

Response to Questions on the FY 2016 Budget

Request By: Supervisor Hyland

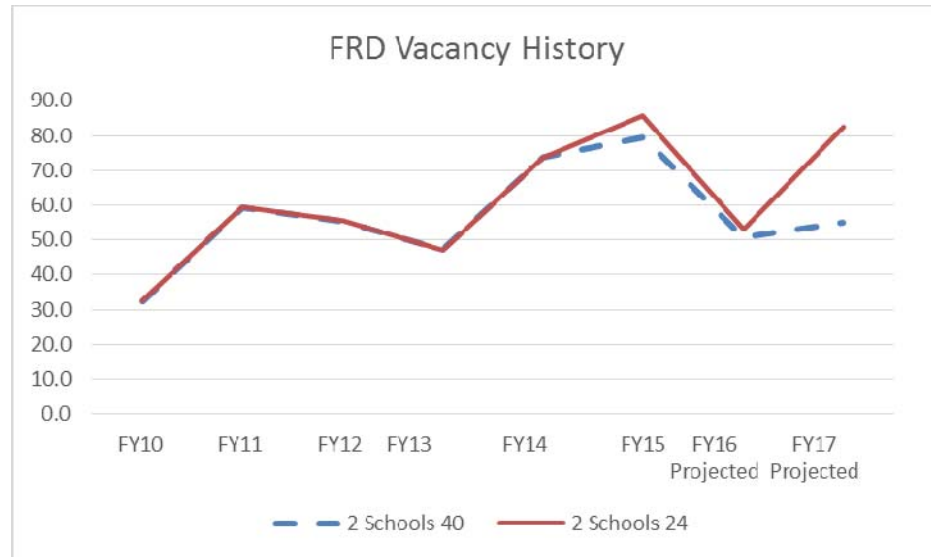
Question: Please report back to the Board with information on the status of staffing issues in the Fire and Rescue Department.

Response: The Fire and Rescue Department (FRD) is a minimum staffed organization; this means in order to operate the required number of apparatus and maintain appropriate service levels, the department must have at least 350 personnel working each day based on current minimum staffing levels. Shortages to the 350 daily requirement occur for a variety of reasons including position vacancies, annual leave, sick leave and injury leave. When vacancies occur personnel are brought in on overtime authorized to fill minimum staffed positions.

In FY 2015, 60 additional uniformed personnel were required as a result of opening the Wolftrap Fire Station and the addition of four person staffing on ladder trucks due to the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant awards. This additional staffing requirement combined with average monthly attrition of four people has created larger than normal vacancy rates resulting in larger than normal callback overtime requirements. To date, for FY 2015, FRD has spent approximately \$1 million more in callback overtime as a result of vacancies. It should be noted that FY 2014 callback overtime numbers were also inflated as a result of high vacancies, indicating this is an ongoing issue that will remain significant if not addressed.

The FRD budget is funded for two schools of 24 recruits annually. In FY 2015, FRD held larger than normal recruit schools in an effort to reduce vacancies as quickly as possible and as of June will have graduated 78 recruits. This effort will begin to reduce the number of vacancies; however, current projections suggest that two schools of 40 recruits will be required in FY 2016 to keep vacancy numbers within manageable levels. Historical data indicates that vacancies should fluctuate between 40 and 50 in order to maintain adequate staffing levels and to not over rely on callback overtime.

The chart below illustrates how average vacancies by fiscal year have increased. Additionally, it reflects two projections based on if the department remains with the two schools of 24 recruits (solid line) or if the numbers are increased to two schools of 40 recruits (dashed line).



In order to continue recovery efforts and bring vacancy levels back to more manageable levels, FRD will be required to hold two schools of 40 recruits in FY 2016. Funding requirements associated with training an additional 32 recruits per year will be significant as FRD must cover additional costs associated with recruit salaries, instructor pay and operating supplies such as uniforms and protective gear. These additional costs, combined with reductions of over \$2.4 million, will provide a substantial challenge to manage the FRD budget in FY 2016 within the amount included in the FY 2016 Advertised Budget Plan. As a result, staff from FRD and the Department of Management and Budget (DMB) will closely monitor the department's budget in FY 2016.

It is important to note that based on initial projections it is likely that larger schools will also be required in FY 2017. FRD will continue to monitor this and will work with DMB during the FY 2017 budget development process.