

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA TOPIC

An Ordinance authorizing execution of a grant agreement with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security FEMA to accept \$707,423.39 in Fire Prevention and Safety grant funding for Electronic Core and Associated Key Security Equipment; amending the 2023-2024 budget of the Operating, Grants, Donations and Special Reserves Fund in the amount of \$707,423.39; and authorizing expenditures of said grant funds.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**ACTION**

Commercial and multi-family buildings in Bellevue with fire protection systems have firefighter rapid access key boxes (Knox boxes) to allow firefighters quick access during emergencies without forcing doors, which damages property. If adopted, this Ordinance would authorize execution of a grant agreement with the Department of Homeland Security to accept \$707,423.39 in Fire Prevention and Safety grant funding for Electronic Core and Associated Key Security Equipment; amend the 2023-2024 budget of the Operating, Grants, Donations and Special Reserves Fund in the amount of \$707,423.39; and authorize expenditures of said grant funds. This grant will help the Bellevue and Redmond Fire departments update their Knox box infrastructure to interoperable electronic Knox box systems while avoiding passing the cost of a new lock core onto building owners with newer boxes. This new Knox infrastructure will also expedite emergency responses for members of both communities when Bellevue and Redmond firefighters arrive first within one another's boundaries with shared e-key access.

RECOMMENDATION

Move to adopt Ordinance No. 6805

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

Knox boxes are secure, proprietary boxes installed on the outside of commercial and multi-family buildings with fire protection systems. They contain keys to the building to facilitate rapid firefighter access during emergencies without damaging property by forcing open doors.

The Bellevue Fire Department participated in the Knox Company's beta testing of an electronic Knox Box ("eLock" system) infrastructure in 2018. Recognizing the eLock system maximizes Knox key

security and increases response times through interdepartmental access, the fire department decided to transition away from the current mechanical system. The transition has been a documented process improvement within the Fire Prevention Annual Report beginning in 2018, when locking electronic key holders and keys were purchased for front-line fire department emergency vehicles.

Since then, the fire department has been contemplating how to fund the remainder of the infrastructure modernization, totaling approximately \$364,621.33. Choices considered were: requesting funds through the city's Budget One process, applying for grants, and passing the cost of replacement key cores to building owners. The Bellevue Fire Department applied individually last year for FEMA's Fire Prevention & Safety Grant for this project. The application was rejected.

This Spring, the Bellevue and Redmond Fire Departments partnered to apply for a regional grant award through FEMA's Fire Prevention & Safety grant, which was awarded for \$707,423.39 with a 24-month performance period. This award will cover transition costs for both municipalities to implement the Knox eLock infrastructure for the departments' response areas while avoiding passing costs onto building owners with newer Knox boxes.

The Bellevue and Redmond Fire Departments share a jurisdictional border of 9.5 miles, responding to a combined 2,126 mutual aid calls in 2023, nearly 10% of the year's total call volume. Bellevue provided aid to Knox box equipped spaces in Redmond's jurisdiction 563 times in 2023. Redmond did the same for Bellevue 948 times. Of those: 50 were cardiac arrest calls, 8 were strokes, and 22 were confirmed structure fires (14 of which were in multi-family residences). We can be sure that in all 80 of these calls, any time delays would have significantly impacted patient outcomes and extent of structure damage. Implementing eLock Knox systems in tandem will allow both departments to share electronic key access to each other's Knox boxes while adding security features. In conclusion, accepting this Fire Prevention & Safety Grant award will improve community safety and emergency response in both the Bellevue and Redmond Fire Departments' service areas while minimizing the economic impact on the municipalities' building owners and managers.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

Acceptance of this grant would require additional cooperation between the City of Bellevue and the City of Redmond to share access to Knox boxes, as the Bellevue and Redmond Fire Departments update their Knox box infrastructure to interoperable electronic Knox box systems.

The Bellevue Fire Department's current written policy on Knox boxes resides within the Fire Prevention Manual. The policy will need to be updated to address the electronic boxes and made into a Fire Department Standard Operating Procedure.

Fiscal Impact

The allocated costs of the Bellevue Fire Department to transition to an electronic Knox box system is \$350,949.00 in electronic key box cores (1,410) and \$13,672.33 in equipment and hardware (such as electronic keys and installation tools), excluding sales tax and shipping. If the grant is not accepted, the

cost of the electronic cores will be passed onto individual building owners to purchase new cores, and the city would need to commit additional funding to purchase the equipment and hardware.

As a condition of this grant, the awardees are required to contribute a combined total of 5.00% of the Federal funds awarded, or \$35,371.17, of the total Federally approved project budget of \$742,794.56. The cost of City staff members' time spent programming and installing the electronic key can be used as the 5.00% soft match.

The funding source is the U.S. Department of Homeland Security via the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Fire Prevention & Safety (FP) Grant.

OPTIONS

1. Adopt the Ordinance authorizing execution of a grant agreement with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security FEMA to accept \$707,423.39 in Fire Prevention and Safety grant funding for Electronic Core and Associated Key Security Equipment; amending the 2023-2024 budget of the Operating, Grants, Donations and Special Reserves Fund in the amount of \$707,423.39; and authorizing expenditures of said grant funds.
2. Do not adopt the Ordinance and provide alternative direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS

Proposed Ordinance No. 6805

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

EMW-2023-FP-00114 Award Package includes the following documents: –
Bellevue Fire Department and Redmond Fire Department Joint Application FY23 FP&S Grant MOU
FY23 FPS Application - FEMAGO