



May 4, 2023

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Krystal Oriadha, Chair,  
Health, Human Services and Public Safety (HHSPS) Committee

THRU: Josh Hamlin *JH*  
Director of Budget and Policy Analysis

FROM: Cassandra Fields *KCF*  
Budget and Policy Analyst

RE: Fire/Emergency Medical Services Department and Volunteer Fire Commission  
Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Review

**Budget Overview**

- The FY 2024 Proposed Budget for the Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Department is \$268,962,400, representing an increase of \$18,788,500 or 7.5% above the FY 2023 Approved Budget.
- The FY 2024 Proposed General Fund Budget is \$259,673,400, which represents an increase of \$19,281,600 or 8.0% over the FY 2023 Approved Budget.
- The proposed budget increases are driven primarily by compensation costs associated with planned salary adjustments, position and grade reclassifications, and 3 additional classes for 80 new recruits (\$8.6 million); increases in overtime (\$8 million); fringe costs increases (\$5.8 million); Medicaid billing costs (\$910,000); an increase to the Office of Information Technology cost allocation for technology services (\$862,600); net increases to operating for supplies and services (\$1.5 million); offset by decreases in interagency charges, capital outlay, compensation due to lapses and attrition, and decrease in the fringe benefit rate from 80.1% to 72.2% (\$6.3 million).
- The Department projects that it will require a supplemental appropriation for the FY 2023 budget of approximately \$11,257,600 million for FY 2023 merit increases and overtime due to minimum staffing requirements.
- Approved Fiscal Year 2023 to Proposed Fiscal Year 2024:

Fund	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Approved	FY 2023 Estimated	% Change - Est vs App	FY 2024 Proposed	\$ Change, Prop vs App	% Change
General Fund	\$ 226,435,265	\$ 240,391,800	\$ 251,649,400	4.7%	\$ 259,673,400	\$ 19,281,600	8.0%
Grants	5,715,418	9,782,100	5,509,100	-43.7%	9,289,000	(493,100)	-5.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 232,150,683</b>	<b>\$ 250,173,900</b>	<b>\$ 257,158,500</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>\$ 268,962,400</b>	<b>\$ 18,788,500</b>	<b>7.5%</b>

▪ Authorized Staffing (Full-time) - All Classifications

	FY 2023 Approved	FY 2024 Proposed	Change
General Fund	1,068	1,132	64
Grants	52	46	-6
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,120</b>	<b>1,178</b>	<b>58</b>

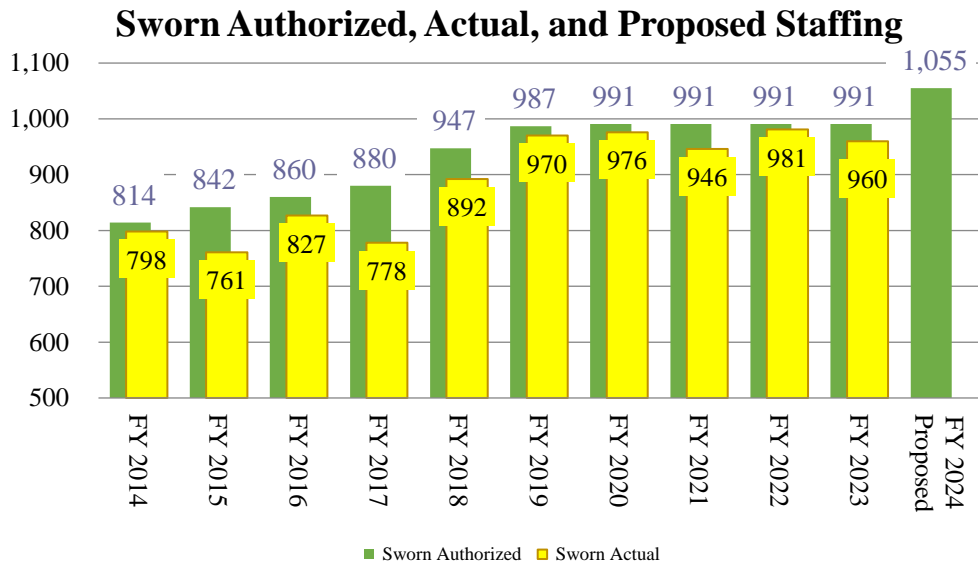
**Budget Comparison – General Fund**

Category	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Approved	FY 2023 Estimated	FY 2024 Proposed	Change Amount	Percentage Change (Approved Budget)	Percentage Change (Estimated Budget)
Compensation	\$ 117,528,031	\$ 118,722,100	\$ 128,892,600	\$ 133,725,300	\$ 15,003,200	12.6%	3.7%
Fringe Benefits	81,584,161	95,088,800	93,060,500	96,535,200	1,446,400	1.5%	3.7%
Operating Expenses	27,188,598	26,340,900	29,556,300	29,412,900	3,072,000	11.7%	-0.5%
Capital Outlay	234,901	240,000	240,000	-	(240,000)	-100.0%	-100.0%
Subtotal	\$ 226,535,691	\$ 240,391,800	\$ 251,749,400	\$ 259,673,400	\$ 19,281,600	8.0%	3.1%
Recoveries	(100,426)	0	(100,000)	0	-	0.0%	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 226,435,265</b>	<b>\$ 240,391,800</b>	<b>\$ 251,649,400</b>	<b>\$ 259,673,400</b>	<b>\$ 19,281,600</b>	<b>8.0%</b>	<b>3.2%</b>

