

# City of Alexandria, Virginia

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## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** APRIL 17, 2015

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

**THROUGH:** MARK B. JINKS, ACTING CITY MANAGER 

**FROM:** MORGAN ROUTT, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET 

**SUBJECT:** BUDGET MEMO #25: OTHER ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF FIRE STATION 210

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This memorandum is in follow-up to Budget Memo #18, which presented alternatives for staffing a fire engine at Fire Station 210. It indicated that approximately \$0.9 million would be needed to staff an engine by December 2016. After discussing how to reengineer parts of the applicant screening and training process and noting the quality of the 500 applicants for firefighter/medic positions that were received this week in *just the first 3 days* of the new application period, and that within those applications were 29 already-medic-certified applicants, staff has developed an accelerated Station 210 staffing plan that could end up with the station engine staffed between December of 2015 and March of 2016. The cost of this new plan is \$0.4 million more than the prior plan, for a new total cost of \$1.3 million.

Since the release of budget memorandum #18, the Alexandria Fire Department (AFD), the Office of Management and Budget, Human Resources, and the City Manager's Office have reviewed Fire hiring and training processes in an attempt to streamline the timeframe for getting newly hired personnel into service more quickly. As a result, staff believes it can staff the Engine Company at FS210 earlier than the December 2016 time stated in budget memo #18 by starting the next recruit school sooner and condensing the training schedule. Depending on the level of qualifications and certifications of the current set of applicants, the engine could be staffed between December 2015 and March 2016. The primary guiding principle with altering the timeline is to ensure that the City's high hiring and training standards remain. These standards help us to hire, train and utilize the best and brightest of the applicant pool. The AFD historically has little trouble attracting qualified applicants.

The current hiring process consists of a number of steps including the application period, written entry level test, candidate physical abilities test (CPAT), medical physical, polygraph, fingerprinting, physiological evaluation, panel interview and finally, an individual interview with the Fire Chief. The CPAT itself consists of several work-related physical evaluations and is conducted to ensure the candidates can physically perform the duties required. This nationally recognized standard, which helps to ensure a fair hiring process and assist the Department to

address any legal challenges to the hiring process, is required to be open for at least 8 weeks. Alexandria does not have a certified CPAT facility so we have to work with neighboring jurisdictions and utilize their facilities.

The AFD and Human Resources Department staff will also work together to expedite the current hiring process. Our objective is to hire at least 10-12 candidates who have some already existing level of firefighter, EMT or paramedic training (that is recognized in Virginia). Additionally, the AFD training staff has developed a plan to conduct an abbreviated recruit school for these more qualified applicants with a targeted recruit school start date in September 2015. The goal (if there are a sufficient number of already trained candidates who make it through the screening process) will be to complete their training and assign them to stations (including E210) no later than the end of December 2015.

If we do not have enough previously certified individuals in the applicant pool, and have to conduct the normal recruit school, the targeted recruit school start date will still be in September 2015 with these personnel entering the stations no later than March 2016. We will not know with any certainty until the hiring process is completed with the result of enough qualified applicants. The plan also depends on the candidates successfully completing the recruit school. Detailed in budget memo #18, the process for 20 overhires in FY16 was based on funding for 5 months (February-June 2016). Starting the process earlier as described above (September 2015) would extend the period of overhire positions, increasing the FY 2016 by approximately \$0.4 million, from \$0.9 million to \$1.3 million.