispatcher so increasing the number of call takers will allow us to promote internally and streamline the training process along with increasing the retention of successful trainees.

CONFIRE is an ever-changing organization, adapting to the innovations of next generation technology. We strive to increase customer and staff engagement while leveraging those assets to exceed industry standards and member expectations. Achieving full staffing remains a challenge but we remain focused on reaching this goal as soon as possible using every available resource.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Approval of equity cost increase will provide an approximate 10% increase for all unit classifications covered in the Emergency Services Unit MOU effective January 15, 2021. The net result would be an approximately \$174,000 increase in personnel costs for the remainder of fiscal year 2021/22. Due to the cost savings resulting for current vacancies, no net increase will be required in fund 2008 for the current fiscal year.

Anticipating full staffing is achieved would result in a total cost over base of \$409,274 for fiscal 2022/23.