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April 22, 2025

The Honorable Katy Yaroslavsky
Chair, Budget and Finance Committee
200 N. Main Street, Room 440
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Councilmember Yaroslavsky:

Los Angeles Fire Department Proposed Budget FY25-26

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2025-26 Proposed Budget for the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD). With the understanding that the upcoming fiscal year presents significant challenges to fund all necessary requests, the Department thanks Mayor Bass for a \$923.4 million operating budget and additional non-departmental resources that support our endeavor to provide the highest level of public safety and emergency services throughout the City of Los Angeles. We are truly appreciative given the difficult decisions made in this budget process, yet the resources are necessary to continue mission critical functions at the most basic level.

A. As requested, we have outlined top-line core services that the FY 25-26 budget will support:

Fire Suppression and Emergency Medical Services

- Staffing to launch the comprehensive Homeless Fire Protection and Street Medicine Program with 67 new positions and related expenses to provide adequate fire protection, fire code enforcement, emergency medical care, and life sustaining connections to humanitarian services and pathways to broader support.
- Staffing to augment first responder resources including continuation of a SAFER-22 grant supported engine in the San Fernando Valley; and adding Fire Captains to Marine Fireboats 1 and 5 to improve tactical abilities during emergency responses.
- Staffing and resources to address the over 80% call volume attributed to Emergency Medical Services (calls) resulting in approximately 600 daily transports; including continuation of emergency-appointed paramedic positions and paramedic training, and the expansion of Tactical Emergency Medical Services (TEMS) deployments and Paramedic Assessment Cycle Teams.
- Ensuring field resources are properly and safely equipped to deliver first responder services through funding for safety and protective equipment, professional maintenance

of turnout gear, and reformulated firefighting foam, as well as emergency apparatus under the MICLA-funded Fleet Program.

Fire Prevention and Hazardous Materials Enforcement

- Staffing for fee-supported fire prevention support, including and affordable housing and small business support under the Mayor's Executive Directives 1 and 4, fire inspection support for the Los Angeles World Airports, and CUPA hazardous materials management support.

Training

- Funding for the Firefighter recruit program to train and hire 118 Firefighter for two new academy classes to meet attrition, and for paramedic training and other critical in-service training for which special funding is not available.

Civilian Administrative and Field Support

- Adding and restoring critical civilian positions for sworn and civilian hiring, promotions and numerous aspects of time sensitive personnel support, Workday resolution, grants management, accounting, revenue and administrative support;
- Providing the necessary resources to maintain the minimum daily need of approximately 416 ground fleet apparatus and five Fireboats in the field at any given time, including the restoration of fleet maintenance staffing and more adequate funding for fleet parts and boat maintenance.
- Funding for essential technology management, enhancements and hardware needs, particularly in support of field operations and human capital.

B. Reconsideration of Additional Critical Resources and Funding.

The Department is requesting reconsideration of the following items critical to administrative operations and public safety. These requests would add nine (9) positions that amount to **\$2.18M** in additional funding, including identified offsets:

1. Payroll Integration Software and Staffing – Software platform (\$1.5M) and one (1) Senior Systems Analyst I and two (2) Programmer Analyst III (\$267,746) – **Total \$1,767,746**

This request ensures that LAFD has both the technology and personnel required for a successful transition to an integrated payroll and scheduling system that aligns with Workday, which is critical to getting sworn members paid accurately and on time. The request includes software procurement for the replacement of the legacy Network Staffing System (NSS) and the technology staffing essential to support planning, integration, configuration and ongoing maintenance. The addition of this personnel will ensure proper alignment with LAFD's technical infrastructure and mitigate risks related to system downtime, data discrepancies and/or compliance failures. The staffing cost represents nine months funding.

2. Information Technology Oversight – One (1) Assistant Chief – **Total \$278,543**

This request restores an Assistant Chief position not continued in the Equity Bureau to support the Bureau Commander/Chief Information Officer (CIO). The position is needed to ensure effective management and continuity of leadership within the Information Technology Bureau (ITB). The current span of control for the CIO includes oversight of a wide array of mission-critical functions, including:

- Infrastructure: Core IT systems supporting department-wide operations
- Help Desk: End-user support for technology issues across the department, including triage, troubleshooting, and escalation management
- Software Development and Integrations: Custom applications, systems integration, and digital solutions
- Fire Communications: Radio and Cellular Communications, communication installations in vehicles and at radio sites
- Tech Control: 24/7 monitoring and operational support for emergency fire technology infrastructure, including radio systems, networks, and fire station alerting
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS): Mapping and spatial analysis in support of emergency response
- Fire Stat (Proposed Addition): Data analytics and performance metrics for operational effectiveness

The breadth and complexity of these domains—many of which operate in a real-time, high-stakes environment—necessitate an additional executive-level position to maintain high standards of service delivery, reliability, and strategic coordination.

