

Emergency Communications Executive Board

ECD Executive Board Action 24-003

Date: February 22, 2024

Presented by: John Vaught **On behalf of:** County of Monterey ECD

Action:

1. Approve, and recommend the Monterey County Board of Supervisors approve, an increase to the Dispatch Fund (028) Fiscal Year 2023-24 appropriations budget of \$567,829 funded with FY2022-23 surplus which is currently held in Fund 028 fund balance.
2. Authorize the Department to add any remaining surplus from FY2023-24 to the Dispatch Reserve.

Summary/Discussion

The department is anticipating costs to finish the year ~\$280k (1.9%) over budget after the anticipated completion of the perimeter security fence and 3-fold increased hiring.

FISCAL YEAR 2022/23 SURPLUS

At the October 2023 ECD Executive Board meeting, this Board directed staff to incorporate \$567,829 FY24 surplus into the FY25 budget as a revenue offset. The Department was premature in requesting this action at such an early stage of the fiscal year. The surplus resulted from:

Surplus Revenue

1. \$85,092 of Investment Income from interest on fund balance (\$77,892 over budget).
2. \$28,437 of unbudgeted late fees collected on Dispatch Billing (nothing budgeted).
3. \$20,451 recovery of FY2019-20 Public Safety Sales Tax (Prop 172) shortage vs budget.

Expenditure Savings/Delays

1. \$428,102 Salary and benefits savings for open positions and delays in fence project.

NEED FOR BUDGET INCREASE

INCREASED HIRING & SEPARATIONS: For years the Department has been chronically short staffed in the Dispatcher job classes with hiring efforts resulting in limited to no net headcount increase. In Fiscal Year 2023-24 the Department has made it a primary goal to increase hiring and have been very successful. Unfortunately, employee retention continues to be a problem.

Contributing factors to this hiring success have been the wage study conducted on Dispatcher classifications resulting in a ~17% raise, holding more recruitments and academies, and advertising for job openings in local movie theaters. The department has been able to more than triple the number of new hires in 2023 vs the prior year.

Additionally, to increase employee retention, the Department implemented Amazon AI call answering, reconfigured a pod on the dispatch floor, completed P.O.S.T. supervisory training, contracted with a leadership training company, and implemented Frontline software for training tracking, customer service and policy review.

Hires & Separations		
<u>Year</u>	<u>Number Hired</u>	<u>Separated</u>
2020	7	10
2021	13	10
2022	8	12
2023	27	18
2024		2

In 2023, 18 employees separated comprised of 12 trainees with an average tenure of 6 months and 5 fully trained dispatchers with an average tenure of over 9 years, and one administrative position. 5 were lost to agencies with less overtime or higher pay.

The direct cost of hiring and releasing a Dispatcher to call-taking status is approximately \$34,000 to \$35,000. It can take 2-3 times this amount to full train a dispatcher and promote them to Dispatcher II. While some increased hiring was budgeted for, the success of the recent hiring efforts was not fully anticipated.

Hiring is planned to continue at a similar pace through 2024 because the Department still has 10 vacant dispatcher positions and 3 vacant shift supervisor positions.

Budgeted Positions		Filled Positions	
56	Dispatcher II Positions	46	Dispatchers
9	Shift Supervisor Positions	6	Shift Supervisors
10	Admin Positions	10	Admin

OVERTIME: The Department anticipates FY24 overtime expense of \$2.5 million which is \$185k over budget due to the high turnover rate and recent increase in hiring, the new hires are not yet working productive hours because they are in training so overtime has not fallen.

PERSONNEL COSTS: Several new personnel costs have been added during this fiscal year that were not included in the budget. These include: ~\$10,000 for a retiree to return to train the department’s new Administrative Secretary and assist in a significant backlog of retro pays that were not completed in the last fiscal year. ~\$38,000 for on-call pay. ~\$8,000 for dispatch staff enrolled in PERS Platinum. Special Assignment pay of \$15,000 to employees who are awaiting position studies from HR.

ECD DISPATCH RESERVE STATUS

This proposal does not impact the reserve balance, or the FY2023-24 reserve contribution. Future reserve contributions will be discussed in budget approval actions.

- \$2,369,717 projected balance at the end of FY2023-24 (\$329,000 budgeted contribution). This is 16.4% of the FY24 operating budget before this budget increase.

Target balance is 15% of the operating budget.

Staff Recommendation:

The Department recommends the ECD Executive Board authorize an increase to the FY2023-24 appropriations budget of \$567,829.

If this action is not approved, the Department will stop all hiring for the remainder of the fiscal year after February, postpone all promotions, and freeze all possible spending including projects already underway such as the fence.

_____ **Executive Board Action** _____

Modification to requested action: Yes ___ No ___

Vote Date 2/22/2024

Motion by _____ 2nd _____

/s/ Chair _____ Date Signed: _____

Yeas: _____

Nays: _____