



COUNCIL BUDGET STAFF REPORT

CITY COUNCIL of SALT LAKE CITY

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TO: City Council Members

FROM: Jennifer Bruno
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Project Timeline:

Briefing:	May 24
Budget Hearings:	May 17, June 7
Potential Action:	June 14 (TBD)

DATE: May 24, 2022

RE: FY23 BUDGET – FIRE DEPARTMENT

ISSUE AT-A-GLANCE

The Salt Lake City Fire Department provides fire and medical services to residents of and visitors to Salt Lake City. Fire fighters are stationed at 14 fire stations around the City, including the Salt Lake City International Airport. The proposed budget increases the Fire Department budget by 6.6%, about \$3 million, from \$45.6 million to \$48.6 million. The Department currently has 381 full time positions (10 of which are unfunded FTEs to account for turnover and training delays), and the proposed budget increases that amount to 392, reflecting the addition of 4 firefighter FTEs for another Medical Response Team (MRT) , 6 firefighter FTEs to help with overtime coverage, and 1 office facilitator in Emergency Management. The budget also reflects a shift in the Medical Response Team, added last budget year with ARPA dollars, to the general fund. ***The Mission and Vision Statements for the Department, as well as a more detailed Department overview, can be found on pages 171 to 175 of the budget book.***

Major budget changes proposed for FY23 include staffing additions noted above, to respond to an increased usage of the overtime budget, reduce firefighter burnout, improve firefighter safety, and need for a more sustainable way to respond to medical calls.

The Fire Department manages and administers the following services:

- Fire Prevention, including construction review
- Fire Response, including to the SLC Airport
- Emergency Management - planning & response
- CPR Training
- Medical Services
- Mobile Response Team (MRT) & Community Health Access Team (CHAT)



	FY Actual	FY 22 Adopted	FY 23 Proposed		Change	
Fire Department Budget by Division						
				FTEs		
Administrative Services	\$ 6,719,853	\$ 6,849,396	\$ 8,024,795	74	\$ 1,175,399	17.2%
Office of the Chief	\$ 2,766,965	\$ 4,168,893	\$ 3,677,450	9	\$ (491,443)	-11.8%
Operations	\$ 30,732,743	\$ 34,569,111	\$ 36,894,764	309	\$ 2,325,653	6.7%
Total	\$ 40,219,561	\$ 45,587,400	\$ 48,597,009	392	\$ 3,009,609	6.6%
Fire Department Budget by Type						
Personal Services (<i>Salaries/Benefits</i>)	\$ 37,712,360	\$ 41,291,239	\$ 45,679,000		\$ 4,387,761	10.6%
O & M	\$ 958,004	\$ 1,620,900	\$ 1,251,520		\$ (369,380)	-22.8%
Charges and Services	\$ 1,523,716	\$ 2,517,061	\$ 1,608,489		\$ (908,572)	-36.1%
Capital Expenditures	\$ 25,482	\$ 158,200	\$ 58,000		\$ (100,200)	-63.3%
Total	\$ 40,219,562	\$ 45,587,400	\$ 48,597,009		\$ 3,009,609	6.6%

Goal of the briefing: Review the Fire Department's General Fund budget for FY23 and identify any follow-up issues.

