




## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor and Council Members  
**FROM:** Joel G. Baker, Fire Chief   
**DATE:** July 11, 2023  
**SUBJECT:** Staff Response to Resolution 20230413-038 – AFD Aerial Apparatus

The Austin Fire Department (AFD) has prepared the following response to Council [Resolution 20230413-038](#) by outlining the one-time and recurring operating resources needed to place an aerial apparatus into service in FY2024 and a second aerial apparatus into service in FY2025.

AFD is working with the City Manager's Office to develop recommendations in response to the additional requests found in the Resolution. Recommendations will be related to AFD reserve apparatus fleet, strategies and technology to improve AFD response times, gaps in services and staffing shortages, the renovation of joint Fire/EMS stations, and other immediate needs. We plan to brief Council on these subjects prior to the October 13, 2023 deadline.

### BACKGROUND

While aerials have been purchased in recent years in order to retire old apparatus, the last time a new aerial and crew were added to AFD's frontline fleet was in 1995. Aerial apparatus include ladder trucks and quints. Quints perform five functions; they pump water, have an extendable ladder, and they carry fire hose, ground ladders, and a water supply tank. AFD currently has 13 frontline aerials (seven ladders and six quints) assigned to stations and six reserve aerials available for use during training or when frontline apparatus are undergoing maintenance.

### STAFFING TWO ADDITIONAL AERIALS

The Resolution states that, "in 2020, because the need to staff an additional aerial apparatus was justified, an aerial apparatus was purchased and funds were allocated to staff this aerial apparatus, but funding for staffing was subsequently removed from the budget and the aerial apparatus has since remained unstaffed and remains available to be staffed." The aerial purchased in 2020 was linked to south east Austin and the opening of the Del Valle station. The costs for staffing the aerial in FY2024 include \$1.7 million for sworn staff and \$166K for apparatus maintenance, for total ongoing operating costs of \$1.86 million. An additional \$208,400 in one-time funding is needed to fully equip the apparatus.

The need for a second aerial in northwest Austin at the new Loop 360 station was identified in 2018 when Council resolved to build five new fire stations in six years (Resolution No. 20180524-035). In order to staff a second aerial in FY2025, the apparatus needs to be purchased in FY2024 because the time from purchase to delivery of a new aerial apparatus is currently 18 months to two years. FY2024 one-time costs are \$1.7 million to purchase a second aerial apparatus that would be delivered around March 2025.

The funding to staff (\$933K ongoing) and equip (\$208K one-time) the second aerial would be requested in the FY2025 budget. Since some of the operating costs in FY2025 are for a partial year, there would be additional funds needed in FY2026 to annualize the budget.

The purchase of an additional aerial truck can be debt funded. The annual operating cost of \$1.86 million for each apparatus, \$3.72 million annually in total for both, would need to be incorporated into the General Fund operating budget over the next three fiscal years. The ability to fund new ongoing initiatives in the General Fund has been highly challenging since the State enacted a 3.5% cap on the annual growth in property tax revenue for local governments.

Inquiries regarding this initial Resolution update can be directed to me or Chief of Staff Rob Vires.

cc:      Jesús Garza, Interim City Manager  
         Bruce Mills, Interim Assistant City Manager  
         Ed Van Eenoo, Chief Financial Officer  
         Carrie Lang, Budget Director  
         Jennifer Walls, Fleet Director