



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Arlington Professional Fire Fighters

City of Arlington Cuts Fire Service, Threatens Fire Fighter Pay and Benefits

*TSAFF: 'Unprecedented' retaliation seen in city's civil service implementation;
Arlington Fire Fighters: Voter mandate, national safety standards ignored by city*

ARLINGTON, Texas, Sept. 20, 2017 – Facing a deadline to implement voter-approved civil service for firefighters, the City of Arlington announced plans to slash firefighter pay and benefits next month after two days of tense meetings with firefighters.

Four months after Arlington voters approved the implementation of Texas Local Government Code Chapter 143 to manage fire department hiring, promotional and disciplinary procedures, the City announced the cuts in “meet-and-confer” sessions attended by about 150 firefighters at the Bob Duncan Community Center in Arlington.

As Arlington City Manager Trey Yelverton said Tuesday the city would eliminate or reduce at least 11 current firefighter benefits, Arlington Fire Chief Don Crowson would not say whether he supported the drastic cuts, which would not affect him or his command staff. The cuts – which could include eliminating a three percent 401(k) match and education and certification pay. After voters approved civil service, the city removed all references to minimum staffing in fire department operating procedures – in continuing rejection of national staffing standards.

Arlington Professional Fire Fighters President David Crow said, “Citizens of Arlington must know that the drastic cuts imposed by the city will adversely affect the stability and competitiveness of the fire department and the security of firefighters and their families. We have tried for months to work with the city with no real reciprocation. In the 11th hour, the city offered three proposals which would all eliminate civil service protections that were approved by voters.”

Crow said, “There already are serious consequences to the city’s response to voter approval of civil service. Dozens of experienced Arlington firefighters are retiring and many others are applying to fire departments in Fort Worth and other Texas cities. This all affects the level of experience and staffing in the fire department.” The city recently announced that Arlington firefighters must file paperwork to retire by Sept. 30, 2017 to lock in current benefits.

John Riddle, president of the Texas State Association of Fire Fighters, said, “We are troubled by the City of Arlington’s unprecedented implementation of civil service. More than 70 Texas cities have implemented civil service or collective bargaining and none has retaliated like the City of Arlington. The city’s reputation in the fire service is at risk. The 18,000 men and women of our association are watching developments in Arlington closely.”

Jim Tate, an APFF advisor, said, “The City of Arlington’s characterization of its civil service obligations is bizarre and misleading. Never before has a city implementing civil service so blatantly threatened to punish a group of employees because of a vote of the citizens. The city’s response shows why Arlington firefighters needed civil protections related to hiring, promotional and disciplinary procedures. Firefighters are grateful that the citizens supported them in their fight for fairness.”

Arlington firefighters agreed to pay through benefit reductions the estimated \$580,000 annual cost of civil service implementation, even though the APFF believes the costs were overstated by the city, based on the city’s changing cost estimates.

Tate said, “The city’s immediate pay and benefit cuts could exceed \$1.9 million – more than triple the estimated cost of the implementation of civil service. That’s just the start: if the city does not revise its position, firefighters are facing tens of millions of dollars of additional cuts related to vacation pay, sick pay, and other compensation – none of which are at risk to be taken from police and civilian city employees.”

Crow said, “Arlington firefighters deliver excellent service, are good stewards of community resources, and they give back to the community. We played by the rules with the referendum and the voters supported us. We’re fighting for what’s right in Arlington. Now, we urge the City Council to intervene and implement civil service, as required by law, and order the city manager to withdraw the punitive cuts in firefighter pay and benefits.”

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