

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 14, 2008

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO # 95: ALEXANDRIA HEALTH DEPARTMENT
REQUEST FOR DIRECTOR OF EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

This budget memorandum provides additional information concerning the Health Department's request for a new position. The full-time position, Director of Emergency Preparedness, is included in the City Manager's Alternative Budget. This request was briefly discussed at the work session on Monday, April 7.

Subsequent to the discussion, the Health Department revised their original request and now proposes a potential hire date of September 2008. This reduces the cost of the new position from \$113,867 down to \$93,783, a decrease of \$20,084.

The attached information, submitted by the Alexandria Health Department, provides more detailed information to support their request.

Attachment

The Alexandria Health Department has revised the request for the Supplemental position of Director of Emergency Preparedness and Response in the Health Department. The revised amount of \$93,783 represents a potential hire date of September 2008, rather than July 2008. This request is quite simply about the safety and health of the people of Alexandria.

In the last several years, particularly since 9-11, it has become increasingly clear that most emergencies – in fact, all 15 of the most severe threats identified by the Department of Homeland Security – include threats to the public's health. But quite frankly, Public Health has not been staffed to reflect this fact. Ranging from fairly frequent norovirus and floods to less-likely-but-very-high risk bioterrorism, Public Health is now an acknowledged critical, front line element in any jurisdiction's readiness and response. As a result, emergency preparedness and response is now one of the four fundamental missions in the Health Department's strategic plan.

This has also meant that the Health Department's Emergency Preparedness and Response unit, working closely with the City's Emergency Management Office in the Fire Department, served literally as the lead for several initiatives in Alexandria, including:

- Staffing the Mayor's Pandemic Working Group, forming and guiding the subcommittees, and writing the plan.
- Leading for Alexandria the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's mandated Cities Readiness Initiative, requiring us to be able to distribute medication to the entire Alexandria population – residents and visitors – in less than 48 hours.
- Writing the Bioterrorism section of the City's Metropolitan Medical Response System plan.
- Overseeing the development of a plan to lessen the impact of a large medical surge that exceeded the capacity of our medical care resources.
- Conducting an assessment of nursing homes' emergency readiness.
- Initiating a study of how to best prepare and support our most at-risk residents.
- Designing and conducting drills and exercises to test our plans.
- Training staff and volunteers
- Tripling the size of the Medical Reserve Corps of volunteers, to a group of 350 volunteers
- Assuring region-wide consistency for public health emergencies

The Health Department's Emergency Preparedness and Response unit is only a one-person office, supplemented by a part time grant-funded Medical Reserve Coordinator. As the list of risks and work load increases, the capacity of our staff to prepare and respond is exceeded. This position would significantly add to that capacity of the City's (and our residents') preparation and ability to respond to health emergencies.

In addition to being engaged in all of the above, the new person will:

- Manage two current short-term grant-funded positions.
- Manage other large grants, primarily medical and non-medical supplies. Total grants in excess of \$350,000.
- Oversee the 21 State and 57 CDC required standards of performance.

- Assure Intra-City and Regional coordination.
- Serve as the lead in the City Emergency Operations Plan for EFS 8
- Prepare the Alexandria Health Department for an emerging high level emergency preparedness and response certification process, called Public Health Ready. This is a new and substantial task. The Virginia Department of Health is likely to ask Alexandria to be one of the leading agencies in moving all Virginia Health Departments toward this certification by 2009 or 2010. We have been preparing in steps gradually and have the foundation in place, but significant effort will be needed. Arlington County and Montgomery County (Maryland) have achieved this special status.

This position would then allow staff time to be dedicated to filling current gaps in implementation, including:

- Testing medication points of distribution. We have 17 sites identified, and have only had time to actually test and supply five of them. This will involve working with the sites, and then designing and conducting drills to test their viability.
- Training City staff. In order to respond to a large scale health emergency, we may well need City staff who can be temporarily assigned to us if they are not needed on the short term in their regular job. This will entail designing the training, meeting with departments to identify people, and recruiting them.
- Expanding our outreach to “Special Needs” populations. People in Alexandria may be especially vulnerable during an emergency because of medical, cultural, language, economic, age, or other factors. We need to locate them, find ways to prepare them, facilitate their self-sufficiency in an emergency if possible, and know how to address their needs in an emergency.
- Expanding and testing our pre-hospital medical surge plans.
- Designing and managing an inventory system for handling our large quantity of special supplies.