



Staff Report

City Council

Item No. {{section.number}}.F

Meeting Date: March 12, 2025

From: Michael Contreras, Fire Chief

Title: Increase in Authorized Staffing to Implement Measure W FY 2024/2025 Initial Staffing Requirements

RECOMMENDATION:

To authorize an increase of eight FTE in the city’s authorized staffing schedule to allow the early hiring of up to six Firefighter Paramedics and two Public Safety Dispatchers to ensure Medic #4 is in service by July 1, 2025.

BACKGROUND:

Cathedral City Fire & EMS is facing a shortage of Firefighter Paramedics, impacting emergency response capabilities. The personnel being considered for these positions are currently in paramedic school and would typically not enter the background check process until after completing their education and obtaining their licenses. By initiating background checks before licensing, we can significantly reduce hiring time and ensure personnel are ready for deployment by July 1.

This proactive approach minimizes delays and allows for a seamless transition into field operations without additional waiting periods.

Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) was implemented to meet County protocols in 2023 and then paused in April 2024 due to inadequate staffing in dispatch to meet the increased time commitment that EMD calls require.

DISCUSSION:

This expedited hiring process will address current and projected shortages, reduce onboarding time, allow Cathedral City to remain competitive in recruiting qualified paramedics, and ensure Medic 4 is in service by July 1, 2025.

Firefighter Paramedic shortages are an ongoing challenge across Southern California, with Cathedral City competing against multiple fire departments for a limited pool of qualified candidates. By implementing an expedited hiring process, the department can:

- Secure qualified paramedics ahead of competing agencies,
- Reduce mandatory overtime and prevent personnel fatigue,
- Ensure adequate ambulance staffing and maintain emergency response times, and
- Streamline background investigations and onboarding to align with the completion of paramedic school.

This expedited process allows the department to shorten the traditional hiring process, ensuring the selected recruits complete training and are fully operational by July 1, 2025.

The hiring and training of two Public Safety Dispatchers will allow the Police Department to resume Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD).

FISCAL IMPACT:

The average monthly cost for each Firefighter Paramedic is \$13,375, totaling \$160,500 for this initial two months.

In addition, the Police department will be hiring two additional Public Safety Dispatchers to ensure we are able to support the Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) functions being implemented under the Measure W initiatives.

	DESCRIPTION	GENERAL LEDGER ACCOUNT CODES	PROJECT CODE	AMOUNT	ONE TIME or ONGOING
2024-2025	Measure W Ambulance Staffing	151-300-330-334-80XX-80XX	N/A	\$160,631	Ongoing
2024-2025	Additional Police Dispatch Staffing	100-300-310-314-801X-80XX	N/A	41,649	Ongoing
2024-2025	Total			\$202,280	

During the December 11, 2024 City Council meeting, \$388,983 was approved to purchase the ambulance unit for Medic #4.

The Measure W funding the City will receive in FY 2024/2025 should be \$1,250,000. With these two commitments for the ambulance and the firefighter staffing total \$549,614, there will be \$700,386 remaining.

FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN:

Measure W

ATTACHMENTS:

None