

City Council – Action Request Form

Date: January 13, 2019

To: Mayor, Mayor Pro Tempore, and Members of the City Council

From: Damon Dequenne, Assistant City Manager
William L. Mayo, Fire Chief

Council Action Requested:
Resolution authorizing submission of an application to the Department of Homeland Security for an Assistance to Firefighters Grant.

Strategic Focus Area: Safe and Secure Community
Strategic Objective: Improve Public Safety Service Quality
Strategic Plan Action Item: No
Key Work Item: No



Summary of Information:

The Fire Department seeks authorization to apply for an Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) from the Department of Homeland Security to purchase washers and dryers, as well as turnout gear extractors and dryers for the stations that need this equipment.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has concluded that, compared to the general population, firefighters are 9% more likely to face a cancer diagnosis and 14% more likely to die from cancer. The increased cancer rate is attributed to firefighters' exposure to carcinogenic products of combustion in the modern fire environment, which is filled with synthetic materials. The accepted best practice to address the increased cancer risk is to minimize the time firefighters are exposed to carcinogens. Winston-Salem firefighters are provided two sets of structural firefighting gear and receive a clean protective hood and a clean pair of gloves each trip through rehab. They go through a decontamination wash before leaving the scene of every fire and they are not available for additional requests for service until their apparatus and equipment have been decontaminated and they have had a shower, dressed in a clean uniform, and put a clean and dry set of turnout gear in service.

Committee Action:

Committee	Finance 1/13/2020 Public Safety 1/13/2020	Action	Approval
For	Unanimous	Against	
Remarks:			

Currently, contaminated turnout gear must be transported back and forth between stations that do not have gear washers and those that do. This is inefficient, requires more handling of dirty gear, and is a source of misplaced gear. It unnecessarily moves fire companies out of their assigned territories or ties up safety and training officer resources. Without washers and dryers at all stations, personnel are either traveling to fire stations that have these appliances on their off time, are using public laundromats, or are washing contaminated uniforms at home. Using laundromats or washing uniforms at home are not recommended as safe or appropriate practices for decontaminating uniforms. Additionally, firefighters encounter bed bugs with increasing frequency during performance of their duties, and there are multiple instances each year where fire trucks and stations have to be treated. The accepted way to kill bed bugs in clothing is to place items in a clothes dryer and subject them to high heat for 30 minutes. Having clothes dryers in all fire stations allows for immediate laundering of infested uniforms and eliminates the potential for fire personnel to take bed bugs home.

It is estimated that equipment and appliances will cost \$192,000 and utility upgrades will cost \$318,000. While the 2019 AFG guidance is not available, the 2018 guidance required a 10% match for municipalities the size of Winston-Salem. This request is for authorization to apply for an AFG when the application period opens, with a local match requirement not to exceed \$76,500.

Once the application period opens, there is a very small window of time in which to apply, and if the City is awarded the funds, they will be made available in fall of this year. A budget amendment will be brought to City Council for approval at that time.