

AGENDA MEMORANDUM

Item

TO: City Council, City Manager

FROM: Mark Guthrie Fire Chief

DATE: June 19, 2026

SUBJECT: Authorization and Implementation of Volunteer Firefighter Pay-Per-Call Incentive Program

1. Background & Statement of Need

Our volunteer firefighters sacrifice their personal safety, family time, and sleep to protect the citizens of our community. However, volunteering is not entirely free. Members routinely incur personal expenses for fuel, vehicle wear-and-tear, and apparel care just to respond to emergencies. Under our current system, our volunteers essentially "pay to volunteer." The proposed Pay-Per-Call program addresses several critical operational and equity challenges:

- **Utility Discount Disparity:** The City currently offers a municipal water bill discount to volunteer firefighters. However, members who live in apartments or multi-family complexes do not receive this benefit. The Pay-Per-Call program creates equity by ensuring all active responders are recognized regardless of their housing type.
- **Volunteer Retention:** As call volumes rise and personal scheduling demands increase, an active incentive program directly supports volunteer retention and stabilizes our roster.
- **Voluntary Participation:** This program includes an explicit opt-out provision. Any firefighter who wishes to maintain strict unpaid volunteer status may do so via a standard opt-out form.

2. Fiscal Impact Analysis

We have modeled the financial footprint of this program using both historical data and real-time 2026 tracking. The proposed rate structure matches standard regional baselines: **\$25.00 per emergency call** response and **\$15.00 per mandatory training meeting**.

The proposed **\$20,000 line item** in the FY2026 budget is heavily insulated by realistic volunteer participation rates, ensuring we will not exceed budget boundaries.

Cost Projections & Budget Alignment

Metric / Scenario	Data Basis	Projected Annual Cost
Historical Baseline	Full 2024 Run Data	~\$21,675
FY2026 Proposed Budget Line Item	Fixed Allocation	\$20,000
Real-World Tracking (2026 Mid-Year)	27% Avg. Active Participation	~\$9,170 (<i>Projected annual total</i>)
Theoretical Maximum (100% Attendance)	Perfect-World Cap (All 9 Responders)	~\$30,330

Financial Takeaway: Because actual average response attendance hovers around 27% across our active roster, our current real-world spending tracks at roughly **\$9,170 annually**. The requested \$20,000 budget allocation provides a safe, comfortable buffer to accommodate an expected surge in volunteer turnout once the incentive goes live.

3. Accountability Framework

To ensure strict stewardship of public funds, the department will enforce an operational framework based on verified regional templates:

- **Member in good standing:** Member meets all department guidelines and participation matrix of 25% of calls, this is monitored monthly for a 12 month rolling period. Member will not be eligible for pay during periods of less than 25%.
- Member must meet applicable personnel standards of the City's Personnel guidelines
- **Response Thresholds:** Firefighters must arrive at the station within **15 minutes of dispatch** to receive credit.
- **Duty Completion:** Members must remain on scene or at the station to assist in placing apparatus back in service unless formally released by a commanding officer.
- **Officer Auditing:** Responding officers are required to return to the station post-incident and manually audit attendance logs within our firehouse management software, taking individual ownership of the credit list.
- **Disbursement Logistics:** Payouts will be processed and distributed on an **Annual** basis, preventing heavy weekly administrative overhead for city finance staff.

4. Recommendations

It is recommended that City Council take the following actions:

1. **Approve** the implementation of the Volunteer Firefighter Pay-Per-Call Incentive Program for the upcoming fiscal year.
2. **Authorize** the allocation of the proposed \$20,000 line item within the FY2026 Fire Department budget.
3. **Adopt** the response accountability guidelines to govern Annual disbursements.