



City Council Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

DATE: APRIL 16, 2024

FROM: FIRE DEPARTMENT

WARDS: ALL

**SUBJECT: DONATION OF CERTIFIED THERAPY CANINE SERVICE DOG THROUGH
WORKING DOGS FOR WARRIORS**

ISSUES:

Accept the donation of certified Care Canine Service dog “Odin” from Working Dogs for Warriors of Fontana, CA.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the City Council:

1. Accept donation of certified Therapy Canine Service dog “Odin” from Working Dogs for Warriors of Fontana, CA.; and
2. Authorize the City Manager, or designee to approve the donation.

BACKGROUND:

The City of Riverside Fire Department experienced a heartbreaking loss on April 1, 2023, with the passing of Fire Captain Tim Strack. Tim, as the president of the Riverside City Firefighters Association, was a vocal supporter of mental health and wellness in fire departments at both the state and national level. Tim acknowledged the impact that years of emergency response can have on our personnel’s mental and physical well-being. Before his death, Captain Strack, who championed the department’s PEER Support Team, was working to set up a Therapy Canine Program. This program would support the important work being done by the RFD PEER Support Team.

With the Donation of Therapy Canine “Odin” from Working Dogs for Warriors, Tim’s goal of providing the comfort and calming presence of a canine to our department will have been realized.

DISCUSSION:

Fire Department personnel face a variety of difficult and challenging incidents nearly every shift. At times, our firefighters operate on incidents that are very traumatic, and sometimes tragic. The mental and physical toll from these incidents can have a lasting effect on the well-being of our

personnel. The main duty of a Therapy Canine is to offer emotional support and comfort during critical incident debriefs for our personnel and others impacted. Trained as a therapy dog, “Odin” can effectively soothe personnel dealing with anxiety, stress, and trauma symptoms. Therapy Canine “Odin” and his handler, Engineer Michael Dobyns, will work as a team to create a safe and non-judgmental environment where healing is the priority.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This item contributes to the following Strategic Priorities:

No. 2 Community Well-Being

- No. 2.6 Strengthen community preparedness for emergencies to ensure effective response and recovery.

This item aligns with each of the five Cross-Cutting Threads as follows:

1. **Community Trust** – The City of Riverside Fire Department is an all-risk department committed to providing high-quality service to our community. Ensuring the well-being of our firefighters strengthens that commitment.
2. **Equity** – The Therapy Canine team is based out of one of our 14 fire stations, with the ability to respond anywhere in the city to assist our firefighters and other public safety partners during critical incidents.
3. **Fiscal Responsibility** – “Odin” is being provided through a generous donation by Working Dogs for Warriors.
4. **Innovation** – Therapy Dog “Odin” and Engineer Dobyns will work as a team to provide emotional support and comfort to firefighters and other public safety personnel experiencing stress and anxiety brought on by critical and traumatic incidents.
5. **Sustainability & Resiliency** – Therapy Canine “Odin” is expected to provide comfort and support to our personnel for at least 10 years.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact to the city. Therapy Canine “Odin” is being donated through the Working Dogs for Warriors Foundation.

Prepared by:	Jeff DeLaurie, Deputy Fire Chief
Approved by:	Michael A Moore, Fire Chief
Certified as to availability of funds:	Kristie Thomas, Finance Director/Assistant Chief Financial Officer
Approved by:	Mike Futrell, City Manager
Approved as to form:	Phaedra A. Norton, City Attorney