



## Legislation Text

---

File #: 170944., Version: 1

---

### **Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Firefighter Grant Program FY2017 Funds (NB)**

**This item involves a request to apply for and accept a grant, if awarded, from the Federal SAFER Grant Program for the hiring of firefighters.**

The Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Act was established by Congress in 2004. This Act authorizes funding to local fire departments for the purpose of increasing the number of firefighters to meet industry-minimum standards for safety and effective deployment. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) SAFER Grant was approved in January 2018, and the Congress allocated \$345 million to the FY2017 program.

In March 2011, Gainesville Fire Rescue (GFR) was successful in obtaining a SAFER grant of \$1.6 million to staff Fire Station-8. Again in 2014, we were awarded \$1.14 million in support of a new Squad company.

GFR is requesting approval to apply for SAFER grant funding to staff a four-person aerial/ladder apparatus (Quint) capable of fire suppression, vehicle extrication, rescues, emergency medical services (EMS) and other all-hazard responses. This unit will be deployed to serve the rapidly growing southwest and adjoining service areas, and to comply with national response standards for apparatus and personnel.

Development in the SW and associated areas, particularly the increase in the number of multi-story occupancies, presents additional coverage risk and potential for elevated structural firefighting and rescue services. A second GFR unit and the upgrade to Quint capabilities is part of the deployment plan to maintain the two-unit level of service currently provided under the FSAA. The other unit serving that area is a three-person unit (Squad) at GFR Station 9 (4213 SW 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue).

A permanent station location is being sought to serve this area for the longer term. Regardless of the outcome of talks between the City and County regarding the future of the FSAA, it has been established that County Station 80 which serves the southwest portion of the City will move at some point in time. When this occurs the City's obligation to provide fire services in that area will increase. The demand for services is increasing rapidly in this area; it has grown by 15% in the last two years alone, reaching nearly 4,000 responses in 2017. Without adding resources to meet the current and growing needs it will require temporary deployment changes that are not sustainable in the long term and result in coverage issues elsewhere in the city.

The SAFER Grant presents an opportunity to address some of these issues and the following options are available:

Defer SAFER Application: Current levels of service in the southwest will remain consistent in the near term, but service levels will diminish after June 1<sup>st</sup> and with increasing demands and longer response times. This area has the highest call volume and continues to grow. When other variables such as pending and future annexations are taken into account, the need is exacerbated.

Apply for SAFER: If the grant is awarded, and should the City agree to accept, the additional resources will accommodate existing and future demand for the foreseeable future. Acceptance of the grant would require careful consideration of the future financial implications that the City would need to plan for, including some impact in FY19.

Choosing to deploy a Quint, rather than an Engine will improve GFRs ability to meet the national standard to immediately engage in interior firefighting and rescue operations while meeting OSHA and NFPA safety requirements for elevated structural firefighting. This deployment model significantly improves firefighter survivability and rescue of trapped occupants. Additionally, the unit will fulfill an ISO requirement for the number of Ladder Company's in the City, improving GFRs score at the next evaluation in 2019.

Meeting standards with personnel from the first arriving company is becoming increasingly vital as response times grow and call loads continue to increase. Increased demand without additional units directly contributes to increased time for the arrival of the first and later arriving units. GFR has already submitted an application for the FY2017 Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG), that if awarded will off-set the cost of the Quint aerial apparatus and its equipment estimated at \$1.0 million.

To partially account for the increased funding needs for fire and EMS services resulting from community expansion, the Special Assessment for Fire Services rate per factored fire protection unit (FFPU) was updated from \$78.00/FFPU to \$101.0/FFPU for FY18 and expected to increase annual revenue by \$1.6 million. The adjustment was the first since the program began in FY2010. It is expected to generate an approximate increase in total revenue from \$5.3 million to \$6.9 million. This amount represents approximately 50% of the assessable costs related to providing fire services not related to the costs of Emergency Medical Services.

This unit will assist GFR to address the fire, rescue and the EMS needs resulting from growing demand for services in the SW and adjoining areas and impact service delivery city-wide. Therefore, GFR is seeking funding through the *SAFER* program to significantly lower the initial cost to hire additional firefighters needed.

The SAFER Grant Program reimbursement and match methodology is based on a three-year program: Year (1) and (2), the grant provides 75% of the amount request. For Year (3) the grant portion reduces to 35%. The corresponding match for FY 19, based on a phase in of the new services, is estimated at \$200K. The FY 20 and 21 match is estimated at \$350K and \$850K respectively. At the end of the grant period, the full cost to the City is estimated at \$1.3 million.

The City Commission: 1) authorize the City Manager or designee to apply for and accept a grant, if awarded, from the US Department of Homeland Security for the SAFER Grant Program; 2) if the grant is awarded, authorize the City Manager or designee to execute the grant agreement and other grant-related documents, subject to approval by the City Attorney as to form and legality; 3) development of an implementation plan that would address long term funding options as well as grant acceptance criteria (such as FSAA and other City-County conditions);and 4) approve the required payment process for hiring of personnel and expending the grant funds for compliance with associated Federal requirements.