



TO: Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager
FROM: Anita Gallagher, Chief Policy Analyst to the Mayor, City Manager’s Office
COPY: City Council and City Clerk
SUBJECT: Resolution – Expedited Staffing of Fire Station on Tide Flats – August 22, 2017
DATE: August 11, 2017

SUMMARY:

A RESOLUTION relating to the Tacoma Fire Department; expressing the City Council’s legislative intent to fund 24-hour Tacoma Fire Department engine staffing on the Tide Flats, until such time as Fire Station 5 can become fully operational, allowing the City Manager to commence all necessary implementation steps.

COUNCIL SPONSORS:

Deputy Mayor Robert Thoms
Council Member Conor McCarthy

STRATEGIC POLICY PRIORITY:

The strategic priorities best aligned with this action are:

- Strengthen and support a safe city with healthy residents.
- Ensure all Tacoma residents are valued and have access to resources to meet their needs.

BACKGROUND:

Fire Station 5, located at 3510 East 11th Street, on the Tacoma Tide Flats has been inactive since 2007 due to budget constraints and the need to prioritize services. However, planned and existing industrial development in the Tide Flats demonstrates a need for enhanced public safety services for this crucial hub of economic activity, as well as the surrounding community. The nearest fire station to the central Tide Flats (Engine 3, in Northeast Tacoma) is an estimated 4.7 minutes away, and it is in the best interest of the businesses and nearby residential community to strive toward a shorter response time.

The City has plans to complete necessary renovations to Fire Station 5 in the Tide Flats by 2019. Moreover, in 2016, The City of Tacoma entered into an agreement with the Port of Tacoma to staff Fire Station 5.

Funding sources are anticipated to include the recently awarded Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (“SAFER”) grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to hire, train, and employ 12 additional firefighters for a three-year period, which positions will be used to staff the 24-hour engine in the Tide Flats area

ISSUE:

Currently, there is no fire station on the Tacoma Tide Flats. Planned and existing industrial development in the Tide Flats demonstrates a need for enhanced public safety services for this crucial hub of economic activity, as well as the surrounding community. A commitment to fund expediting of Tacoma Fire Department staffing in this area would help to mitigate the risk of a fire-related emergency and provide necessary public safety services. The City of Tacoma already has plans to bring Fire Station 5 back into operation by 2019, so this proposal would fill the staffing gap from the fourth quarter of 2017 through 2018.



ALTERNATIVES:

The City Council could choose to not commit to funding the requested staffing model. This would maintain the status quo, not having Tacoma Fire Department staff stationed in the Tide Flats, and any fire-related emergencies would be responded to by other Fire units. Currently, units from Station 1 downtown and Station 4 in the Hilltop would be the initial responders to emergencies in the western Tide Flats. Units from Station 2 downtown and Station 11 in East Tacoma would be expected to be among the first units to an emergency in the central Tide Flats while units from Station 12 in Fife and Station 3 in Northeast Tacoma would both respond to emergencies in the central and eastern Tide Flats. For much of the Tide Flats travel times for the above units are longer than five minutes.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council express its legislative intent to fund 24-hour Tacoma Fire Department engine staffing on the Tide Flats, until such time as Fire Station 5 can become fully operational, allowing the City Manager to commence all necessary implementation steps to reduce risks to businesses and neighborhoods and reduce response times for this important public safety service. The model would remain in effect until training of additional staff made possible by the 2016 SAFER grant is completed and available for regular operational assignment.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Depending on implementation decisions, the unbudgeted General Fund staffing costs range between \$1.4 million and \$2 million over the 2017-2018 biennium.