

AGENDA ITEM REPORT

DATE: November 2, 2021
DEPARTMENT: Public Safety
REQUESTER: Benjamin Abes
TITLE: Approve Request for 21 New Positions for Emergency Medical Services

I. MOTION REQUESTED

Approve a mid-year position request for the Division of Emergency Medical Services to add twenty-one (21) regular, full-time positions, including eighteen (18) Emergency Medical Technicians and three (3) EMS Lieutenants.

II. ITEM SUMMARY

This item approves the immediate creation of 21 new EMS positions to address staffing impacts associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, at a cost not to exceed \$1,860,327. In the last 90 days, EMS workload has increased dramatically, with unique incidents in August 2021 up 31 percent over August 2019 alone. Additional personnel funded using American Rescue Plan Act funding would help provide personnel within the system to address sick and vacation time and staffing to add new resources to respond to the pandemic's uncertainty. The Department plans to reduce the long-term reliance on ARPA funds by transitioning staff into future positions needed to address EMS service demands.

III. BACKGROUND AND IMPLICATIONS OF ACTION

A) Board Action and Other History

In the last 18 months, employees of Public Safety have worked to provide services to the community during the COVID-19 pandemic. This has included emergency response to people ill in the community, community-based testing sites, and mass vaccination efforts.

The pandemic has resulted in impacts on EMS staffing and workload. Staffing impacts include quarantine and isolation orders and fatigue from the 18 months of response, in addition to illness after exposure to COVID-19. EMS staff have also responded to higher than normal incident volumes in hot personal protective equipment. This workload has resulted in fatigue and the need for additional time off for rest.

The addition of 21 employees will allow for the increased opportunity for time off without impacting operational readiness. The employees identified above will transfer to the General Fund by implementing the Department's growth plans and will transfer all positions to the General Fund by the end of FY23/24.

B) Policy Issues

C) BoCC Goals

D) Analysis

A. Short-term staffing augmentation using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding

The increased workload has continued as COVID cases have started to decline in September 2021. For the past 18 months, EMS staff have worked at over anticipated volumes in hot personal protective equipment. This workload has resulted in fatigue and the need for time off for rest. The addition of 21 employees will allow for the increased opportunity for time off without impacting operational readiness.

This phase consists of 18 EMT/Paramedic positions and three Lieutenants. County Administration, Public Safety, Economic Development, Human Resources, and Hodges University have worked on an apprenticeship program. In addition to the usual hiring of certified applicants, this program will allow the rapid training and onboarding of non-certified applicants.

B. Long-term (36-month) transition of employees from ARPA funding to General Fund budget

Growth in the community in the last two years and continued population migration to Southwest Florida will necessitate the addition of new resources into the EMS system. The plan includes the addition of peak-hour ambulances during the day and resources to help respond to emergencies in areas like Corkscrew Road, where growth has occurred. The employees identified above will transfer to the General Fund by implementing these ambulances and resources to transfer all positions to the General Fund by the end of FY23/24.

E) Options

IV. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

A)	Current year dollar amount of item:	\$1,860,327
B)	Is this item approved in the current budget?	No
C)	Is this a revenue or expense item?	Expense
D)	Is this Discretionary or Mandatory?	Discretionary
E)	Will this item impact future budgets? If yes, please include reasons in III(D) above.	Yes
F)	Fund: Program: Project: Account Strings:	
G)	Fund Type?	Other: Federal Grant
H)	Comments:	

V. RECOMMENDATION

Approve

VI. TIMING/IMPLEMENTATION

VII. FOLLOW UP

ATTACHMENTS:

Description	Upload Date	Type
Business case	10/20/2021	Backup Material
Supporting data	10/20/2021	Backup Material

REVIEWERS:

Department	Reviewer	Action	Date
Public Safety	Abes, Benajamin	Approved	10/20/2021 - 1:33 PM
Budget Services	Henkel, Anne	Approved	10/22/2021 - 12:19 PM
Budget Services	Winton, Peter	Approved	10/25/2021 - 4:48 PM
County Attorney	Fraser, Andrea	Approved	10/26/2021 - 8:42 AM
County Manager	Brady, Christine	Approved	10/26/2021 - 12:01 PM