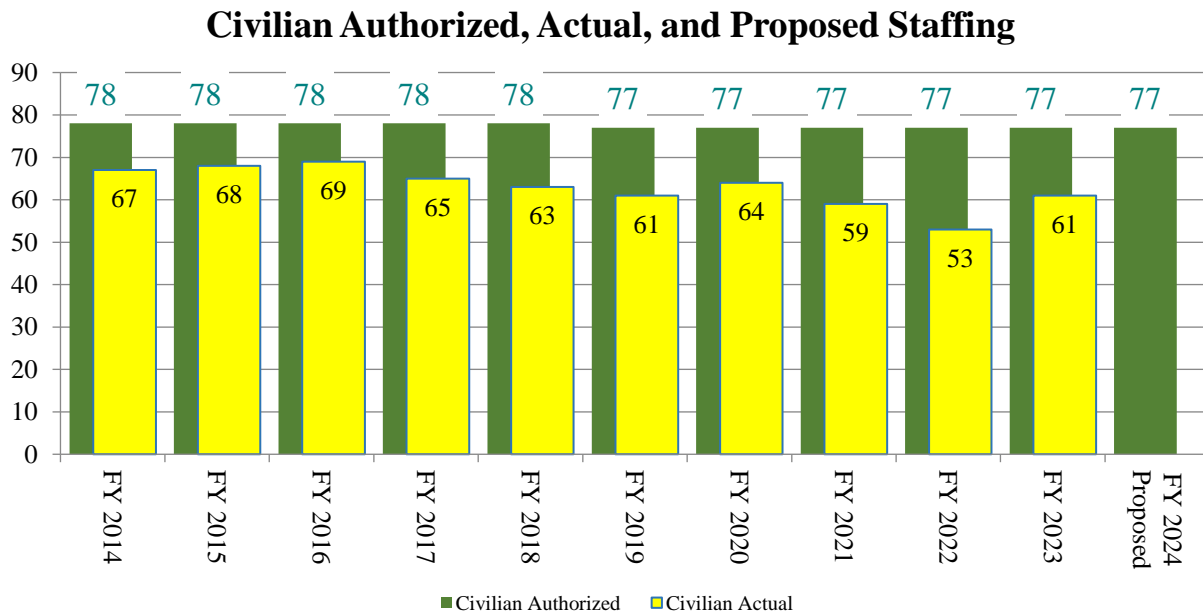
***Compensation***

- In FY 2024, General Fund compensation expenditures are proposed at \$133,725,300, representing an increase of \$15,003,200, or 12.6%, above the approved FY 2023 budget.
- The top drivers of the proposed compensation increases are:
  - Mandated salary adjustments, position classification and grade changes (\$8.6 million, inclusive of the recruit classes below)
  - Overtime to cover mandatory shifts, and (\$8 million)

- Three (3) recruit classes (80 new recruits), which is partially offset by anticipated attrition and salary lapse. (decrease of \$1,585,400 million)
- The number of authorized General Fund full-time positions included in the FY 2024 Proposed Budget includes 1,132 total: 77 civilian positions, which represents no change from the FY 2023 approved level; and 1,055 sworn positions, which represents 64 additional full-time positions over the prior year's budget.



- As of March 2023, the sworn vacancy rate was 31 employees, representing a 3.13% vacancy rate. At this time last year, the vacancy rate was 1% for sworn positions.



- As of March 6, 2023, the Department’s actual civilian staffing level was at 61 employees, representing a 20.8% civilian vacancy rate. At this time last year, the vacancy rate was 31.2%.

- As of March 2023, the Department reports a monthly attrition rate of three (3) employees.

***Fringe Benefits***

- A five-year trend analysis of fringe benefit expenditures is included below:

<b>Fringe Benefits Historical Trend</b>						
	<b>FY 2020 Actual</b>	<b>FY 2021 Actual</b>	<b>FY 2022 Actual</b>	<b>FY 2023 Budget</b>	<b>FY 2023 Estimate</b>	<b>FY 2024 Proposed</b>
Compensation	\$ 111,156,971	\$ 101,369,698	\$ 117,528,031	\$ 118,722,100	\$ 128,892,600	\$ 133,725,300
Fringe Benefits Expenditures	\$ 79,437,769	\$ 72,229,431	\$ 81,584,161	\$ 95,088,800	\$ 93,060,500	\$ 96,535,200
As a % of Compensation	71.5%	71.3%	69.4%	80.1%	72.2%	72.2%

- In FY 2024 fringe benefit expenditures are proposed at \$96,535,200, representing an increase of \$1,446,400 or 1.5%, above the FY 2023 approved level.
- A fringe benefits breakdown by component is presented in response to the *FY 2024 First Round Budget Review Question No. 11*.
- The largest component of fringe benefits is the Fire Retirement Plan (accounts for 53.17% of the Department’s fringe expenditures).

***Operating Expenses***

- FY 2024 General Fund operating expenditures are proposed at \$29,412,900, representing an increase of \$3.07 million, or 11.7%, above the approved FY 2023 budget level. This increase is primarily to support Medicaid billing, gas and oil, office supplies, operating contracts, and office automation charges. Funding is also provided for volunteer firefighter and emergency medical technician recruitment and retention efforts as well as staff training.
- The accompanying table compares the FY 2024 Proposed Budget operating expenditures with the FY 2022 Approved Budget operating expenditures. In 14 of the categories, the proposed FY 2024 budget levels remain unchanged from the prior year; seven (7) categories are proposed to increase over the FY 2023 approved budget; and one (1) reduces planned spending from the FY 2023 approved budget.