KEY BUDGET ISSUES & POLICY QUESTIONS

A. Medical Response Team (MRT) – Shifting one existing MRT to General Fund (from grant funds) and adding an MRT - 4 FTEs shifted, 4 FTEs added. New MRT: \$264,240 for 11 months, \$55,900 for equipment from Funding our Future. Shifted MRT: \$288,262. The proposed budget includes adding a Medical Response Team (proposed in the Sugar House Area) with Funding our Future dollars and shifting the MRT that was funded for the Poplar Grove area in FY 22 with ARPA dollars, to the general fund. The department is proposing to add a third MRT, based on the high level of medical calls in those areas, and the efficiency in which the MRTs address them. This was a strategy implemented initially in the downtown area to help reduce carbon emissions generated with larger fire apparatus responding to predominantly low-acuity medical calls. It has also saved the department money over the years, both from a fuel and fleet perspective, as well as freeing up heavy apparatus to respond to more serious calls in other areas of the City. Fire estimates that about 80% of their calls are medical. Apparatus for the additional MRT is included in the Fleet fund transfer in non-departmental (\$50,000). The full-year cost for the Poplar Grove-based MRT is \$288,262. The Sugar House-based MRT is proposed for 11 months of funding (\$264,240) and would have the same annualized cost as the Poplar Grove MRT (a difference of \$24,022). Funding this initiative for 11 months allows time for firefighter training and to procure equipment, with a proposed implementation date of January 2023.

- **Background on the Medical Response Team** – the MRT is a two-person team that utilizes an SUV to respond to medical calls. The City initiated this new type of response model in September 2014 because the data showed that 80% of the calls answered by the Fire Department were medical calls, and most were concentrated in the downtown area. With an increased interest in reducing the City's carbon footprint, and concerns for budget efficiency, this model has proven effective at providing needed medical services during the hours when the city is most populated, while maintaining fire fighter safety (*note: one concern for not operating overnight is for safety reasons of the two-person team*).
- The Administration notes that the call volume justifies the Poplar-Grove based MRT beyond availability of ARPA dollars, which is why it is proposed to be shifted to the general fund this year.
- In FY20 the Council adopted a legislative intent relating to the Medical Response Team, asking for the Administration to continually evaluate data and recommend when an additional MRT made sense. At that time the data didn't support adding a unit, but the Administration indicates that the data now supports adding a unit in the Sugar House area.
- The Administration provided the following information with regard to metrics of the Medical Response Team:
 - The Downtown (Station 1) MRT response to approximately 7 calls per day (2,000 calls per year)

- The Station 6 MRT (fully staffed in Jan 2022) responds to approximately 5 calls per day (1,500 calls per year).
- The Sugar House MRT is projected to answer approximately the same amount of calls as Station 6.
- Between the 3 teams, this will save 5,000 calls that would have otherwise been answered by a heavy apparatus and 4 fire fighters.

B. 6 additional fire fighters (3 FTEs for 11 months - \$217,998, 3 FTEs for 5 months – \$99,090) – one-time equipment costs \$5,400. The Administration is proposing to add 6 additional firefighters in a phased approach (to recognize the other budget priorities in this fiscal year), to help alleviate the stress and overtime burden of maintaining staffing levels. Because the Fire Department is required to have 4 fire fighters on each apparatus (see background in the bullet point below), there are many times where current staffing is insufficient because of available leave benefits. Employees required to fill overtime slots are subject to burnout and the department has determined it is more financially prudent to add FTEs than to continue adding to the overtime budget. The annualized cost of all 6 FTEs is \$499,414, a difference of \$182,326 from what is budgeted in FY 23, which will have to be added to the FY 24 budget (not including pay adjustments).

- **Background on 4 fire fighters on each apparatus (known as “4-handed staffing”)** – Former SLC Mayor Rocky Anderson signed an executive order requiring the Fire Department to make best efforts to have 4 fire fighters on each firefighting apparatus. This was a result of many discussions with the Fire Union and independent research into safe and effective best practice (particularly when responding to Fire calls). In situations where the Fire Department is not fully staffed, they utilize a “buy back” function and pay existing employees straight time or overtime to achieve 4 handed staffing. This is not as financially effective as making sure there are enough authorized FTEs to help with full staffing.
- The department indicates that Emergency Responder Pandemic Leave, Covid, and increased usage of parental, personal leave (PL), and short-term disability leave in the last 2 years have all contributed to justifying adding FTEs rather than increasing overtime budgets.

