

LONG BEACH



Correspondence - 2 FIRE FIGHTERS

Date: April 17, 2015

To: Councilwoman Suzie Price, Third District
Chair of the Public Safety Committee

From: Rex Pritchard, President *RP*
Long Beach Firefighters Association, Local 372

Subj: Alternate Funding Sources for Public Safety

Dear Chairwoman Price:

I would like to thank you for bringing forward this item and beginning the discussion about alternative funding sources for public safety. The Fire Department has endured devastating cuts over the past decade and, to be frank, further cuts to sworn operational personnel will result in putting citizen's lives at risk along with the lives of your sworn firefighters.

Since 2004 we have lost 77 sworn firefighter positions, eliminated fire engines 8, 15, 17, 18, 23, and 101, eliminated Truck 14, and have gone from a daily operational sworn firefighting staff of 137 to an historic low of 111. We had more fire fighters on-duty every day in the 1920's than we do today and yet our call volumes today are 10 times what they were in the 1920's. Our response times are increasing, we run out of ambulances available to respond to 911 calls, we have no surge capacity within the city when major incidents occur, and we just don't have the operational personnel to handle our current call volume.

The General Fund can no longer support the needs of the citizens in funding the Fire Department and alternative methods must be examined so that we begin to rebuild the department rather than continue down the path of tearing it down. All options must be explored and discussed before we look to cut more sworn operational personnel.

The Long Beach Firefighters Association is supportive of looking at all options and believes the Public Safety Committee should lead the discussion in finding alternative funding sources. We respectfully request that the Public Safety Committee examine the following:

-Formation of a Fire District for the City of Long Beach

-Fire Management Consolidation

Fire District formation would create a permanent long-term solution to rebuilding the Long Beach Fire Department and keeping it on a stable financial footing. Fire district formations are not new and many fire districts currently exist in the California.

Fire management has not been examined for efficiencies that can be made, nor have they been subject to cuts over the years. Several cities, recognizing that they can no longer cut operational sworn firefighters, have implemented fire management sharing with neighboring jurisdictions. Fullerton and Brea in Orange County have implemented such a model.

While many other options can/should be considered and examined, we must recognize and address that further cuts to fire department sworn operational personnel must be withdrawn as an option in dealing with the future deficits that are facing the city. We can no longer continue to address future deficits in the same form and fashion as we have over the past several years.

RDP:lcr