



FRANCISCO "FRANK" MORAN  
MAYOR

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY OF CAMDEN  
NEW JERSEY

TEL: 856-757-7200  
FAX: 856-963-1841  
EMAIL: MAYOR@CI.CAMDEN.NJ.US  
WEBSITE: WWW.CI.CAMDEN.NJ.US

February 10, 2020

Via Overnight Mail

Deirdre Webster Cobb, Esq., Chair/Chief Executive Officer  
New Jersey Civil Service Commission  
P.O. Box 310  
Trenton, N.J. 08625

Re: City of Camden Layoff Plan for Permanent Members of the Camden Fire Department

Dear Chairperson Cobb:

Please accept this letter as a Plan of the City of Camden (hereinafter "the City") respectfully requesting approval of the proposed layoff plan of permanent members of the Camden Fire Department. The proposed layoff plan, which is in effect a restructuring of the Camden Fire Department, would take effect at the close of the work day on **Friday, June 26, 2020**. The City is facing a severe fiscal crisis for the Fiscal Year beginning on July 1, 2020 (hereinafter "State Fiscal Year 2021" or "SFY 2021"). This fiscal crisis is being caused by the City's loss of the Staffing for Adequate Fire & Emergency Response (SAFER) grant which was being utilized by the City to fund the cost of salary and benefits for twenty-seven firefighters. The SAFER grant provided funding of \$2,439,601.84 for these twenty-seven (27) firefighter positions.

**A. The Challenge of Covering the Loss of the SAFER Grant**

The City relies primarily on aid from the State of New Jersey in the form of Consolidated Municipal Property Tax Relief Aid ("CMPTRA"), Energy Tax Receipts Property Tax Relief ("ERT") and Transitional Aid to Localities ("TAL") for the support of the municipal budget. In SFY 2019, the City received \$63,784,351.00 in CMPTRA, \$37,302,612.00 in ERT and \$22,300,000.00 in TAL for a total of \$123,386,963.00. For SFY 2020, the City is anticipating \$56,566,903.00 in CMPTRA, \$44,520,060.00 in ERT and \$22,300,000.00 in TAL for a total of \$123,386,963.00. Thus, the total State aid is the same amount. Finally, no additional state aid to help offset the loss of the SAFER grant is expected for SFY 2021.

## **B. The City Appropriately Considered Alternatives to Layoffs**

As set forth in the regulations, the City has considered the following:

1. Proceeding under N.J.A.C. 4A:8-1.2 [Alternatives to Layoff] and N.J.A.C. 4A:1.3 [Pre-layoff Actions], the City has pursued alternatives to layoffs to lessen the possibility of layoffs and to lessen the possibility of future permanent layoffs, including meeting with Representatives of IAFF Local 788 and IAFF Local 2578, which represents firefighters and fire supervisors, discussed below.
2. **Meetings with Fire Department Officials Including Representatives of Local 788 and Local 2578**

City Administration met several times with Fire Department Officials, including Representatives of IAFF Local 788, having an address of 327 Market Street, Camden, NJ 08102 and representatives of IAFF Local 2578, having an address of 327 Market Street, Camden, NJ 08102, for the purpose of considering alternatives to possible layoffs and to seek input from the Fire Chief, Deputy Fire Chiefs and Representatives of IAFF Local 788 and IAFF Local 2578 on ways to close the budget gap caused by the loss of the SAFER grant.

3. **January 7, 2020 Meeting with Fire Department Officials Including Representatives of Local 788 and Local 2578**

The first meeting to discuss the loss of the SAFER grant and the potential for a RIF of firefighter personnel took place on Tuesday, January 7, 2020, at 10:30 a.m. In attendance were, among others, Mayor Frank Moran, Fire Chief Michael Harper and his Deputy Chiefs, Business Administrator Jason Asuncion, City Attorney Michelle Banks-Spearman, Finance Director Patrick Keating, Howard McCoach, Esq. and Representatives of IAFF Local 788 and IAFF Local 2578. At this meeting, Mayor Moran discussed the loss of the SAFER grant which covered twenty-seven (27) fire personnel and the need to find savings and/or other economic efficiencies in the Fire Department budget to offset the loss of these grant funds. The discussion also focused on the potential need for a RIF, or alternatively, sufficient savings and/or other economic efficiencies that could be identified to cover the loss of this SAFER grant. At the end of the meeting, Mayor Moran asked the Fire Chief and his staff as well as Representatives of IAFF Local 788 and IAFF Local 2578 in attendance to consider any and all options to identify potential savings and/or other economic efficiencies to cover the loss of the SAFER grant.

