

To: FFPD Board of Directors, FFPD Staff, FFR members

From: Paul M. Berens. FFR Volunteer Firefighter

Re: Structure Proposals (*Email*)

Dear Structure Committee and FFPD Board,

These are my opinions of the issue with our Fire Department not having a Chief of the organization, paid or not, is an operational issue and all of the fire department member's opinions should be taken very seriously. This document is coming from my experience. This document should not be looked at anything more than a concerned volunteer. I love this department and truly feel that from when I started in 2004 has slowly declined in several areas. The community's opinion should be heard, but unfortunately the community does not have the expertise of Fire Department operations and what may be needed as much as the members of the Fire Department. The FFPD Board has failed in proposing these issues to the volunteers. The volunteers should have been involved from the beginning. If the Board really wanted volunteer input they would have and attended member meetings to solicit a better response. I have seen certain Board members at previous meetings and nothing was mentioned in regards to these related matters, nor was no request for volunteers to participate in the Structural Committee. Why?

I would like to pose a question to the Board of Directors: If I was a member of the Board I would be asking myself as to why we have 14 qualified members that are eligible to be Fire Chief declining their nomination. We roughly have a quarter of the department eligible to be the Fire Chief, yet they have all declined? It seems to me that the board has overlooked this issue which seems that this is the root of the reason we are looking at proposals for a Paid Chief. Certain Board Members have placed the blame on the volunteers stating that they do not want to commit the time. This is incorrect, these volunteers commit several hundred hours a year and most of the volunteers have been on for several years. The volunteers make up this organization. The Board owes it to the volunteers to determine why 14 members did not accept nominations for Chief.

My recommendation is that we speak with Ed Daniels who is a former member of FFR and who is a Fire Department consultant to see if he is available for his services. We also need to not reinvent the wheel; several departments have experienced something similar. We should also talk to Chief Angell (Fairmount Fire) and Chief Bales (Golden Fire). The Golden Fire Department has received 2 awards this year in regards to their volunteer organization. This should not be done with just Director Smith. The structure committee and ALL FFPD Board members should be present at the next Membership Meeting and give the members a presentation on the proposal

since all members cannot attend board meetings. Then after the presentation an open discussion should be allowed.

After my personal review of the documents posted on the fire department website, conversations with members, and conversations with Chief Officer's from other volunteer organizations I have formed my personal opinion about the proposal from the *Structure Committee*. First, my opinion of the *Structure Committee* is that it does not represent the voice of the members of Foothills Fire & Rescue. This is no surprise to me as to when the last *Structure Committee* was formed to form the new organizational chart, and to discuss the Business Manager position, the Administration staff, which included myself at the time, was left out and no questions or opinions were asked. This was also true with some volunteer members that expressed the same concern. I do not understand why we do not include the entire Administration staff that is there 40+ hours a week. It seems to me they can give great insight on fire department operations on pros and cons on the issues. Being apart of the Administration staff less than a year ago, I saw several operational issues that could help run the fire department more effectively, yet the previous Structure Committee never inquired my opinion on matters that affected the Administration staff or the volunteers directly. You would have to ask the current Administration staff if their Ideas, opinions and thoughts have been expressed to the current *Structure Committee*.

I believe it is time for a paid Chief with our organization. However, I have several issues with the documents that are posted currently on the FFR website. First, we have documents that are written by Director Smith of conversations with Chief Officers from other organizations. The issue I have with these is that they could be, I'm not saying they are Director Smith's interpretation from these interviews. I would have more confidence if they were signed documents from those Chief Officers that were interviewed.

Secondly there are what seem to be job postings for Fire Chief's around the United States. There is no salary information for those job postings. One of the options from the *Structure Committee* for the Paid Chief shows a salary of \$60K-\$70K with all the current duties of the Business Manager position to be outsourced. \$60K-70K is not a competitive salary for a Fire Chief. It would be a concern that we might get an undesirable candidate because of this low salary for a Chief. If we did not outsource, the Paid Fire Chief could not do the Chief duties and the current business manager duties. We formally had an Administrative assistant that assisted with these duties that option 1& 2 are going to outsource. Having these actions or duties in-house is vital to smooth operation of the fire department. There have been problems in the past out sourcing certain items. Proposing that these duties should be outsourced is a clear sign that the Board and possibly members of the structure committee do not know what operations take place and how they are conducted, and therefore should stay out of operational duties of the department. This relates to the third issue I see.

The third issue I see is outsourcing duties slows down production. Recently we outsourced our internet service/ server service to an outside company. This was more trouble than it was worth, several days/weeks passed when the Administration staff could not perform essential duties for their job because the company didn't call back for several days. Currently our members are responsible for report information and getting it to the Business Manager, then that person enters the report into the system. I know several fire departments including two that I have been a member of, that the Incident Commander is responsible for entering those reports into the database. Why would we outsource several simple duties and pay for them if they can be done in house.

The fourth issue I see is that the Board is solely responsible for determining who the Paid Chief will be in option one and all of the Chief Officer's in option two. It is my belief that the Board is not responsible in determining Operational solutions for the department. This would change that. There is no volunteer voice of confidence to elect Chief Officer's to assist in running the fire department. There is the option that volunteers along with community members and board members are apart of an "Interview Committee". Why would community members that have no expertise of a fire department be able to determine the Fire Chief who plays the biggest role within the fire department.? I live in West Metro's Fire District. I'm not attending their Board meetings and interjecting myself on who the Paid Chief is. Why, well because I leave that up to the Fire Department. When the time comes to hire the Paid Chief the interview or hiring committee should be comprised of other volunteer Fire Chief's, FFR members, Admin staff. I do not believe the board should be involved at all. The board should take a recommendation from the committee. It seems to me that FFPD Board is trying to take more control over the department by involving themselves in operational issues, thus missing other important debilitating problems like the recent Budget oversight. If the FFPD Board was more focused on issues like that, maybe it would not happen.

The Fifth issue I see is that we need to STOP this responder at last resort. It is very unsafe to have 2 to 4 members going on calls. First of all, fire departments nationwide have a Chief Officer respond to every call. We need the Chief to do just this. When the Chief is not working, there should be a rotating volunteer Chief schedule so that they run the calls when the Paid Chief is not on duty. That is why the current organization chart is inadequate. If you're interested, I have a revised chart available. This could have been prevented in my opinion.

Lastly, I believe that we need to hire from outside the department for the best solution. The Job should be a responding position, and should be full. I think you will need an assistant to the Chief to help him with minor things. Why not make this a responder position as well.

If any Board members shall apply for the position, there should be no other Board member or community member on the hiring committee, just FFR volunteers and Admin. Staff and other Chief Officers from other organizations.

If you should have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thanks,

Paul M. Berens

Firefighter