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**INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM**

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**TO:** CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** MONICA ZOLTANSKI, DISTRICT 4

**SUBJECT:** PROPOSAL FOR USE OF CARRYOVER FUNDS

**DATE:** OCTOBER 12, 2021

**CC:** BRIAN KELLEY, ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES DIRECTOR  
MIKE APPLGARTH, COUNCIL OFFICE DIRECTOR

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Colleagues:

Sandy City has done well to meet public safety needs with planning and conservative budgeting. Central to our conservative budgeting philosophy is avoiding the use of one-time funds for ongoing operational expenses. Excess year-end funds are typically reappropriated for equipment and capital projects unless some more pressing public need presents. While this is a practice we generally maintain, the council is not prohibited from tapping into carryover surplus to address needs of greater importance. In fact, it is the job of this council to continually evaluate, oversee, and adjust our budget when necessary. This year, we have already seen that occur. When presented with a critical public safety need combined with a comfortable surplus of year end “one-time” money, the council has responded appropriately with our recent, unanimous Council decision to invest \$2.26 million in “one-time” American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) for Police Department compensation. I propose employing this same method to fund three of the seven new paramedic positions requested by our Fire Chief, and we do so immediately.

**Problem Presented**

As you aware from presentations from Fire Chief Cline over the last 7.5 years, our Fire Department has been understaffed with paramedic personnel according to Chief Cline’s operation reports, staffing goals, and National Fire Prevention Safety Standards. Our stations are staffed with 2 on an engine and 2 on an ambulance “2 & 2”. As the council knows, emergency medical calls are by far the most common type of call for service from Sandy residents. When a medical call comes in and two paramedics are dispatched in the ambulance, the remaining two firefighters are at the station to answer emergency calls for that area. A 2-handed engine is far from optimal, and studies show that survivability rates increase substantially when engines operate at recommended staffing levels.

3 on an engine keeps fire fighters in their assigned area and removes the need to draw down staff from another station for backup. In bigger emergency scenes, such as a full arrest, canyon rescue, chemical spill, or big vehicle accident, just the medical response requires 6 people on a call.

### **Why three? Why Now?**

Three new paramedics are needed to create a depth of personnel support at each of the A, B, and C shifts. This will give us a starting point to fulfill the chief's request for a total of seven paramedics in the next years. Adequate staffing will put less pressure on existing personnel to serve "call backs" or mandatory overtime, allowing their days off to be their time for rest and recovery so they return to their posts refreshed. Also, it provides savings to the department, so the needs are met without the use of expensive overtime/gap pay.

### **Safer Response**

When a greater response is needed, other engines are dispatched for support, leaving those base areas vulnerable as the next engine comes to the aide and so on. For a good discussion of the importance of having well-staffed engines, follow this link:

<https://www.firefighternation.com/firerescue/engine-company-staffing-nfpa-1710-nist-research/#gref>

During a fire, a three-person engine crew is much more capable of going on the offensive and attacking a fire, whereas a two-person crew will only be able to defend, while they wait for more support.

As a comparison, Sandy stations operate at lower staffing levels than surrounding agencies like Draper, Midvale, and Unified Fire. They run 3 & 2 or 4 & 2. Not only is this a reference, but it also impacts our operations when Sandy is supported under mutual aid agreements. Sandy reciprocates with the same level of staffing we receive. For example, if Draper sends one 3 & 2 team and Sandy sends one 2 & 2 team to reciprocate, we have a shortfall.

### **Why ARPA Funding Makes Sense**

This year our fire department has seen a jump in Covid-related calls. Our ambulances and paramedics are busier than ever, leaving the engine teams back at the station shorthanded. This creates a significant safety issue to our constituents as well as the women and men in the Fire service. This is an urgent need that must be addressed now as the Delta variant continues to cause higher than usual demand for medical services and transports. Fortunately, we have the financial tool, ARPA funding, which is designed to cover just this type of COVID-related expense for increased services over the next two years.

With a greater demand for medical services, the division of labor between engine and paramedic crews is putting more pressure on our fire professionals. There is more pressure to always perform at peak levels, with little chance to process the macro and micro trauma between

emergency calls. This increases stress levels and mental health pressures on our firefighters who are constantly running under lean resources. Better staffing offers a buffer and support in their high-demand occupations and prevents stress from mounting between intense “lights and sirens” calls. Having a depth of personnel to support and respond to the community and department needs will translate into cost savings and improved safety for our community.

**The Solution**

Like we did to address the urgent matter of increasing police officer pay, we allocate a small portion of our carryover funds, specifically ARPA funding, to address this problem immediately. For the modest amount of \$136,913 we can begin to correct the paramedic shortage in Sandy Fire Department. The following table captures the costs to hire, train, and equip a new firefighter/paramedic, along with the amount of additional funds we would need to fund three new Firefighter/Paramedic positions for the last half of Fiscal Year 2021-22:

<b>Firefighter/Paramedic Costs</b>	
Annual Salary & Benefits	\$85,100
SLC Fire Academy	\$1,850
Station Uniforms	\$1,025
Personal Protective Equipment	\$3,300
<b>Total Annual Cost per Firefighter/Paramedic</b>	<b>\$91,275</b>
<b>6-Month Cost</b>	<b>\$45,638</b>
<b>6-Month Cost for 3 Additional Postions</b>	<b>\$136,913</b>

In order to meet this critical need, the Council would decrease the amount of carryover/ARPA funds being sent to capital projects contingency, and instead increase the fund balance by an additional \$136,913. This additional money, moved to fund balance, would then be allocated to the Fire Department, allowing the department to move forward with hiring 3 additional firefighter/paramedics.

Using one-time funds for ongoing operational costs will clearly require the next Administration and Council to find a sustainable funding strategy. However, this Council and Administration have already required that with our recent decision on Police compensation. We are already in a position where the next Mayor and Council will have to creatively find new sources of revenue. This proposal represents a modest increase to that need but solves an immediate public safety concern. The immediate trade-off is a minor decrease to the funds we would normally save for capital projects. While equipment and infrastructure are important, I hope you will agree that investing in the protection of our residents and personnel is a higher priority.

I look forward to discussing this proposal with you at our October 12, 2021, Work Session.