Finance Director Keating also spoke and indicated that the City's current Fiscal Year 2020 budget had sufficient funds to cover the loss of the SAFER grant up through the end of the Fiscal Year, June 30, 2020. However, savings and/or other economic efficiencies to address the loss of the SAFER grant would be necessary for Fiscal Year 2021 which is to begin on July 1, 2020.

Mayor Moran also invited fire personnel in attendance to contact their federal and state representatives to discuss the loss of this grant and any possible means to replace those funds. He indicated that he would also be in contact with state representatives for financial assistance.



Finally, Mayor Moran tasked the Fire Chief, as the head of the Fire Department, with putting together a written Plan that would examine any and all possible savings and/or other economic efficiencies that could reduce or eliminate the need for a RIF of fire personnel due to the loss of the SAFER grant.

#### **4. January 14, 2020 Meeting with Representatives of Local 788 and Local 2578**

On Tuesday, January 14, 2020, Fire Chief Harper and his Deputy Chiefs met with Representatives of IAFF Local 788 and IAFF Local 2578. During this meeting, Chief Harper discussed the loss of the SAFER grant, the amount of the SAFER grant and the need for a Plan that encompassed savings and/or other economic efficiencies to make up for the loss of the SAFER grant to avoid a potential RIF of fire personnel.

#### **5. January 15, 2020 Meeting with Representatives of Local 788 and Local 2578**

On Wednesday, January 15, 2020, another meeting with Mayor Moran took place. In attendance were, among others, Fire Chief Harper and his Deputy Chiefs, Senior Personnel Assistant Lisa Picon, City Attorney Michelle Spearman, Finance Director Patrick Keating, Howard McCoach, Esq., and Representatives of IAFF Local 788 and IAFF Local 2578. The attendees were advised by Mr. McCoach that if a Reduction in Force (“RIF”) Plan became necessary, the City was looking at a filing date with the Civil Service Commission of February 14, 2020 and with a potential RIF date occurring on June 26, 2020.

On numerous occasions during this meeting, Mayor Moran indicated to the Attendees that this and other meetings were not be seen by the Attendees as somehow involving current labor or contract negotiations as those negotiations were separate from these discussions. Instead, the sole purpose of these meetings was simply to find identified savings and/or other economic efficiencies to cover the loss of the SAFER grant funds.

During this meeting, Fire Chief Harper presented his written Plan to Mayor Moran and the Attendees which discussed his mechanism for savings and/or for other economic efficiencies to counteract or reduce the effect of the SAFER grant. Essentially, this Plan provided that, through promotions, a reduction of \$756,754.00 in the Fire Department’s overtime budget, a restructuring of the Fire Marshall’s Office and other measures, a RIF was unnecessary.

Mayor Moran then indicated that Fire Chief Harper’s written plan would need to be analyzed to determine whether the savings and/or other discussed economic efficiencies discussed in the written Plan could actually be realized.

A Representative of IAFF Local 2578 then spoke and indicated that IAFF Local 2578 did not agree with parts of Chief Harper’s written Plan and expected to submit its own Plan. This Representative also asked for a copy of Finance Director Keating’s spreadsheet that listed the costs

that the SAFER grant was covering for fire personnel which was to be made available as this process was to be considered truly transparent.

Finance Director Keating then spoke and commented that any savings and/or other economic efficiencies had to be real and actual. This was necessary to ensure that, if a Plan was eventually implemented, the City could not experience a shortfall in Fiscal Year 2021 because the identified savings and/or other economic efficiencies in the Plan did not occur or did not come to full fruition.

At the end of the January 15, 2020 meeting, Mayor Moran indicated that he would review Chief Harper's Plan and welcomed others to submit any suggestions or other plans but asked that any such suggestions or plans come directly through Chief Harper. He also indicated to the Attendees that he would be scheduling another meeting for further discussions.

