



# SOUTH METRO FIRE DEPARTMENT

1650 Humboldt Avenue • West St. Paul MN 55118

Phone: (651) 552-4176 • FAX: (651) 552-4195

www.southmetrofire.com

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DATE: July 26, 2021

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Mark Juelfs, Fire Chief

**RE: EMS Special Taxing District Levy Increase discussion**

## **Summary:**

Adding three new firefighter positions in 2022 was presented to the Fire Board during budget discussions. During the discussions the Board agreed with the need to add the additional staff but questioned how we pay for the increase without adversely affecting the Cities general levy. In addition to Both South St. Paul and West St. Paul's contribution to South Metro's budget, South Metro receives \$550,000 from an EMS special taxing district that was established in 2012. The taxing district is overseen by the same members of the Fire Board. The levy limit for this district had been \$550,000 until the recent Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services Special Taxing Districts legislation was signed into law during the 2021 legislative session. The new law amended the former Emergency Medical Services Special Taxing District law to include the formation of Fire Protection districts. Another change was to remove the levy limit from the law thus enabling South Metro to raise its current levy of \$550,000 to cover the cost of the three new positions requested in the 2022 budget. If the three new positions are added to the 2022 budget the EMS taxing district levy would increase from the current \$550,000 to \$825,000.

At it's July meeting the Fire Board was in favor of increasing the EMS taxing district levy but wanted to have a discussion on the topic with each City Council before moving forward.

## **Supporting Information**

### **- Calls for Service**

In 2008, our first operational year, South Metro responded to 4622 calls. In 2020, South Metro responded to 6760 calls. In 2008, South Metro had 33 operational staff. In 2020, South Metro had 35 operational staff. Currently South Metro remains at 35 operational staff. In 12 years of operations, our call volume has risen by 46.3% while or operational staffing has increased by 6%. Through the first six months of 2021 our call volume is up and additional 5%.

### **- BLS Transports**

In 2008, South Metro transported 565 patients. In 2020, South Metro transported 1651 patients an increase of 192%. In 2020 there was a slight reduction in transports due primarily to Covid-19, industry wide EMS calls were down. Through the first six months of 2021 we are on pace to exceed our budgeted amount of 1750 transports.

### **- Average Calls Per Day**

In 2008, South Metro averaged 12.7 calls for service a day. In 2020, South Metro averaged 18.5 calls for service a day, an increase of 45.7%.

- **Burnout**

As a department we have made great strides in the last two years regarding our personnel's mental health. However, as our call volume continues to increase our staff is exposed to more and more trauma each day which leads to an increase in burnout. In addition, we are consistently short staffed due to retirements or injuries which creates significant overtime thus exposing our personnel to additional traumatic calls. Adding the three new firefighters, one per shift, will eliminate the need for much of the current overtime resulting from being short staffed.

**Recommendation:**

- Discuss the impact of increasing the EMS taxing district levy to support the hiring of three additional firefighters.