



Board of Commissioners Meeting Agenda Item Submittal

Item To Be Considered: **Application for Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER)**

Board Meeting Date: **January 9, 2024**

Prepared By: **Jacob Randall – Fire Chief**

Overview: Through evaluation, risk analysis, and strategic planning, the Town of Swansboro Fire Department identified the need to increase the staffing level and medical services capabilities better to protect the livelihood of our citizens and guests. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides grant opportunities for Staffing Adequate Fire and Emergency Services (SAFER) to hire personnel and enhance the level of Emergency Services offered by the Town of Swansboro.

During the FY 23-24 Budget Workshop on May 17, 2023, direction was given to plan and present the service level enhancement vision and find funding to reduce the financial burden.

The SAFER grant, if awarded, will fund the requested new positions, allowing for adequate time to augment and enhance planning efforts needed to sustain the positions. Typically, the positions are funded for three (3) years. The notice of funding has not been released, so the cost match, if any, has not been provided. In the past five (5) cycles, it has been a 0% match for the applicant, with 100% funding for Salary, Benefits, and Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) accrued overtime from FEMA. The salary reimbursement would not account for any Festivals or Non-Standard overtime accumulated by the employee, aside from recognized holidays.

In August, we enhanced our EMS response from only high-priority calls (Charlie, Delta, Echo) to all calls (Alpha-Echo) to better serve the citizens of the Swansboro and White Oak River Community Fire Districts. The Fire Department, in 2023, responded to 1,221 emergency incidents, an increase from the 2022 total of 813. We experienced an average on-scene time awaiting an ambulance for definitive care of over 19.5 minutes. This funding opportunity allows the ability to provide a Paramedic level provider within minutes, establishing care and treatment for a wider range of life-threatening issues.

To sustain the program while focusing on our primary legal responsibility of Fire Suppression and Protection, the number of personnel requested would allow for an effective response force for both fire and EMS response, aiding in lowering the Insurance Rating for available personnel credit. Likewise, the already developed professional development ladder allows for continuous growth of employees to increase their provider capabilities from the Basic Life Support (BLS) {EMT} to the Advanced Life Support (ALS) {Paramedic} level through a long-term career with the Town of Swansboro Fire Department.

Action: _____

We seek your permission to apply for the FY 2023 SAFER grant for funding to hire twelve (12) personnel. Six (6) would be classified as a Firefighter III (Firefighter/Paramedic) and six (6) Firefighter I or II (Firefighters). The annual calculation and funding amount are listed below, though the overall fund requested for the entire performance period totals \$2,693,516.12, based on rates as of 1/9/2024.

Total Grant: \$2,693,516.12

Year 1 (Salary, Overtime, & Benefits): \$859,373.03

Year 2 (Salary, Overtime, & Benefits): \$897,186.48

Year 3 (Salary, Overtime, & Benefits): \$936,956.61

The Period of Performance for utilizing these funds is three (3) years if awarded. We would return for final approval to proceed with acceptance to the Board of Commissioners, with an official acceptance in the form of a Resolution.

Background Attachment(s): None

Recommended Action:

1. Approve the Fire Department to seek funding for hiring twelve (12) personnel through the FY 2023 Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Services (SAFER) grant for an application minimum of \$2,693,516.12 but not to exceed a maximum request of \$2,850,000.00.
2. Allow the Fire and Police Chief to compile options for a public-specific pay scale to promote recruitment and retention and reduce employee classification compression.