



# Cathedral City

## Legislation Text

---

File #: 2016-475, Version: 1

---

***City Council***

**MEETING DATE: 12/14/2016**

**TITLE:**  
**New Firefighter Positions**

**FROM:**  
Paul S. Wilson, Fire Chief

**RECOMMENDATION:**  
Staff recommends the City Council approve a budget amendment to the FY16-17 budget in the amount of either \$157,532 or \$175,251 and authorize the addition of three FTE positions to the fire department staffing schedule.

**BACKGROUND:**  
In January 2016 the City Council established their 2016 goals. Staff received direction from Council for the fire department to apply for a Federal Emergency Management Agency - Staffing for Adequate and Fire and Emergency Response Grant for six (6) firefighter / paramedics.

The grant was submitted in March 2016 and was not awarded.

Council also adopted goals statements asking for a review of staffing levels in the Fire Department once year-end financial data was available. The year-end budget status report was presented to Council on October 26, 2016 during the study session. The conclusion of the report was that the City is unable to add staffing at this time, based on existing revenue sources being fully committed to covering existing and known future costs.

The City has recently permitted several medical cannabis businesses, from which the City will be collecting taxes based on current voter authorization to do so. Revenue from the medical cannabis businesses is not included in future revenue projections due to the limited history that the City has with actual collections. Because a number of businesses are now permitted, however, it is possible to estimate potential collections. Finance staff estimate that within three years the City could see new revenues from medical cannabis business in excess of \$3,000,000 per year.

**DISCUSSION:**  
**FIRE DEPARTMENT STAFFING:**

The fire department has operated since 2012 with only six on-duty firefighters assigned to the fire

companies (two personnel on each fire apparatus) protecting 53,000 residents. The two ambulances are each staffed with two firefighter / paramedics, however ambulances are unavailable forty percent of the time due to emergency transports to the hospitals.

The Fire Department strategic plan, adopted by Council earlier this year, sets a goal of adding three firefighter positions in FY16-17.

This will allow the fire department to provide one additional on-duty firefighter on the busiest company located at the fire station at 32100 Desert Vista Rd. This will permit the fire department to deploy twelve on-duty firefighters to a major medical or structure fire within eight minutes.

The purpose of the proposed F.F. / EMT positions is to hire local firefighters reflective of the community we serve. The individual firefighter cost savings for a loaded (salary and benefits) F.F. / EMT as compared to a loaded (salary and benefits) F.F. / Paramedic is \$11,813. or 11.25% annually for each position.

The fire department currently employs more paramedics than the Riverside County Emergency Medical Services Agency requires. Although the level of paramedic training provides optimum patient care it is more expensive than an EMT position. The Cathedral City Professional Firefighters and Fire Management Associations recommend the City continue to hire firefighter / paramedics.

The fire department conducted a comparison of neighboring fire department staffing. Palm Springs fire department has forty-eight firefighters of which twenty-three are EMT and twenty-five are paramedic positions. Ambulance services in Palm Springs are provided by AMR ambulance with one EMT and one Paramedic on each ambulance.

Rancho Mirage fire department has twenty-seven firefighters of which nine are EMT and eighteen are paramedic positions. Ambulance services in Rancho Mirage are provided by the fire department with two firefighter paramedics on each ambulance.

In order to provide enhanced life safety and fire protection staff recommends the City Council authorize a FY2016/17 mid-budget adjustment of three fire department positions, at the F.F. / EMT level.

The cost to add the three recommended positions is outlined below:

Positions Recommended	FY 16-17 Half-year Cost	Estimated Full-year Cost
Firefighter EMT (3 FTE)	\$157,532	\$315,063
Firefighter Paramedic (3 FTE)	\$175,251	\$350,502

### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

The full cost (salaries and benefits) to add the three recommended Firefighter EMT positions for six

months (1/1/2017 through 6/30/2017) is \$157,532 or a full year cost of approximately \$315,063.

The full cost (salaries and benefits) to add the three Firefighter Paramedic positions for six months (1/1/2017 through 6/30/2017) is \$175,251 or a full year cost of approximately \$350,502.

The three recommended Firefighter EMT positions provide the City a \$35,439 savings annually.

Estimated revenue from medical cannabis businesses will eventually be enough to cover these costs. If the revenues do not materialize quickly enough fund reserves will be required in the short term to cover these added expenses.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Click here to enter text.