

# City of Alexandria, Virginia

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** MARCH 25, 2014

**TO:** THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** RASHAD M. YOUNG, CITY MANAGER 

**SUBJECT:** BUDGET MEMO #12: RELOCATION OF FIRE ENGINE 204 TO FIRE STATION 210

---

The FY 2015 Proposed Operating Budget recommends the relocation of Engine 204 from its current station on Powhatan/2<sup>nd</sup> Street to the newly constructed Fire Station 210 located on Eisenhower Avenue. Given the public concern expressed about this proposal, I am providing you with additional information regarding the rationale and expected consequences of shifting these resources.

As you are aware, the City's development and population patterns change over time. It is both prudent and necessary that our public safety service models are continually reassessed to recognize these changes. The City's commitment to construct Station 210 is in fact recognition that increasing development and population in the western part of the City requires infrastructure investment to ensure high quality Fire services are delivered in all areas of the City. The proposed redeployment of Engine 204 is, likewise, recognition that our service delivery model requires reassessment of apparatus and staffing to mitigate geographic imbalances in service. Relocating Engine 204 permits the City to better balance fire apparatus throughout the entire response area and to improve fire response capabilities to those areas where calls for service are most prevalent.

Understanding with some precision how we invest our public safety resources to the greatest advantage, and doing so in a fiscally sound and prudent manner, continues to be a high priority for us all. To improve our understanding of how Fire Department assets should best be utilized to protect our citizens, I have directed the Office of Performance & Accountability (OPA), in collaboration with the Fire Department, to undertake a review of all station locations and apparatus deployed. I have asked that the review consider call volumes, call types, and any other factor relevant to ensuring we provide high quality Fire service to our citizens. The recommendations of OPA will help guide future discussions regarding Fire station locations and apparatus utilization. I have asked for the study to be completed in time for the FY 2016 budget cycle, critical timing in light of the \$40 million in capital projects planned for the rebuild/renovation of four of our existing stations over the next six years. Before we embark on this significant investment in our current stations, this analysis will help us ensure that we have matched the station and apparatus location with the changing growth and service patterns of the City to optimize our performance standards for the future.

The Fire Department is expected to transition Engine 204 to Station 210 this Fall. Station 204 will retain its ladder truck and EMS complement of staff.

There is not a current plan to close Station 204 and any such future discussions of Fire station locations and equipment will occur subsequent to the OPA analysis I noted above.

As always, I am pleased to answer any questions.

Attachments: #1 – Statistics and Cost Estimates  
#2 – Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

cc: Michele Evans, Deputy City Manager  
Nelsie L. Smith, Director, Office of Management and Budget  
Andrew Snead, Acting Fire Chief

**Attachment #1: Statistics and Cost Information**

The table below shows that Station 204’s first due area has averaged approximately 24 fire calls each year within the last three years. Details on call type are provided for each of the past three fiscal years:

<b>Number of Incidents in Station 204 area by Incident Types by Fiscal Year</b>			
<b>Category/Description</b>	<b>FY 2011</b>	<b>FY 2012</b>	<b>FY 2013</b>
100 Structure, Vehicle and Outside Fires	28	20	23
200 Overpressure, Ruptures, Explosion, Overheat (Not a Fire)	4		1
300 Emergency Medical Service	1,042	998	939
330 Technical Rescue	1	2	4
350 Rescue - Suppression	25	29	40
400 Hazardous Conditions (No Fire)	29	36	32
450 HazMat	9	3	3
500 Service Calls	145	143	119
600 Good Intent Calls	157	156	124
700 False Alarms & False Calls	171	172	187
800 Severe Weather & Natural Disasters	0	4	1
900 Other Type of Incidents	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,612</b>	<b>1,563</b>	<b>1,474</b>

The estimated cost to keep Engine 204 staffed at its current location and staff an Engine at Station 210 is \$2,200,080 in FY 2015 which includes the following:

- \$ 779,080 of salary/benefits of 10 positions
- \$ 1,330,000 of overtime costs (largely driven by minimum staffing requirement)
- \$ 91,000 of additional equipment for firefighters

## **Attachment #2: Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Engine 204**

### **1. Is it true that there is a plan to move Truck 204 to another station in the near future as well?**

Language in the FY 2015-2024 CIP related to the Fire Station 205 project states that Truck 204 will relocate to Station 205 (Old Town West/Cameron Street) after re-construction. There is no plan to relocate Truck 204 and the conflicting language in the CIP document will be removed to adjust for this current proposal.