	Operating Objects	FY 2023 Approved	FY 2024 Proposed	\$ Change	% Change
5101	Telephone	\$ 400,000	\$ 400,000	\$ -	0.0%
5102	Utilities	1,001,100	1,001,100	-	0.0%
5103	Printing	4,500	7,500	3,000	66.7%
5104	Postage	-	-	-	0.0%
5105	Periodicals	11,600	11,600	-	0.0%
5106	Data-Voice	-	-	-	0.0%
5107	Office Automation	6,966,300	7,828,900	862,600	12.4%
5108	Training/Recruitment	118,000	118,000	-	0.0%
5109	Advertising	3,000	3,000	-	0.0%
5110	Travel: Non-Training	-	-	-	0.0%
5111	Membership Fees	14,000	14,000	-	0.0%
5112	Mileage Reimbursement	400	400	-	0.0%
5115	Insurance Premiums	1,614,000	1,614,000	-	0.0%
5117	General & Administrative Contracts	1,688,100	2,981,200	1,293,100	76.6%
5117	Operating Contracts	202,000	202,000	-	0.0%
5118	General Office Supplies and Medical	1,805,500	2,064,900	259,400	0.0%
5119	Office and Operating Equipment Non-Capital	2,089,100	2,089,100	-	0.0%
5120	Other Operating Equipment Repair/ Maintenance	272,000	272,000	-	0.0%
5121	Vehicle Equipment Repair/Maintenance	4,800,000	4,803,900	3,900	0.1%
5122	Gas and Oil	1,300,000	2,000,000	700,000	53.8%
5123	Equipment Lease	62,500	62,500	-	0.0%
5124	Office/Building Rental/Lease	-	-	-	0.0%
5125	Building Repair/Maintenance	106,000	206,000	100,000	94.3%
5126	Grants/Contributions	1,150,000	1,150,000	-	0.0%
5141	Miscellaneous	2,446,000	2,446,000	-	0.0%
5161	Interagency Charges	286,800	136,800	(150,000)	-52.3%
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 26,340,900</b>	<b>\$ 29,412,900</b>	<b>\$ 3,072,000</b>	<b>11.7%</b>

- The most significant dollar increases in the FY 2024 Proposed Budget from the FY 2023 Approved Budget are in the General & Administrative Contracts (\$1.3 million), Office Automation costs associated with IT services (\$862,600), Gas & Oil expenditures (\$700,000), and General Office Supplies/Medical Supplies (\$259,400).
- The reduction between the FY 2024 Proposed Budget and the FY 2023 is in the interagency charges line item, due to a decrease based on the Office of Central Services charges (\$150,000).

***Recoveries***

- There are no recoveries budgeted in FY 2024, the same level as the FY 2023 Approved Budget.

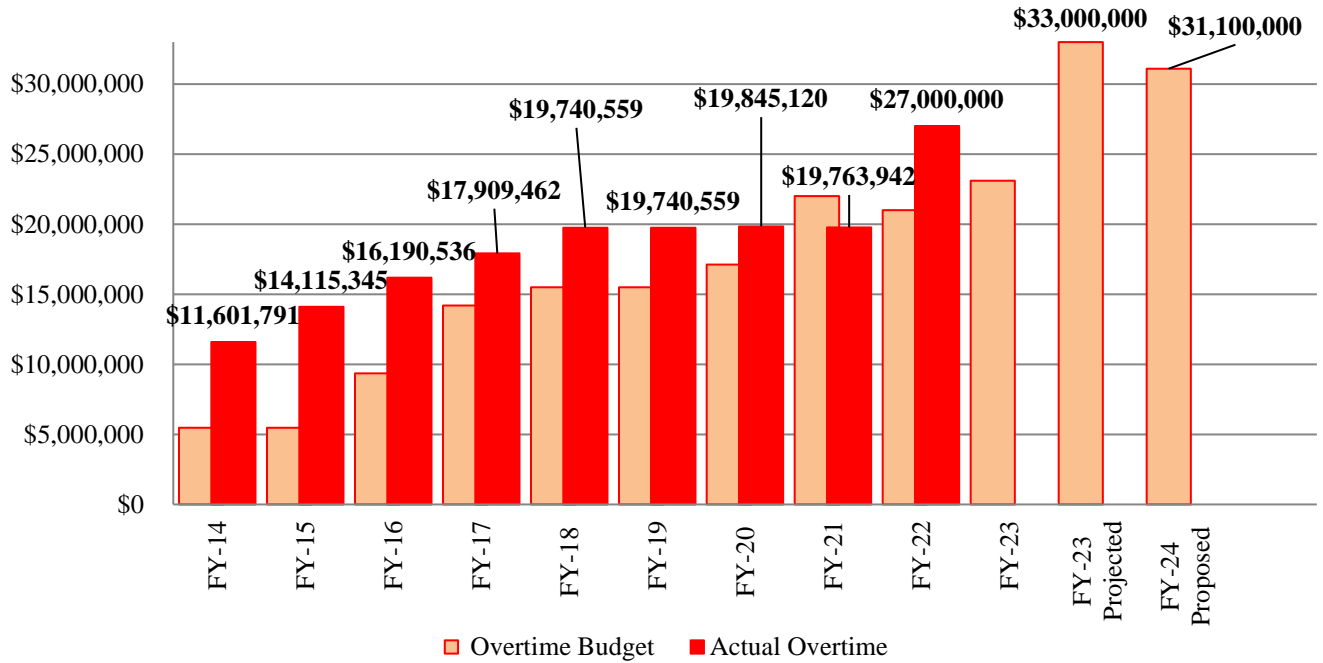
**Grants**

Category	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Approved	FY 2023 Estimated	FY 2024 Proposed	Change Amount	Percentage Change
Compensation	\$ 416,983	\$ 2,625,000	\$ 64,700	\$ 2,397,400	\$ (227,600)	-8.7%
Fringe Benefits	142,043	1,434,400	51,500	1,569,400	135,000	9.4%
Operating Expenses	5,134,094	6,180,900	5,474,700	5,605,400	(575,500)	-9.3%
Capital Outlay	174,898	25,000	56,200	185,000	160,000	640.0%
Total	\$ 5,868,018	\$ 10,265,300	\$ 5,647,100	\$ 9,757,200	\$ (508,100)	-4.9%