#### **6. January 24, 2020 Meeting with Representatives of Local 788 and Local 2578**

On January 24, 2020, another meeting took place Representatives of IAFF Local 788 and IAFF Local 2578 with regard to a potential RIF for the City of Camden Fire Department. This meeting was chaired by Mayor Moran and others in attendance included, among others, Fire Chief Harper and his Deputy Fire Chiefs, Representatives of IAFF Local 2578, Representatives of IAFF Local 788, Business Administrator Jason Asuncion, City Attorney Michelle Banks-Spearman, Finance Director Patrick Keating, Howard McCoach, Esq. and Senior Personnel Assistant Lisa Picon.

As before, this meeting began with a discussion of the City's scheduled date to file with the Civil Service Commission, if necessary, which Mr. McCoach indicated would be Friday, February 14, 2020. Mayor Moran then stated that some time would still be necessary before that filing date to review the draft document.

Discussions then focused on the written Plans submitted by Representatives of IAFF Local 2578 and IAFF Local 788 to address the loss of the SAFER grant funds. Since these Plans had been recently submitted and had not been analyzed, Mayor Moran did not want to personally comment on the two (2) written Plans but offered the Representatives of IAFF Local 2578 and IAFF Local 788 an opportunity to discuss. Representatives of IAFF Local 2578 and IAFF Local 788 then discussed their written Plans. Mayor Moran also indicated that he had discussions with various State and federal officials seeking assistance to avoid a possible RIF and Representatives of IAFF Local 788 and IAFF Local 2578 reported similar discussions. Notably, Representatives of IAFF Local 788 reported discussions with Senator Menendez's Office concerning possible modifications to the SAFER grant application that would allow for current firefighters for the City of Camden as well as other jurisdictions to qualify under the grant and remain in place.

Fire Chief Harper also discussed the possibility of billing for certain Fire Department services, including billing insurance companies for services rendered for Motor Vehicle accidents



and billing corporations for fire services provided as these invoices for these types of services are permitted by law. He also indicated that, to date, such services have not been billed.

Mayor Moran was clear to indicate that, while these discussions are certainly helpful and may ultimately be successful, the City would continue to examine any and all means to cover the loss of the SAFER grant, including a potential RIF for fire personnel. However, Mayor Moran was also quick to point out that even if a RIF Plan is submitted and approved by the Civil Service Commission, and thereafter, forty-five (45) day notices are issued, the City could still cancel the RIF if adequate funding becomes available from any source or sources.

Mayor Moran also indicated that any and all proposals to avoid a RIF for the Fire Department would receive serious consideration but he was also clear that any proposal or part thereof to avoid a RIF that included an incentive program for retirement was simply not acceptable.

Mayor Moran then called the meeting to a close but indicated that he and others in his Administration would carefully review the Plans submitted by Representatives of IAFF Local 2578 and IAFF Local 788.

#### **7. February 10, 2020 Meeting with Representatives of Local 788 and Local 2578**

On February 10, 2020, another meeting took place Representatives of IAFF Local 788 and IAFF Local 2578 with regard to a potential RIF for the City of Camden Fire Department. This meeting was chaired by Mayor Moran and others in attendance included Fire Chief Harper, a Representative of IAFF Local 2578, a Representative of IAFF Local 788, Business Administrator Jason Asuncion, City Attorney Michelle Banks-Spearman, Finance Director Patrick Keating, Howard McCoach, Esq. and Senior Personnel Assistant Lisa Picon.

At this meeting, all written plans submitted by Chief Harper, Representatives of IAFF Local 2578 and IAFF Local 788, including the January 22, 2020 combined Plan submitted by IAFF Local 788 and IAFF Local 2578, were discussed. Mayor Moran indicated that, after numerous discussions, including the review of the submission of these plans a restructuring - layoff plan was being recommended to address the loss of the SAFER grant. Mayor Moran then outlined the proposed restructuring - layoff plan which has been incorporated in this proposed plan.

Mayor Moran also indicated that the restructuring plan which includes a proposed layoff plan would be filed with the Civil Service Commission via e-mail by the close of business on February 10, 2020. Copies would then be made available to others. The remainder of the meeting focused on the proposed restructuring and layoff plan and issues and concerns raised some of the Attendees.

