

**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council**

August 18, 2026

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SUBJECT: HOPE Fire Response Unit

This budget response provides a follow-up to the August 11, 2026, City Council Budget Work Session regarding the HOPE Fire Response Unit.

Background

HOPE Fire's work centers on activities such as delivering supplies like water, sunscreen, and Narcan of unhoused individuals; conducting camp checks, especially during cold weather; and offering minor medical care including minor wound care and basic health monitoring. When higher-level medical intervention is required, the team calls 911 for emergency response or refers individuals to Acclaim Health Street Medicine. The unit does not have any fire suppression responsibilities.

This unit is a small, specialized unit within the Fire Department made up of three dual-role firefighters and one dual-role firefighter lieutenant. In the General Fund, operating the program costs \$655,198 annually, including \$639,213 for personnel and \$15,985 for operations. In addition, overtime expenses total \$632,818 due to the need to backfill these positions. Altogether, the program's annual General Fund cost is \$1,288,016. The team has also previously used limited grant funding, in partnership with Neighborhood Services, to help offset operational expenses.

Recommendation

This reduction was proposed by the Fire Department as part of their budget submissions to meet the 1% reduction required of all departments as part of the City's budget process. The Fire Department proposed reducing the entire Community Risk Reduction program; however, the recommended budget only considers elimination of the HOPE program.

During a review of this unit, the Fire Department discovered an overlap and duplication with the recently merged Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) team. Future work in this space will be absorbed by MIH pertaining to social determinants of health and is better aligned with the EMS mission. Work is already underway to meet with key stakeholders in the Lancaster Corridor and assign expanded MIH teams to this area. The Fire Department recognizes the vulnerable nature of this population and will continue to provide necessary services.

Moving these dual-role positions back to Fire Operations will save the \$632,818 in overtime costs related to backfill overtime for leave vacancies (sick, vacation, occupational). This budget reduction is only tied to the reduction in backfill overtime. If the decision was made to include the HOPE Fire team in the FY 2027 Adopted Budget, then the tax rate equivalent would be 0.00055 pennies added to the tax rate.

If you have questions concerning this information, please contact Christianne Simmons at 817-392-6222.

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City Manager