- In FY 2024, 3.5% of the Department’s budget is proposed to be funded by grant funds.
- FY 2024 grant funds are proposed at \$9,289,000, representing a 5.0% (\$493,100) decrease below the FY 2023 approved level. An additional \$462,800 is proposed to be transferred from the General Fund, classified as the County contribution.
- The Department proposes a FY 2024 full-time Grant Funded staff complement of 45 sworn positions, which represents a decrease of five (5) positions compared to the FY 2023 level, through the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant. Additionally, the FY 2024 budget includes one (1) Limited-Term Grant Funded (LTGF) position, which reflects a reduction of one (1) position from the FY 2023 approved budget.
- Please refer to responses to *Questions No. 2 and 3 of the FY 2024 First Round Budget Review Questions*, for further information on FY 2023 and FY 2024 grants.

**Overtime**

- FY 2024 General Fund overtime compensation is proposed at \$31,100,000, representing an \$8 million increase over the FY 2023 approved level (\$23.1 million).



- As of the April 4, 2023 projection, the Department reported that its FY 2023 overtime spending will be above the budgeted level by approximately \$9.9 million.
- The agency reports that 96% of overtime is mandatorily assigned.
- Additional information on overtime can be found in response to the *FY 2024 First Round Budget Review Questions No. 22-27 and FY 2024 Second Round Budget Review Question, No. 11.*

**Workload**

Call types	# of Calls CY 2021	# of Calls CY 2022
ALS	53,388	51,222
BLS	54,926	61,420
Fire	16,640	18,394

Service Calls Calendar Year Data					
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2021-2022 Change
Basic Life Support (BLS)	74,211	66,987	69,156	69,692	0.78%
Advanced Life Support (ALS)	47,962	49,878	53,299	59,840	12.27%
<b>EMS Subtotal</b>	<b>122,173</b>	<b>116,865</b>	<b>122,455</b>	<b>129,532</b>	<b>5.78%</b>
Fire	18,921	17,470	18,318	19,115	4.35%
Hazmat/Technical Rescue	4,828	3,032	3,004	2,999	-0.17%
Non- Emergency	6,664	8,923	13,484	12,549	-6.93%
<b>Fire Subtotal</b>	<b>30,413</b>	<b>29,425</b>	<b>34,806</b>	<b>34,663</b>	<b>-0.41%</b>
<b>TOTAL INCIDENTS</b>	<b>152,586</b>	<b>146,290</b>	<b>157,261</b>	<b>164,195</b>	<b>4.41%</b>
% EMS	80.1%	79.9%	77.9%	78.9%	
% Fire	19.9%	20.1%	22.1%	21.1%	

- In FY 2022, the Department investigated 482 fire incidents. In FY 2023 (7/1/22-2/21/23), the agency investigated 305 fire incidents.
- In CY 2022, six (6) residents died and twenty-two (22) sustained injuries, as a result of fires in the County.
- Workload matters are discussed in response to the *FY 2024 First Round Questions No. 30-34*:
  - The trend of workload demand has continued to increase of the past year, while volunteer participation has declined in some regions in the County. The agency reports that this creates an inequity in resource production to meet the workload needs in some communities. In FY 2022 and FY 2023, staffing enhancements will allows the Department to address reliability in two (2) large geographic areas. However, despite the best efforts and deployment models, there will still be areas that have inferior staffing capabilities.
  - Another challenge encountered is the development of apparatus replacement plans for volunteer corporations.
  - The Department currently employs eleven (11) work schedules. However, the agency noted that this staffing dynamic does not increase the complexities of filling vacancies or other staffing challenges.
  - FY 2024 proposed budget includes funding for only one (1) Social Worker position to manage the Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) Program/Community Paramedic Program. The MIH webpage is currently being designed. The MIH does not operate with a separate budget, it is included under the Emergency Services Command Division.
  - In CY 2022, the Department responded to 670 behavioral health emergency incidents. This represents 0.4% of the total call volume.
  - The 988 Crisis Hotline has fielded and redirected patients experiencing crises from the 911 system to definitive mental health services. There were some initial challenges in the implementation of the new system. However, the Fire/EMS Department is participating in



a pilot program, with several partners to include law enforcement, Homeland Security, and Community Crisis Services, Inc. (which provides guidance on responding and caring for patients who are experiencing mental health crises). The protocols developed from this partnership delineate procedures for sharing a scene with law enforcement, and the mobile crisis team, whilst also assisting the patient.

- A full-fledged nurse navigation program is being considered. It would be implemented with the 911 emergency medical services system. It aims to match a low-acuity caller with the appropriate level of care based on the caller’s communicated medical needs. It utilizes nurses and physician-approved protocols to guide the callers. The intent is to reduce the demand low-acuity patients pose on the system, while still supplying them the care they need. The cost estimates for the program have been provided:

Payment for Services		
One-time implementation fee (year one only): \$50,000. The services included in this implementation fee are a dedicated project manager and client services team, in-person kickoff and re-occurring steering committee meetings, IT and protocol collaboration, Medical Director joint review and approvals, creation of white labeled community outreach/marketing materials and vanity 888 number, creation of customized reporting, alternative destination network education and build-out, Lyft coordination/reporting, EMD training templates, 24/7 nurse coverage, staffing and management levels adjusted in Realtime to meet demand.		
Monthly Call Volume Range	Monthly Cost with Lyft	Monthly Cost Without Lyft
0-100	\$10,250	\$9,750
101-200	\$15,750	\$15,00
201-300	\$21,250	\$20,250
301-400	\$26,750	\$25,250
401-500	\$32,250	\$30,500
501-600	\$37,750	\$35,500
601-750	\$46,000	\$43,250
751-1,000	\$60,000	\$56,000
1,001-1,250	\$73,500	\$68,750
*3% increase each year		

- The Department has been working with a consultant, Fitch and Associates, for some time to develop the Department’s Strategic Plan, Standards of Cover, and Community Risk Assessment recommendations. It is anticipated that the final reports and recommendations should be ready for review within 30-60 days, after which time, a formal presentation to County leadership will occur.

