Council Communication

Department: Case/Project No. Applicant. Fire Chief Justin James	Ordinance No. Resolution No. _____	First Reading Second Reading Third Reading _____

Subject/Title

This is a request for your concurrence and City Council action on a resolution increasing the authorized strength of the Council Bluffs Fire Department from 108 positions to 114 positions and allowing the department to go above the authorized strength at the discretion of the Fire Chief to a maximum of 120 personnel as needed to control overtime and academy costs. Adoption of this resolution will increase staffing for the fire department by six firefighters and change the minimum manning from 28 to 30 on each shift.

Background/Discussion

In 1999 the Council Bluffs Fire Department had an authorized strength of 113 personnel. In 2002 that strength was reduced to 100 personnel. Since that time we have recovered to an authorized strength of 108. The current strength allows for the department to operate three ambulances and seven front line apparatus. Over the last 20 years our total call volume has more than doubled. In 2004 we responded to 5411 emergencies. At the end of 2023 those calls have grown to 11,228. Of those calls, over 80% are medically related. In 2004 we transported 3228 patients to local hospitals. At the end of 2023 our patient transports had grown to 5310. Over the last five years it has become apparent that we needed to return to operating four medic units on a daily basis. The six additional firefighters requested will allow the department to return to, four staffed ambulances on a daily basis to ensure coverage throughout the city. The total costs to these additional six personnel is estimated at $722,215.20.

In 2005 our EMS revenue was $512,538.00. EMS revenue historically has paid for less than 50% of the costs to operate the service. The remaining costs were funded by the tax payer. Those costs were figured to include 9 FF EMT's, 9 FF Medics, and 1 EMS Officer for the department. In fiscal year 2020 EMS revenue began to fully fund the 19 positions assigned to EMS. That revenue has now increased again to an estimated 2.9 million in FY2024. Due to changes in our billing of EMS currently, we are expected to see that revenue increase again to 4.6 million in FY2025. Even with these requested changes to the budget the revenue being generated is now paying for roughly 23.5% of the entire fire department's budget. That is a huge savings to our citizens. The increase in our projected revenue make it possible to cover the costs of these additional personnel requested in this resolution.

With the approval of this resolution we will still only be one additional staff member more than we were 25 years ago. This is the first step to getting our department to where it needs to be to continue to be success. This authorized strength change is a crucial need to continue to provide the level of service that the department provides to our community.

We are also asking that you allow the department to carry over the authorized strength, up to an additional six personnel. This would be done to ensure that we are never forced by law to hire single recruits. All recruits are trained in a fire academy that runs between 8 to 10 weeks long here in Council Bluffs. To accomplish this academy it takes a considerable effort by our department. To do this we never want to train less than six new recruits at a time. Allowing the department to carry six additional personnel at any one time ensures that we will always have an academy class equal to or bigger than six recruits. This improves efficiency and saves the tax payer dollars. Our operations budget is always figured using a minimum staffing number cost, plus the overtime to maintain that number. The carrying of additional personnel is cost neutral and at times a savings to the tax payer due to us not utilizing overtime to cover shift vacancies. This has been our on-going practice for some time, however we are asking that this be approved for by council action and done as the department determines the need. With this resolution it would allow for us to carry

up to 120 personnel at any given time. As separations take place we would then wait until we hit our authorized strength of 114 personnel before we hired another class of recruits. This hovering between the authorized strength of 114 and our max at 120 allows the department the flexibility to ensure personnel are not over taxed with forced overtime and saves the tax payer money in the long run.

Approval of this resolution will truly be the first time the department has grown in the last 25 years. It is the first step in getting our department where it needs to be. There will be additional steps that need to be taken. It is an investment into the future of where the department is going with revenue that the department has generated. In doing so the Citizens of this city will still be at a cost savings when it comes to the Fire Department and the overall impact to the general fund budget. It is the Staff's recommendation to approve the above changes at a total estimated costs of **$722,215.20.**

Recommendation

Approval of the Resolution.

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Department Head Signature Mayor Signature