



Albemarle County

Legislation Text

File #: 19-549, **Version:** 1

AGENDA DATE: 11/20/2019

TITLE: Re-organization of the County's Emergency Management Function

SUBJECT/PROPOSAL/REQUEST: Establish an Albemarle County Emergency Management Service Division within the Fire Rescue Department

ITEM TYPE: Regular Action Item

STAFF CONTACT(S): Richardson, Walker, Kamptner, Farley, Bessette, Eggleston, Oprandy

PRESENTER (S): Dan Eggleston

LEGAL REVIEW: Yes

REVIEWED BY: Jeffrey B Richardson

BACKGROUND: The City of Charlottesville, University of Virginia, and Albemarle County embrace a regional approach to provide command and coordination capabilities for large-scale or unusual natural or made-made events. The Charlottesville-UVA-Albemarle Office of Emergency Management (CUAEM) is a division within the regional Emergency Communication's Center (ECC) and is proportionally funded by the City of Charlottesville, University of Virginia, and Albemarle County. The CUAEM Office employs two full time employees - an Emergency Coordinator and an Assistant Emergency Coordinator. Emergency Management staff report directly to the Director of the regional Emergency Communications Center, who reports to the regional ECC Management Board comprised of three representatives each from the City of Charlottesville, the University of Virginia, and Albemarle County.

Response, planning, recovery, and mitigation processes are guided by an approved Regional Emergency Operations Plan, which is a multi-jurisdictional, multidiscipline, all-hazards plan that establishes a single, comprehensive framework for the management of major emergencies and disasters within the region. The plan is implemented when it becomes necessary to mobilize community resources to save lives and protect property and infrastructure. The plan outlines the roles and responsibilities assigned to City, County and University departments and agencies for response to disasters and emergencies.

STRATEGIC PLAN: Quality Government Operations: Ensure County government's capacity to provide high quality service that achieves community priorities

DISCUSSION: As the region continues to grow and change, emergency management services must evolve to meet new and emerging needs. While weather-related events continue to be the primary threat to the region overall, coordination of special events, with a focus on public safety, is emerging as more prevalent for the City and the University. In contrast, weather-related events remain the most significant threat to County residents.

The differences between the three entities' needs occasionally create a dilemma in terms of how the region allocates resources and time to plan and manage various events. Because of its large geographic footprint of over 720 square miles, with associated risk factors and vulnerability profile, public safety professionals in the

County recommend a change in approach to the operation of emergency management activities to ensure the County and region continue to be prepared to address the safety interests of residents and visitors (as described in Attachment A).

The recent departure of the Emergency Management Coordinator creates a vacancy and offers an opportunity to assess how to better serve the unique and challenging aspects of Albemarle County's emergency management needs while continuing to support the regional emergency management structure. Upon conferring with the ECC Director, the determination was made to not fill the vacant Emergency Management Coordinator position to allow County staff time to confer with the Board.

After review of the County's Emergency Management needs and research of other like-sized organizations, staff recommends the following:

1. The County establish an Emergency Management Division within the Albemarle County Department of Fire Rescue (ACFR) and hire an Emergency Management Coordinator to support this function.
2. The County reallocate the FY20 funds it previously appropriated to the ECC to support the County's share of the Emergency Coordinator position to support the proposed new Emergency Management Coordinator position in the County, subject to the ECC Management Board's approval.
3. The ECC not fill the Emergency Management Coordinator position and maintain the Assistant Emergency Management Coordinator position to help coordinate regional initiatives.

The County's new Emergency Management Program will be designed to coordinate the response to emergencies and disasters, including staffing the regional emergency operations center, maintaining emergency plans, providing training to staff and agency partners, seeking grant funding for mitigation efforts, liaising with state, regional and local emergency management staff, and assisting County departments with the development of a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP).

Establishment of the Regional Emergency Management Technical Advisory Committee

To continue with the spirit of collaboration, staff expects to work with the City of Charlottesville and the University of Virginia to propose the establishment of a Regional Emergency Management Technical Advisory Committee (REMTAC). Once established, the REMTAC will be comprised of Emergency Management Representatives from the City of Charlottesville, University of Virginia, and Albemarle County. The mission of the REMTAC will be to strategically coordinate planning and resources to better prepare the region for natural, technological, and/or man-made disasters.

The concept of the REMTAC aligns with the current model used by the City of Harrisonburg, County of Rockingham, and James Madison University, in which each entity employs its own Emergency Manager and collaborate to establish a regional Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), and operate and maintain a regional Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The Harrisonburg/Rockingham/JMU Task force meets quarterly and rotates the responsibility of the chair.

BUDGET IMPACT:

The total annual ongoing cost for this position is estimated to be \$102,000. In FY 20, this amount is prorated to be \$57,500. Funding for this position is anticipated to be provided from the County's requested reduced cost share of the Emergency Communication Center (ECC) through the elimination of this position at the ECC, subject to ECC Management Board approval, and the Reserve for Contingencies. If approved, staff will prepare an appropriation request for a subsequent Board of Supervisors meeting.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Board of Supervisors) authorize establishing the Emergency Management Division within the ACFR Department; and 2) authorize the new position of Emergency Management Coordinator within

ACFR.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A: Albemarle County Emergency Management Operations