



Date: April 21, 2014

To: Thomas J. Bonfield, City Manager
Through: W. Bowman Ferguson, Deputy City Manager
From: Daniel M. Curia, Fire Chief
Subject: Renewal of Urban Search and Rescue Memorandum of Agreement

Executive Summary

The Durham Fire Department (DFD) has a long standing agreement with the City of Raleigh Fire Department and the Town of Chapel Hill Fire Department to jointly staff and fund an Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) team. The previous memorandum of agreement (MOA) among the municipalities for this purpose has expired and needs to be renewed in order for the team to continue its operations. While the last MOA expired on June 20, 2012, all departments continued to operate as though the agreement would be extended. Therefore staff recommends the City renew the MOA with the City of Raleigh and Town of Chapel Hill for continued participation in the USAR team through June 30, 2023.

Recommendation

The Fire Department recommends that Council authorize the City Manager to enter into an MOA with the City of Raleigh and the Town of Chapel Hill for continued participation in the regional USAR team and to authorize an annual payment not to exceed \$61,027.35 to the City of Raleigh for consolidated team funding.

Background

The USAR initiative in the United States originated in the 1990's as heavy rescue teams and evolved into 28 federal task forces. Shortly after the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, some states began building USAR capabilities as well. Many of the state programs, like the teams in North Carolina, were developed through local Emergency Management.

In 2002, North Carolina Emergency Management (NCEM) implemented a progressive plan to establish regional USAR teams across the state. In 2003, eleven (11) regional USAR teams were identified, with various size teams and geographic locations.

In 2013, after a decade of experience in USAR operations, NCEM streamlined the number of USAR regional teams necessary to serve the state of North Carolina.

Modeled after the statewide regional hazardous materials regional response team program that has operated very successfully since the early 1990s, there are currently seven (7) USAR regional teams in the North Carolina system.

The City of Durham Fire Department, in conjunction with the Raleigh Fire Department and Chapel Hill Fire Department, is currently a member of USAR Task Force 8, which is designated as a USAR Type I rescue team. There are two such teams in North Carolina, with Task Force 8 being located in the Raleigh/Durham area and the other located in Charlotte; Charlotte Fire Department operates the other Type I team. A Type I rescue team is the most equipped and largest of all teams in the USAR program and is capable of twenty-four hour operations for up to ten days. The Type I team deploys with up to eighty trained personnel and the most extensive equipment cache. It meets the requirement to operate in all technical disciplines and in all conditions.

The three municipal fire departments have developed a shared, special operations team that provides the region with technical rescue capabilities that are superior to any that are available to any of the individual municipalities. Additionally, the region's dependence on State and federal disaster teams, which are hours away from the area, is significantly reduced.

This local team combines high-level technical proficiencies in heavy rescue, structural collapse, vertical rescue, weapons of mass destruction response, catastrophic incidents from any hazard, confined space and below grade rescue, weather disasters and major incident management. The team is designed to dovetail with the regional emergency preparedness efforts currently being developed through the Triangle J Council Governments and also with State and federal efforts in these response disciplines.

The MOA was in effect until June 30, 2012 and is in need of renewal. Although the expired MOA encompassed participation by the three aforementioned fire departments and the Town of Cary Fire Department, the Town of Cary withdrew its support of the team in May 2013. The three remaining fire departments feel the function of the team is necessary for disaster preparedness and mitigation; therefore, the USAR team's operations have continued unhindered.

Issues/Analysis

Events in previous years have made it necessary to continue local and regional planning and to maintain capabilities to respond to a variety of threats and hazards. The development of these special capabilities on a shared regional basis helps spread the costs among several jurisdictions and increases the resources available for any single jurisdiction. No single jurisdiction (except a major metropolitan city) could afford to fully develop these resources.

The operations of the regional USAR team are coordinated through the Raleigh Fire Department. As the lead agency, the Raleigh Fire Department has the primary responsibility to plan, organize, structure, and offer training for the team members.

The Durham Fire Department assists in these efforts through a task force leader, who is a member of the DFD and who fulfills the need for team coordination among the municipalities. The DFD also provides instructors for the team and hosts various training events.

In May 2013, as the fire chiefs from the participating jurisdictions discussed the need to renew the expired MOA, the Town of Cary withdrew its participation from the team due to a lack of State funding, Cary's belief that the Raleigh Fire Department possessed capabilities to operate a USAR team without assistance, and their stated need to focus on internal staff development. The remaining fire chiefs discussed the issue and jointly agreed that the need for a team with USAR capabilities still existed and that the established structure of joint participation, management, and funding of the team was the most cost-effective manner in which to proceed.

The City of Durham's participation in the USAR team entails a monetary contribution of \$61,027.35 annually, which is 34.6% of team funding. The monetary contributions and percentages of total for the City of Raleigh and the Town of Chapel Hill are \$98,737.35 (55.98%) and \$16,613.35 (9.42%), respectively. The monetary amount is based on population and is appropriated for equipment procurement, routine maintenance, and training needs.

A percentage of each municipality's contribution is made available to the individual municipality for the training, travel, and small equipment needs of its individual members. This percentage, as outlined in the MOA, is eighteen percent (18%) of the financial commitment. For the City of Durham, the total amount allocated to the USAR team is \$61,027.35; however, that amount includes \$10,984.92, which is eighteen percent (18%) of Durham's total contribution. Annually, the USAR contribution remitted to the City of Raleigh will be \$61,027.35 less the amount used by the City of Durham for the individual training of its personnel.

The MOA also incorporates a clause pertaining to the termination of the agreement. With 90 days' notice, any participant can opt to withdrawal from the agreement and have all USAR property and equipment returned to the remaining members of the team. Once a participant withdrawals, there is no further monetary obligation on the part of the municipality.

Continuing the USAR team in its current structure and operation allows for a high level of regional coordination among participating departments, a greater level of preparedness for disaster situations, and the ability to quickly respond to and assist any governmental unit in the area.

Alternatives

The alternative would be not to authorize the City Manager to enter into the Memorandum of Agreement for continued participation in the USAR team. The Durham Fire Department would not be able to participate as a member of the USAR team and members of the department would not be eligible for emergency

deployment or team training. Equipment assigned to the DFD as a member of the team would be returned to the remaining municipalities.

Financial Impact

The financial impact of the proposal will not exceed \$61,027.35 to pay the DFD's proportionate share of annual USAR funding. The DFD already has funds appropriated for this purpose in the City-adopted FY14 budget.