



**Betsy Sundermann**  
Cincinnati City Councilmember

## MOTION

January 15, 2021

**WE MOVE** that the Administration prioritize in the FY22 budget funding for 40 recruits for Fire Recruit Class #118 to ensure the start date is no later than July 1, 2021, and for 40 recruits for Fire Recruit Class #119 to target a start date of April 1, 2022.

**WE FURTHER MOVE** that the Administration continue to pursue SAFER grant funding opportunities when available to assist in offsetting the cost of these recruit classes.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Betsy Sundermann

\_\_\_\_\_  
Liz Keating

## STATEMENT

The citizens of Cincinnati have consistently placed public safety as a very high priority in their expectations for city services. Adequate funding for fire and police protection is critical to providing these services. Currently, the budget for fire personnel and department expenses is being heavily challenged by COVID-19 and attrition.

For the twelve months ending FY20, the Cincinnati Fire Department overtime costs were \$3,437,641.67. Yet, for the six-plus months ending 01.05.2021 (FY21), YTD overtime costs have totaled \$5,583,965.56. The Finance and Budget Monitoring Report for the Period Ending October 31, 2020 showed Cincinnati Fire Department projecting an additional budget need of up to \$8.8 million by fiscal year end.

(continued)

The COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated the use of additional overtime to meet staffing and service requirements. Sick leave has increased due to COVID-19 diagnoses, exposure, or mandatory quarantine periods required while waiting for test results. COVID-19 related sick leave has been further exacerbated by the close living and working conditions of sworn staff in fire houses.

For the identified needs that are directly related to COVID-19, the Administration will seek additional federal or state CARES dollars to help offset the overage.

Additionally, attrition in the first quarter of FY21 has trended 200% higher than expected due to unanticipated separations. Several separations are attributed to medic unit staff burnout, which has increased since the start of COVID-19. Attrition tends to accelerate in the first quarter and then curtails in quarters two through four. If attrition trends do not curtail, the department will require additional overtime to backfill vacant positions.

The Approved FY21 Budget Update assumes a starting sworn strength of 826.0 FTE with an estimated annual attrition rate of 31.0 FTE. As of January 5, 2021, Fire currently has a sworn strength of 800.0 FTE. An additional 11.0 FTE are expected to retire before the fiscal year's end.

Moving forward, Fire anticipates 12.0 FTE to retire in FY22 and 31.0 FTE to retire in FY23. These figures do not include unanticipated retirements or other types of employment separation. As noted above, attrition has increased during COVID-19. These trends may continue in FY22. Additionally, the department has noticed that sworn personnel enrolled in the Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP) do not stay the entire eight years of the program, further increasing unanticipated attrition.

The trajectory of overtime costs due to COVID-19 and attrition requires the city to prioritize its recruit classes planned for the FY22 budget. Depending on CARES funds that come available in the near future, funding for a Recruit Class #118 of 40 recruits should be prioritized in the FY22 budget so that the recruit class can be started no later than July 1, 2021, earlier if possible. Additionally, funding for a Recruit Class #119 of 40 recruits should be targeted in the FY22 budget for an April 1, 2022 start date to help cover for the anticipated attrition.

Even though it will take time to get recruits trained and on the job, the rebuilding of the sworn strength of the Cincinnati Fire Department will address both the attrition and overtime crises our city and budget are facing.

# City of Cincinnati



City Hall, Room 346B  
801 Plum Street  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

Phone (513) 352-3640  
Email Betsy.Sundermann@cincinnati-oh.gov

**Betsy Sundermann**  
Cincinnati City Councilmember

## MOTION

January 15, 2021

**WE MOVE** that the Administration prioritize in the FY22 budget funding for 40 recruits for Fire Recruit Class #118 to ensure the start date is no later than July 1, 2021, and for 40 recruits for Fire Recruit Class #119 to target a start date of April 1, 2022.

**WE FURTHER MOVE** that the Administration continue to pursue SAFER grant funding opportunities when available to assist in offsetting the cost of these recruit classes.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Betsy Sundermann

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Liz Keating

## STATEMENT

The citizens of Cincinnati have consistently placed public safety as a very high priority in their expectations for city services. Adequate funding for fire and police protection is critical to providing these services. Currently, the budget for fire personnel and department expenses is being heavily challenged by COVID-19 and attrition.

For the twelve months ending FY20, the Cincinnati Fire Department overtime costs were \$3,437,641.67. Yet, for the six-plus months ending 01.05.2021 (FY21), YTD overtime costs have totaled \$5,583,965.56. The Finance and Budget Monitoring Report for the Period Ending October 31, 2020 showed Cincinnati Fire Department projecting an additional budget need of up to \$8.8 million by fiscal year end.

(continued)