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INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

RE: Prop 1 Background

- Prop 1 will add a levy of \$0.30 per \$1000.00 of assessed value of Spokane city properties to keep 30 of the 48 firefighters recently hired off of a federal grant in 2017. 10 other firefighters are being funded through general fund dollars. It will also hire 20 police officers, with those positions primarily staffing the behavioral health unit, Neighborhood resource officers and adding funding for Community Court and other therapeutic courts, as well as 5 officers assigned to the downtown core.
- Spokane Fire Department has been chronically underfunded for many years. In 1976 the Spokane Fire Department had 87 firefighters per shift and ran approximately 6700 calls per year, primarily fires.
- In 2016 the SFD was down to 61 firefighters per shift (up from a low of 58 in 2013) and ran 40,314 calls, primarily medical.
- Call volume rose in 2017 to 42,499. These call volume increases are largely driven by use of the 911 system by those who have no other place to turn; the homeless, those without healthcare insurance, and the elderly. The increased call volume has meant that our apparatus are so busy that they are often out of service on other calls when fires, cardiac arrests, or other serious events occur, increasing response times and decreasing the probability of a positive outcome.
- In 2016 the SFD put in for a federal grant called a SAFER grant for 50 firefighters. Largely due to our staffing level we were able to secure 48 of those. That was one of the largest SAFER Grant awards in the history of the program. That funding runs out at the end of 2019. That increased staffing level has allowed us to increase the amount of apparatus responding to calls, making sure that apparatus and crews are more likely to be available when major events occur.
- The increased staffing over the last year have dramatically increased our ability to respond to calls rapidly and with the right apparatus. The majority of the positions have been used to staff small 2 person pickups that go on less serious medical calls, leaving large fire apparatus available for more serious emergencies.
- These small units (known as Alternative Response Units, or ARUs have responded to over 31,000 calls for service since they were first used as a pilot program in 2013. If the levy were to fail, we would lose the ability to staff these small apparatus, and those increased calls would fall on the larger engine and ladder trucks once again, creating a situation where major apparatus are not available when major events occur.