



*Office of Mayor Lawrence J. Morrissey
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PRESS RELEASE

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CITY LEADERS RESPOND TO BUDGET SHORTFALL

ROCKFORD, IL. – May 24, 2010 – City leaders have taken a proactive step in responding to an anticipated five to eight million dollar budget deficit in the 2011 budget through a proposed elimination of two fire suppression companies.

As defined in a letter to the City Firefighters Union IAFF Local 413, the “City has determined that the suppression company at Station 8 shall be reduced effective July 1, 2010 and (one of the two) suppression companies at Station 1 will be reduced January 1, 2011.” The elimination of these two fire suppression units will reduce the current manning, which are mandated by the union contract, by 30 firefighters for a cost savings of \$1.9 million dollars. No immediate layoffs will occur, but up to 20 current firefighters may be laid off at the end of the year.

The need to make deep cuts in city services for 2011 was identified at the close of the 2010 budget process. Finance Director Andres Sammul made it well-known in March that the approval of the 2010 budget was a very small step in resolving the City’s fiscal crisis and that deep budget cuts or alternative revenues would still be needed in order for the city to maintain its ability to deliver services. With the knowledge that the 2011 budget would be difficult, city staff transitioned after approving the 2010 budget in March, to planning for the 2011 budget process in April; a step that would typically happen in the third quarter of the year.

The City administration has worked with Fire Chief Derek Bergsten to identify a means of reducing the budget appropriately. While other city departments, including Police and Public Works, experienced drastic cuts to their staffing levels in 2009 and 2010, Rockford Fire Department did not experience personnel layoffs. Chief Bergsten and his command staff analyzed several options before suggesting that the elimination of fire suppression in stations 8 and 1 would have the least impact on the delivery of services.

“This recommendation to reduce fire suppression companies does not come easily, but given our dire economic circumstances, we must strike a balance to provide a service level that our citizens can afford,” stated Mayor Morrissey. "Unfortunately, many communities throughout Illinois are faced with the same decisions."

City staff will continue to analyze additional cost cutting options to close the budget gap for 2011.

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