

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: REPAIR OF DAMAGE TO FIRE TRUCK

BACKGROUND:

The Fire Department's Pierce ladder truck (Truck 3) was purchased in 2002 and was intended to be in service for fifteen years. Two aspects of this truck are in need of immediate repair so that the truck can continue to provide needed fire protection for our community.

The first repair is the pinnable waterway attached to the ladder. This waterway is a component of the elevated master stream that can be used in two different positions. The first is in the rescue mode, where the master stream (nozzle) is locked into place approximately 15 feet down the ladder so it will not interfere with a rescue at a window or a roof top. The second position is in the elevated master stream. This allows the master stream to be as high as possible at the end of the ladder to deploy and direct water during a fire emergency. The importance of the elevated water way is to extinguish large fires that are difficult to reach. Firefighters can deploy the master stream to protect exposures. In Ames, we have one master stream for our city. This is a critical component to our firefighting equipment. Currently, we are relying on our mutual aid departments for their elevated master streams.

Damage recently occurred to the water way during company level training. It appeared that the water way was in the locked position when it was not. The water way was launched off the vehicle into an adjacent field, causing approximately \$12,500 in damage.

The second repair came to light in April 2009 when corrosion was noted during a routine inspection of the undercarriage of this apparatus. This corrosion appears to be on the frame rails and has attacked the frame system. At that time staff contacted the vendor, Clarey's Safety Equipment, and explained our concerns to them. Staff had been working with Clarey's to obtain a quote for the repairs when the water way was damaged.

The corrosion repairs will be extensive, and will require that the ladder and body be removed to allow for removal of the rust and addition of a rust inhibitor. When the body is placed back on the frame, a rubber spacer will be added to allow room for cleaning and to separate metal to metal contact.

Staff had hoped to avoid this type of problem in 2000 when we began efforts to replace the previous ladder truck. Staff looked at options with various vendors and explained our experience with corrosion on the frame of the previous truck.

At that time Pierce told staff that if we painted the frame white it would be more noticeable when corrosion started and that an extra application of paint would assist in protecting the frame. The truck also came with a one-year warranty on undercarriage corrosion. Staff felt that we had done due diligence but, unfortunately, was surprised to see that the corrosion issue again surfaced on this new ladder truck.

The estimated cost to repair this corrosion was \$63,000, and the manufacturer claimed no responsibility for this situation. Pierce stated that many vehicles located in the north have been experiencing an increasing amount of rust due to the brine solutions that are being applied to roadways, and did not believe that the corrosion was a result of poor manufacturing.

With this information, staff decided to repair the water way immediately and to continue to work with Clarey's on a long-term solution to the corrosion problem. However, the Pierce Company then indicated that it was virtually certain that the ladder truck would not pass the Underwriters Laboratory (UL) certification after they completed the water way repair, due to the amount of corrosion on the undercarriage. This would leave the City without a certified ladder truck in our community. It is essential to have the elevated water way in service; but is also important to have a safe and certified ladder truck.

With this new information we were faced with a repair of \$12,500 for the water way and \$63,000 for the corrosion problem. The ladder would need to be delivered to Appleton, Wisconsin, and the repairs made at the Pierce plant. The total cost appeared to be approximately \$75,500.

On September 3rd staff met with Pierce and Clarey representatives in Appleton and asked them to assume greater responsibility for these repairs. Pierce and Clarey agreed to perform both the corrosion repair and water way repair for that \$40,000. Additional City expense for delivery and pick up of the vehicle will be approximately \$4,000, and there may also be smaller expenses for unrelated repairs discovered while the truck is at the factory.

Unfortunately, none of these expenses were anticipated or budgeted. In an effort to bring the truck back into full service, however, staff has identified \$47,000 in possible funding from the following areas:

- \$5,000 in unused local option funding from the 2008/09 Station #1 remodel project
- \$24,000 unspent from the 2008/09 general fund appropriation to the Fire Department
- \$11,000 from the \$50,000 budgeted for the Department's annual vehicle maintenance in 2009/10
- \$7,000 in unneeded vehicle depreciation for a Fire administrative vehicle

The ladder truck will be out of service for approximately three months while these repairs are being made. During that time, the Ames Fire Department will call upon mutual aid agreements with the Nevada and Boone Fire Departments for the use of their ladder trucks during an emergency.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Authorize the repair of Fire Truck 3 from the funding sources identified above at a cost of \$40,000.
2. Do not authorize the repair of Truck 3 at this time.

MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Truck 3 is a critical piece of fire protection equipment for the City with the only elevated water stream available to protect our citizens. Damage to the water way and the likelihood of not regaining UL certification without repairing the corrosion lend a sense of urgency to these repairs. There is not time to build this expense into a future Capital Improvements Plan project to access G.O. bond funding. Staff has explored the potential of other sources covering these costs (insurance, litigation), and this negotiated settlement appears to be the most suitable manner available to expeditiously accomplish these repairs.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1, thereby authorizing the repair of Fire Truck 3 from the funding sources identified above at a cost of \$40,000.