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April 24, 2020

Honorable Paul Krekorian  
Chair, Budget and Finance Committee  
c/o Mandy Morales, Legislative Assistant  
200 N. Main Street, Room 360  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Councilmember Krekorian:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2020-21 Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) Proposed Budget. My most sincere appreciation is extended to Mayor Garcetti for a \$732 million budget to enhance the LAFD's ability to make our communities the safest in the nation.

With the prospect of an extremely difficult fiscal year ahead with COVID-19 related fiscal and operational challenges, the Proposed Budget provides resources to continue our mission critical functions efficiently and effectively, including Advance Provider Response Unit (APRU) staffing, SAFER Grant engine resources, replacement and augmentation of critical first response equipment including turnout gear, helmets and defibrillators, and two new recruit classes to maintain attrition and a minimum level of staffing throughout the City's 106 Fire Stations. One-time reductions of \$4.6 million in Sworn Salaries (not including Recruit Training), \$10.5 million in Constant Staffing Overtime, and \$4.7 million in Civilian Salaries, for a total of nearly \$20 million in reductions, will present significant challenges throughout the year. However, we will make every effort to manage within our budget and report on residual needs in the Financial Status Reports.

I did want to present a few but significant requests in the Proposed Budget that directly impact first response field operations for Committee and Council consideration, amounting to \$4.4 million in additional funding:

- 1. Firefighter Hiring and Training Recruit Salaries - \$4,264,818:** The Fire Department requests recruit salaries annually as part of its Firefighter Hiring and Training budget request. These are funded at the level of Firefighter I in alignment with the number of weeks of recruit training classes held over the course of the year. For DT 81 in FY 20-21, this amounts to \$4.3 million for two new classes (20-2 & 20-3), as well as the conclusion of a class beginning in the current year (19-2). The FY 20-21 Proposed Budget, Item 41, excludes recruit salaries, **which has not occurred in prior years.** The Department-wide appropriation for Sworn Salaries is a projection of filled sworn positions at Fire Stations, with Constant Staffing Overtime compensating for backfill needs. Recruit salaries are budgeted for separately since they are at a significantly lower rate than Wages and Count salaries and only for the duration of the training academy.

Without the funding of recruit salaries, the Department's overall salary shortfall is increased from \$20 million to \$24.3 million at the start of the year.

2. **Incident Command Support – Emergency Incident Technician (EIT) - \$174,970:** The Proposed Budget continues only 14 of 15 resolution position authorities for Firefighter III/Emergency Incident Technician (EIT), deleting one position on the basis of a vacancy. EITs are critical for accountability, situation status, resource status, and emergency safety procedures at every emergency incident. Over the last few budget cycles, the Department has achieved its goal to incrementally restore EIT positions that were deleted in the FY 2010-11 Budget. With all Battalions now staffed with EITs, deletion of this position is a setback to maintaining comprehensive coverage in the field. This position serves Battalion 14 in the North Hollywood area and was filled on April 12, 2020.
3. **Wildland Fuel Management (WFM) Supervision – Fire Captain I (special duty) - \$0:** The WFM Unit is responsible for the maintenance of 54 miles of fire roads and 16 miles of Fire Breaks within the City and supports various Bureaus. A supervisory level position is needed to address workload and public safety considerations pursuant to escalated wildfire activity in recent years which has increased demand on resource deployment (staffing and heavy equipment) and wildland fuel management training. This position would manage the Dozer and Crew 3 Fire Crew programs. This request involves the deletion of a Firefighter III position as an offset.
4. **Exemption from Furloughs and Hiring Freeze:** It is respectfully requested that an exemption be granted from civilian furloughs and the hiring freeze taking effect in FY 20-21 for the following positions. These positions have been and will continue to be subject to a work load increase due to the COVID-19 local emergency, through both increased responses in the field and assistance to civilian and sworn members in coping with behavioral wellness and financial difficulties. The fiscal impact (i.e., 10% of salaries) is approximately \$127,000 although we will absorb this amount within civilian salaries.
  - EMS Advanced Providers (6)
  - EMS Advanced Provider Supervisor (1)
  - Fire Psychologist (2)
  - Chief Physician (1)

I look forward to discussing the above items with the members of the Budget and Finance Committee and the City Council. I appreciate your consideration of my requests to enhance public and firefighter safety if additional funding is available.

Sincerely,

  
RALPH M. TERRAZAS  
Fire Chief