

ARLINGTON COUNTY FISCAL AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMISSION
REPORT TO THE COUNTY BOARD

FY 2016 PROPOSED BUDGET

BUDGET AREA:	Fire Dept.
FAAC REVIEWERS:	Tenley Peterson, Paul Holland, Patrick Bogenberger
DATE OF FAAC ACTION:	March 26, 2015

FAAC Opinion:

FAAC supports the fire department’s practice of trying inventive approaches to fulfilling its multiple missions including a department reorganization, utilization of a physician assistant, developing a customer satisfaction survey, and modified staffing of paramedic units. The reorganization transfers 15 FTEs from the Business Services and Fire Prevention lines of business to Operations and the Office of the Fire Chief. The personnel transfers do not represent a change in duties or emphasis as staff would continue to perform the same functions in a different organizational alignment. FAAC is concerned about the department’s current 15 vacancies, the highest level in years. The department indicates that it would like to initiate a discussion about modifying the current 56 hour workweek which was established in 1956. FAAC notes that last year’s recommendation for the department to gather performance data about the physician assistant pilot program does not appear to have been done.

FAAC Recommendation # 1			
FAAC recommends that the County Board approve the County Manager’s proposed 2016 Fire Dept. budget.			
Vote:	Yes: 8	No: 0	Abstain: 1
Comment:	Proposed budget represents a 3% increase over the FY 2015 adopted budget. The proposed 321 FTEs are the same level as FY 2014 & 2015		

FAAC Recommendation # 2				
If Arlington County receives a SAFER Grant, the FAAC supports the transfer of non-department funds to the Fire Department to cover expenses not covered by the grant.				
Vote:	Yes: 9	No: 0	Abstain: 0	
Comment: Out year ongoing County commitment if SAFER grant is awarded and accepted		FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
	Federal Share	\$465,442	\$1,020,299	\$0
	County Share	\$136,088	\$138,723	\$1,185,510

Future Considerations

The fire department has a number of initiatives whose costs, effectiveness, and efficiency will play out over the next several years.

- Recruiting and maintaining staffing levels such that the department can reduce its current high number of vacancies.
- Receiving a SAFER Grant increases costs in three FYs, 2016 – 2018, and commits Arlington to fund 12 FTEs in year three of the grant -- FY 2018.
- Modifying the current 56 hour workweek may increase personnel costs.
- Developing better program performance measures to more adequately judge department performance including being able to make appropriate performance comparisons to other local jurisdictions. Development of a customer satisfaction measure would be a significant step.
- Implementing the Advanced Practice Paramedics pilot program may provide savings through efficiencies.