

**SUMTER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

SUBJECT: Application for Staffing for Adequate Fire & Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant

Work Session (Report Only) **DATE OF MEETING:** 12/8/09
 Regular Meeting
 Special Meeting

BUDGET IMPACT: \$ 672,036 annually at third fiscal year, est. to be FY 11/12
 Annual **FUNDING SOURCE:** Sumter County Fire District
 Capital **EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT:** Sumter Fire personnel services
 N/A

REQUESTED ACTION: Direction on the Application for the SAFER (FEMA) Grant

HISTORY/FACTS/ISSUES:

The SAFER Grant is intended to provide “seed” money to enable fire rescue services to meet minimal national standards for staffing for emergency response personnel on a 24 hr. basis. It is a FEMA competitive grant, with a short application window, this year’s **application deadline is 12/18/09**. The FEMA sponsored “webinar” which covered the rules, funding priorities, and changes in the 2009 program over past years were conducted last Thursday afternoon, 12/3/09. The main points learned from this webinar and the application guidelines are:

- * SCFR is a an eligible applicant agency, and as we are a “Combination Fire Dept.” we could use SAFER funding to initiate 24 / 7 staffing at certain “high-volume” stations
- * The SAFER Grant would provide funding for 100% of the personnel costs (including benefits, “cola” and retirement fund) for all NEW firefighter positions required to provide 24 / 7 coverage for the first 2 years. SCFR would need to cover these costs for the 3rd year and each year thereafter. We would need to guarantee the third year of employment or be at risk of default for the first 2 years
- * Application is NOT a guarantee of funding, and award announcement may take until January 2011
- * If selected as a SAFER recipient, we would have the ability at that time to; accept, refuse, or renegotiate for fewer positions if revenue sources and the economic climate do not indicate adequate funding for the 3rd year. That third year of full cost impact is estimated to be FY 2012/13.

PROPOSAL / SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

An additional 12 new firefighter positions, working an average 56 hr. workweek (allowed for shift firefighters by FLSA) and increasing the avg. workweek of 6 existing positions to 56 hrs. (all existing now work 42 hrs/wk avg.) would allow us to staff 3 fire stations with a 2 person crew 24 / 7. Each station requires 6 firefighters; to provide 3 shifts of 2 firefighters each. The locations of the 3 stations staffed 24 / 7 / 365 would be: Wildwood, Lk. Panasoffkee and Bushnell.

* These 3 stations are located in our most populous areas and currently account for over 63% of our annual all volume. The stations in these locations respond beyond the municipal limits of their communities, and each are primary response stations for I-75.

* The 24 hr. staff in these locations would also respond to areas covered by the “satellite” stations, staffed by the “on-call” or reserve firefighters. This response along with the reserve firefighter response from those stations would work to assure minimum response requirements as per National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 1720, which addresses Combination Fire Depts. In Suburban & Rural Locations. (SCFR coverage area falls under this definition)

* These 18 positions would be arranged on the standard fire dept. 3 shift system of 24 hrs. on / 48 hrs. off, this is also utilized by Lake-Sumter EMS and The Villages Public Safety Dept. This will both further improve interoperations with these two agencies, and allow the 12 firefighters off-duty at any given time to be able to respond to major incidents and emergencies.

* Internal studies indicate that staffed stations have an **average 2 min. quicker response time** than stations that rely on reserve firefighters to respond to the fire station first, then to the scene of the emergency. We currently staff these 3 areas only 12 hrs/ day - 7 days / week. By providing 24 / 7 staffing we are in effect **doubling the coverage**, while assuring first response for all emergencies 24 / 7 in **all areas of Sumter County with improved response times.**

* Minimum career staffing would be 6 Firefighters & 1 Shift Commander 24/ 7 / 365 for the area covered by SCFR, with maximum career operational staffing of 18 Firefighters & 1 Shift Commander on-duty during peak operational periods (Mon.- Fri. 7:00am-7:00pm). For major incidents (hurricanes, tornadoes, industrial and transportation incidents) and disasters, there would be a total of 37 State Certified Fire Rescue professionals (including the Fire Chief) on the career roster of SCFR. With a current annual call volume (emergency incidents) of roughly 7,000 (NOT including The Villages) there is ample opportunity and need for up to approx. 100 members on the reserve roster.

* The Fire Station Construction Grant (received and underway) will provide for 24 / 7 crew accommodation at the 3 locations considered as we will be completely rebuilding the original Wildwood station with a crew dorm, building totally new facilities for the Bushnell and Coleman (South Wildwood) coverage areas. Recall that each station covers a much larger area than the city in which they are located. The new station for Coleman / South Wildwood will “free-up” a double-wide modular fire station at that location, which will be relocated on County owned property behind the existing Lk. Panasoffkee Fire Station. Combined, these buildings are more than large enough to house the 24 / 7 career staff and the Shift Commanders in a “central”

location. The County should not incur additional costs for 24 / 7 crew accommodation at these three locations.

* Currently there are two large Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs) under consideration for Sumter County that combined, would increase our residential parcel count by 6,000 (conservative est.). Both DRI's are in the final review stage by DCA (Dept. Of Community Affairs). This increase in residential parcels alone, at the current fire assessment rate of \$106 almost covers the full cost of the 12 additional firefighter positions at the third year:

$\$106 \times 6,000 = \$ 636,000$ Full Cost (including all benefits) of 12 FFs at 3rd yr. = \$672,036

* The need for 24 / 7 coverage at certain fire stations provides benefits that are apparent now. Future growth will only exacerbate that need. If awarded, the SAFER Grant will allow us to meet that need sooner than later, using Federal funding for the first 2 yrs., allowing revenue sources to “ramp up” as controlled growth helps to pay for its demands

* There is NO guarantee of future SAFER Grant application periods. Again, if considered for award, we can always “scale down” the number of SAFER positions should revenue forecasts at that time indicate. We CANNOT ask for more positions at that time, our maximum is limited to the number in our original application, due by December 18, 2009.

* SAFER Grant is very competitive and is applied for and administered in the expedited electronic FEMA format. If we are fortunate enough to be selected, prior to commitment, the Board will have the opportunity to approve, revise or refuse

DEPARTMENT / DIVISION RECOMMENDATION: The need is apparent now for 24 / 7 Fire Rescue coverage in our 3 busiest fire districts (areas). This will require a minimum of 18 Firefighters on avg. 56 hr. weeks to provide for 3 shifts of 6 each. We feel that it is prudent to apply for 12 of these through the SAFER program at this time, knowing that if selected, we can “scale back” the request at that time to balance with revenue forecasts. - *William M. Gulbrandsen, CFO - Fire Chief*

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR RECOMMENDATION: Due to the timeframe for the potential award finances can be set aside over the next 2-3 years to prepare for the operational impact at year 3 of the grant by both the general fund and fire assessment rate. This grant proposal is in line with the past discussions with the BOCC regarding the stations for consideration for 24/7 staffing. Also, 2 of the 3 stations are part of a grant we have in hand now to prepare them for 24/7 staffing. The Lake Panasoffkee Fire Station will require the relocation of the mobile home from Oxford for the quartering of the 24/7 staffing (to the rear of the fire station). The concern of the BOCC should be the impact at year 3 which can mitigated as stated above as well as the timing of the 24/7 staffing. I am moving forward with the grant application

unless directed otherwise. I am convinced that the future integration with the Villages Public Safety Department will be imperative on or about 2020 and this grant will further prepare for that event and the service level expectation of the urban areas.

ACTION TAKEN BY THE BOARD:

DATE: