



Date: August 30, 2019

To: Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Patrick H. West, City Manager 

Subject: **Update: Relocation of Apparatus from Fire Station 9**

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This memorandum follows the August 20, 2019 update on the relocation of apparatus from Fire Station 9, at 3917 Long Beach Boulevard on the diagonal strip of land between Virginia Road and Long Beach Boulevard, north of Roosevelt Road. In addition, this memorandum provides information as a follow up to the community meeting held by Councilmembers Al Austin and Roberto Uranga on August 27, 2019. At this community meeting, nearly 200 individuals requested information about the City's plans for Fire Station 9. While many of the questions were answered at the meeting, this memorandum provides additional detail on the costs and needs for the temporary and permanent station.

### **Location Analysis**

City staff have continued extensive deliberations on options for quickly relocating Fire Station 9 apparatus from their temporary locations back into the core service area with the long-term objective being a new replacement station in a suitable location. With consideration to public safety, real estate, building structural integrity, environmental laws, location, and cost, staff currently believes the existing location, 3917 Long Beach Boulevard, offers the greatest opportunity for bringing Fire Station 9 apparatus back into the core service area without disrupting local businesses, jobs, or homes. While many locations for a temporary station were considered during these deliberations, the density of the neighborhood served by Fire Station 9 makes it difficult to immediately identify a suitable location for temporary Fire Department operations in the area.

Returning apparatus to 3917 Long Beach Boulevard would require demolition of the existing structures, as the history of active mold, previous illnesses reported by crew members, and likely extent of repairs are well documented. Further, the building is unable to shed water effectively off the exterior of the structure, windows and roof, which would further exacerbate existing active mold onsite. The City is currently working with environmental experts to evaluate the severity of this structural challenge. Even if all mold could be remediated permanently, the station would still not meet requirements for gender accommodation and is significantly undersized for modern day fire operations, leaving the City with a station that would be renovated at high expense and would still not meet the Fire Department's needs to serve the community.

### **Review of Alternative Sites**

Other sites reviewed included vacant public, and private land, a former Fire Station that is currently privately held, and the adjoining land uses around Fire Station 9. Several of these options were outside of the preferred response area for Fire Station 9. Others would require a lengthy lease or purchase negotiation process, which would add time to delivering a temporary

station. The expansion of Fire Station 9 through acquisition of the adjoining property would require displacement of several private property owners and severe disruption to residents and businesses, as well as involve a lengthy period of time. Given these factors, staff recommends the current location of Fire Station 9 as the best alternative to house a temporary station.

### **Funding for a Temporary Station**

Should the City decide to temporarily relocate Fire Station 9 apparatus to 3917 Long Beach Boulevard, the City would need to identify approximately \$1.5 to \$2 million in one-time funding. This amount is expected to cover the environmental review process, demolition of the existing structures, and purchase and placement of prefabricated temporary facilities for firefighters, and covered parking for the engine. This amount does not address a future permanent station. This funding will be required in the immediate term to establish a temporary station. Establishment of a temporary station would provide the time necessary to plan, design and fund a new permanent Fire Station 9.

### **Timing of a Temporary Station**

The timing of relocation is important. The City's goal is to complete the temporary relocation within 120 to 160 days. However, the environmental review process could add additional time to that timeline. The City's Development Services Department is currently conducting a historical analysis of the building, that will inform the level of environmental review necessary.

### **Funding and Timeline for a Permanent Station**

The cost of replacing Fire Station 9 with a new permanent station will depend greatly on land value, the size of the facility, and construction costs. Purchase of private land in the area could range from \$2 to \$4 million. The City has already engaged an architect, and design costs for a new station could range up to \$1 million and take approximately one year to complete. Construction costs for a new station, depending on size and scope of the project, could range between \$10 and \$15 million, and construction time would be approximately 18 months to 2 years. Altogether, the cost of a new station could range from approximately \$13 million to \$20 million, in addition to the \$1.5 to \$2 million required for the temporary station.

### **Funding Considerations for a Permanent Station**

Because of a shortage of both one-time and structural resources, the funding of Fire Station 9 will be a difficult decision likely requiring either deferral or cancellation of planned or proposed one-time spending, or an increase in future operating costs for debt service that will require future offsetting service reductions, or some combination thereof. Staff will further evaluate options for funding a new station once locations are identified and a better understanding of facility needs can be determined. Those options will likely include reprioritization of Measure A projects; deferral of other CIP projects or one-time spending; evaluation of borrowing options; reductions in operating expenses; or any other source of one-time or General Fund dollars. Given the number of high priority projects and services in the City, this will require some difficult choices on behalf of the City Council. Design funding will be needed in the short term to start the design of the facility while the City examines options to fund the permanent station.

**Current Status of Fire Station 9 Operations**

As previously mentioned, to protect the health and safety of Fire Department employees, Fire Station 9 will remain vacated until an alternative location is formally identified, and suitable structures are put in place to house Engine 9 and its crew. Until this occurs, Engine 9 will continue operating out of temporary trailers at Fire Station 16 and Rescue 9 will operate out of Fire Station 13. Fire Stations 13 and 16 were chosen for the temporary relocation because they share contiguous response area borders with Fire Station 9 and will minimize impacts of such a move. Some areas that were traditionally served by Fire Station 9 resources may see an increase in response times, though the Fire Department will strive to maintain them. The Fire Department is working diligently to counteract this by patrolling the area during the day, when possible.

Should you have any questions, please contact Fire Chief Xavier Espino at (562) 570-2509 or Assistant City Manager Tom Modica, at (562) 570-5091.

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