

2017-2018 BUDGET QUESTION

Response to Request for Information

DEPARTMENT: Fire

REQUEST NO.: 56

REQUESTED BY: Alter

DATE REQUESTED: 7/31/17

DATE POSTED: 8/10/17

REQUEST: Please provide the number of vacancies estimated to be filled over the next three fiscal years based on the current cadet class projections, highlighting any potential budgetary increases or decreases based on these projections and include the estimated number of retirements and/or attrition, the incorporation of ESD No. 4 firefighters, and any potential new sworn positions being added from FY 2018 – FY 2020?

RESPONSE: The Austin Fire Department (AFD) is estimating the graduation of 220 to 290 cadets over the next three fiscal years and expect vacancies to decrease to approximately 40 by the end of FY 2020.

The estimated firefighter separation rate – retirements and others leaving the organization - is 2.5 FTEs per pay period totaling around 65 FTEs per year for the next 3 years.

Known budgetary increases include:

- In FY 2018, AFD will add 30 positions that are fully reimbursed by ESD 4 at an estimated \$3.3 million.
- In FY 2019, 16 positions will be added to staff the new Onion Creek fire station at an estimated cost of \$2.0 million.

Anticipated budgetary decreases include:

- In FY 2019, firefighter vacancies are projected to decrease by roughly 50. This will result in an estimated reduction in sworn overtime of \$6.1 million based on the current average overtime rate of \$122,000 per position. This is only an estimate because the average overtime rate fluctuates based on the number of vacancies and shifts in firefighter wages based on seniority and specialty pay. Filling vacancies results in net savings because overtime expenses related to backfilling vacant positions exceed costs associated with filling those positions.
- In FY 2020, vacancies are projected to decrease by another two positions overall, for an additional reduction in overtime costs of approximately \$244,000.

The graph on the following page shows actual and projected firefighter vacancies with the timing of cadet class graduations, ESD No. 4 added positions, and the Onion Creek fire station staffing.

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