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April 21, 2021

Honorable Paul Krekorian  
Chair, Budget and Finance Committee  
c/o Mandy Morales, Legislative Assistant  
200 N. Main Street, Room 360  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Councilmember Krekorian:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2021-22 Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) Proposed Budget. My most sincere appreciation is extended to Mayor Garcetti for a \$750 million budget to enhance the LAFD's ability to make our communities the safest in the nation.

The Proposed Budget provides resources to continue our mission critical functions efficiently and effectively, including funding for three new recruit classes to maintain attrition and incrementally staff for a surge of sworn retirements expected over the next three years; continued staffing for impactful field operations including the Advanced Provider Response Unit (APRU), SAFER Grant engine resources and cannabis enforcement; the replacement of front line equipment including Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA), turnout gear, helmets, cardiac monitors and defibrillators; the life cycle replacement of fleet apparatus; and, facilities maintenance. We will perform our best to manage one-time reductions of \$4.6 million in Sworn Salaries and \$5 million in Constant Staffing Overtime.

I did want to present a few but significant requests in the Proposed Budget that directly impact first response field operations for Committee and Council consideration, amounting to \$1.3 million in additional funding:

- 1. Incident Command Support – Emergency Incident Technician (EIT) - \$187,318:** Position authority and funding are requested for a Firefighter III/Emergency Incident Technician (EIT) that was not continued in FY 20-21. EITs are critical for accountability, situation status, resource status, and emergency safety procedures at every emergency incident. Over the last few budget cycles, the Department has achieved its goal to incrementally restore EIT positions to all Battalions that were deleted in the FY 2010-11 Budget. The deletion of this position impacted Battalion 14 in the North Hollywood area and was a setback to maintaining comprehensive coverage in the field.
- 2. Regulation 4 Unit Staffing – Fire Inspector II - \$118,689:** Position authority and funding are requested for staffing of Regulation 4 compliance of 76,000 fire life safety systems at over 26,000 occupancies. Under the Fire Chief's Regulation No. 4, all fire protection equipment and systems across Los Angeles must undergo testing at scheduled intervals to ensure acceptable performance. In order to provide enforcement

over this vast number of systems, the Department utilizes outside Certified Testers that are processed and approved by Regulation 4 personnel. The department currently has 564 Certified Testers within this program but is staffed with only one Inspector for program oversight. The additional Inspector will assist with the processing and implementation of additional Certified Testers needed to increase compliance within the 76,000 systems. Optimally functional fire life safety systems have a positive impact on response times and public safety. Fire alarm testing industry representatives have attended multiple Fire Commission meetings and have been very collaborative and supportive of the Reg 4 Unit and this request. The cost of this position is fee supported. The position will assist in transition to a new fee system anticipated to generate approximately \$1.5 million in annual revenue.


3. **False Fire Alarm Program –Salaries Funding - \$195,580:** Funding is requested in the Unappropriated Balance for the staffing cost of a new False Fire Alarm program pending a report back on program details. Patterned after LAPD's False Alarm Program, the primary objective is to significantly reduce emergency responses to false fire alarms through establishment of a false alarm fee. With false alarms currently averaging 34,000 annually (37,652 in 2019 and 30,521 in 2020), a false alarm program will have a positive effect on response times by increasing the availability of Firefighters for other emergency calls. Per Council instruction (CF 20-0600-S84), the Department is in process of preparing a report and ordinance relative to the establishment of a new fee. The report will address program requirements and a staffing model (to include a Senior Management Analyst, Accountant and Accounting Clerk) with fee recommendations to be reflected in the ordinance. Current Department staffing cannot absorb the workload of processing thousands of new billings and payments and appeals by property owners. The program will generate revenue from non-compliance fees, currently projected at up to \$1.7 million annually.
4. **Hardware and Software Support – Contractual Services - \$475,000:** Funding is requested to address ongoing Information Technology Bureau (ITB) service, subscription and product needs to support department operations. This request addresses increased usage of cloud-based systems, data analytic systems for Firestat metrics and performance reporting, and increased basic licensing costs that support our Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system. Funding of \$475,000 was provided in FY 20-21 but not continued.
5. **Telecom Recurring Cost – Office and Administrative Expense - \$250,000:** Funding is requested to offset the increased usage of broadband and other telecom services that support field operations. The Department's entire fleet of emergency vehicles is being upgraded with broad band to facilitate greater situational awareness with such capabilities as real time mapping, automated vehicle location (AVL) and drone livestreaming.
6. **Early Intervention Treatment Program (EITP) – Contractual Services - \$82,500:** Funding is requested to continue contract funding for a nine-month period in FY 21-22 to complement Innovation Funds received for this injury prevention program. The EITP is the first meaningful LAFD effort to address rising Work Compensation costs. The contractor provides clinical support towards evaluating LAFD members' injuries and developing treatment and corrective exercise plans to help correct or minimize workplace injuries. Ultimately, the program will help reduce Workers Compensation

claims and backfill overtime from members placed off duty due to injuries. Every Firefighter field vacancy due to injury costs approximately \$680 in daily backfill overtime. Since October of 2020, the EITP has served 334 members and performed 782 treatments. Early data is promising and we are projecting a 9% conversion rate. This rate is the reduction of Workers Comp injuries to injuries treated by the EITP. The EITP has also shown some early success in improving Drill Tower retention by screening recruits for injury potential.

- 7. Separation Incentive Program (SIP) – Departmental Chief Accountant:** The Department requests retention of this position after re-evaluation of management needs in Accounting operations. Two Accountant non-SIP vacancies in Accounts Receivable and EMS Reporting are proposed as substitutions for deletion to offset costs and align with the intent of SIP. These deletions will significantly impact operations, particularly with the Department having lost an additional Principal Accountant II, two Accounting Clerks and a Senior Administrative Clerk to SIP. However, the Department has determined that it is more critical to retain the Chief Accountant as the Chief Accounting Employee for the Department given the complexity and unique nature of LAFD finance. The position manages a staff of over 30 professional and clerical accounting employees, including payroll, accounts payable, accounts receivable, emergency medical services billing and collection, receipt collection, and all accounting reporting and audit requirements. The position also manages over 30 different types of billing and prepayment services, with over 100,000 invoices billed for various entities and constituents to generate over \$60 million in annual revenue, and also manages the Department's EMS accounting activities with an annual 220,000 transports and over \$70 million in revenue.

I look forward to discussing the above items with the members of the Budget and Finance Committee and the City Council. I appreciate your consideration of my requests to enhance public and firefighter safety if additional funding is available.

Sincerely,



RALPH M. TERRAZAS  
Fire Chief