



Legislation Text

File #: ORD. 2023-326, **Version:** 1

To authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to accept funds in the amount of \$867,909.09 from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, to amend the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Special Fund Budget by creating a new special fund for the Department of Fire and Emergency Services called the “FY2022 Fire Prevention and Safety Grant Special Fund,” and to appropriate the increase to the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Special Fund Budget by increasing estimated revenues and the amount appropriated to the Department of Fire and Emergency Services’ FY2022 Fire Prevention and Safety Grant Special Fund by \$867,909.09, for the purpose of providing funding for two years of salary, benefits, and training for five new civilian fire prevention inspectors.

THE CITY OF RICHMOND HEREBY ORDAINS:

§ 1. That the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, is authorized to accept funds in the amount of \$867,909.09 from the Federal Emergency Management Agency for the purpose of providing funding for two years of salary, benefits, and training for five new civilian fire prevention inspectors.

§ 2. That Article I, Section 2 of Ordinance No. 2023-071, adopted May 8, 2023, which adopted a Special Fund Budget for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2023, and ending June 30, 2024, and made appropriations pursuant thereto, be and is hereby amended by creating a new special fund for the Department of Fire and Emergency Services called the “FY2022 Fire Prevention and Safety Grant Special Fund” for the purpose of providing funding for two years of salary, benefits, and training for five new civilian fire prevention inspectors.

§ 3. That the funds received from the Federal Emergency Management Agency are hereby appropriated to the Special Fund Budget for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2023, and ending June 30, 2024, by increasing estimated revenues by \$867,909.09, increasing the amount appropriated for expenditures by \$867,909.09, and allotting to the Department of Fire and Emergency Services’ FY2022 Fire Prevention and Safety Grant Special Fund the sum of \$867,909.09, for the purpose of providing funding for two years of

salary, benefits, and training for five new civilian fire prevention inspectors.

§ 4. This ordinance shall be in force and effect upon adoption.

O&R Transmittal

DATE: October 16, 2023

TO: The Honorable Members of City Council

THROUGH: The Honorable Levar M. Stoney, Mayor

THROUGH: J.E. Lincoln Saunders, Chief Administrative Officer

THROUGH: Jason P. May, Director of Budget and Strategic Planning

THROUGH: Sheila D. White, Director of Finance

THROUGH: Melvin D. Carter, Chief of Fire and Emergency Services

FROM: Angelia Adediran, Deputy Director of Fire and Emergency Services

RE: FEMA Fire Prevention and Safety Grant Award

ORD. OR RES. No.

PURPOSE: To authorize the Chief Administrative Officer to accept grant award funds in the amount of \$867,909.09 from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), to appropriate the increase of the same to the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Annual Budget by increasing the adopted budget's estimated special fund revenues and expenditures with a new special fund entitled Fire Prevention and Safety Grant Special Fund. The funds are for the purpose of training five new civilian fire prevention inspectors and paying two years of their salaries plus fringe benefits.

The Fire Department will request funding for three of these positions to continue after the award's performance period. The Department will advertise the positions as grant-funded for two years, subject to continuous funding afterward, and inform applicants of its plans to seek City funding for three of the positions.

BACKGROUND: In early 2023, the Richmond Fire Department applied for FEMA's FY2022 Fire Prevention and Safety Grant. (FEMA's funding for this grant was provided in Federal FY2022.) The Fire Department sought the funding to hire and train five new civilian fire prevention inspectors over the two-year maximum performance period allowed by the grant.

These new personnel would advance the Fire Department's "For a Safer Richmond" program by ensuring that the Fire Marshall's Office can inspect all of Richmond's approximately 7,000-11,000 business locations once every three years. (The Department currently inspects half or less than that total.)

The Fire Department could then comply with the fire inspection standards of National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 1730, as well as this Fire Department's Policy #411, and could better enforce the fire safety requirements set in the Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code (SFPC), the Code of Virginia and the Code of Richmond.

The award's performance period runs from September 1, 2023, through August 31, 2025. The grant award includes a match requirement of \$43,395.46, spread over the two years, for which the Fire Department does not seek additional funds.

The Fire Department currently employs three civilian fire inspectors and is recruiting to fill two vacant positions that were previously budgeted. So far in 2023, the inspections team has inspected approximately 1,700 locations, including a substantial proportion of non-businesses, such as residential complexes. The additional five inspectors would enable sufficient inspections so that all Richmond locations are inspected in line with national standards and this Department's adopted policy.

Conservatively, the additional five civilian fire prevention inspectors will generate between \$75,000.00 and \$300,000.00 in annual revenue from inspection fees. (Assuming 3,000 new inspections per year multiplied by \$25.00 at the lowest end or by \$100.00 to represent a reasonable estimated average inspection fee.) There is also the possibility of generating more revenue from permitting fees. By reestablishing the fee schedule, the revenue received will provide resources helpful to supporting the inspectors in future years beyond the grant's expiration.

In FY2023, despite limited personnel and limited ability to meet demand for permitting inspections, the Department generated \$62,495.00 in permitting fees. Business needs drive this demand, with FY2022 generating only \$46,895.00 in fees. However, in FY2021, with greater personnel capacity, the Department inspected significantly more properties, generating nearly \$80,000.00 in permitting fees.

The Fire Department will request funding for three of these positions to continue after the award's performance period. The additional collected fees will partly support these positions. The Department will advertise the positions as grant-funded for two years, subject to continuous funding afterward, and inform applicants of its plans to seek City funding for three of the positions.

Notice of the grant award came on September 1, 2023. FEMA required indication of our intent to accept the grant within their FEMA GO online system no later than October 1, 2023. The Fire Department received approval from the Chief Administrative Officer to indicate that intent on September 29, 2023, through a signed memorandum.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: Inspectors inspect businesses and large residential complexes across the City every week. Annually, our Prevention personnel make the public aware of required fire inspections and fire prevention best practices through Fire Prevention Week, which ran October 8th-14th of this year. The Department utilizes social media to spread awareness of these events.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES AND OTHER GOVERNMENTAL:

FISCAL IMPACT: The total amount of the award is \$867,909.09 with a matching funds requirement of \$43,395.46, which is 5% of the total approved award budget of \$911,394.55. **If adopted**, the City obtains \$867,909.09 in revenue otherwise unavailable for training and employing the five civilian fire prevention

inspectors. The City would need to cover the salaries of the five new civilian fire prevention inspectors after the grant's performance period.

DESIRED EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon introduction

REQUESTED INTRODUCTION DATE: November 13, 2023

CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING DATE: December 11, 2023

REQUESTED AGENDA: Consent Agenda

RECOMMENDED COUNCIL COMMITTEE: Public Safety

AFFECTED AGENCIES: The Department of Finance, the Department of Budget and Strategic Planning and the City of Richmond Department of Fire and Emergency Services

RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING ORD. OR RES.: Adopted Ordinance #2023-071

ATTACHMENTS:

- Adopted Ordinance #2023-071, establishing the FY2023-2024 Annual Budget
- FY22 Fire Prevention & Safety (FPS) Grant Award Package
- Memorandum signed by the Chief Administrative Officer allowing conditional "acceptance" of the grant from FEMA to reserve the funds pending Council's approval and acceptance
- Richmond Fire and Emergency Services Fire Inspection Policy 411
- Draft Ordinance
- Approval of Draft Ordinance by City Attorney Greg Lukanuski

STAFF: Fire Chief Melvin D. Carter, 804-646-5451; Angelia Adediran, Deputy Director - Fire and Emergency Services, 804-646-4912; Gregory Irving, Grant Writer - Fire and Emergency Services, 804-646-5442