



Legislation Text

File #: 19-0119, **Version:** 1

Resolution to accept the donation of an Accelerant Detection K-9 from State Farm Insurance for use by Hampton Division of Fire & Rescue to continue their Accelerant Detection K-9 Program

PURPOSE/BACKGROUND:

Accelerant Detection canines are an invaluable resource and are used to assist fire investigators in determining whether or not ignitable liquids were present at the time of a fire; be it a content fuel or a fuel introduced as an accelerant. There are many other proper uses for detection canines in our field ranging from detecting ignitable liquids on a suspect's clothing or inside of a vehicle used to transport such liquids; helping the fire investigator clear the scene of ignitable liquids; clearing investigators tools before scene processing, among many other things.

Hampton Division of Fire & Rescue (HDFR) has had several Accelerant Detection K-9s over the years. Medic Firefighter Jesse Gomes is assigned to the Fire Prevention Branch of the Community Risk Reduction Section. He is an Assistant Fire Marshal Investigator and K-9 Handler for Taylor, a black lab and HDFR's Accelerant Detection K-9. Taylor will be retiring in April 2019 from active service and Medic Firefighter Gomes will be stepping down from his K-9 handler position.

State Farm places arson dogs with departments or agencies that respond to a minimum of 50 structure fires a year. State Farm also looks at applications where an arson dog will investigate in multiple cities/counties/fire districts, allowing you to combine information from surrounding jurisdictions to increase the fire load numbers. VA Beach's handler and K-9 have both recently retired so, currently, K-9 Taylor is the only accelerant detection K-9 for the Southside and the Peninsula. The new dog would step into Taylor's position.

Medic Firefighter and Assistant Fire Marshal Investigator Christopher Persons has expressed interest in becoming the next Accelerant Detection K-9 Handler. State Farm has generously awarded a scholarship to HDFR to enable the Fire Marshal's office to continue with the Accelerant Detection K-9 Program. The scholarship, according to State Farm, equals approximately \$25,000. The scholarship includes all training fees for both handler and K-9, acquisition of the dog, lodging during the training, certification of the K-9 team and transportation expenses to and from the training facility at the Richard M. Flynn Fire Academy in Concord, New Hampshire. Investigator Persons will take part in the next academy which is scheduled for April 1-26, 2019.

Discussion:

Once the "Team" graduates from the school, yearly maintenance, care, and upkeep of the K-9 is the responsibility of HDFR. This would also include annual recertification for the team. In years past, HDFR's fiscal year budget has supported the Accelerant Detection K-9 Team and Fire Programs funds have allowed funding for travel to attend annual recertification.

Impact:

A new Accelerant Detection K-9 & new Handler, Christopher Persons, would continue the accelerant detection program for the City of Hampton in providing aid to suspected arson related fire investigations. The purpose of an accelerant detection K9 is to combat arson fraud. Because of this, the dog and handler team could get potential criminals off the street and also provide additional Public Safety protection for our uniform personnel, citizens of Hampton, visitors to the City and help our neighboring jurisdictions. The dog serves as an ambassador for HDFR at school events. They are used to educate children about the dangers of fire.

Recommendation:

The desired action from City Council would be to accept the donation of a new accelerant detection K-9 for HDFR.

WHEREAS, State Farm Insurance will generously donate the cost of an Accelerant Detection K-9, training for the dog and the handler, and transportation to and from the Richard M. Flynn Fire Academy in Concord, NH for the handler and K-9, and

WHEREAS, Accelerant Detection K-9s aid in the investigation of suspected arson related fires and a properly trained dog can give the fire investigators a significantly greater chance of locating samples of ignitable liquids that will be confirmed by chemical analysis, as well as, detect traces on the clothing of suspects and bystanders, and

WHEREAS, Hampton Division of Fire & Rescue welcomes the opportunity to accept this important tool which will assist our fire personnel on the scene of fire investigations as well as the fire scenes for our neighboring jurisdictions.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Hampton, Virginia that the new Accelerant Detection K-9 be accepted for use by Hampton Division of Fire & Rescue.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Hampton, Virginia authorizes the City Manager, or her designee, to take the necessary actions to implement this request.