C. Community Health Access Team (CHAT) – \$316,092, 3 FTEs – The FY 23 budget reflects the annualized cost of the action in Budget Amendment #4, that shifted 3 social workers into the Fire Department to form the CHAT team. The Administration indicates that the intention is to utilize these positions in conjunction with the MRT to serve in situations when there may be a mental health, substance abuse, or social service-related issue along with a medical one. Launch date is fall of 2022. The Department indicates they are evaluating ways to make the dispatching of these social workers with the MRT as practical and efficient as possible and will adjust as the year goes on. ***The Council may wish to ask the department how these functions will overlap/coordinate with the other diversified response models (civilian response team, social workers in PD, park rangers).***

D. Emergency Demolition revolving fund - \$200,000 (in Non-Departmental Budget) – This funding is located in the Non-Departmental budget but relates to the safety of the Fire Department. In recent years, instances of fires in vacant buildings have increased dramatically (currently 155 of one type or another). In some situations, this can present a public safety threat to those who occupy them but a life-safety threat to firefighters, as the buildings can be unstable as firefighters are trying to clear them. The Administration is proposing this program for the Fire Department, in conjunction with the Building Services department, to identify select circumstances where the City may be justified in demolishing a building that poses a public safety threat (the property owner would have the opportunity to demolish first). The only buildings that would “qualify” for this would be buildings that: have been affected by fire previously (therefore are compromised), occupy a parcel less than a quarter acre, have been abandoned, and are deemed unsafe to occupy or respond to.

- The property owner would be provided with notice that their structure fits into this category and would have opportunity to demolish at their own expense.
- If the property owner chooses not to demolish the structure, the City would have contracts in place to invoke the emergency demolition ordinance and could pay to demolish the structure from this fund. The City would then place a lien or administrative judgment on the property, which would replenish this account for future years.
- The department indicates that they expect to need this tool only 2-3 times per year.

E. Fuel Increase - \$116,009 – The FY 23 budget includes this adjustment to reflect increasing fuel prices.

- F. **Firefighter Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) - \$82,000 (\$12,000 is one-time)** – The FY 23 budget includes this adjustment to repair and replace fire fighter turnout gear. Including \$12,000 in a one-time improvement for temperature control for the room that stores the PPE, which can routinely reach over 90 degrees and which can contribute to the degradation and reduced usage life of this equipment.
- G. **Pension and Insurance Rate Changes - \$556,536** (\$52,240 increase)– Pension contributions are determined by the Utah State retirement system and cannot be independently negotiated by the City. This is a \$52,240 increase over the FY 22 budget.
- H. **Merit Changes - \$782,380** (\$120,288 increase). This budget increase reflects previously agreed-upon contractual increases.
- I. **Office Facilitator for Emergency Management - \$71,607** (10 months) – annualized cost of this position is \$85,928, a difference of \$14,321, which would have to be included in the FY 24 budget.
- J. **Cost Saving measures** – In the FY 22 budget cycle, the Department provided the following information relating to cost saving measures that are ongoing, and apply to FY 23 as well:
- i. The new Fire Training Center was recently completed and was a retrofit solution from an old fire station. This provided savings not only in monetary value but also in sustainability initiatives. The building was not demolished, saving tons of debris from going to the landfill. Other fire stations, apparatus, and associated equipment are always being evaluated for cost efficiencies and energy savings.
 - ii. Internal audits are being completed as staff time allows. This has resulted in savings and updated department policies.
 - iii. Determinant Codes are also routinely assessed by Fire staff, in consultation with our medical director, to provide the appropriate level of medical response. The continued evaluation of these codes will ensure the proper resources are being sent on calls and may eliminate many dual-apparatus responses.
 - iv. The Medical Response Team (MRT) unit was relocated to alleviate multiple heavy apparatus response to the core of the city. This frees up resources to be used in other parts of the city and reduces heavy-apparatus carbon emissions.
- All above-mentioned measures have a positive impact as cost savings can be applied toward other needs throughout the department such as equipment, PPE, and our 4-handed staffing model. These cost savings will be maintained with the adoption of the FY21 budget and the department will continue to identify and implement efficiencies.
- K. **Additional Residential Development Downtown** - Staff inquired if additional residential development downtown has changed peak hours for Fire/EMS response. There are almost 4,000 existing residential units and an additional 4,000 are expected in the next couple of years. The Department indicates that their call volume at night has increased, but that a large number of these calls are false fire alarms (situations where an MRT would not be appropriate, but disrupts the recovery time for the heavy apparatus in the downtown station). The Chief indicates he is looking at strategies deployed in other cities to sort out the true calls from the false alarms, and they are continuing to monitor the data, as with the MRT program, to evaluate when additional teams/shifts may be warranted from a budget perspective.
- L. **Fire Department Strategic Plan** – The Department provided their 2020-2024 Strategic plan (**see attachment 2**), as well as a recent report card for how they're tracking with goals in the Strategic plan (**see attachment 3**). The Department prepared this plan with feedback from community members, City officials and fire department employees. The strategic plan outlines goals for the department as well as strategies to meet those goals. The goals are as follows:
- Provide unparalleled public safety service
 - Firefighter health and safety
 - Department training, leadership, and development
 - Community Risk Reduction
- The Council may wish to discuss this plan in greater detail with the department.***

