SUBJECT: S.A.F.E.R. GRANT REQUEST

SOURCE: FIRE DEPARTMENT/AIRPORT

COMMENT: A Federal Homeland Security Appropriations for fiscal year 2005 passed with an appropriation of $65 million for a new program called “Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER).”

Under the SAFER program, jurisdictions can request funding to hire additional fire fighters much like the Federal COPS program. The program is designed to pay a sliding-scale portion of a new fire fighter’s position for four years with a commitment from the jurisdiction to retain the fire fighter for at least one additional year. The sliding scale is 90% for the first year (up to 36k), 80% for the second year (up to 32k), 50% for the third year (up to 20k), and 30% for the fourth year (up to 12k). This amounts to $100,000 per fire fighter over the four-year period. This means the City would be required to support each position at $23,000 the first year, $27,000 the second year, $38,000 the third, $46,000 the fourth year and the full salary with benefits in year five, $59,000. These estimates are based on fiscal year 2004/2005 pay and benefit costs.

The Fire Department is requesting authorization to submit a grant request for four (4) new fire fighter positions. This would allow the City to comply with NFPA standards 1710 which is one of the highest priorities in the Federal evaluation system. As a stand-alone program, this would require the City to fund $92,000 in year one, $108,000 in year two, $152,000 in year three, $184,000 in year four, and full funding of $236,000 in year five.

The grant is highly competitive and funding is based on a local needs assessment along with its impact on neighboring departments. With the proposed down-staffing of station 20, these additional fire fighter positions may be used to augment the Fire Department’s ability to respond to the east side of town and/or joint staffing of station 20 by City and County personnel.
Staff was advised this week that the grant application process would be open for the month of June only.

Monies are not available to support the program from the Fire Department. Other sources have not been defined unless Council increased the deficit to support the program. The greatest likelihood for support would be from a potential Sales tax measure. An application could be submitted and the program implemented if the Sales tax measure passes.

OPTIONS: That the City Council select one of the options below:

Option 1  Authorize staff to submit a grant request for four additional fire fighters under the terms and conditions set forth by the grant with funding to be achieved by increasing the City’s General Fund deficit.

Option 2  Authorize staff to submit a grant request for four additional fire fighters under the terms and conditions set forth by the grant, but condition the request on the City’s ability to pass a sales tax measure on the November 2005 ballot.

Option 3  Do not submit the request.

Option 4  To be determined by Council.

RECOMMENDATION: Option 2

ATTACHMENTS: None