Authorization to Purchase Aerial Ladder Truck

RECOMMENDATION:

Council authorize the City Manager to enter into a contract with Pierce Manufacturing Co. to build and deliver a model year 2007 aerial ladder truck for $871,167.00.

DISCUSSION:

Background: Since 2003 the Fire Department has been pursuing National Accreditation. The initial step was to develop a “Standards of Cover” (SOC) study of the City. SOC provides an overview and analysis of the Fire Department’s performance in meeting service level objectives. The following four major factors needed to be evaluated to effectively study the department’s response performance:

- Community Emergency Risk Analysis – Potential emergency risks in the City of Atascadero
- Time Impacts – How quickly fire engine companies respond to emergencies and its importance
- Weight – The engine staffing to deliver service based on tasks for which engine companies are responsible for and how they are performed
- Effective Response Force - Location of fire companies, staffing, training, and available equipment

In the spring of 2004, the Fire Department conducted a citywide hazard analysis of all commercial and multi-family buildings as part of the SOC study. Staff used a computer modeling program called RHAVE and the Geographic Information System (GIS) to evaluate and assess the threat level for each of these buildings. As the study progressed, a number of issues emerged including the need for an aerial ladder truck.

As an interim solution to address the immediate need for a ladder truck, staff negotiated an auto-aid contract with the City of Paso Robles. The auto-aid contract provides the automatic dispatch of the Paso Robles truck to Atascadero for commercial and multi-family building fires. In return, Atascadero sends a structure engine to all commercial and multi-family building fires and a wildland engine to all vegetation fires in Paso Robles.
Currently, fire personnel cannot access heights above 19'. Nineteen feet is usually within reach of a standard 24' ground ladder. The ability to quickly rescue trapped occupants, gain access and cut off the fire are top tactical priorities. Ladder trucks are specialized pieces of fire equipment. These trucks carry 163’ of ground ladders, forcible entry and ventilation tools, hose, a fire pump and water. Trucks can be used as a large tool box, fire engine, a ladder truck or all three.

Atascadero currently maintains an ISO insurance rating of 5.24. Insurance ratings are used by the insurance industry to set rates on a scale of one to ten, the best being a one. The rating is rounded down, so Atascadero is a Class 5 City. If the City’s class rating drops to a Class 4, commercial fire insurance rates would drop by millions of dollars. An improvement of .25 points is needed to drop or improve to a Class 4. ISO has stated the two areas the City stands to make the most improvement on, is staffing and placing in service an aerial ladder truck.

Lastly, a ladder truck is less versatile than a typical fire engine. Turning radius, angle of approach, angle of departure and height severely restrict the travel route of a ladder truck. Staff raised concerns regarding the location of three and four story buildings and the departments’ ability to respond with a ladder truck. A Truck Use Zone was drafted. Development impact fees are applied to multi-family and commercial buildings located with in this zone. In January 2006 the City Council updated the development impact fees and created an Aerial Fire Truck Fees Fund to help pay for the new truck.

Conclusion: The City contracted with Pierce Manufacturing Co. to supply the last two fire engines. Staff has followed the City of Atascadero’s Purchasing Policy for purchasing proprietary equipment. A selection committee of fire department staff was created in preparation for this large purchase. The committee, consisting of four members, conducted a site visit of the Pierce plant and assembly lines and on a different trip toured the next largest ladder truck builder, Seagrave Manufacturing. The committee recommends the City contract with Pierce. By purchasing a ladder truck from Pierce, the City will receive a truck with a cab, chassis, motor, transmission, pump and water valves that are identical to the last two engines purchased by the City. Maintenance on three identical vehicles is more cost effective than maintaining filters, replacement valve kits belts and hoses on different and assorted vehicles. It is selection committees’ opinion that Pierce produces the highest quality, longest lasting and best provides the best warrantee for fire apparatus.

FISCAL IMPACT: $871,167.00 from the Aerial Fire Truck Fees Fund

ALTERNATIVES: Reject purchase and reallocate budgeted funds.