



LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT

RALPH M. TERRAZAS
FIRE CHIEF

January 21, 2021

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
FILE NO. 21-017

TO: Board of Fire Commissioners

FROM:  Ralph M. Terrazas, Fire Chief

SUBJECT: IN-KIND DONATION OF PEER SUPPORT DOG PILOT PROGRAM

FINAL ACTION:	<input type="checkbox"/> Approved	<input type="checkbox"/> Approved w/Corrections	<input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn
	<input type="checkbox"/> Denied	<input type="checkbox"/> Received & Filed	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

SUMMARY

The Los Angeles Fire Department and United Firefighters of Los Angeles City (UFLAC) Local 112 support the need to be an innovator in the Fire Service by addressing suicide prevention, PTSD, secondary trauma, and mental health care. Service dogs, including Therapy/Comfort dogs, have already been proven by multiple studies to reduce PTSD in war veterans. Purdue University studied two groups of Veterans suffering from PTSD- one group with therapy dogs and one without therapy dogs. Not surprisingly, the results revealed that the group with access to the dogs experienced significantly lower levels of depression, higher life satisfaction levels, increased overall psychological well-being, and less absenteeism from work. Local agencies have recently deployed dog(s) to the following fires with admirable results:

- Thomas Fire
- Montecito Fire
- Woolsey Fire
- Bobcat Fire

Large incidents are only some of the opportunities for firefighters to access the assistance these dogs provide. Deployment for Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Debriefing meetings after significant incidents, therapy sessions, station visits, and even public service education events are areas our therapy dog might be an added team member. Our LAFD Peer Support Dog will be available to accomplish the department's goals by helping fulfill the mission of preventing loss of life - "Everyone Goes Home," "Sound Mind, Sound Body."

Firefighter Susan Jensen has volunteered to be the designated handler for LAFD's first Peer Support Therapy Dog. Firefighter Jensen interviewed with the Patriotic Service Dog Foundation (PSDF) to determine if she qualified for training. After being accepted into the program, there is a vetting process to receive such a highly trained dog. Firefighter Jensen has volunteered approximately 100 hours to training with Theodore Roosevelt, aka "Teddy." Teddy's training and skills under the PSDF program legally qualify him for our Certified Behavioral Health Peer Support therapy dog.

Training was completed in mid-December, and at that point, Teddy and FF Jensen will be a fully trained, Certified Therapy Dog team. The team will require future training to maintain certification and ensure proficiency in the dog's skills to perform; recognize PTSD symptoms and behavior.

The proposed program will have a therapy dog assigned to FF Jensen, a member of the LAFD Peer Support Program. The dog will accompany FF Jensen while on duty and be available for call outs while off duty.

The therapy dog has a value of \$20,000.00 - \$25,000.00 He is fully sponsored by an angel donor, allowing Teddy to be donated free of charge. All required training will be offered free of charge at the Triple T Ranch located in Murrieta, CA. The partnership between our department and the Patriotic Service Dog Foundation will directly benefit our behavioral health team for years to come.

Patriotic Service Dog Foundation has agreed to provide the dog at no cost to the LAFD. All costs for this pilot program will be paid for by FF Susan Jensen, including living expenses and health care costs for the dog unless we identify additional funds. If this pilot is not successful, FF Jensen has agreed to either adopt the dog or return him to Patriotic Service Dog Foundation for reassignment to another department.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Board:

1. Receive this report for the In-Kind Donation by the Los Angeles Fire Department Foundation for the items listed above, valued between \$20,000.00 and \$25,000.00 to the Los Angeles Fire Department.
2. Request the Commission Executive Assistant to transmit this report to the Mayor's Office in accordance with Executive Directive No. 3 and to City Council in accordance with the Los Angeles Administrative Code, Ordinance 15514, Article 12, Section 5.111.4, for consideration and approval.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact to the Department's budget from the acceptance of this donation. Donations provide the necessary items meeting the needs of the respective fire stations or administration sections. Replacement or repair of items meeting City specifications and Fire Department business needs may be borne by General Fund, subject to budgetary constraints.

CONCLUSION

The Los Angeles Fire Department benefits tremendously from gracious donations and support provided by groups such as The Patriotic Service Dog Foundation. The LAFD acknowledges the PSDF for its generosity.

Board report prepared by Public Information Director Peter Sanders, Community Liaison Office.