- The Department reports that the collection rate for ambulance transports has realized an increase from 42% in FY 2022, to a 46% rate (year-to-date) in FY 2023. The third-party vendor billed \$36.8 million in FY 2022, and \$25.6 million (to-date) in FY 2023. The Department has written off \$19.74 million in FY 2022, and \$16.22 million to date for FY 2023. Detailed information relating to ambulance billing is contained within the response to the *FY 2024 First Round Question 43 (a-g)*.
- Program Management matters are addressed in additional detail within their responses to the *FY 2024 First Round Questions No. 35-52*.

Fleet and Apparatus Maintenance Overview								
	Total fleet	County owned	Volunteer owned	No. of equipment that currently exceeds replacement age	% Apparatus that exceeds replacement age	Cost of replacement of all equipment that exceeds replacement age	FY 2022 Maintenance cost	FY 2023 YTD Maintenance cost
Rescue Squads	10	4	6	5	50%	\$10,000,000	\$237,349	\$127,666
Ladder Trucks	24	12	12	9	38%	\$19,800,000	\$552,248	\$296,565
Engine	91	25	66	54	59%	\$59,400,000	\$1,371,132	\$1,088,551
Mini-pumpers	5	0	5	3	60%	\$850,000	\$6,298	\$8,342
Ambulances/Transport Units	128	95	33	86	67%	\$38,700,000	\$880,700	\$383,694
Brush Trucks	8	3	5	1	13%	\$116,000	\$16,952	\$10,754
Tankers	4	2	2	3	75%	\$2,800,000	\$24,413	\$13,223
Command Vehicles	80	27	53	49	61%			
Support Vehicles	293	186	107	125	43%	\$7,900,000	\$892,222	\$839,365
Specialty Vehicles	100	82	18	35	35%	\$10,000,000	\$111,420	\$81,693
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>743</b>	<b>436</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>\$149,566,000</b>	<b>\$4,092,734</b>	<b>\$2,849,853</b>

- As of March 15, 2023, the Department reports having 270 key pieces of apparatus (141 County owned and 129 owned by Volunteer Companies). 59.6%, or 161 pieces of key apparatus, currently exceed the recommended replacement age, which is slightly higher than the level reported last year (53%).
  - Post COVID-19 delivery times for major machinery/apparatus has been delayed to in excess of twenty-four months.
- Information on the Department’s equipment and information technology can be found in response to the *FY 2024 First Round Questions No. 50-52* and Volunteer Fire Commission’s responses to the *FY 2024 First Round Questions 20-21*.

**Department Identified Critical Issues:**

- The country is facing a looming crisis in the recruitment, hiring, and retention of public safety personnel. These issues are complex, did not occur overnight, and the specific challenges vary based on the agency. There is not one clearly defined problem or resolution to the issue at hand. Public safety organizations have found themselves in a rapidly changing environment and must market themselves as modern workplaces in an effort to maintain competitiveness, attract and retain competent employees, and bridge the gap toward restoring public confidence in public safety entities.

- On the Fire/EMS side of the equation, the pandemic exacerbated recruitment and retention efforts. As a result of lower fire academy numbers, decreasing funding sources, and challenging political climates, many departments were forced to increase mandatory overtime requirements on their members. Coupled with the already stressful nature of the job, these conditions have led and continue to lead to higher burnout and employee turnover rates<sup>1</sup>. Firefighters are experiencing the more long-term impact of COVID on crew dynamics. Whether or not it should have been, COVID was not an anticipated event. As such, procedure and policy development occurred “on the fly”. According to some studies, the constant rule changes increased the risks of burnout, turnover intentions, social withdrawal, both active-and-passive work withdrawal, and work-family conflict. It is reported that fire service personnel felt, or are feeling the effects of burnout, chronic fatigue, poor sleep patterns, and leadership shortcomings<sup>2</sup>. COVID-19 also shed light on the critical need to focus on provider mental and physical wellness. To retain health professionals, EMS organizations may identify a need to implement wellness programming. The Department’s leadership has recognized this need and as such, dedicated resources to specifically address the health & wellness of the members of the Fire/EMS Department navigate through the various services provided by the Health & Wellness Office<sup>3</sup>.
- The Department reports that attrition remains a major challenge for the agency. It is unable to keep up with the rate of retirement/resignations. They report that they have a difficult attracting and retaining employees (both sworn and civilian), as other employers in the region offer higher salaries, alternative work options (telework), and more flexible work schedules<sup>4</sup>. The entry level salary for a firefighter is \$48,063, which was increased from \$46,890 as a result of a cost-of-living adjustment.
- The trend of workload demand has continued over the past year, while volunteer participation has continued to decline in certain areas of the County. The Department expressed that this resulted in an unequal balance of resource production to meet workload in some communities. Planned staffing enhancements for FY 2023 and 2024 are forecast to allow the Department to address production reliability in two (2) large geographic areas. However, it was noted that despite the Department’s efforts, there are still areas that have poor staffing reliability<sup>5</sup>.
- Both sworn and civilian staffing will continue to challenge the agency for the foreseeable future and beyond. The agency reports losing an average of 3 sworn members per month (36 per year), which includes resignations, retirements, and those who are enrolled in the Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP) program. The Department has also been required to commit to additional staffing levels based on the collective bargaining agreement. This mandates that at least four (4) firefighters are on each fire suppression unit at all stations.
- The Department struggles to keep pace with the administrative and support needs of the operations. Even though there has been a significant increase in workload demands, the civilian

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.firehouse.com/safety-health/article/21212709/covidrelated-stressors-impact-on-fire-service-members>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.firehouse.com/safety-health/article/21212709/covidrelated-stressors-impact-on-fire-service-members>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/4449/Health-Wellness-Resource-Center>

<sup>4</sup> Responses to the FY 2023 Operating / Program Review Questions dated 11/3/2022

<sup>5</sup> Id.

complement has remained unchanged at 77 positions for the past 10 years. To cover some of these vacancies, sworn employees have had to be assigned the administrative duties that could and should be held by civilian personnel.