ADDITIONAL & BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- A. Performance Measures.** Traditional Fire Department performance measures include call Volume (**see attachment 1**). In addition, two of the performance measures listed on page 172 of the FY23 Mayor's Recommended Budget book for "Turn-Out Times" and "Operational Injuries" refer to targets. Other performance measures are tracked in the strategic plan report card, referenced above, and in **attachment 3**.
- B.** The Administration provided the following objectives for Emergency Management, in the context of the shift to the Fire Department in FY 21:

Emergency Management Objectives

1. Developing the organizational structure of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and its place within SLCFD chain of command and Salt Lake City administration.
 2. Providing emergency preparation, mitigation, and NIMS training for individual City departments.
 3. Improving upon the current City alerting system and better incorporating its use for both internal and external audiences.
 4. Identifying critical infrastructure, developing plans for its protection, and communicating and coordinating those plans with all necessary parties.
 5. Expanding upon public education initiatives to enable residents to become better prepared. Focus on existing programs like: Firewise Communities, CERT, Safe Neighborhoods, Run-Hide-Fight, Fix the Bricks, etc.
 6. Maintaining and growing SLC's Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP).
 7. Identifying SLC's Emergency Shelters/Victim ID centers/ Family assistance centers and sharing how these facilities benefit the community.
 8. Emergency Management web page integration
 9. Mutual aid/MOUs/contracts
- C. Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) Trainings** - The CERT program managed by Emergency Management provides disaster preparedness training for a variety of hazards to residents. Specific topics include fire suppression, medical operations, light search and rescue and team organization among others. The Emergency Management Division continues to offer online CERT trainings during the pandemic. The training is now available in Spanish. At current funding levels capacity exists for approximately 300 residents to be trained a certified annually.
- D. Run Volume by Station:** See attachment 1 for Run volume by Station and apparatus since 2019. Note that EMS call volume is significantly higher than Fire call volume, and that Station 1 in Downtown is the busiest station in both categories.
- E. Cost recovery for fire service provided to the University of Utah facilities** – The Council may wish to ask the Administration about the response volume the SLCFD provides to the University of Utah, as the University does not operate their own fire service. In previous years the council has discussed whether it makes sense to dialogue with State Officials about potential cost recovery (full or partial) for this service.

Attachments

Attachment 1 - Call volume by type and station, from 2019

Attachment 2 - SLCFD 2020-2024 Strategic Plan

Attachment 3 – SLCFD 2022 Strategic Plan Report Card

Attachment 4 – Map of all Fire Stations in Salt Lake City