

COMMISSIONERS OF CHATHAM COUNTY

CHATHAM COUNTY COURTHOUSE
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April 5, 2023



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County Manager

R. JONATHAN HART
County Attorney

JANICE E. BOCOOK
County Clerk



Mr. Conrad T. Kearns, Chief Executive Officer
Chatham Emergency Services
1399 Dean Forest Rd
Savannah, Georgia 31405
Via e-mail: ckearns@chathames.org

Dear Chuck:

Chatham County is currently reviewing the Fiscal Year Ending (FYE) 2024 operating budget request for CES Fire as well as the capital budget request. The operating budget request of \$17.8 million is significantly higher than the current FYE 2023 budget of \$13.1 million. The existing fire fee rate structure adopted in 2023 will not fully fund the operating budget request.

CES has also made a CIP budget request of \$12.3 million for FYE 2024. For the current year, the capital budget request was \$7.8 million. The Board of Commissioners has not approved a budget for the CES capital items requested.

As my Board has frequently reminded me, when the County first began considering a service agreement with CES Fire, the FYE 2022 budgeted expenses were approximately \$10 million. Due to the inconsistent nature of the operating budgets CES has presented to the County, I have asked the County Finance Director to formulate a budget recommendation for my consideration. That recommendation will be shared with you for further discussion.

The Board of Commissioners will consider and approve the County's operating and capital budget on June 23, 2023. Budget adoption will include the Fire Fee Fund, where the CES Service agreement is funded.

Until such time that the Board of Commissioners adopts the County's budget, I would advise you to follow the below process:

1. Per the Service agreement between the County and CES dated December 2021, do not exceed the County's adopted operating budget for FYE 2023. The County is not obligated to reimburse CES for services above the budgeted amount.
2. Freeze all capital purchases for FYE 2023 and FYE 2024. The Board of Commissioners has not adopted a capital budget for CES. The only approved use of "County funds" lies within the Service agreement where CES may use depreciation expense to fund debt service payments related to capital purchases.



3. Provide the County's Finance Director with any requested information on the FYE 2024 budget recommendation for CES's operating and capital budget. Additional fire revenue sources collected by CES should be examined to determine how they may offset the County's costs.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

Michael C. Kaigler
Michael Kaigler

cc: Chairman and Members of the Board
Andre Pretorius, Assistant County Attorney
Linda B. Cramer, Assistant County Manager
Amy J. Davis, Finance Director
Jeannie Alday, Director, Internal Audit

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