- Recruitment and retention of volunteer members is a critical level too. If volunteer participation continues to decline, there will be significant service gaps in response to calls. <sup>6</sup>
- There are nine (9) 100% volunteer fire stations within the County: Riverdale (807), Bladensburg (809), Branchville (811), Riverdale Heights (813), Boulevard Heights (817), Morningside (827), West Lanham Hills (828), Kentland (833), and Ritchie (837).

<b>Station</b>	<b>% in Service</b>	<b>Misc.</b>
Riverdale (807)	45-55% of the time	
Seat Pleasant (808)		Recently closed. No operational volunteers to move into the Shady Glen station (802). One of the reasons the County had to supply career staffing for this station.
Bladensburg (809)	75-85% of the time	
Branchville (811)	45-55% of the time	
Riverdale Heights (813)	0-5% of the time	
Boulevard Heights (817)	0-5% of the time	
Morningside (827)	75-85% of the time	
West Lanham Hills (828)	75-85% of the time	
Kentland (833)	100% of the time	
Ritchie (837)	75-85% of the time	

- There are twenty (20) stations at which volunteer corporations are housed but staffed 24/7 with career staffing due to the limited volunteer participation at each station:

Capitol Heights (805)	Beltsville (831)
Glenn Dale (818)	Allentown Road (832)
Marlboro (820)	Chillum-Adelphi (834)
Oxon Hill (821)	Greenbelt (835)
Forestville (823)	Baden (836)
Accokeek (824)	Chapel Oaks (838)
Clinton (825)	Brandywine (840)
District Heights (826)	Oxon Hill (842)
Silver Hill (829)	Bowie (843)
Landover Hills (830)	Bunker Hill (855) <sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Pg. 6, Question 9, of the FY 2024 2<sup>nd</sup> round questions delineates all of the programs and recruitment efforts that were a result of the FY 2023 \$240,000 recruitment budget.

<sup>7</sup> Houses two volunteer corporations (Mount Rainier & Brentwood).

- A majority of fire departments, both career and on-call agencies around the nation, are also having difficulty getting enough qualified applicants. In career organizations, many are experiencing a significant decline in the number of applicants, especially those requiring paramedic level licensing to apply. With many organizations experiencing a reduction in the number of significant fires, training to obtain and maintain skills is critical. Our Fire/EMS Department reports that approximately 80% of all calls are EMS related, with the balance (20%) being fire related<sup>8</sup>. As new equipment, techniques or processes are added, ***continuing education is necessary and required to maintain licensures***. This is a challenge for both career and on-call departments. In full-time organizations, it may be the issue of finding time or replacing other aspects of the job. ***In volunteer departments, the time commitment may act as a disincentive to some who want to help but just cannot commit to the training that may be required***<sup>9</sup>. This needs to be properly evaluated in every organization to determine the impact. ***Prince George's Fire/EMS Department is fortunate, inasmuch as they report that they have been able to meet the typical capacity of a recruit class (40 recruits) because the average recruitment process yields over 2,000 applicants***<sup>10</sup>. However, over the past couple of years, the agency has also seen this trend begin to change to the detriment of the Department.

***The detailed and technical nature of the service being provided requires that an experienced recruit needs six (6) months of training at the Academy and nine (9) months for a non-experienced recruit. Additionally, both require a year from being sworn in to complete and be released from their probationary status from the County***<sup>11</sup>.

In addition to the stringent training requirements, run volume places extra strain on the entire Department. This will vary depending on the run volume of the organization and of the individual units. Some are responding to calls that don't allow for rest and recovery, training, and normal maintenance activities. Excessive response can affect responder health and impact service levels. Agencies across the nation saw this was exacerbated by the pandemic<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> FY 2023 Proposed Budget Responses to A&I, from Chief Tiffany D. Green, dated 4/1/22.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.fireapparatusmagazine.com/ems/chief-conderns-challenges-of-ems/>

<sup>10</sup> FY 2023 Proposed Budget Responses to A&I, from Chief Tiffany D. Green, dated 4/1/22.

<sup>11</sup> FY 2023 Proposed Budget Responses to A&I, from Chief Tiffany D. Green, dated 4/1/22.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.fireapparatusmagazine.com/ems/chief-conderns-challenges-of-ems/>

**Volunteer Fire Commission/Volunteer Services Command**

- The Volunteer Fire Commission’s (“Commission”) budget is included in the overall Fire/EMS Department’s FY 2024 Proposed Budget.

