

# City of Alexandria, Virginia

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 2, 2010  
TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL  
FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER   
SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO 45 FUNERAL ESCORTS

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This memo is in response to the following questions from Mayor Euille and Vice Mayor Donley: What fees could we raise for funeral escorts and what would the structure look like? What is the Police Chief's recommendation?

As part of the FY 2011 budget development process, the practice of providing on-duty escorts for funeral processions was examined and significant changes are recommended to take place in FY 2011. Chief Cook recommends that funeral escorts be provided by off-duty officers for a fee and will be developing a plan to address the administrative components. Chief Cook also recommends that on-duty police no longer perform funeral escorts.

The Alexandria Police Department currently provides on-duty escorts for funeral processions of over 10 vehicles, upon request. Because on-duty officers are utilized, no overtime is incurred and as a result, no fee is currently charged for the service. Jurisdictional lines are sometimes crossed to complete an escort, but are normally no more than a few miles into a neighboring locality.

Police escorts are generally provided by officers in the motor unit. However, when motor officers are unavailable, 2-3 patrol units will be used to provide the funeral escorts. These escorts are beneficial because they allow for standardization of procedures and increased safety as a result of trained and experienced officers handling each escort as a team. However, allocation of resources to funeral escorts takes away time and resources from critical operational duties such as traffic enforcement and patrol functions.

The table below shows the number of funeral escorts conducted and the percent of time the Motor Unit dedicated to providing funeral escorts from calendar year 2007 through 2009.

Funeral Escorts: 2007-2009			
	CY07	CY08	CY09
Number of Funeral Escorts	140	104	133
% of Motor Unit Time Spent on Funeral Escorts	6.1%	4.5%	5.8%

Staff recommends that the City no longer provide funeral escorts using on-duty officers. Instead, funeral directors would have the option of hiring off-duty officers through a private entity, such as the Alexandria Police Association. Private association staff will have to address the details of schedule coordination, establishment of a fee structure, and all billing matters. Off-duty officers would be compensated through the private entity.

The drawback to this option is that motor officers who currently staff and coordinate most of the funeral escorts will generally be unavailable because their assignments are during normal business hours. This loss of expertise may result in inconsistency in the manner escorts are handled.

The advantage to this option is that the time and resources currently dedicated to funeral escorts will be redirected to traffic enforcement and patrol operations. In 2009, nearly 6 percent of the motor unit's time was devoted to funeral escorts. If this option were approved, this time would be devoted to traffic enforcement (the traffic fine revenue impact has not been estimated). Another advantage is that the private entity will handle all administrative duties associated with charging a fee for this service. Preliminary discussion with the President of the Association, Ryan Staab, indicates that their association is willing to assume this role.

As an alternative to this option, the City would continue the utilization of on-duty officers to provide funeral escorts, but would charge a fee for the service. Funeral escorts require an average of six motor officers or 2-3 patrol units for approximately one and a half hours. This amount of time includes travel to and from assignments. The Alexandria Police Department recommends charging a minimum fee of \$655 for the first hour and a half and \$400 for each additional hour.

The minimum fee of \$655 represents the amount needed to fully recover the cost of providing this service, including officer compensation, fuel, and vehicle maintenance. In addition, the minimum fee includes an administrative charge to account for the time necessary to coordinate and process these requests. Assuming the number of funeral escorts remains consistent with 2009, this fee would generate \$87,115 in revenue.

This option has a number of drawbacks. First, funeral escorts utilizing on-duty officers reduce the amount of time and resources spent on operational duties such as traffic enforcement or patrol functions.

Also, the implementation of a new fee structure would create an additional administrative workload for City staff. Police Department staff would become responsible for invoicing for services provided and tracking fee collection. In addition, the Finance Department would be responsible for coordinating receipt of revenue. Due to budget reductions in the past several years, there is limited capacity in the Police and Finance Departments to handle this additional workload.