

SAFER GRANT

On August 27, 2007 at a meeting of the South Burlington City Council a presentation was made by Fire Chief Douglas Brent and members of the South Burlington Career Firefighters Assoc. in regards to staffing levels at the fire department. The purpose of this meeting was to seek the permission of the City Council for the fire department to apply for a federal grant program called the SAFER program. SAFER is an acronym for Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response. In the discussion following the presentation the City Council felt this was an opportunity that the city should take advantage of and unanimously authorized Chief Brent to submit a grant for six additional firefighters.

The SAFER grant is a cost sharing program that pays a decreasing portion of a firefighters salary and benefits over a 5 year period. As the federal share decreases, the local share increases, until the 5th year when the community assumes the full cost. It is designed to assist a community to increase the number of on-duty firefighters while easing the financial impact to the city budget. There are 3 shifts at the fire department and if the grant is OK'd this would increase staffing on Engine 1 (Dorset Street) from 2 firefighters to 3 firefighters per shift. It would also increase the staffing on Engine 2 (Shelburne Road) from 2 firefighters to 3 firefighters per shift.

As of this writing it was unsure if we will be awarded the grant. As this is budget season, the City Council needed to decide how the city share would be funded should we be awarded the grant. There was essentially two ways to accomplish funding; have the City Manager put the figure into the operating budget, or seek approval from the voters to fund the project.

The decision was made to put the request on the ballot in May. This is based around a 10 year plan to fund the positions developed by City Manager Chuck Hafter. This plan would use a combination of general tax revenue and sales tax revenue to pay the City's portion. By funding the city share this way the cost would be spread over 10 years instead of 5 and would gradually build up the City's property tax expense while equally reducing the sales tax appropriation.

<u>Budget</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>SAFER Grant</u>				<u>Impact (*)</u>
<u>Year</u>	<u>Annual Cost</u>	<u>Proceeds</u>	<u>Net Cost to City</u>	<u>City Budget</u>	<u>Sales Tax Revenue</u>	<u>Property Tax rate</u>
08/09	302,984	(227,700)	75,284	-	75,284	-
09/10	316,316	(202,380)	113,936	57,000	56,936	0.002
10/11	337,493	(126,480)	255,488	127,000	128,488	0.005
11/12	383,892	(75,990)	276,402	176,000	100,402	0.006
12/13	367,888		367,888	226,000	141,888	0.008
13/14	382,604		382,604	276,000	106,604	0.009
14/15	397,908		397,908	326,000	71,908	0.011
15/16	413,824		413,824	376,000	37,824	0.012
16/17	430,377		430,377	426,000	4,377	0.013

By voting to accept this grant program staffing at the fire department could be increased by 6 Firefighter/EMT's while leveraging \$632,550 of federal funding. For further information contact Fire Chief Douglas Brent at 846-4110 or City Manager Chuck Hafter at 846-4100.