**Volunteer Fire Commission Budget Comparison - General Fund**

Category	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Approved	FY 2023 Estimated	FY 2024 Proposed	Change Amount	Percentage Change
Compensation	\$ 608,848	\$ 492,100	\$ 593,300	\$ 647,900	\$ 155,800	31.7%
Fringe Benefits	4,012,808	6,756,900	6,328,400	6,985,000	228,100	3.4%
Operating Expenses	12,160,322	13,009,800	13,851,400	13,214,500	204,700	1.6%
Capital Outlay	-	-	-	-	-	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 16,781,978</b>	<b>\$ 20,258,800</b>	<b>\$ 20,773,100</b>	<b>\$ 20,847,400</b>	<b>\$ 588,600</b>	<b>2.9%</b>

- In FY 2024, the Commission’s budget is proposed to increase by \$588,600, or 2.9%, above the approved FY 2023 budget level.
  - The proposed increase in compensation reflects mandatory and planned salary adjustments. The fringe benefit increase is a result of additional funding to support the Length of Service Award Program (LOSAP), in conjunction with projected health care and pension costs. There is funding budgeted to support volunteer recruitment, as well as training.
  - The FY 2024 proposed operating expenses are \$13,214,500, or 1.6%, more than the approved FY 2023 budget. The primary justification for the \$204,700 increase from the prior fiscal year is due to an increase in the technology cost allocation assigned by OIT (\$171,500) and the increase in general contracts to support Stryker maintenance and the Pulse Point contract (\$67,300).
  - \$240,000 was included in the proposed FY 2024 budget for all recruitment endeavors (volunteer and career).
  - On average, four (4) to six (6) volunteers become career FF/EMT annually.
- The Length of Service Award Program (LOSAP):
  - In FY 2024, LOSAP will provide a \$450 per month stipend (and \$8 a month for service in excess of 25 years), which is awarded after 25 years of service at the age of 55. The Program also provides a burial benefit of \$10,000 after 25 years of service.
  - In FY 2023, the LOSAP cost is estimated at nearly \$4.7 million, and \$5.9 million is also included in the FY 2024 Proposed Budget.
  - The Commission’s FY 2024 estimated LOSAP expenditures represent 84.5% of the Volunteer Services Command Division’s total fringe benefit expenses and 6.1% of the Department’s total fringe benefit expenses.

- The Department partnered with the Office of Information Technology and the Fire Commission to create a LOSAP application for use on the intranet that would streamline the management of all functions associated with record keeping. The application is currently being tested at three (3) trial stations: Morningside Station #827, Hyattsville Station #801, and Laurel Rescue Station #849.
- The Station Management Funds allocation information is provided in response to the Department’s *FY 2024 First Round Budget Review Question No. 55*.
- ***The most critical issues reported by the Volunteer Fire Commission are:***
  - Recruitment and retention of volunteers is a top priority for the commission and Department collectively. In addition to the vacancies and difficulties with recruiting qualified applicants to serve, in FY 2022, approximately 200 volunteers were moved to administrative status due to failure to maintain operational readiness.

<b>Volunteer Qualifications</b>					
<b>Qualifications</b>	<b>FY 2019</b>	<b>FY 2020</b>	<b>FY 2021</b>	<b>FY 2022</b>	<b>FY 2023 YTD</b>
Fire Fighter	1,321	1,321	1,368	1,243	858
Emergency Medical Technician	1,423	1,530	1,530	224	194
Paramedic	87	20	20	16	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,831</b>	<b>2,871</b>	<b>2,918</b>	<b>1,483</b>	<b>1,066</b>
<i>YTD as of: March 6, 2023</i>					

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- The Volunteer Recruiter serves under a contractual relationship (however, it includes 2,080 hours). The Commission and agency report this creates some impediments to the most effective tools and practices of recruitment. The agency faces high turnover in this role due to the lack of benefits and demands to work closely and consistently with all volunteer corporations to keep members interested and active. Additionally, the administrative record-keeping efforts associated with volunteer records faces challenges. The Commission noted that implementation of an applicant tracking system (ATS) will assist with electronically managing all administrative tasks involving applicants, to even include managing physicals for all volunteer firefighters and EMT clinicians. If authorized, this position would be best served as a full-time employee of the agency, hired at \$68,231 serving as a Human Resources Analyst I.
- An internal review uncovered that eligible volunteers had not received any cost-of-living adjustment since 2020 or increases based on additional years of volunteer service through LOSAP. The discrepancy noted caused the Commission and OHRM Pension Division to develop a calculation plan, hire a contractor, and execute retro pay for over 700 eligible members. All adjusted payments should be received by May 2023.
- The agency is still experiencing significant downtime associated with patient drop-off at hospitals. The Commission and agency reports that the countermeasures implemented in FY 2022 to combat this drain on resources are still in place. These include the utilization

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<sup>13</sup> Note\* The number of volunteers certified as FF/EMT and EMT-P are based on number of volunteer members that are issued self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) equipment. It is not indicative of how many active members there are. The cost of SCBA equipment per volunteer is estimated at \$10,300 per unit. (Page 9, 1<sup>st</sup> round responses)

of a disposition officer (EMS 801), Direct-to-Triage, multi-patient management, and meeting regularly with medical facilities in the region to discuss best practices and mitigation strategies. The Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS) is working to assist with implementing measures to increase transfer of care (TOC) times to alleviate the “bottlenecks” transpiring in medical facilities.

- With mounting debt for fire apparatus and EMS units, compounded with diminishing volunteer corporations in operation, the Commission developed a plan to use the Senator Amoss 508 State Funding to reduce the overall debt. This new model has afforded several stations to successfully pay off eight (8) pieces of apparatus (as of March 2023), and the Department’s General Orders were modified to require the Fire Chief to authorize all purchases for apparatus.



## **FY 2024- FY 2029 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Overview**

- The Fire/Emergency Medical Services (Fire/EMS) Department is responsible for fire suppression, emergency medical services, fire prevention, research, training, and the coordination of the Volunteer Fire Companies. The Fire/EMS Department operates 45 Fire and EMS stations, as well as several other support facilities that are located throughout the County.

