



Date: January 14, 2020

To: Thomas J. Bonfield, City Manager
Through: W. Bowman Ferguson, Deputy City Manager
From: Robert J. Zoldos, Fire Chief
Subject: Interlocal Agreement for Automatic Mutual Aid with the Town of Chapel Hill

Executive Summary

An automatic mutual aid request is a pre-programmed instruction in the computer aided dispatch (CAD) system that automatically dispatches a neighboring fire department's resources to emergency scenes in another fire department's jurisdiction for certain call types, most typically for structure fires. Fire departments routinely enter into automatic mutual aid agreements to have resources from a neighboring fire department deployed as quickly as possible when that neighboring department is closer than the primary department's other fire stations, or when the neighboring fire department has special equipment or training needed for the call type.

The DFD has automatic mutual aid agreements in place with surrounding volunteer and municipal departments including the Chapel Hill Fire Department (CHFD). This interlocal agreement is part of an initiative by the City Attorney's Office and DFD to update existing automatic mutual aid agreements that had not been reviewed in many years and ensure that the automatic mutual aid agreements with municipalities are interlocal agreements.

Recommendation

Fire Department staff recommends that the City Council resolves to ratify and to authorize the City Manager to execute an interlocal agreement for automatic mutual aid with the Town of Chapel Hill.

Background

When requested, the Durham Fire Department responds to neighboring communities with mutual aid assistance. This assistance speeds up the deployment of fire department resources needed to efficiently mitigate the emergency and improve the survivability of residents. Conversely, the DFD receives mutual aid assistance from neighboring fire departments. This assistance can be activated through either a *mutual aid request* or an *automatic mutual aid request*. A mutual aid request is initiated when the incident commander on an emergency scene realizes the need for additional resources and requests assistance from a neighboring department. An automatic mutual aid request is a pre-programmed instruction in the CAD system that automatically dispatches the neighboring department's resources for certain call types, most typically for structure fires. Fire departments routinely enter into automatic mutual aid agreements to have resources from a neighboring fire department deployed as quickly as possible when that neighboring department is closer than the primary department's other fire stations, when the department does not have sufficient resources to handle the emergency on their own, or when the neighboring fire department has special equipment or training needed for the call type.

The DFD has automatic mutual aid agreements in place with surrounding volunteer and municipal departments including the Chapel Hill Fire Department (CHFD). This interlocal agreement is part of an initiative by the City Attorney's Office and DFD to update existing automatic mutual aid agreements that had not been reviewed in many years and ensure that the agreements with municipalities are interlocal agreements.

Areas for automatic aid are clearly defined, and every effort to respond is expected if in the judgment of the chief of the responding party's fire department such dispatch would not impose upon their own respective community a serious impairment of fire protection and rescue services.

Issues and Analysis

The DFD has worked with the CHFD on an automatic mutual aid basis for many years and there have not been any call volume, staffing, or equipment issues related to providing this service. The DFD has the capacity to effectively provide the service. The agreement renews annually which will allow modification or termination of the agreement if there is a decrease in capacity to serve residents of either jurisdiction.

Alternatives

The alternative to this proposal is that the City of Durham could choose to not enter into this automatic mutual aid agreement with the Town of Chapel Hill and a standard mutual aid request would be made on confirmed fires or entrapments due to vehicle accidents. Because not all reported structure fires and entrapments are actually fires and entrapments, there would be a decrease in the number of responses for each department; however, on the occasions where help is needed immediately, there will be an additional 5-10 minute delay in help arriving on the scene which may cause an adverse impact on the outcome of the emergency.

Financial Impact

The DFD is responsible for all personnel and equipment costs associated with a mutual aid response, except that the cost of special extinguishing agents may be reimbursed. The same is true for the agency assisting the DFD.

Equal Business Opportunity Summary

This is an agreement that was not reviewed by the Equity & Inclusion Department for compliance with the Ordinance to Promote Equal Business Opportunities in City Contracting.

Attachments

Durham Chapel Hill Fire Interlocal - Final