



CITY OF CONCORD

New Hampshire's Main Street™

FIRE DEPARTMENT

REPORT TO MAYOR AND THE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: John A. Chisholm, Fire Chief / Emergency Management Coordinator

DATE: November 20, 2023

SUBJECT: A report from the Fire Chief to accompany a resolution authorizing the City Manager or designee to apply for the 2024 New Hampshire Department of Safety, State Homeland Security Competitive Grant Program, that requires no City match, to secure funding to purchase a modular vehicle barrier system for the protection of crowds at public gatherings in closed roadways.

Recommendation

The Fire Department requests that the City Council accept this report.

Background

The City of Concord encourages events that improve the overall sense of community of its citizens and visitors. Several of these events, such as Halloween Howl, involve public roadway closures to facilitate the presence of vendors and other activities. The physical barriers involved in these closures are traditionally wooden saw-horses that are easily overrun by a vehicle. In fact, on more than one occasion in Concord, vehicles have bypassed the barriers during an active event on Main Street. Reports of incidents throughout the nation where vehicles plow through crowds injuring or killing multiple bystanders, either through malicious intent or accidental circumstances, are increasing.

Discussion

Over the past year, the Fire Department has engaged in discussions with Intown Concord to determine the best method to protect crowds of people gathered in closed public roadways. A modular vehicle barrier system was found and demonstrated that would meet the needs of the City. Intown Concord appeared before the Finance Committee on May 22, 2023 to show the need for and its support for a barrier system, but stated it was unable to fund the purchase of the system. At that time, it was discussed that pursuing a grant may be the best option. A demonstration unit of the proposed barrier system was on display at Halloween Howl on October 27, 2023 to familiarize the product with City Council and the general public. The overall consensus of the public who stopped to learn about the barrier system was favorable.

Acceptance of this system would require increased operational costs of City staff time to transport, deploy, and breakdown the system. An estimate of increased operational costs will be made available to City Council if the grant application is approved, when City Council votes to accept the grant and appropriate the money.