The proposed Assistant Chief will be primarily responsible for the day-to-day oversight of Fire Communications, Tech Control, GIS and Fire Stat. This position will ensure focused leadership in these areas while also serving as the assistant bureau commander, supporting all sections of the bureau during the CIO's absence or when otherwise engaged. Establishing this role will reduce span-of-control challenges, strengthen decision-making capacity, and enhance the resilience and responsiveness of the Bureau's leadership team. The staffing cost represents 12 months funding since the position is currently filled.

3. Accounts Payable Supervision – One (1) Principal Accountant II (\$105,993); delete one (1) Management Analyst (\$76,868) from HSD Grants Expansion and delete \$29,125 from the Financial Management Division's Office and Administrative/Account 006010 base budget allocation – **Total \$0**

This request restores a deleted position in the Accounts Payable and Special Funds Unit to address several key issues:

- Insufficient supervisory capacity to manage the complexity and volume of financial transactions.
- Delays in vendor payments and special fund reconciliations.
- Inadequate oversight and mentoring of staff due to high supervisor-to-staff ratios.

In FY23-24, the Accounts Payable Unit handled cash expenses and vendor payments of over \$115M. The Department has over 50 active contracts and processed 57 Authority for Expenditures. There are also ongoing vendor payment and fund reconciliation deadlines and council instructions for fund transfers every fiscal year.

4. Financial Management Division Support – One (1) Senior Management Analyst II –
Total \$128,870

As the Fire Department's FY 25-26 Budget is proposed to increase by \$103M for an operating budget of \$923M and by 258 resolution and 3,878 regular positions, it is essential to add a civilian authority that focuses on the analysis of salary accounts. This request is for a supervisory position responsible for overseeing the creation of salary and overtime projections for the preparation of Financial Status Reports (FSR), wages and count, and research and data analysis of salary projections and expenditures. This entails working on the Adopted Budget and Proposed Budget simultaneously to analyze salary accounts, and provide adequate projections and details to ensure a comprehensive understanding of each salary account. With sworn and civilian staff and numerous Memorandum of Understandings to review and provide details that impact each salary account, there is a need to dedicate staff and develop a high level of expertise for accurate analysis and projections.

Ninety percent of the adopted budget is distributed over six sworn salary accounts. The Department's sworn salaries are very complex and interrelated. With over 3,500 sworn regular authorities on special duty and platoon duty and over 350 civilian positions to track, there is constant analysis and projection adjustments required for reporting purposes and to meet payroll needs biweekly. Salary account analysis is also impacted by numerous grants and special funded positions that are front funded and require monitoring of reimbursements.

Each pay period requires a deep dive into each salary account to ensure that if expenditures vary from projected expenditures, there is a clear understanding of what caused the difference and determine if future projections need to be adjusted. With over 50 premium pay or sworn bonuses, dedicated civilian staff must become experts in numerous details that impact how sworn salaries work. Each sworn salary account can have unique codes that need to be reviewed and analyzed.

The complexity of LAFD sworn salaries and overtime accounts and constant review, analysis and preparation of reports necessitates expertise beyond the one position currently assigned these tasks. The staffing cost represents nine months funding.

5. Film Permit Streamlining Package – Two (2) Inspector I, one (1) Accounting Clerk and one (1) Administrative Clerk – **Total \$0** (\$341,141 expense is fully cost recovered from permit fees).

The request will address inspection backlogs and billing inefficiencies in the Film Unit. This Unit receives approximately 30 to 50 requests per day to perform "spot checks" to determine if a film shoot is fire code compliant. Under current staffing levels, Inspectors can only complete approximately 5 to 10 spot checks per day. Therefore, most film

shoots never see an Inspector. Film LA bills the industry for the spot check and, if performed, the spot check fees are issued to the City for reimbursement. A recent increase of spot check fees from \$84 to \$253 elevated Film revenue by \$1.2 million. However, missed revenue of \$3M to \$3.6M annually can be captured if the Unit is fully staffed.

C. Opportunity to Reorganize Personnel to Streamline Services

The Proposed Budget instructs the Department to take the necessary steps to consolidate the Equity Bureau, comprised of four remaining positions, into the Professional Standards Division. These resources are needed to maintain the critical aspects of planning and stakeholder collaboration for the continued development of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) structured initiatives. LAFD recognizes a critical need for an organizational structure and staffing that will effectively mediate conflict, carry out a strategic diversity and inclusion plan, mitigate complaints, grievances and lawsuits, and perform other essential functions that facilitate a positive working environment.

The recommendations to reconsider the additional resources and funding outlined above are required to maintain frontline services, public safety and an effective organizational model. Please note that the Department does not have a completed organizational chart due to continuing reconciliation on position control within Workday. That exercise will be completed at a later date.

I look forward to discussing the above items with the members of the Budget and Finance Committee and the City Council and appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ronnie Villanueva", with a stylized flourish at the end.

RONNIE R. VILLANUEVA
Interim Fire Chief