



City decides to not move forward with SAFER application

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Earlier today, City leadership made the decision to not move forward with the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant application. The SAFER Grant provides funding directly to fire departments and volunteer firefighter interest organizations to help increase or maintain trained firefighters in the community. Last year, Dayton voters approved a charter amendment which would allow the City to apply for the SAFER grant.

“It is disappointing that we are unable to apply for this grant at this time,” said City Manager Shelley Dickstein. “Last year, when we asked voters to approve the charter amendment we had no idea a pandemic would devastate our community and upend our finances. Without a clear picture of what the total impact will be from the COVID-19 depression, it would be unwise to move forward with our application.”

Acceptance of the SAFER grant would require the City to maintain a staffing level of 197 firefighters for the three-year grant period. While the grant would cover 12 firefighters funded at their first year pay level for three years, an additional 8 firefighters would need to be funded with General Fund dollars along with years two and three salary increases for the grant-funded positions. The increased cost to the City would average \$358,000 per year, or roughly \$1.1 million over the mandatory three-year commitment.

“Despite this fiscally challenging time, the Dayton Fire Department remains committed to providing the best possible services to the people we serve,” said Jeff Lykins, Dayton Fire Chief. “Although I would like to see the department grow, I understand the economic uncertainty that has resulted from this pandemic and look forward to applying to the SAFER grant in the near future.”

Additionally, this arrangement puts the Dayton Fire Department in a growth mode, at a time when the City has had to make tough decisions regarding other essential services and City departments. In the face of additional budget cuts and possible layoffs, the City is unable to make such a commitment without knowing the full impact the COVID-19 crisis will have on budget resources. Further, staff has confirmed with FEMA that applying and turning down an award could harm its

competitiveness for future applications.

The City would like to thank Dayton Firefighters Local 136 for their work and support during this process. We will continue to work with our federal delegation to urge Congress to reduce onerous grant restrictions that will allow us to make the best decisions for our city residents, businesses and stakeholders.

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