



BAYSHORE FIRE PROTECTION AND RESCUE SERVICE DISTRICT

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“Serving With Pride”

October 11, 2017

To: The Citizens and Community of the Bayshore Fire District

As the Fire Chief it is with a heavy heart that I must inform you to some of the issues and changes that are affecting the Fire District. Since 2008 the District has been struggling to make ends meet as a result of the great recession and the housing market collapse within the District. Collectively the District has lost over 43% of our budget revenue from property taxes. The District took several actions over the years to stabilize the budget and to maintain a level of service that meets the needs of the community. We streamlined purchases, secured grants from multiple areas for the purchase of equipment and for personnel. One of those grants is known as the SAFER grant. This grant provides funding for staffing, so that communities within the country can have adequate full time staffing for personnel. In 2014 the District lost our SAFER grant and we were forced to lay off (6) full time firefighters; however, in 2015 we were re-awarded a SAFER grant, and the District immediately reinstated the (6) full time firefighters positions. The SAFER grants are a (2) year grant.

Over the last couple of years the District has been seeing some rebound in our budget, but not enough to significantly recover from our compounded losses since 2008. The District was forced to apply for another SAFER grant to retain our current staffing level. Unfortunately despite our best efforts, and due to some changes in the guidance language within the grant application, the District received a denial on our application for grant funding on September 30, 2017.

Without the SAFER funding, and without fully recovering from the great recession, the District is once again forced to lay-off (6) full time firefighters effective November 1, 2017. The District Commissioners and staff looked at any avenue available to prevent at the least some of the lay-offs from taking place; however, we are not able to find other alternatives to fund staffing at this time.

The District will continue to provide a level of service to our best abilities, but the loss of these personnel will make our jobs more difficult. The call volume within our response area continues to grow, and the needs for service are becoming more constant throughout the year. Coupled with a very active brush fire season and impacts from Hurricane Irma, the need for a full daily staffing of (4) full time staffing is evident. The District will be staffed daily with (2) personnel daily beginning November 1st.

As your Fire Chief, and also speaking for the board of Fire Commissioners, I can promise you that we will not give up on finding other avenues of funding to return our staffing to levels needed, and to achieve this, as soon as possible. The men and women of Bayshore Fire Rescue are committed to protecting the community, and are dedicated to providing the best services to our abilities.

Respectfully yours,

Lawrence Nisbet
Fire Chief