



## City of Homer

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## Office of the City Manager

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### Memorandum 20-161

TO: Mayor Castner and Homer City Council  
FROM: Rob Dumouchel, City Manager  
DATE: October 7, 2020  
SUBJECT: Follow-up to Ordinance 20-65

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At the September 28, 2020 meeting where Ordinance 20-65 was introduced, Council had some questions regarding how COVID-related personnel costs will be accounted for moving forward into 2021. This memo adds to the discussion started in Memorandum 20-146 from Finance Director Walton regarding COVID-19 Related Personnel Costs.

I see the COVID-related personnel costs in three categories: existing staff who are spending a significant amount of time on COVID-response-specific tasks, public safety emergency hires, and CARES Act Emergency Relief Grant program hires.

#### **Existing Staff**

Existing staff has largely absorbed the impact of COVID-response. The time spent on COVID-related activities is eligible for reimbursement and has been diligently tracked by affected staff members. Because these hours are identifiable and reimbursable we are requesting CARES Act funds to defray the costs to the City of responding to the declared emergency. All of these positions are already included in the 2021 budget and no impacts are anticipated to next year's budget. If administration of our COVID-related response intensifies, we may need to evaluate the value of hiring additional help, or exploration of FEMA reimbursement options for allowable staff hours, but at this time we are not pursuing that option.

#### **Public Safety Emergency Hires**

At the beginning of the COVID emergency, the Fire Department went forward with two emergency hires to support their operations in a time of increased need and risk to the health of both the volunteers and paid staff. The emergency hires were intended to provide the safest means of responding to potentially high-risk situations, where mitigation of illness to others was the highest priority. The addition of these hires meant that the daily roster would have two trained EMTs available to respond 24/7 to emergencies. This makes for a safer work environment at the fire station and greatly reduces risk of COVID exposure to both volunteers and paid staff alike. This strategic decision was made with the thought that it would minimize the risk to as many HVFD members as possible. This ensures that if full-time staff succumb to illness, a healthy volunteer crew would still be available to staff the ambulance and to continue to respond to fire calls. This is the best way the City can protect and serve our community during this disaster.

The two emergency hires were brought on with the understanding that these are not permanent positions and will only persist as long as funds and an emergency need exist. Ordinance 20-65 funds these positions

through the end of the CARES Act's defined eligibility window (the end of December 2020). Depending on the level of risk and operational needs of the Fire Department at the end of the year, there may be a discussion brought to Council about accounting for these emergency hires extending into the 2021 budget year.

### **CARES Act Emergency Relief Grant Program Hires**

The CARES Act Emergency Relief Grant (ERG) programs created by the City Council have been paired with two individuals who are assisting City staff with development and implementation of the programs. One is a temporary hire and the other is a private contractor operating on a short-term contract. These positions are wholly funded by CARES Act funds and are not expected to persist beyond the existence of CARES Act funding or impact the 2021 budget. There are no funds appropriated in Ordinance 20-65 which would apply to the ERG program hires.

**Staff Recommendation:** Approve Ordinance 20-65 as proposed.