Memorandum

TO: Tim Swadley, Mayor

David Ehlinger, Finance Director

FROM: Joshua Ripp, Fire Chief

DATE: September 7, 2022

SUBJECT: County wide swift water AFG (Assistance to Firefighters Grant)

Included you will find a packet of information, which I submitted last fall as part of an AFG application co-sponsored by Black Earth Fire District and Dane County Emergency Management. This would provide training (including travel costs) and equipment for fire department members within Dane County. The City of Stoughton's portion would be a 10% match of the costs associated with the grant (current estimated cost is $200/per person). This means that on our own, we'd be paying $2000 per person for similar training and equipment. Equipment would include wetsuit fit to the FF and a rescue style PFD.

The reason for my interest in this grant, is two-fold. First, we have a river running through Stoughton that often meets the definition of "swift water" (flows at 1 Knot or greater) and depths of those water being deeper than knee depth of the average rescuer (2' approx.). Secondly, I need to be looking at the possibility of added risk with the installation of the swift water park being proposed within the City of Stoughton. It will take some time (years) to build up the expertise and experience amongst department members, so waiting until it is approved isn't something I'm willing to do.

Historical/Current status: We have had rescue calls take place in the river, down at the Dunkirk Dam. It was very apparent during the most recent one a few years ago that we didn't have the proper equipment, and more importantly, training/knowledge to handle the rescue safely. We have equipment and expertise for static/slow moving water, especially when we can utilize our boat. Our cold water/ice rescue suits are also fine when used in those situations. However,

these are not workable/safe methods when we start approaching moving water rescues. These require more extensive use of ropes/lines to move rescuers' and rescuees to safety. The next closest swift water teams are located in Janesville, Madison, Black Earth and Mazomanie. This means, at the soonest, we'd see them about 30 minutes after being requested.

Stoughton Fire Department has a rich history of trying to do whatever possible to help the citizens of Stoughton in their times of need. This includes possibly putting ourselves at risk to accomplish this. We do quite a bit of impromptu plan development (based on past experience, best practice, our training, etc) to accomplish this. Swift water rescues are a very high risk, low occurrence type rescue. We also can't say "we won't do those rescues" because if there is a 911 call placed, and we are dispatched, we need to have some level of knowledge to start the rescue.

Plan and the Countywide Grant: The reality is that we likely won't be accomplishing the task on our own. This will take a team of people to do so, and that is where this grant comes from. Black Earth is sponsoring the grant, mainly due to the 2018 floods, and the realization that we (FD's in Dane County) need to have the expertise spread around and this is a way to start the process. Having a number of resources available around the county, and having us meet together at a scene, is one very good strategy to make this successful.

We'd possibly get called to assist other areas in Dane County (and further if the incident was bigger). In the same note, we could be calling for help as well. This is the best approach, in my opinion. I'm hoping to have 4 people attend class and become qualified in Swift water rescue, and be a starting point for a team. They'd be our subject matter experts, and we'd use them as resources as we develop our SOG's and SOP's, equipment requests, and figure out other members. Admittedly, this isn't the final request, as we'll need to keep training people, but it definitely will put us in a great position as we start down this road.

Thank you for considering this request.