



Albemarle County

Legislation Text

File #: 15-159, **Version:** 1

AGENDA DATE: 7/1/2015

TITLE:

Pantops Fire Rescue Station

SUBJECT/PROPOSAL/REQUEST: Consideration to approve the Pantops Fire Rescue Station included in the FY16 Capital Improvement Plan

ITEM TYPE: Regular Action Item

STAFF CONTACT(S): Foley, Walker, Davis, and Eggleston

PRESENTER (S): N/A

LEGAL REVIEW: Yes

REVIEWED BY: Thomas C. Foley

BACKGROUND: The Pantops Fire Rescue Station is necessary to support the County's Land Use Policy by providing an urban level of service consistent with development area expectations and the risk profile associated with the area. The following specific information highlights the need for the station:

1. The Pantops area currently sees inadequate response times, with an average response time of 7:00 minutes and a fractile (or 90%) response time of 10:20. Further, with more than 200 concurrent calls a year, the East Rivanna Volunteer Fire Company is overtaxed covering both Pantops and their region.
2. The Pantops region is a high risk area for both fire and EMS calls. People over 65 are at the greatest risk of injury and illness, and with over 640 elderly care units, more than 27% of the Pantops population is over the age of 65. Additionally, due to lightweight construction and dense housing, Pantops has the potential for rapid fire spread.

The need to construct a fire rescue station in Pantops was reaffirmed in the 2007 Regional Fire and Rescue Study (Attachment A) commissioned by the City of Charlottesville and County of Albemarle. In addition, in April 2010, the Board and Charlottesville City Council agreed to the formation of a subcommittee to evaluate areas of possible further collaboration and cooperation between the Departments of Fire Rescue for each jurisdiction. The committee's final report (Attachment B) reaffirmed the need for the City's Fontaine station and the County's Ivy and Pantops stations.

Based on the need to provide some level of coverage to Pantops, during the FY13 budget process the Board approved three fire fighter/ALS positions to staff a daytime ambulance. The Board further directed County staff to inquire about possible space at the new Martha Jefferson Hospital (MJH) facility for the County to temporarily locate an ambulance service until a County facility could be funded and constructed. Staff negotiated a three-year renewable lease with MJH for 151 sq. ft. of office space, and the Board approved the lease agreement on July 11, 2012.

The leased space at MJH was intended to be a temporary solution and has certain limitations that affect

response time and working conditions for staff.

1. The fire fighter/ALS personnel assigned to the MJH occupy a 10 x 15 ft. space 12 hrs./day, 5 days/week. The room is inadequate for the type of work performed. Staff must decontaminate and shower in a shared space and they have no access to laundry facilities. There is no space to prepare meals.
2. Response times are affected because the ambulance is parked outside of the MJH parking deck (the ambulance will not fit within the parking deck). It takes about 2 ½ minutes to walk from the office space to the ambulance. The turn-out time goal for staffed stations is 1 minute.
3. State and federal regulations require that drugs and IV fluids stocked on an ambulance be kept at a certain temperature. Because the ambulance is parked outside, the ambulance must be kept running to maintain the proper temperature during times of significant heat or cold weather.

During its June 3rd meeting and work session, the Board reviewed the history associated with and the need for the Pantops Fire Rescue Station. The Board further directed staff to contact the City of Charlottesville and the Martha Jefferson Hospital (MJH) to discuss opportunities for collaboration with MJH and/or partnering with the City Fire Department. The Board expected the results of these discussions to be presented during the July 1st meeting.

STRATEGIC PLAN: Prioritize, plan and invest in critical infrastructure that responds to past and future changes and improves the capacity to serve community needs.

DISCUSSION:

Martha Jefferson Hospital

Staff met with the MJH staff to explore options to extend the current lease or relocate the ambulance and fire fighter/EMTs to a more accommodating location within the MJH complex. While MJH staff is willing to work with the County to extend the current lease for the existing space, the option will not address the space limitations as outlined above. MJH staff is also willing to explore the use of an alternative space within the complex that better meets the County's needs, but the process would likely involve relocating existing MJH operations and some level of demolition and construction. Because federal law prohibits MJH from providing in-kind services to the County's emergency medical services, the County would be responsible to pay for any constructions costs associate with new space and would also be required to pay fair market value for rent on any expanded/more adequate space.

City of Charlottesville

Staff met with the City Manager and City Fire Chief to explore opportunities for the City and County to partner for the construction and/or staffing of the Pantops Fire Rescue station. While both the City and County agree that the Pantops station would benefit both localities, the station does not directly benefit the City in terms of faster response times. Therefore, the City does not see an advantage to participating financially in the construction or operation of the station. Furthermore, the City's Insurance Service Office (ISO) rating of 1 is based on City's current station and staffing distribution model. Therefore, the City would not benefit from a joint staffing arrangement because a redistribution of City resources to help staff the Pantops station will likely jeopardize the City's ISO rating. In spite of the circumstances regarding the Pantops station, County and City staff strongly support and will continue ongoing collaboration and cooperation to identify additional areas for regional cooperation.

Staffing options

Should the Board agree to move forward with the design of the Pantops Fire Rescue Station in FY2016, the decision does not commit the Board to a particular future staffing option. As previously discussed during the June 3, 2015 work session, staff provided the Board with options to phase in staffing under various scenarios. More discussion will about the options will occur during the 5-year plan work sessions.

BUDGET IMPACT: The Pantops Fire Rescue Station is included in the proposed, funded Capital Improvement Plan.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Board proceed with the design of the Pantops Fire Rescue Station in FY2016.

Attachment A - Albemarle Final Report

Attachment B - Final Report - City-County Cooperative Fire Rescue Services