Response to Questions on the FY 2015 Budget

Request By: Supervisor Cook

Question: Please outline the fiscal and operational impact if firefighters were moved to a 40 hour work week (to reduce overtime) with appropriate hiring to keep current staffing levels.

Response: The Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department (FRD) operates on a 24 hour shift schedule comprised of three separate shifts – A, B and C shift. The work period for fire protection personnel is a 28 consecutive calendar day period covering four weeks or two pay periods. The number of hours worked during the 28 day work period may vary depending on shift schedules with 240 hours as the maximum and 216 hours as the minimum. Previous analysis has shown this to be more cost effective than adding additional positions.

According to the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), overtime for fire protection personnel shall include all hours worked or on paid leave in excess of 212 hours in a 28 day work period. Therefore the question posed above is: what would the cost savings and operational impact be to reduce the number of hours worked in order to eliminate the overtime hours currently built into the staffing schedule – 28 hours as a maximum and 4 hours at minimum. There would be a significant savings in overtime; however, a transition to a 40 hour work week would require adding another shift of 350 personnel to the uniformed ranks of FRD. Peer departments currently operating on a 42 hour work week require a fourth shift to meet minimum staffing and coverage requirements. With full staffing of Fire Station 42, Wolftrap and the safe staffing positions associated with the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant, the daily minimum staffing for FRD is 350 personnel for each current shift.

Before specific fiscal impacts could be estimated and to fully understand the ramifications and options available regarding daily work/shift hours for a 40 hour work week, a comprehensive study and analysis of employee leave trends and the impact on mandatory training and certification requirements is required.