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PUBLIC SAFETY

OCT 16 2013

MOTION

PERSONNEL & ANIMAL WELFARE

LAFD Critical Firefighter Hiring Needs Assessment

There is currently a major imbalance between firefighter hiring and attrition within the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) that requires the immediate attention of the City Council. The LAFD has not hired a single firefighter in over five years, and last graduated a recruit training class in February of 2009. The LAFD has now reached a tipping point where it is experiencing a great deal of difficulty staffing existing fire companies and rescue ambulances on a daily basis due to an insufficient number of firefighters and paramedics. At its peak in Fiscal Year 2008-09, the LAFD had roughly 3,600 sworn members on its payroll. Today, through attrition, this number hovers around 3,100.

To address the issue of ongoing attrition, the LAFD recently resorted to the use of the Recall System to fill the daily fixed-post platoon-duty staffing vacancies at the City's 106 fire stations when there are not enough members willing or able to work an overtime shift, just to keep an existing fire company or rescue ambulance in service. A Recall is generally reserved for rare and exigent circumstances such as an earthquake or civil unrest where there is a need pull-in or hold-over additional personnel to provide a larger deployable field force during a major emergency impacting the City. The use of the Recall System to fill daily field vacancies is an extreme measure and suggests that LAFD management lacks a strategy to properly address a staffing crisis. This current staffing situation also calls into question the short and long term hiring plans of the Fire Department.

In the current 2013-14 Fiscal Year, the LAFD is scheduled to hire one recruit class of 70 firefighters. Based on the historic 20% rate of attrition through the LAFD Drill Tower (academy) over the last ten years, only about 55 of these 70 these recruits will continue on to be members of the Fire Department, and they will not enter the field until June 2014. At the same time, there are 60 current sworn members who must exit the Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP) on or before June 30, 2014, leaving the LAFD with even fewer firefighters on payroll than today. The situation only gets worse in Fiscal Year 2014-15 with another 120 mandatory retirements and in Fiscal Year 2015-16 when another 178 firefighters must retire through DROP.

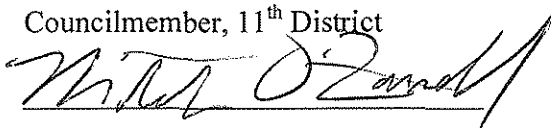
More startling is the fact that even with a Drill Tower running continuously every single week for the next four and half years -- a logistical impossibility, it will take the LAFD until April of 2018 just to hire enough firefighters and paramedics to bring the Fire Department's staffing levels into balance. This does not even account for regular retirements, terminations, or any additional hiring necessary should there be a decision to restore any neighborhood fire station resources.

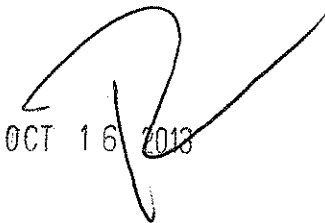
I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Council instruct the Fire Department (LAFD), Office of the City Administrative Officer (CAO), and the Personnel Department to immediately report on: 1) How the Fire Department ended up in this situation and what processes should have been in place to catch this staffing imbalance; 2) options for increasing the number of Drill Tower classes and/or pushing up the start date for the first class; 3) options for increasing the staffing levels on field resources such as Light Force companies to accommodate additional probationary firefighters, 4) the staffing needs of the Fire Department Recruit Training Section to open a possible second Drill Tower; and 6) the Personnel Department Public Safety Division staffing needs to assist with the processing of additional firefighter applicants.

PRESENTED BY:


MIKE BONIN
Councilmember, 11th District

SECONDED BY:




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