Jason Dempsey receives City Manager Leadership Award for April

City Manager Lori Ann Farrell Harrison presented Emergency Services Administrator Jason Dempsey with the City Manager Leadership Award for the month of April.

“Since the early days of the pandemic, Jason has been instrumental in our emergency operations and response,” Farrell Harrison said. “As someone with extensive military experience, including special operations forces, I knew we were in good hands right from the start. I am so grateful for all he contributed to our team during these difficult times.”

In August of 2018, Dempsey joined the City of Costa Mesa as the Emergency Services Administrator where he has helped the Police Department obtain over $1 million in equipment from the federal government, managed the receipt and use of multiple grants, engaged with local and regional stakeholders on behalf of the city.

During ongoing efforts to maintain situational awareness, Dempsey became aware of a novel coronavirus, later referred to as COVID-19, in December 2019, and began tracking its development in January 2020. From January to early February, discussions were held with City Leadership regarding how the virus could impact the City.

On the evening of February 20, 2020, Dempsey was notified by Cal OES that Fairview Developmental Center was to be used as the first non-military quarantine/isolation facility in the Western U. S.

This site was to become active Monday, February 24, 2020 with minimal warning, reassurance, or safeguards in place.

Dempsey provided City Leadership with invaluable information in the first weeks of what became a historic pandemic, enabling the City to secure a rare Stay Order against the CDC, FEMA, and CalOES plans to use Fairview.

Dempsey's early recognition of the severity of these events, coupled with the national and international response to COVID-19, had a significant impact on the City response to the Pandemic and emergency protective measures implemented.

As he assisted with the City's COVID-19 response, he also continued to research ways to improve efficiency and secure resources to ensure we were prepared to serve our community in the event of an unforeseen natural disaster.

He facilitated technology and video updates in the Emergency Operation Center, assisted with civil unrest intelligence and planning during countywide protests, led efforts to be one of the first cities in Southern California with DHS authorization to use Wireless Emergency Alerts, and obtained a Hazard Mitigation Program Grant to assist the City in developing our Hazard Mitigation Plan.

In 2020, Dempsey received the Critical Event Management Award from Everbridge due to efforts to identify and address COVID-19 on behalf of Costa Mesa.

Dempsey began his career in 1997 when he enlisted as an infantryman in the Marine Corps. After September 11, 2001, he deployed as a member of Special Operations Command to Operation Enduring Freedom.

After completion of his third deployment, he moved into the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) field where he was physically embedded with infantry, Reconnaissance and Special Operations Forces (SOF) as well as foreign units such as the British Royal Marines 40 Commandos.

Dempsey's duties included providing direct EOD support to both

the president, vice president and secretary of state visits domestically and internationally.

Dempsey completed 8 deployments, as well as other international dignitary missions, before retiring from the Marine Corps in 2015 as a Chief Warrant Officer.

Following his military retirement and prior to coming to Costa Mesa, Dempsey took a position as an emergency manager with the City of Los Angeles. He spent most of his time at Los Angeles World Airport LAX addressing planning, response, and continuity considerations.

His participation ranged from supporting dignitary visits, interagency exercises with federal agencies such as FBI, CDC, and DHS, to helping develop continuity measures for the LAX EOC and Airport Operations.

Dempsey has two master’s Degrees: one in Public Administration from the University of Southern California (USC), another in Homeland Security from the Pennsylvania State University as well as a bachelor’s degree in Emergency and Disaster Management. He is a Certified Emergency Manager (CEM) and a Certified Business Continuity Professional (CBCP).