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## **MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Mayor and City Council  
**From:** Warren Hutmacher, City Manager  
**Date:** May 13, 2013  
**Subject:** **Discussion of Exploration of the North DeKalb Fire Authority**

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### **ITEM DESCRIPTION**

Staff has met with the potential partner cities and will return to a future meeting with a recommendation for a firm to conduct a formal feasibility study.

### **BACKGROUND**

Since incorporation, DeKalb County has provided fire services for the City of Dunwoody based on an Intergovernmental Agreement. On an annual basis, the County sets the fire prevention millage and our homeowners and businesses directly pay for these services.

At the request of Council, in 2010 staff completed some preliminary research into the possibility of creating a Dunwoody Fire Department. A high-level budgetary analysis concluded the capital, personnel, and operating expenses for a Dunwoody-only model would necessitate a roughly \$6.4 million annual budget. Further, a Dunwoody-only model eliminates some economies of scale and presents certain challenges for responding to larger scale situations. Following additional conversations with DeKalb Fire Chief O'Brien, the Council reached consensus to continue the present arrangement but monitor the situation.

In July 2012, following the raising of the fire prevention millage from 2.70 to 3.29 mills, Councilman Nall requested staff investigate other alternatives for fire services. Staff prepared analysis for consideration at the Council's Annual Strategic Planning Retreat in February 2013. Council then directed staff to continue exploring the possibility of creating a North DeKalb Fire District with the cities of Brookhaven, Chamblee, and Doraville. Specifically, the Council asked that staff approach the potential partner cities and reached consensus that if the partner cities were interested, it may be prudent to hire a consultant with expertise in fire services to verify and double-check the analysis.

### **UPDATE**

As requested, staff further refined the analysis of the North DeKalb Fire Authority concept and hosted meetings with the Mayor and City Manager from Brookhaven, Chamblee, and Doraville. The concept was well received and each city's representatives agreed that we should (1) continue to explore this possible partnership and (2) hire a consultant with expertise in fire services to complete a formal feasibility study. The representatives agreed in principle that we could split the cost of the feasibility study based the percentage of population each city has in the proposed North DeKalb Fire Authority.

Staff is preparing a Request for Proposals to find a firm to conduct the feasibility study. We intend to return to the Council later this summer with a recommendation and approach each of the three potential partner cities with a request to pay for a percentage of the firm's cost for the study.