

Status of the Fire Department:

I am passionate about public safety in both police and fire/ems services. But this conversation I would like to open tonight is specific to Fire/EMS. I am just going to be brutally honest about this.

For over a year, as a citizen, I have felt an undercurrent of an "agenda" in both prior council and prior administration that felt like all steps are leading toward moving away from Community Based EMS services and toward going private. I've seen signs numerous times in both actions and heard it spoken verbally on occasion since the first time I served on Council back in 15/16.

First and foremost I feel strongly that a topic as big as this should begin at the community level. If we are moving in this direction, I feel it is owed to our community to talk about it openly, and allow them to participate in the conversation. By that I mean, the first step should be having this open discussion honestly in front of our citizens. And if it turns out some of us feel privatization is the only option for the future of our town then I think we owe it to our community to do our due diligence in figuring out and laying out what both options look like and be very open about it, so our people can decide which way they want us to go. And by that i mean through a vote.

I heard the words used recently that Our Fire/EMS department has been metaphorically bleeding for several years, and that we have got to stop the bleeding! These words are perfect in describing the last three years where I believe that our former administration wanted it to bleed, so that at some point it would just die. We have all seen how devastating all these steps we have taken are affecting our community. Particularly in the last 6 months with the loss of several volunteers and the citizens who have been affected by a severely understaffed department. Not to mention the strain on the few guys remaining, pulling all the weight! It's dangerous and wrong in my opinion. It should have never come to this.

The bottom line is that we are a government body. Which means we are here to serve the citizens of our community. Not ourselves, and not the few friends we may have around us that have ideas to sell. We need to be open, and honest with our community in order to reestablish a sense of trust that we are here for them.

If we all want to work together to stop the bleed and think outside the box on how to make that happen then we've got work to do, and that's great. But if even one of us already feels there is no hope, we need to get it out in the open and like I said, get our community involved.

I'd really like to hear from each councilor and our city administrator, where you stand on this topic. Where do you want to see EMS in 5 years?