### ***Needs Assessment***

- The Office of Central Services (OCS) Facilities Operation and Management (FOM) provided a complete assessment of the mechanical systems and the condition of the roofs of all stations. Based on that assessment, the replacement of these mechanical systems has been prioritized and the most critical are included in the Fire Station Renovation projects.
- Also, based on the roof assessment and a review of the existing roof warranties, a roof replacement schedule has been developed. Funding for these improvements is included in the Fire Station Roof Renovations project.
- Five (5) stations have been identified as requiring extensive renovation to meet existing and projected service needs.
- Four (4) additional stations are planned to meet future service demands. All new stations and/or renovations will include station alerting systems designed to reduce stress on personnel and reduce response times, separate male/female sleeping facilities and will comply with the American Disability Act (ADA) and the building code for fire alarm and sprinkler systems protection.

### ***CIP Budget Overview***

- The FY 2024 - 2029 CIP total project cost funding request is \$38,043,000. The total project cost is \$354,299,000.
- The FY 2024 Proposed Capital Budget for the Fire/EMS Department is \$6,683,000, which represents a \$1.2 million decrease from FY 2023 approved funding.
- Out of 39 CIP projects listed in the FY 2024 – 2029 Proposed CIP Budget; seven (7) projects have funding for either FY 2023 or FY 2024.
- The following is an update on the seven (7) Capital projects with FY 2023 and/or FY 2024 funding:

**1. Fire Station Renovations**

*FY 2024 funding request: \$2.5 million*

*Estimated cost for FY 2023 is \$4.05 million.*

*Total project cost: \$55.95 million*

*Project status: Ongoing.*

This project provides for designing and replacing electrical, mechanical, structural and plumbing systems at numerous Fire/EMS facilities throughout the County. The 45 stations vary in age and require ongoing maintenance in order to provide continued service to their communities. Funding will support renovations at multiple stations based on the prioritization from the completed stations conditions assessment conducted in conjunction with a consultant and the Office of Central Services (OCS).

**2. Fire Station Roof Renovations**

*FY 2024 funding request: \$600,000*

*Estimated cost for FY 2023 is \$17,000*

*Project Status: Ongoing.*

Based on roof assessments and a review of existing warranties, a roof replacement schedule has been developed that will enable replacements to be a more proactive process rather than reacting to emergencies due to water infiltration and damage.

\$600,000 is budgeted annually for this endeavor, commencing in FY 2024 and running through 2028. In FY 2024, roofs are planned to be replaced at St. Joseph's (#806), Chillum (#844) and Fort Washington (#847)

**3. Hyattsville Fire/EMS Station**

*FY 2024 funding request: \$3 million*

*Estimated cost for FY 2023 is \$2.7 million*

*Total project cost: \$8,013,000*

*First year in the CIP: FY 2004*

*Project status: Completion is anticipated in FY 2024*

The project has changed from the construction of a new fire station to a major renovation of the existing station. The programming and design phase has begun to renovate this station completely. The contractor has been selected (Bignell, Watkins, and Hasser).

**4. Laurel Fire/EMS Station**

*FY 2024 funding request: \$0*

*Estimated cost for FY 2023 is \$2 million*

*Total project cost: \$12.5 million*

*First year in the CIP: FY 2002*

*Project status: The project is currently in the rezoning phase. It has been delayed with an expected start date in FY 2025. The projected cost for the project has increased by \$3.5 million due to market conditions.*

The project consists of replacing the existing station with a new four-bay Fire/EMS station, which will house two engines, three BLS ambulance, a medic unit and rescue squad.

**5. Oxon Hill Fire/EMS Station**

*FY 2024 funding request: \$0*

*Estimated costs for FY 2023 are \$2 million.*

*Total project cost: \$15 million*

*First year in the CIP Budget: FY 2009*

*Project status: Project is delayed as it is being evaluated for a public/private partnership opportunity as part of a larger development.*

The project consists of replacing the existing station with a new 5-bay Fire/EMS station which will house two (2) engines, an ambulance, an aerial truck, and a Battalion Chief. The design work is 90% complete. Peer review and permitting will begin soon. The contractor has been selected (Bignell, Watkins, and Hasser).

**6. Public Safety Pier**

*FY 2024 funding request: \$0*

*Estimated cost in FY 2023 is \$425,000*

*Total project cost: \$2,600,000*

*First year in the CIP: FY 2015*

*Project status: anticipated completion date is FY 2024*

The project consists of the creation of a pier on which boats can be used by the Fire/EMS Department, Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Police, Maryland Department of Natural Resources Police and the Prince George's County Police Department. The pier will have four (4) boat lifts and enable the deployment of boats in a timely fashion for emergency services. Construction of the pier was completed in FY 2023; however additional electrical work was necessary in FY 2024 for project closeout.

**7. Shady Glen Fire/EMS Station**

*FY 2024 funding request: \$583,000*

*Estimated cost for FY 2023 is \$519,000*

*Total project cost: \$16.3 million*

*First year in the CIP Budget: FY 2005*

*Project status: The construction of the station was completed in FY 2022, with fiscal closeout expected in FY 2024.*

The project consists of replacing the existing station with a new 4-bay Fire/EMS station which will house an engine, an ambulance, and a ladder truck. A prefabricated metal building will be constructed in the rear of the station that will house the Candidate Physical Ability Test course used for testing entry level Fire Fighter applicants. The station will improve Fire/EMS response times along the Central Avenue corridor.

**8. Water Storage Tanks**

*FY 2024 funding request: \$0*

*Estimated costs in FY 2023 are \$2.3 million*

*Project status: Ongoing.*

The project provides funding for installing 30,000-gallon underground storage tanks and the installation of dry fire hydrants in rural areas not served by the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission or other municipal water supply systems.

\$400,000 is budgeted annually for this endeavor, commencing in FY 2026 and running through FY 2028. Tanks Direct completed the installation of a 30,000-gallon water storage tank at Croom Road, for \$300,000. An assessment is currently being conducted to identify land for additional tanks.