




Date: October 17, 2019

To: Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Thomas B. Modica, Acting City Manager 

Subject: **SAFER Grant Award and Acceptance**

I am pleased to report that on September 18, 2019, the Long Beach Fire Department (LBFD) was awarded a Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Staff will accept the grant this week.

The SAFER grant provides funding to help fire departments increase or maintain the number of trained firefighters available in their communities. The Fire Department's SAFER Grant application highlighted the need to hire 12 additional firefighters to partially support the restoration of Fire Engine 17 and decrease response times in Fire Station 17's immediate response area and citywide.

This SAFER grant will provide between \$2.3 million to \$2.8 million in funding from FY 20 to FY 23, depending on how the final grant requirements are applied to the City, which is uncertain at this time. The LBFD must maintain fire suppression staffing levels between September 2019 and March 2023, plus 12 additional SAFER-funded firefighter positions to be hired in FY 20.

The SAFER grant will pay 75 percent of the costs toward salaries and benefits for new firefighters in the first and second years of the grant, and 35 percent in the third year. The City will be responsible for the remaining costs associated with these positions during the three-year performance period. The FY 20 budget and associated Measure A plan provides \$4.7 million in funding for two years, not including grant funds awarded by the SAFER grant. With the combination of the SAFER grant and Measure A funds, it is estimated that the City is between \$700,000 to \$1.2 million short of the total amount of required City funding to maintain Fire Engine 17 through the grant performance period, which ends in March 2023. If Fire Engine 17 is maintained through the end of FY 23 (September 2023), the estimated City funding shortfall will be between \$2 million to \$2.5 million. Any shortfall will need to be addressed in future budgets.

If an adverse City budget situation results in a reduction to fire suppression staffing levels during the grant period, the grant funds may need to be returned to FEMA. As previously reported to the City Council, significant General Fund shortfalls are currently projected during the grant performance period that will need to be resolved. To balance the future budgets, there is a significant chance that maintaining LBFD staffing during that time may result in substantial reductions in funding to the non-public safety departments. Staff will continue to implement strong financial practices to develop and recommend budgets that minimize the size and risk of budget shortfalls. The situation will be evaluated during each budget cycle and we will keep the City Council informed as to whether reductions in LBFD staffing may be appropriate to consider as part of budget balancing in future years.

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With the expected difficult budget situation, the SAFER grant is an extremely welcomed addition to current one-time funding for Fire Engine 17, which has been restored by the City Council with funding for two years.

If you have any questions regarding the SAFER grant, please contact me at (562) 570-5091.

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