



REPORT TO COUNCIL

City of Sacramento

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STAFF
June 20, 2006

Honorable Mayor and
Members of the City Council

Subject: Update on the Fire Department Community Outreach and Recruitment Program

Location/Council District: Citywide

Recommendation:

This report provides an update on the Fire Department's Community Outreach and Recruitment Program and requests the Mayor/Council's support for the next steps of the Program.

Contact: Ray S. Jones, Assistant Chief, 264-8100

Presenters: Ray S. Jones, Assistant Chief

Department: Fire Department

Division: Emergency Medical Services

Organization No: 2554

Summary:

The Fire Department Outreach and Recruitment Program is a 3-year pilot effort developed at the direction of the Mayor and City Council in order to create a more diverse workforce. While the applicant pool we believe has diversified as a result of the programs efforts, a number of barriers still remain to achieving a workforce that mirrors our community. Staff has identified a number of innovative and aggressive next step strategies to breakdown the barriers for potential candidates interested in entering the fire service.

Committee/Commission Action: None.

Background Information:

In 2003, the Mayor and City Council approved a three year pilot program focused on increasing the diversity within the Fire Department through active outreach and recruitment. To assure focused attention to the Community Outreach and Recruitment Program the SFD established a Community Outreach Coordinator dedicated to this effort.

Over the last three years, the Coordinator has attended over 150 events and speaking engagements. These included career and job fairs, presentations at colleges, universities, middle schools and high schools as well as employment development centers. During these outreach efforts, it became evident that while many people were interested in a career with the SFD they were often discouraged by a number of factors. Under the Community Outreach and Recruitment Program, the Fire Department has responded to these factors including:

EMT Basic Class

Since 1998, it has been a standard practice and requirement by the department that new hires be certified as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT). Therefore, in September 2003 the Department developed and offered the first EMT-Basic class. Since that time over 109 people from the community have been trained and certified as EMTs. Increasing the number of EMTs in the community has allowed for a more diverse pool of applicants.

Paramedic Training Program

In an effort to set the groundwork for future training opportunities for the Community, SFD has also developed and established a Paramedic Training program. The first class was implemented in August of 2004 and completed in December 2005. There were 42 students in the class of which 22 are paramedic interns for SFD.

Youth Outreach

The Coordinator also collaborated with the Oak Park Community Center staff to put on a "Hot-Rec" mini-academy for high school students. Although the after school academy successfully exposed many students to various Fire Service activities, the department does not currently have a career path for eighteen year olds who are interested in the fire service since the current eligible age requirement for recruitment is twenty-one.

Next Steps

In researching recruitment programs of other fire service agencies, we found that recruitment challenges exist statewide and our efforts are very proactive in comparison to other jurisdictions. However, while progress has been made in recruiting applicants, the current program efforts have not been as successful as hoped at capturing a diverse qualified pool of qualified candidates. Attachment A (should this be "the Power Point Presentation?") provides a comparison of changes in diversity. As a result, the SFD has had to refocus on barriers to capturing a broader candidate pool.

The process to become a firefighter is involved, expensive and confusing. The current

minimum qualifications for firefighter applicant include: 21 years of age; high school diploma or G.E.D.; 20 semester or 30 quarter units college (3-years of firefighter experience can be substituted); EMT-1 or higher; no tobacco use 12 months prior to hire; and a class B drivers license before academy graduation. For the past decade, the emphasis has been on hiring paramedic trained candidates to meet the growing demand for medical service calls. Clearly, the current system creates barriers to many potential candidates.

In response to this challenge, the Fire Department has designed two new recruitment strategies that will allow the Department to "Grow Our Own". The first program will open the door to high school graduates and mentor them through a structured program that will provide EMT training, internships and field training. The second program will offer jobs to EMTs, allowing them to work as a firefighters while also working toward their paramedic licenses. The second program will allow EMT's to become firefighters while working toward becoming a paramedic.

Additional Strategies:

In addition to the "Grow Our Own" strategies, next steps in recruitment efforts include:

- 1) Hiring at the Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) level in addition to the Paramedic/Firefighter level;
- 2) Maintaining an appropriate ratio of EMT to paramedics;
- 3) Reducing the minimum age requirement for hiring from twenty-one (21) to eighteen (18) years old;
- 4) Expanding the Community EMT and Paramedic training classes;
- 5) Increasing participation in Community CPR and First Aid Training; and
- 6) Continuing the Community Outreach and Recruitment Program and investigate models that allow for early entrance into the academy

Timing of next stepsXXXXX????

Currently in process of incorporating all of the above steps.

Evaluate total cost of internship, training and learn while working programs. Report back at midyear with estimated annual participation and associated costs.....

Financial Considerations:

The Community Outreach and Recruitment Program was initially approved as a 3-year pilot program with funding of up to \$300,000 a year. The overall cost of the pilot program costs to date is approximate \$586,780. Funds remain to begin implementation of the programs "Next Steps" for FY2006-07.

Environmental Considerations:

This is not defined as a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and, therefore, is exempt.

Policy Considerations:

The Fire Department Outreach and Recruitment Program was a pilot program developed at the direction of the Mayor and City Council in order to recruit a more diverse workforce. While the applicant pool we believe has diversified, barriers still remain to achieving a workforce that mirrors our community. Staff has recommended a number of innovative and aggressive next steps to breakdown the barriers for potential candidates interested in entering the fire service.

Emerging Small Business Development (ESBD): None

Respectfully Submitted by: _____
Ray Jones, Assistant Chief

Approved by: _____
Julius J. Cherry, Fire Chief

Recommendation Approved:

RAY KERRIDGE
City Manager

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