### **2. Aren't AFD's response times longer than recommended typically, resulting because stations are improperly located? What does the City plan to do about this?**

The City Manager has requested a study from the Office of Performance Accountability on station and apparatus locations. With the renovation/rebuilding of four stations and the building of a new station (Station 211 in the Beauregard corridor) in the 10-year Capital Improvement Program, this study will help address issues with response times moving forward.

### **3. Simultaneous emergencies are frequently occurring within the same geographical area which causes increased response time. Won't moving Engine 204 make this worse?**

The Fire Department reviewed the call volume of the closest stations to 204, (Station 201—Prince Street, 205—Cameron Street, and 209—Potomac Yard), and those engines had lower call volume than the engines in the western portions of the City. It is also worth noting that the Fire Department units are not static at their 'home' location as a variety of issues take them out of their station and first due areas (i.e. responding to calls for service, training, logistical pickups, public education, etc.).

### **4. There is increased traffic and congestion since the Station 204 was originally constructed. Won't this increase response times significantly for other units trying to get to Station 204's area to respond?**

The Fire Department will be able to use the Bus Rapid Transit lanes that are nearing completion on the Route 1 corridor along Potomac Yard. This will provide an opportunity to improve response times in rush hour traffic for calls that require movement along Route 1.

### **5. Is it true that there is insufficient apparatus funding to house an engine at both Station 204 and 210?**

The AFD fleet plan approved by the City Manager in FY 2012 fully funded the replacement of all the fire engines in the fleet, including Engine 204, as well as the purchase of an engine to be used at Station 210. As a result of this proposed change, the engine scheduled for use at Station 210 will be used as a rotational unit to provide back-up capacity when maintenance and service is required for front line engines and to be used for training purposes. The reduction of the 10 vacant positions in the FY 2015 proposed budget, along with corresponding overtime by adding a staffed engine to the system, is what would be needed to staff both engines and meet minimum staffing requirements.

**6. How does this proposal compare to what was considered for Engine 204 in last year's budget?**

As part of the FY 2014 budget process last year, all Departments were asked to propose cost savings measures to meet a proposed budget target. One of the options proposed, but ultimately not accepted, was taking Engine 204 out of service entirely

That memo stated the following points when discussing Engine 204:

*“In order to meet the target for the Public Safety cluster, the Alexandria Fire Department (AFD) proposed several options to meet their share of the reduction amount. Those options included closing Fire Station 201 and shutting down one fire engine from Fire Station 204 but redeploying personnel assigned to those stations to other stations throughout the City.*

*To estimate the impact on response times if these reductions were taken, AFD looked at historical response times for incidents in the areas served by Station 201 or Engine 204 by other Fire/EMS units who are not the 'first due' or primary unit assigned to these calls for service.*

*Additionally, the reduction of Engine 204 would leave Station 204 with some apparatus available for incident response, but reduce the working capacity of the station and could result in increased response times in its response area of 6.5 minutes at the 90th percentile currently to over 8.7 minutes at the 90th percentile.”*

The 90<sup>th</sup> percentile means that in 90 percent of incidents, a unit would be on the scene of an incident at or below this time. This does not reflect the average response time of the first arriving engine in 204's first due area which is 5.64 minutes and an estimated average of 5.9 minutes without engine 204. All of the statements in last year's budget memo are still valid with the FY 2015 budget proposal. Engine 204 was selected based on the best available data, location of stations, NOVA regional response model, and apparatus at those stations when weighed against risk.