# 2021 Fire Department Budget - Discussion Document

## *Introduction*

The Alexandria Fire Department (AFD) is a full service department that provides life safety to 21,000+ residents (39,000 Summer) who live, work and play in our city.

Our motto is “Professional…Dedicated…Role Models”. We are driven by life safety, incident response and stabilization, property conservation while maintaining a strong community spirit and service. We collaborate with many partners in the community.

The Big 4 that is the cornerstone to AFD is; Do your job – Treat people right – Give all-out effort - Have an all in attitude…Be FULLY INVOLVED.

The AFD firefighters provide and protect; life safety, fire suppression, fire prevention and education, technical rescue, fire systems inspections, disaster response and mitigation, emergency management plans and procedures.

We deliver this variety of emergency services through our most valuable resource, the firefighters themselves. We continuously put forth a recruiting effort to find volunteer firefighters – this is and will be our on- going challenge in the future.

One of our strong suits is fire prevention and education throughout the community. We are committed to the safety and prevention in the community through various platforms; public speaking and community events, social media, numerous tours, visits, Safety Day Camp, Operation Graduation, Open House, Big Vehicle Day-we dare say that we impact *thousands* of people each year in some fashion.

We excel at emergency management by providing planning, training, table top discussions, exercises and LIVE drills. During the incidents we tend to establish Incident Command and Unified Command. We are strong collaborators with many community partners. The AFD station has become a hub and central training facility for Regional and Sub Regional EM training and endeavors.

## *PBB Inventory & Costing Estimate*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Program | hrs/yr | % |
|  |  |  |
| Administrative |  | 35% |
| Emergency Management  |  | 20% |
| Fire Prevention / Fire Education  |  | 20% |
| Community Awareness, Branding and SupportFire Incidents / Fire Trainings  |  | 12%7% |
| Fire Inspections |  | 5% |
| Fire Investigations  |  | 1% |
|  |  |
|  |   |  |
|  |   |  |
| Total |   | 100% |

Based on 1.0 FTE

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | The following includes some of the activities within each program element noted in the PBB estimate table above:**Administration** – The Fire Chief is responsible for a significant administrative workload. There are reports that need to be filed for fire calls, township fire levy calculations, and a great deal of human resources work/consultation involved with a large volunteer fire department. **Emergency Managemen**t – When disaster strikes, whether manmade or natural, the AFD Firefighters respond. The Fire Chief is the designated Emergency Management Director for the City of Alexandria that works closely with the Douglas County Emergency Management Director and other collaborative partnerships for Planning, Mitigation, Training and Exercises.**Fire Prevention / Fire Education** – Fire prevention is the key to saving lives and property, Prevention / Education is the first step in AFD’s commitment to saving lives and property. We make an impact by participating and holding numerous Public Education events, especially during the month of October (Fire Prevention Month)-approximately 2000 students come through the station for educational events.**Fire Incidents / Fire Training** - Our vision is to be a high performance emergency response and mitigation system that meets the current and future needs of the City of Alexandria and its community members in response to all emergency situations, accidental, natural or manmade. Our mission is to serve the community and protect lives and property through the provision of professional fire and rescue services.Our strength is in the training and preparedness that the AFD members consistently and proficiently train on.**Community Awareness, Branding and Support** - This is our WHY. We choose to serve this community with compassion and genuine concern for the community in all aspects of public safety. We are committed to providing the utmost comprehensive response and customer service that we can. We are at 85+ community events; either providing education, awareness or support. |

## *Discussion for 2021 Changes*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | 1. The Addition of 1.0 FTE Staff member. The proposed additional staff would serve in a Deputy Emergency Manager Director role while also providing administrative support to the Fire Chief. This position was discussed but not included in the 2021 budget.
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 BUDGET DISCUSSION ITEMS:

*Additional FTE (Deputy Emergency Management Director/FD/EM Administrative Assistant):*

**What have you done already to alleviate/assist administrative tasks?** In the past, we have brought in different people on a contract basis multiple times for multiple projects yearly. This was to ensure that the City of Alexandria and the Alexandria Fire Department were delivering high performance service to all, and completing tasks and administrative tasks that were weighing down this position. There are administrative duties required of the Fire Chief position and some additional tasks have been assigned to this position-(MBFTE/Township, COVID Policy,

**Could you take City Hall personnel over to take on some tasks?** At present Julie from the front desk comes down on some Wednesdays from 1 pm -2 pm - 430pm. It is helping with some organizing; but doesn’t fill the administrative gap entirely.

**Can’t the officers do some administrative tasks?** Fantastic group of Officers and firefighters. However, they all have full-time jobs. Outside of fire calls and some community events, they are usually only available on a regular basis for Monday night training sessions. The Battalion Commanders do find time to devote to AFD in addition to their full-time jobs, but there is only so much time available.

**What has changed since Douglas County hired a full-time Emergency Management Director?** In the time that Julie Anderson has been there, she has been proactive in advancing the County’s Emergency Management activities. This has increased the amount of Emergency Management tasks for the City in terms of developing plans (Mobile Home Parks, Relay for Life, Special Events, Weather, etc). The city has quite a few resources, population and buildings. Each EM component has a different flavor and demographic to cover. Julie brings Public Information Officer knowledge to the EM position and Emergency Operations Center. At current, Douglas County does have a Deputy EM Director in Mark McCabe that assists, along with Sheriff Troy Wolbersen. The workload due to COVID with Julie and Mark has magnified this, along with the downtown fire.

**Duty Crew Update**: Eventually, as the volunteer ranks have a hard time in recruiting volunteer firefighters, a modified duty crew will need to be researched. The average response number was 27 firefighters 5 years ago; now 24 is the average. Currently, we are on scene 39% of the time within 320 seconds and 89% within 540 seconds. Our response time is taking longer. Average is now 6 minutes 50 seconds-(410 seconds). The average response has slowed down a minute in the last 5 years. The response issue is more acute on weekends when we routinely have 12-15 firefighters that do not respond. The last 4 firefighters sworn in took 2 ½ years to get, 11 able to retire with full benefits in 1 ½ -2 ½ years. There were 218 calls last year, and we are currently 10% ahead of last year in calls.

There is more research that has been conducted on the duty crew concept including cost estimating, discussion outlines, benefits, response models, and positive and negative impacts. The average tenure for current generation is 9.76 years of service. This is down from 13 years of service from 20 years ago. Firefighting as a whole is declining nationwide in recruiting volunteers. There is an estimated loss of 5 -8 % of volunteer firefighters yearly nationwide. The current trend is departments exploring and putting on a modified full time crew. This still holds true in 2021 as we have just sworn in two firefighters (May 18, 2020).

# Appendix