City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 18, 2005

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO # 67 : PEEWEE FIRE ACADEMY

This memorandum is in response to Councilman Gaines' request for information on the fiscal impact of holding a Pee Wee Fire Academy on both the West and East ends of the City. In addition, if two academies are not feasible, what would be required to transport youth to a centralized academy to maximize youth participation in this program.

The Alexandria Fire Department's Pee Wee Fire Academy, held at the Fire & EMS Training Academy (behind Lee Center and the primary training center for Alexandria's firefighters and paramedics) began approximately four years ago and has been a popular fire safety education program for youth. This summer program is designed to teach age-appropriate lessons on fire safety, fire prevention, and disaster preparedness to youth in the Alexandria summer day camp programs. The children have the opportunity to meet firefighters who explain how lessons learned at the Academy apply to real-life emergencies, as well as witness and participate in demonstrations in the use of equipment and apparatus.

In conjunction with the Fire Department and the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities' summer camp programs, four sessions, approximately four hours each, are scheduled each summer (4 days or approximately one week) for the Pee Wee Academy which serves approximately 300 youth enrolled in the City's summer camp programs. The total cost to hold the four sessions for each Pee Wee Academy each summer is approximately $1,454. Recreation arranges transportation for the youth through the Alexandria City Public Schools' (ACPS) Transportation Department, at which time ACPS assigns a bus and a driver for the location and times requested. The Recreation Department spends approximately $204 for each four day Pee Wee Fire Academy session during the summer. The Fire Department spends approximately $1,250 to conduct the four sessions of the Pee Wee Academy, which includes funds to provide beverages and supplies for the children and cover overtime for Fire Department personnel who serve as instructors and assistants. However, due to the Academy's location at the Fire Training Academy, many Fire personnel currently on light duty and assigned to duty at the Fire Academy, volunteer their free time to help instruct or talk to the children.

To date, all classes have been held on the East end of the City at the Fire and EMS Training Academy located at the Lee Center. Providing classes on the West end of the City would be possible if instructors could find, at one location, adequate classroom space, an open lawn, and a parking lot for a fire engine. However, there are advantages to continuing to hold the Pee Wee Academy at the Fire Training Academy at the Lee Centers including access to Fire personnel assigned to the Fire Training Academy; access to supplies and apparatus already located at the site; and its location at a recreation center.

However, if it is determined that a second academy should be held, based on the current cost to provide one four session academy ($1,454), the cost to hold a second academy in a location on the West end would double the total cost (2 Academies @ $1,454 each) assuming that there will be no rental fee charged for the classroom facility and assuming that the distance to bus the children is relatively the same.