### **C. The Restructuring - Layoff Plan**

As noted above, the City of Camden has a structural deficit in the Fire Department budget of \$2,439,601.84 caused by the loss of the SAFER grant for State Fiscal Year 2021. The City has pursued options and alternatives to avoid layoffs of Fire Department personnel and, in fact, after discussions, it was determined by Administration for the City of Camden that, to cover a portion of this deficit, City Administration will be reducing the Fire Department budget by \$700,000.00 in estimated overtime costs and \$100,000.00 in estimated Fire Department Office and Equipment costs. Moreover, one Fire Subcode Official's salary, approximately \$36,325.00, will be re-allocated from the Fire Department budget to the Building Code budget. One (1) Administrative position would remain unfilled for a savings of approximately \$60,000.00. Reductions in the City's SFY 2021 budget of \$276,094.00 were identified and \$85,182.84 was identified from New Jersey Fire Safety revenues, for a total savings of \$1,257,601.84.

However, even with these savings, the City of Camden still faces a budget shortfall in the Fire Department budget of \$1,182,000.00

To address this shortfall, the following Fire Department positions are identified for reduction:

1. Deputy Fire Chief - 2
2. Battalion Fire Chief - 1
3. Fire Captain - 1
4. Fire Prevention Specialist UFD - 2
5. Fire Fighter - six (6) vacancies in the Fire Fighter position will not be filled

Total positions identified for reduction: 12

If approved, the City's Restructuring - Layoff Plan will result in the following Organization Chart for the Fire Department:

#### **Current**

One (1) Fire Chief  
 One (1) Fire OFCL-  
     PRTCTN Subcode Official UFD  
 Three (3) Deputy Chiefs  
 Nine (9) Battalion Chiefs  
 Thirty-eight (38) Fire Captains  
 One hundred thirty-nine (139) Firefighters  
 Five (5) Fire Prevention Specialists

**Total: 196 Fire Personnel Staff**

#### **Proposed After Layoff**

One (1) Fire Chief  
 One (1) Fire OCFL-  
     PRTCTN Subcode Official UFD  
 One (1) Deputy Chief  
 Eight (8) Battalion Chiefs  
 Thirty-seven (37) Fire Captains  
 One hundred thirty-three (133) Firefighters  
 Three (3) Fire Prevention Specialists

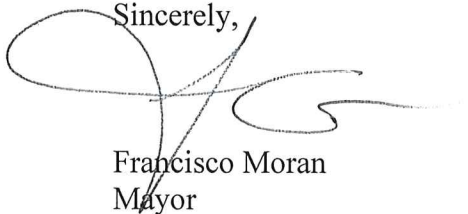
**Total: 184 Fire Personnel Staff**

The above proposed layoff plan for the Fire Department will allow the City to cover its current budget deficit caused by the loss of the SAFER grant while also providing the residents of the City of Camden with the commensurate public safety and fire safety needs required for the residents of the City of Camden.

9. Sample copies of the Individual and General Layoff Notices for the personnel in the Fire Department are attached. **The plan calls for the projected date for completion of the issuance of the Layoff Notices to be Thursday May 14, 2020. The Layoffs would take effect at the close of the working day on Friday, June 26, 2020.**

Please do not hesitate to contact my office with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Francisco Moran', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Francisco Moran  
Mayor

cc: Kelly Glenn, Director of Agency Services, Civil Service Commission [via e-mail and Overnight Mail]  
Michael Jimenez, Human Resource Consultant, Civil Service Commission [via e-mail and Overnight Mail]  
Jason J. Asuncion, Esq., MPA, Business Administrator  
Michelle Banks-Spearman, City Attorney  
Michael Harper, Fire Chief  
Patrick Keating, Finance Director  
Arch Liston, Fiscal Monitor, DCA  
Sam Munoz, Representative of IAFF Local 2578 [via e-mail]  
William Pete Perez, Representative of IAFF Local 788 [via e-mail]  
Lisa Picon, Senior Personnel Assistant  
Representatives of IAFF Local 788, 327 Market Street, Camden, NJ 08102  
Representatives of IAFF Local 2578, 327 Market Street, Camden, NJ 08102  
Curtis Jenkins, Council President  
Members of Camden City Council