



Legislation Text

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Report regarding a resolution approving the purchase of two advanced life support ambulances; authorizing the City Manager to enter into a purchase agreement with Braun Northwest for the construction and purchase in the amount of \$800,573.51; approving the purchase of tools and equipment in the amount of \$110,000; and approving the use of \$450,000 of encumbered funds from a cancelled 2021 ambulance contract along with \$460,573.51 of Vehicle Replacement Funds, for a total amount of \$910,573.51. (*Richard Walls, EMS Chief*)

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council adopt a resolution approving the purchase of two advanced life support ambulances; authorizing the City Manager to enter into a purchase agreement with Braun Northwest for the construction and purchase in the amount of \$800,573.51; approving the purchase of tools and equipment in the amount of \$110,000; and approving the use of \$450,000 of encumbered funds from a cancelled 2021 ambulance contract along with \$460,573.51 of Vehicle Replacement Funds, for a total amount of \$910,573.51.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

In May of 2021 City Council approved a request to purchase an ambulance for \$394,965 with an additional \$55,035 in tools and equipment, amending the Vehicle Replacement Budget in the amount of \$450,000.

South San Francisco Fire Department (SSFFD) staff identified three builders on the market at the time: Braun, Braun Northwest, and Demers, while not realizing that Braun and Demers would soon merge. After weighing several options, staff selected the Braun product and City Council approved a contract to build the ambulance, with an anticipated delivery date between mid-2023 and early 2024. The contractor with whom the City entered into the agreement was very forthcoming about chassis delays related to the COVID pandemic. Braun was very communicative with fire staff reinforcing that delivery of the ordered ambulance would be within 210 days after their receipt of the chassis from the manufacturer.

Considering Braun's long delivery timelines and the age of our ambulance fleet, staff began to look for other vendor options for the purchase of our next scheduled ambulance replacement for Fiscal Year 2022-2023. Each builder was contacted, and timeline issues were discussed. Through these conversations, staff examined various builds and chassis combinations that would provide the same quality ambulance and reduce the delivery timeline.

SSFFD evaluates all aspects of the apparatus that we are selecting. While examining the appropriate size of the ambulance, fire staff decided to stay with the larger, 167" ambulance. Because SSFFD staff exclusively dual-role Paramedic Firefighters on our Advance Life Support (ALS) ambulances, finding appropriate storage capacity is a concern. Along with the County required EMS equipment stored on a standard ambulance, SSFFD personnel also have personal protective gear and firefighting equipment that they must carry to be prepared for non-EMS emergencies. Firefighter turnout coats, pants, boots and helmets, self-contained breathing apparatus for each employee, thermal imagers, flashlights, box lights, axes and a Halligan pry bar are examples of a portion of the additional equipment carried on our ambulances. SSFFD has also chosen to carry more than the minimum County required ambulance equipment list to better serve our community, an example is a device known as a "stair chair", used for homes and buildings with steep but narrow stairways to move easily and comfortably help those who cannot walk out of a building. These vital tools and devices require a large amount of storage and are not standard equipment on other ambulances in the County. This need for additional storage area, associated weight of materials and equipment and longevity of the apparatus are the driving factors for staff during the review of specifications of the available vehicles and ambulance builds when considering the

purchase.

Other major historical considerations for staff when reviewing ambulance chassis and manufacturer build are wheelbase, turning radius and clearance. South San Francisco has a large network of tight turns and sharp inclines throughout our city. Fire Station 61, where one of the ambulances is housed, has a steep departure angle to exit. Not all medium-duty ambulance builds can negotiate these challenges. SSFFD staff measured the current wheelbase, turning radius and lower clearance limits of our current fleet and compared that to the specifications of ambulances that were available on the market.

One company, Braun Northwest has provided ambulances to some of the largest fire departments in the region, as well as similarly sized and situated agencies. Braun Northwest helped us identify our biggest delay was associated with the chassis we had selected in the past. They pointed out two key issues with our chassis selection, customization, and production quantity.

Braun Northwest explained that most manufacturers require a special “ambulance build” or a customized transition kit be installed to qualify their chassis for ambulance use. These ambulance builds are a small portion of their customer base and therefore are simply not in high production. This ambulance kit is required for the International, Freightliner, and Ford products and has to do with how the vehicle’s electrical harness is configured, and transmission is programmed. Without the kit these manufacturers prohibit and will not warranty the use of their chassis as an ambulance. Ram, however, does not place this customization requirement on the use of their chassis, and over the past few years many agencies have been transitioning their fleet to the Ram product for this reason. A second compelling factor in selecting a Ram chassis is the production volume availability, allowing better delivery consistency to ambulance customers. Providing consistent and shorter timelines than the other manufacturers. In fact, our City has ordered a Ram chassis as a separate vehicle and has already received it just seven months after the order. It has been 24 months since our international chassis order and it still has not been delivered.

When examining the power output from the drivetrain of a medium duty Ram chassis to that of our current international chassis, the differences were minimal, with the most remarkable being fuel economy, to the benefit of the Ram. The Ram chassis has a better turning radius and a slightly shorter wheelbase, making it easier to navigate our specific local needs. The Ram 4500 is adequately powered to handle the city’s hills, such as up Westborough and Ridgeview, and we are confident that it will fulfill all the requirements of the larger International and Freightliner chassis of generations past, but more economically.

