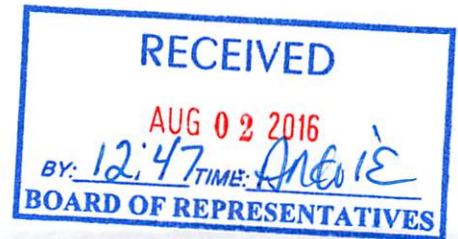


**Belltown Fire Department
Glenbrook Fire Company
Long Ridge Fire Company
Springdale Fire Company
Turn of River Fire Department**

August 1, 2016

Stamford Board of Representatives
888 Washington Blvd.
Stamford, CT 06902



Members of the Board.

We, the undersigned chiefs of the volunteer fire companies, feel compelled to reach out and voice our concerns with the upcoming career firefighter's labor contract. We realize that typically, the volunteer chiefs don't comment on the contract between the city and its career firefighters. However, this is the first contract since the charter change – creating one city wide fire department, and insures that the volunteers are an important part of the department. We could not remain silent on the elements of the contract which directly pertain to the volunteer departments and our personnel.

Some of our concerns are as follows:

The union and the Chief of Stamford Fire Department have always stated that they can cover the city with the resources they already have. If this is the case, why are they requesting an increase in minimum manpower from 52 to 54 personnel per shift?

Fire Watch: We have observed that fire watch duty has dramatically dropped over the years. In the past, the volunteers covered fire watches in their respective districts – one of the few benefits we have been able to extend to our volunteers. Under this new contract, fire watches have been disallowed for volunteers. We cannot fathom how this is not overreaching. Our concern is more of principal than in substance. We must avoid creating a two tiered system. All volunteer and career personnel should be included fairly throughout the city on a rotating list of those eligible to work based on minimum standards. One group should never be excluded entirely from any benefit.

In addition to the contract, there are some "Memoranda of Agreement" attached. There are a few issues directly affecting the volunteer firefighters of this city. Not one of the volunteer chiefs or the Assistant Chief of Volunteer Services was consulted on the memoranda. There is one item in particular, labeled incident command. The CBA creates three different chains of commands within this city, which will undoubtedly result in confusion during emergency situations. We must avoid this at all cost. Three different chains-of-command makes no sense to personnel familiar with incident command structure, nor does it comply with NIMS (National Incident Management System), a national standard designed for interoperability following the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City. NIMS eases most, if not all confusion, and is even referenced in CBA itself. We feel that there should be a standardization of qualifications for fire officers & firefighters city wide. These standards need to be discussed and mutually agreed upon among all parties involved, including the volunteer chiefs. This has not taken place for any operational guidelines thus far.

The charter specifies the volunteer chiefs "shall have primary firefighting responsibility in their Fire Service Districts and primary responsibilities over the personnel and equipment assigned to their Fire Service Districts." It also states that the volunteers are an important component of the Stamford Fire Department. We fail to see how either of these statements can be true, as the city has failed to consult with the volunteer chiefs by entering an agreement which concerns the volunteer districts we hold primary responsibility for. Therefore, it appears the city itself is not following the Charter as written and voted on by the citizens of the City of Stamford.

Since the first of the year we have observed many instances where a volunteer fire apparatus was the closest unit to an incident location in a bordering fire district, and the volunteer fire apparatus was not dispatched to the incident. For time immemorial, the closest volunteer department(s) had been consistently dispatched to the respective incidents. We have noticed a systematic resistance to dispatch volunteer stations or units to incidents that are closer to than our career counterparts, where in many instances, the career apparatus are responding from several additional miles away. This practice delays emergency help from arriving on the scene in a timely manner. It also creates a liability issue for the city - the risk to the public and firefighters increases due to the lengthened lights & sirens travel time through traffic. Furthermore, it also allows for the emergency situation in question to worsen. There have been many instances where a career engine will drive by a staffed volunteer station, ignoring the fully qualified volunteer manpower available within the station. A fire truck responding lights and sirens from many additional miles away when the same type of volunteer apparatus with a fully certified crew of firefighters is available to respond does not make operational or fiscal sense.

For the past 7 months, the city has given the volunteer companies the impression that we are second class and in some cases third class citizens in the City of Stamford fire service. There has been a total lack of communication and a total disregard for the volunteers, who are taxpayers,

many of whom reside in our community, and have given this city so much of our lives. We ask the Board to reject the incident command memorandum at the very least.

We implore the Board to look into why the citizens are now receiving a lesser service by not having the closet unit always dispatched, which was a top selling point of the newly purchased and installed Computer Aided Dispatch System. If we are truly one department as specified in the Charter, it should not matter if the unit responding has career firefighters or volunteer-firefighters on board. All firefighters are certified to the same State of Connecticut standards. Most of our firefighters, career and volunteer alike, receive additional state certified training above and beyond the minimum standard. City officials have received records which show volunteers have well over 100 members ready to respond who are trained and certified to the same level and in many instances a higher level than career personnel sharing the same rank classification. In order to provide the best service to the public there cannot be delineation between volunteer and paid firefighters in our new fire system or the fire system as designed will undoubtedly fail. Volunteer units which are closer to the emergency incident than career unit(s) must be dispatched, in order to provide the best service possible to the citizens of this city and also to lessen the liability to the city.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter in its entirety. Please feel free to reach out to any of the volunteer chiefs at any time should you wish to obtain additional information. We are also willing to appear in front of the Board to answer any questions you may have on the aforementioned topics of concern, or any other matter involving the fire service in Stamford.

Respectfully submitted,

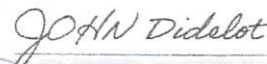
Respectfully submitted,



Frank Jacobellis, Chief
Turn of River Fire Dept.



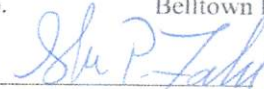
Stu Teitelbaum, Chief
Long Ridge Fire Co.



John Didelot, Chief
Belltown Fire Dept.



Frank Passero, Chief
Glenbrook Fire Dept.



Shawn Fahan, Chief
Springdale Fire Co.