



# *CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT*

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MEETING DATE: **JANUARY 3, 2017**

ITEM NUMBER: **NB-4**

**SUBJECT: FIRE STATION #6 AND RELATED STAFFING**

**DATE: DECEMBER 21, 2016**

**FROM: THOMAS R. HATCH, CITY MANAGER  
DANIEL A. STEFANO, FIRE CHIEF**

**PRESENTATION BY: DANIEL A. STEFANO, FIRE CHIEF**

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: DANIEL A. STEFANO, FIRE CHIEF  
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## **RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

Several members of the City Council have requested that this item be brought forward for consideration. As such, the Fire Chief and City Manager recommend that the City Council:

1. Formally authorize and approve the recommendation to keep Fire Station #6 open.
2. Formally authorize and approve a total of six sworn positions for the Fire & Rescue Department which are currently being filled with overtime personnel, including:
  - a. Three Fire Captain positions
  - b. Three Firefighter positions

## **BACKGROUND:**

The City of Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue Department provides a critical public safety function that protects life, property, and the environment through its mitigation, prevention, preparedness, response, recovery and community risk reduction services. As part of this function, the department provides emergency response services staffed out of six strategically located fire stations, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

In 1993, the City of Costa Mesa officially opened Fire Station #6 (Metro Station), with a first-in response area covering South Coast Metro, the adjacent freeways, and providing second-in response for the balance of the city and neighboring cities of Newport Beach, Irvine, Santa Ana, and Fountain Valley. Since that time, the discussion of expanding the number of fire stations in Costa Mesa to seven (e.g., Segerstrom Home Ranch Development Agreement; 2001-2008) and reducing the number of fire stations to five (e.g., Fire Department Reorganization Plan; 2010-2015) have been considered.

In 2009, the authorized full-time positions for the City of Costa Mesa was 611, inclusive of 111 full-time positions (102 sworn and nine non-sworn; 99 identified as line personnel) for the Fire & Rescue Department and they responded to 9,406 incidents. In 2013, the authorized number positions in the city was reduced to 467, inclusive of 94 full-time positions for the Fire & Rescue

Department (89 sworn and five non-sworn; 87 identified as field personnel) and they responded to 10,732 incidents. In 2015, the Fire & Rescue Department was authorized for 84 full-time positions (78 sworn and six non-sworn; 76 identified as field personnel) and responded to 12,955 incidents.

The reduction in staffing was the result of addressing the economic challenges that the city (and the nation) faced leading up to that time period, which included concerns related to higher employee retirement costs. Ultimately, the goal for the Fire & Rescue Department was to focus on providing the most effective and efficient services to the community without compromising the level of services to the community.

In May 2013, the City Council unanimously approved the City Manager's recommendations for a reorganization of the fire department, inclusive of an "Alternative Model" Restructuring Plan. A key part of the alternative plan was that it would be implemented in a two-phase approach and a new deployment model integrating the use of paramedic rescue units, along with a comprehensive list of 17 recommendations related to various operational and administrative components of the fire and rescue department. One component of the plan included a transition from a six station model to a five station model, which would close Fire Station #6 and initiate an immediate reduction in staffing to realize a cost savings.

As of January 2016, all aspects of the Fire Department Reorganization Plan had been addressed, with the exception of closing Fire Station #6, which remained open during the implementation phase of the reorganization for further evaluation by the Fire Chief and City Manager. Throughout this time, the station has been staffed with overtime personnel (e.g., the total shift is budgeted for 24 positions, but staffed with 26 positions utilizing overtime).

### **ANALYSIS:**

The Fire & Rescue Department has been operating six fire stations with budgeted full-time personnel funding for five stations during the implementation phase of the reorganization to maintain an appropriate level of service. During the implementation phase of the reorganization, it became apparent that the increasing demands for service coupled with decreased staffing, provides a clear nexus to keep Station 6 open and properly staffed. Additionally, with increased unit hour utilization (UHU), mandatory and specialized training requirements, community risk reduction responsibilities, and expanding day-to-day workloads, it is recommendation of the Fire Chief and City Manager for Fire Station #6 to remain open and staffed as the department has been operating for the past three years (e.g., 26 on-duty line personnel), but with budgeted, full-time personnel, not overtime personnel.

From an annual cost perspective and as an example, we are currently filling our firefighter vacancies (PERS Classic) with an approximate annual cost of \$128, 273.60 per firefighter position, whereas, a new firefighter (PEPRA) annual total compensation at Step 1 will be approximately \$81,295.29.

From a staffing perspective, the Department's current daily staffing of four engines, a quint (pumper/ladder), three rescue units, and a ladder truck, while adequate, are the minimum for the risks present in the City, and is less than the Department fielded prior to the recession. What cannot be overlooked, however, and has proven beneficial to the current resource deployment, is the increase of three paramedic rescue units, which has expanded the range and extent of emergency response coverage. Further, the increase from 10 to 13 Paramedics per day is also noted as a positive result of the current staffing goal.

Moreover, while this staffing has been maintained through overtime, it has taken its toll on the personnel, in many cases far exceeding the standard 2,912 annual hours (e.g., 56-hour work week). Providing full-time budgeted positions would substantially mitigate this issue.

**ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:**

The City Council could decide to direct staff to continue to staff the necessary positions at fire station #6 with overtime personnel.

**FISCAL REVIEW:**

The city's Finance Department has reviewed this report and confirms that the identified examples of total cost comparisons are accurate. Moreover, the costs related to hiring new firefighters will provide a realized savings in comparison to paying on-going overtime costs (see attachment 8).

**LEGAL REVIEW:**

The City Attorney's office has reviewed this report and has not identified any concerns.

**CONCLUSION:**

To formally address keeping Fire Station #6 open and based on the increased demands for fire and rescue services with a decreased full-time staff, the Fire Chief and City Manager recommend that the City Council formally disband the closure of Fire Station #6 and immediately approve funding for six full-time positions, including three Fire Captains and three Firefighters.

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DANIEL A. STEFANO  
Fire Chief

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THOMAS R. HATCH  
City Manager

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STEPHEN DUNIVENT  
Interim Finance Director

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THOMAS DUARTE  
City Attorney

Attachments:

- [1\) Total Authorized Staffing](#)
- [2\) Annual Incidents vs. Line Staff Data](#)
- [3\) Housing Trends \(1990-2020\)](#)
- [4\) Population Data](#)
- [5\) Daily Staffing per Unit for the City](#)
- [6\) Resources Sent to Common Risk Types & Effective Response Force](#)
- [7\) Unit Hour Utilization](#)
- [8\) Annual Firefighter Costs](#)