During this evaluation of alternative ambulance chassis manufacturers quotes were solicited. Through the specification and design process, fire staff has identified modest savings with this new chassis. Where the previous 2021 ambulance and equipment had a not to exceed amount of \$450,000, new quotes with the International chassis, same ambulance specification and equipment were upwards of \$550,000. In contrast, the quoted Ram chassis ambulance price with all fees and taxes is slightly less than \$400,287. This includes all the same specified features as previous builds, and provides a few enhancements like upgraded HVAC system, improved infection control system, and an enhanced shock absorber system that will benefit both the patient and the paramedic riding in the back of the ambulance.

SSFFD worked closely with the Corporation Yard to ensure that the Ram chassis would be adequate for our needs and to make sure our mechanics were comfortable working on the product. With the support of the Corporation Yard Fleet Services, Fire staff has chosen to select the Ram chassis for our next ambulance.

As part of the purchasing process, the City is again utilizing the HGAC-Buy (HGAC) program, which is the Houston-Galveston Area Council. HGAC is a Cooperative Purchasing Program which assists local governments in reducing costs through government-to-government procurement services. It is a program that is available to local government entities and qualifying non-profit corporations. As a unit of local government, it assists other local governments with procurement processes by establishing competitively priced contracts for goods and services. HGAC follows bid and purchasing guidelines that align with the City of South San Francisco Municipal Code §4.04.080, *Open market procedures for purchases and sales exclusive of public projects*, and all its contracts have been awarded by public competitive

procurement processes compliant with state statutes.

While working with Braun Northwest on this ambulance design, fire staff was informed by our other vendor that the ambulance approved for purchase in May 2021 still had no chassis identified for the build and was a minimum of 400 days from production. Given that this was the fifth delay, with no assurances that the delivery would not be further delayed, staff sought permission to cancel the previous order. Working with the vendor and the City Attorney this cancellation was approved. Staff would now like to use the funds from the May 2021 contract, with approved funds for this Fiscal Year 2022-2023 budget and proceed with the purchase of two Ram chassis advance life support ambulances from Braun Northwest.

The staff has communicated with other customers of Braun Northwest who have received their ambulances as contracted and believes that the Ram product will be delivered within their quoted timeframe. As previously stated, the lack of restrictions on the use of Ram chassis without a specialized ambulance kit will yield us a chassis and vehicle much sooner and still maintain the chassis warranty. Transitioning to the Ram chassis will have minimal effect on vehicle performance and allow us to include a few enhancements for considerably less than the cost of staying with our current chassis manufacturer. With this, staff seeks approval for the purchase of two advance life support Ram chassis ambulances from Braun Northwest.

FISCAL IMPACT

On June 26, 2019, the City Council adopted the 2019-21 Biennial Operating Budget, funding the Equipment Replacement budget to allow for the purchase of a new ambulance. A total of \$385,000.00 was approved in the amendment to the FY 2020-2021 Budget for the replacement of vehicle 516, a 2011 Durastar International Ambulance. The amendment included the purchase of technology, tools, and hardware to allow the ambulance to respond to calls. Since 2019 the cost of the chassis, materials and equipment had increased significantly bringing the cost of the approved 2021 vehicle purchase agreement with Red Sky to \$394,965. This agreement did not fully fund all the equipment, radios, and technology to bring the ambulance fully into service. Staff requested to use Public Safety Impact Fees to augment the total cost. Council approved \$346,500 be brought from the Infrastructure Reserve Fund and \$103,500 from Public Safety Impact Fee Fund for a total of \$450,000 in the Vehicle Replacement Fund.

On June 22, 2022, City Council adopted the City of South San Francisco Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2022-23, funding the Vehicle Replacement budget to allow for the purchase of an additional new ambulance. A total of \$575,000 was approved for the replacement of vehicle 515, a 2011 Durastar International Ambulance.

After cancelling the 2021 ambulance order staff would like to use the \$450,000 of encumbered funds with a portion of the \$575,000 of approved Vehicle Replacement funds for the purchase of two Braun Northwest ambulances, equipment, radios, and technology in an amount not to exceed \$910,573.51. This amount would consist of a contract amount of \$800,573.51 for construction of the two ambulances and an additional \$55,000 for each vehicle's equipment, radios, and technology, to equal \$110,000. These funds will allow the vehicles to be fully operational upon arrival.

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN

This request is in alignment with Priority 4.2.11, Public Safety, Support reliability of fire fleet through scheduled apparatus replacement.

CONCLUSION

It is recommended that the City Council adopt a resolution approving the purchase of two advanced life support ambulances; authorizing the City Manager to enter into a purchase agreement with Braun Northwest for the construction and purchase in the amount of \$800,573.51; approving the purchase of tools and equipment in the amount of \$110,000; and approving the use of \$450,000 of encumbered funds from a cancelled 2021 ambulance contract along with

\$460,573.51 of Vehicle Replacement Funds, for a total amount of \$910,573.51.

Attachments:

A - South San Francisco HGAC Proposal from Braun Northwest

B- Braun Northwest Withholding Certificate

C - Braun Northwest Vendor Verification Form