



Spring Lake Park – Blaine – Mounds View

Memorandum



To: City Administrators
From: SBMFD Leadership Team

Re: Public Fire Educator, Full-time Justification Statement
Date: May 10, 2019

The transition of Mrs. Booker's position is due to several factors. The largest of which is due to Becky's verbal intent to retire in 2019. This retirement announcement provided command staff with an opportunity to analyze and strategize objectives for the future. It has been on the radar for several years to increase dedication of FTE time toward community risk reduction (i.e. fire prevention efforts). While we have reorganized full-time staff over the past several years, those shifts did not result in more FTE commitment to fire prevention. We would like to foremost point to our mission and vision statement. Both of which cite fire prevention and public education as the core of our organization – before suppression (firefighting) activities. Sticking to these principles is the primary reason we have been able to operate with our unique model. As you are well aware, we credit our low call volume, fire loss, and efficient model to the two-decade+ commitment to fire prevention. A model that many departments now reach out to us for advice and support in implementing. It is with regret that our prevention efforts have reached a plateau in recent years. Much of this is due to the following factors:

- Increased population, commercial business development, requests for service, and demands of the fire department beyond prevention that require staff attention. None of these issues are going away and will likely increase as other essential services cannot be provided or are no longer available. We pride ourselves in being able to offer the most efficient, proactive and innovative solutions to fire prevention efforts – but are only able to do that with adequate staff support. In recent years, Mrs. Booker has not been able to keep up with the workload from years prior and newer demands/requests have gone unmet.
- Additionally, we have hired numerous part-time staff over the years to fill the void in our fire prevention division. With bolstered effort and emphasis over the past 24 months, we have been unable to find suitable applicants to fill those types of positions. Fewer applicants are available during daytime hours when an increasing number of services are requested. Also, the hourly rate and pension opportunities are less desirable to applicants than they once were. We have decreased from 8 PT staff at one point to now 5 active educators. As part of a solution, we have changed our firefighter minimum requirements to include a portion of community risk reduction activities. However, we do this with extreme caution as they are already required to meet increasing demands on other avenues. We do not believe it effective to increase or shift firefighter requirements any more than we did in January 2019. Because we have been unable to fill part-time

positions, and because it is less effective to hire numerous part-time staff to do the work of 1 FTE, we are proposing the increase of .4FTE to hire a full-time public educator after Becky's retirement.

Numbers:

- Call volume has been on the rise over the last 3 years after a steady 10 year plateau. During that same time, population increase has been steady.
- Requests for CRR events has doubled in the last 10 years and over the last 4 years increased by an average of 15% per year (concluding we have been able to do much more with less resources over the past 4 years). A majority of the increase has come for daytime requests and those requiring specialized training (Home Safety Surveys, Car Seat Installations, Juvenile Firesetter Intervention).
- For the first time in recent history, we have had to turn requests away and create a prioritization process for receiving requests. We are more limited now by staff time and output than resources (such as buying smoke alarms or other products and incentives).

Thus, the proposed strategy beginning in 2020 is to incorporate 1FTE, part-time staff as possible, and firefighter requirements in a collaborative effort to increase our CRR division to the standards it has strived for. These staff are supported by our CRR Coordinator (Jeff Lundquist), and Assistant Chief (Maddison Zikmund). Supplemented in many projects by Support Services Supervisor (Tony Scavo) and Fire Technician (Matthias Gosch). Objectives moving into 2020 would be to: not decline any requests for service, update and enhance programs that have gone stale, provide specialized training for more CRR staff to fill vacancies, participate in additional joint agency programs, apply for additional grant and funding opportunities within CRR, and return to a nationally recognized leader in CRR efforts. Because the position would be "new" and demands have changed, we are proposing that the position is incorporated as a responding firefighter to match the SBM strategic plan in increasing overall staffing and capabilities. The hired candidate will work during a similar workweek schedule to other full-time staff and be the face of the department to many residents and business leaders in our community. CRR efforts are designed for a target audience to match our budget formula (i.e. 76% of focus in Blaine, 16% MV, 8% SLP). This is offset somewhat due to high risk populations and our programming focus on schools, apartment complexes, high hazard commercial occupancies, and manufactured home communities.

SBMFD Leadership Team