



MEMORANDUM

Milpitas Fire Department

DATE: October 15, 2021

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers

THROUGH: Steve McHarris, City Manager *Steve McHarris*

FROM: Brian Sherrard, Fire Chief

SUBJECT: Firefighter and Firefighter/Paramedics Recruitment

This Information Memorandum updates the City Council on the hiring process for existing and scheduled Firefighter and/or Firefighter-Paramedics vacancies for the next nine months.

Background

As part of the adoption of the FY 2021-22 Budget, the City Council approved the defunding of four firefighter-paramedic positions onetime, which delayed the deployment of the ambulance until FY 2022-23. On August 9, 2021, the City Council allocated American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to fund the four positions. This included the allocation of funds to rehire the four defunded firefighter-paramedic positions. In addition to the four defunded positions, the Fire Department has experienced turnover of staff due to injuries and retirements. By end of December 2021, the Fire Department anticipates four vacant sworn positions.

It takes approximately twelve months for the hiring process and training of firefighters and/or firefighter-paramedic recruits before they are qualified to be assigned to a fire station. Once recruits have gone through an extensive selection process including medical, background and psychological evaluations, recruits must complete a 20-week fire academy, station orientation period, and medical skills proficiency testing prior to receiving their station assignment. Further, the recruitment process and holding Fire Academies are very staff intensive and are often organized in partnership with other local fire departments and/or agencies.

Recruitment Process and Fire Academy

The Fire Department conducted a comprehensive recruitment process which concluded on October 6, 2021. This process started with obtaining the top 100 candidates from the Firefighter Candidate Testing Center (FCTC) late summer. FCTC was created to provide standardized firefighter candidate testing. FCTC conducts written and physical abilities testing and then establishes a ranked list of all candidates. Then, the Fire Department conducted Subject Matter Expert (SME) review of the top 100 candidates, advanced 76 candidates for oral board interviews and 16 finalists for Fire Chief interviews.

To minimize the impact on existing staff resources and the cost for holding a Fire Academy, the City of Milpitas Fire Department is scheduled to hold a joined Fire Academy with the cities of Palo Alto and Mountain View. The Fire Academy is scheduled to begin on February 14, 2022 with graduation expected in June 2022.

Candidates

The pool of the top finalists consists of many highly qualified individuals. The top finalists possess a diverse background of experience, training, and education reflective of the City's community. These individuals come from a variety of backgrounds and possess the physical, emotional, and mental qualities necessary to be well-rounded and successful firefighters and/or firefighter/paramedics.

Several of the candidates can read, write and speak multiple languages including American sign language. The educational background ranges from successful completion of technical school to master's degrees in Cellular and Molecular Science or Public Health. The candidates' work history includes individuals who are teachers, firefighters, hazardous materials inspectors, paramedics, personal trainers, and armed services veterans.

Conditional Job Offers and Next Steps

Due to this long onboarding process, costs and staff time related to the recruitment process and training, the City Manager authorized conditional job offers for eight finalists pending completion of the background, medical and psychological evaluations. Once these evaluations are complete, final job offers will be made to eight or less recruits.

There's sufficient funding for the four anticipated General Fund vacancies. Further, as part of the approval of the ARPA allocations, there's sufficient funding to hire the four defunded positions. However, there may not be sufficient funding in the Fire Department's budget to cover the cost for the Fire Academy, which would be requested as part of the next ARPA update scheduled for December 7, 2021 or the FY 2021-22 Mid-Year Budget Review scheduled for February 2023.

Depending on the number of recruits successfully completing the Fire Academy, the Fire Department may be able to deploy the ambulance in summer 2022.