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April 21, 2022

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 2022-23 Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) Proposed Budget. With an operational budget totaling \$781.6 million, in addition to non-departmental resources, the Department is greatly appreciative of the resources made available to continue mission critical functions efficiently and effectively, particularly in the areas of Recruit Training, Equity and Inclusion staffing, Firefighter safety and functional improvements in the delivery of EMS services such as with the continuation of Therapeutic Van funding and the replacement of outdated cardiac monitors. We will perform our best to manage one-time reductions of \$6.5 million in salary and overtime reductions.

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 \$1.7 million in additional funding:

1. **Professional Standards Division (PSD) Expansion - \$1,040,893 (\$740,893 Salaries + \$300,000 Expenses):** Position authority and nine months funding are requested for one Battalion Chief and three Fire Special Investigators (FSI) for enhancement of PSD resources. The Department additionally requests that the FSI class be converted to a paygrade structure (ie, FSI I and FSI II) for purposes of elevating two existing FSI authorities to supervisory level positions. The cost differential will be absorbed within the Department's salaries budget upon approval and captured in Wages and Count calculations in subsequent years.

The Department has been subjected to significant litigation payouts attributed to the inability to conduct timely and thorough investigations. While there are policy changes underway within PSD to improve efficiencies, it is clear that the Division is understaffed. The following are requested in an effort to meet the needs of the Department's discipline process and the responsibility to produce quality investigative reports:

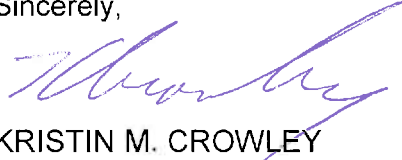
- One Battalion Chief to assist with the adjudication of investigative reports - the analysis of current caseloads and timelines for adjudication of completed investigations indicates that an additional BC is needed to complete this process.
 - Three (3) Fire Special Investigators to fulfill EEO Unit responsibilities. Recent discussions with the City Attorney's Office and EEO experts have revealed that EEO investigations need to be completed in a more expedient manner. Based on current caseloads of investigators assigned to PSD, additional staff is need to meet these deadlines. Approval of this request will provide more timely reports and reduce the likelihood of litigation settlements solely based on the investigative process.
 - Paygrade advancement of two existing FSI positions to provide additional oversight in the areas of EEO and Internal Affairs investigations. The Division will have three areas supervised under this paygrade level, including EEO, Internal Affairs and the Board of Rights Units.
 - Court Reporter Services - \$100,000 - A contractual services increase (\$100,000) will cover the cost of court reporter services. The Department has determined that the time staff are dedicating to paraphrasing interviews is a major delay in completing investigations as efficiently as possible. This task is best handled by a professional service that will transcribe interviews and allow investigators to complete their reports more expediently. Additionally, the Department anticipates an increase in Board of Rights hearings where court reporters and transcription are required by Charter. The Department is currently utilizing court reporters but on a very limited level due to underfunding.
 - Complaint Tracking System (CTS) Upgrade - \$300,000 - was developed on antiquated technology and lacks reporting capabilities to measure the effectiveness of PSD personnel. A system upgrade will include the necessary components to generate accurate reports, track investigation timelines and monitor case progress. The cost is an estimate and pending discussions with ITA for existing programs within the City family that may satisfy the Department's needs.
2. **Firefighter Recruit Training - \$0** – Funding was provided to train and hire 260 Firefighters for four new academy classes at the Valley Recruit Training Academy. The Department proposes to increase the number of classes to five under a “pipeline” training model that was piloted in the current year due to hiring urgencies. This change would increase the number of recruits to 300 under a 14-week curriculum with the same resources. The additional 40 recruits makes a significant impact in current field vacancy patterns and particularly in addressing the surge in DROP retirements expected in January 2024.
3. **Wildland Fuel Management Paid Hand Crew - \$524,292** – Position authority and three months funding are requested for a Fire Captain, two Firefighters, and 26 Fire Suppression Aides, as a new as-needed classification, to be employed as Type 2 Fire Crew members. LAFD Fire Crews are part of an available pool of resources, eligible to be dispatched throughout the City and State of California. The current volunteer crew (Crew 3) is overseen and facilitated by one Firefighter HEO. An additional paid crew is needed for impact, continuity and efficiency. Crew members will commit to a four-day work week unless

dispatched to an active fire. The three-month staffing cost for 26 Aides at \$64,000 annually is \$416,000. The sworn positions will supervise both crews.

4. **Hazardous Materials Supervisor - \$80,402 (fee-supported):** Position authority and nine-months funding are requested for one Hazardous Materials Supervisor (Class Code 7325) to support the Department's hazardous materials response program. The position is needed to assist in meeting State mandates for the Certified Union Program Agency (CUPA) program and in canvassing new businesses not currently permitted under the program. In FY 2018-19, resolution authority for a new position was approved in the Budget authority but was subsequently discontinued in FY 2020-21 given the lengthy process to establish a new Civil Service classification. The position eventually reached the final stage of the process with salary setting approved by the Council on February 16, 2022 (CF 22-0044). This request was not included among the Department's budget requests in November 2021 given uncertainties at the time on the status of approval. The position is fully cost recovered through CUPA permit fees. CUPA revenues have historically been strong and have been largely unaffected by the pandemic. The classification of Hazardous Materials Specialist is already in the Department's Personnel Ordinance which is subordinate to this new class.
5. **Cadet-to-Firefighter Program - \$0** - Request to add as-needed position authority for the Fire Cadet Ambulance Apprentice (Class Code 2109) classification in the Departmental Personnel Ordinance. The position authority was deferred for future consideration during the FY 21-22 Budget process pending the Public Safety's acceptance of an LAFD report on youth programs (B&F No. 167). A report back has been completed and is pending Public Safety committee consideration (CF 21-0600-S12). The Department currently has an allocation of \$106,000 in the as-needed salary account to support this program.

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,



KRISTIN M. CROWLEY
Fire Chief