TO: CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Mayor Sam Liccardo
Vice Mayor Magdalena Carrasco
Councilmember Raul Peralez
Councilmember Lan Diep
Councilmember Tam Nguyen

SUBJECT: OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT

DATE: 8/4/17

RECOMMENDATION

1. Accept the Office of Emergency Services Assessment and Recommendations Report and the staff recommendation to implement option three of the report.
2. Return at Mid-year budget as well as through the annual budget processes with updates on funding the Priority One hires in the consultant report:
   a. Deputy Director
   b. Emergency Operations Manager
   c. Resilience Coordinator
   d. Response & Recovery Coordinator
   e. CERT Program Coordinator
3. Direct the City Manager to consider the priority two hires during future fiscal years alongside other citywide priorities and future general fund needs.
4. Direct the City Manager to return through the mid-year budget process with options to expand the scope of work of the City’s existing contracted grant writer to include a focus on resource-building for the Office of Emergency Services. Additionally, the City Manager should explore;
   a. Partnerships to pursue regional funding; and
   b. Private funding sources for work such as resiliency planning and capacity building
BACKGROUND

Thanks to the City Manager’s office and the Office of Emergency Services (OES) for coordinating the assessment report with Witt O’Brien, and in particular, to City Manager Norberto Duenas and his team for prioritizing investments in disaster preparedness and emergency management over the last two and a half years. While we have to invest substantially more to adequately equip San Jose for the uncertainties ahead, the consultant appropriately recognized the vast improvement over prior years.

After the 2017 Coyote Creek Flood, the Office of Emergency Services and hundreds of City employees responded with ingenuity, compassion and hard work. Through this experience, we also learned that serious improvements could be made to maximize the effectiveness of OES and its disaster preparedness and response. We agree that the highest priorities for OES are:

- Rewriting the City’s Emergency Operations Plan;
- Establishing a comprehensive emergency training and exercise program that involves both city staff and community; and
- Expanding upon key personal and community emergency preparedness and resiliency building programs.

In assessing the appropriate staffing levels for OES, the consultant recommends adding 10-15 more managerial staff to a newly-created Office of Emergency Management, which has 9 employees currently. We must soberly consider such expansions in the context of the City’s General Fund outlook. Next year’s projected $34.8 million deficit, for example, will weaken our efforts to rebuild our police department, improve emergency medical response, and achieve other key public safety priorities, and San Jose remains the most thinly staffed large city in the U.S. as a result of our chronic budgetary challenges. The consultant’s report shows that the half-dozen cities closest to San Jose’s in population have OES staff ranging from 11 (Dallas) to 18 (San Diego), which suggests a somewhat more modest expansion than that contemplated by the consultant.

We also understand staff’s preference to rely on dedicated General Fund dollars for any expansion, and reluctance to depend on one-time grants. We face at least five years of projected general fund shortfalls, however, which is why it’s important for the City to be more resourceful. We should focus on the highest-priority hires for now, but we must augment our pursuit of public and philanthropic sources of grant funding for OES personnel and equipment, technology, planning and capacity building. Major philanthropic organizations, such as Rockefeller Foundation, are investing tens of millions of dollars in resiliency planning and execution, yet I learned when I came into office that San Jose was never included in their “100 Resilient Cities” campaign. (http://www.100resilientcities.org) Similarly, the report cites the loss of federal funding as a result of the transition of federal formula collars to competitive grant programs. If we’re not investing in grant-writing capabilities, we’ll continue to leave money on the table. While grant dollars have obvious limitations, the limits of our General Fund appear even more palpable, and we cannot afford to do anything other than pursue all sources of funding for emergency preparedness and management.

The signers of this memorandum have not had, and will not have, any private conversation with any other member of the City Council, or that member’s staff, concerning any action discussed in the memorandum, and that each signer’s staff members have not had, and have been instructed not to have, any such conversation with any other member of the City Council or that member’s staff.