

*the study cited an opportunity for cost savings and synergies through the combination of these two organizations. This will be done without sacrificing fire safety which is paramount to the town.*

*These two fire departments are independent non-profit organizations separate from the town's control. We are working to facilitate these discussions. While there is still much to be done, there is clear agreement on the following:*

**AREAS of AGREEMENT**

- 1.) The Hemby Road station will remain in operation as it is today.**
- 2.) Staffing will continue to allow 4 qualified firemen, 2 being EMT's, on each shift 24/7/365 as it is today.**
- 3.) The quality & level of fire service will remain as it is today or improve.**
- 4.) Homeowner's insurance rates cannot be allowed to increase as part of this process.**

*Talks are continuing around agreement on potential synergies, board structure & bylaws of the combined organization, review and approval of audited balance sheets and a proposed FY2016 budget submission to the county.*

*As we try to keep clear and open communication throughout this process, The McGrath Fire Study and other documents are available on the town website for your review.*

*Bill Deter  
Rohland  
Mayor*

*Jack Parks*

*Charles*

*President Providence VFD*

*President*

*Wesley Chapel VFD*

*Town of Weddington*

*Board of Directors*

*Board of*

*Directors*

*3/9/15 12:30 pm*

*Mayor Deter said that what he would like to do with the Council's approval is send the letter out. The original intent was to have the presidents of both fire departments sign along with him. He noted that wording would be changed to "commitment" instead of "agreement." Mayor Deter would like the letter to go out late next week. Councilmember Hadley added that there is also a letter from PVFD and that it should be read into the meeting minutes. Mayor Deter agreed to read it aloud:*

*Weddington Mayor & Town Council,*

*This letter is in response to a meeting our board of directors had with Mayor Bill Deter and Mayor Pro Tem Don Titherington on Sunday March 1, 2015. At the meeting we were presented a draft of a letter intended for residents of Weddington indicating areas of agreement between Providence VFD and the Town Council, with respect to the possibility of consolidating Providence VFD and Wesley Chapel VFD.*

*Our interpretation of the current areas of agreement include the following:*

- 1. The Hemby Road station will remain in operation as it is today.*
- 2. Staffing at the Hemby Road station will continue to include a minimum of 4 qualified firefighters, on site (including at least 2 EMTs) on each shift 24/7/365 as it is today.*
- 3. The quality and level of fire and first response medical service will remain as it is today or improve.*
- 4. Homeowner's insurance rates cannot be allowed to increase as part of any process to change fire service.*

*Our board also strongly believes that efforts to try and force a consolidation by July 2015, and the turmoil it will cause, must be avoided. The formation of the existing Municipal Fire District took over a year of work including information gathering, discussions, public involvement, plus town, county, state and fire department actions. Furthermore, it also took the State of North Carolina four years to finalize the documents associated with the district, culminating in an ISO rating of 4 for the town of Weddington.*

*The majority of the Town Council has stated that you want to be out of the fire business and we respect your position. However, the drastic changes you propose must be completely analyzed with respect to public safety and the potential increase in insurance rates associated with improperly changing fire district lines coupled with the delivery of service. Additionally, adequate time must be allowed for Providence VFD, Union County officials and other parties associated with proposed changes, to design the service delivery model that is best for all citizens, including consideration of all viable options.*

*We recommend that your goal should be to have a fire service plan designed by January 1, 2016 for an implementation on July 1, 2016 and, in the interest of public safety, current agreements should be left in place through next year.*

*We are confident that if all parties work together to identify the absolute best service delivery model, considering all options for our citizens, we will all have done our job.*

*Thank you,*

*Jack Parks, President  
Providence VFD*

*Mayor Deter stated that he responded to Mr. Parks by asking if his Board had authorized him to sign the letter and clarifying the second point – Staffing at the Hemby Road station will continue to include a minimum of 4 qualified firefighters, on site (including at least 2 EMTs) on each shift 24/7/365 as it is today. Mr. Parks replied that his Board had not authorized him to sign the letter as written and that the PVFD Board believes it is important to address other options.*

Mayor Deter would like to get approval from Town Council to send out the “areas of commitment” letter (the first letter read by Mayor Deter) to the community. Mayor Pro

Tem Titherington added that he thinks Mr. Parks' name should appear on the letter to show that he has had an opportunity to review the letter. Mayor Deter said that the main point is to get information out to the community. Councilmember Hadley asked if the Mayor is asking for a proposal to send out the letter from Wesley Chapel. The Mayor clarified that the letter is from him and is what he sent to both fire departments (PVFD and WCVFD) to review. Since Wesley Chapel is making a commitment, he's asking that they sign the letter. When there is a letter of agreement, he was asking both parties to sign to agree that those four items are true and nothing will happen if those four items are not fulfilled. Mayor Deter further clarified that it is his letter coming from the Council. Mayor Pro Tem Titherington added that in reviewing Jack's letter, in bullet two the big difference is the two EMTs part; he is comfortable adding that in. He noted that there is no reference to timing in the draft letter – it is really just about continuing the dialogue. Mayor Pro Tem Titherington would like to see the “two EMTs” edit made and for the letter to be sent back to Mr. Parks to see if PVFD would reconsider and sign the letter. If they do not, Mayor Pro Tem Titherington is still comfortable with the letter going out. Councilmember Harrison asked how long it would take to get a response from Mr. Parks. Mayor Pro Tem Titherington suggested requesting a response by the end of the day tomorrow (3/11) and if a response does not come by that time, to proceed with the letter as written. Mayor Deter asked if a special meeting would be needed. Legal Counsel Fox clarified the matter and it was determined that a special meeting would not be needed.

Mayor Deter reviewed next steps: He would send the revised letter to Mr. Parks, including the “two EMTs” edit and await his response. The Council will look to send the letter out later in the week. Councilmember Harrison recommended setting a definitive date and time for Mr. Parks to respond by. The Mayor suggested close of business on Wednesday 3/11 and to get the letter out on Thursday 3/12.

Mayor Pro Tem Titherington made a motion to authorize staff to post a letter on the Town's web site and to send to the Sunshine List outlining areas of commitment with the edit on bullet number two – that staffing will continue to allow 4 qualified firemen (firepersons) on each shift 24/7/365 as it does today, with a minimum of two EMTs. With authorization please send back to Jack Parks, President of Providence Volunteer Fire Department Board of Directors seeing if he agrees with the letter. If he does not, send the letter out with just Wesley Chapel Volunteer Fire Department as the signatory.

Councilmember Hadley offered an amendment to the motion. She quoted from the first letter Mayor Deter read aloud: “While there is still much to be done,” then suggested that “Wesley Chapel VFD commits to the following” be added on. Mayor Pro Tem Titherington suggested that if Providence VFD agrees to sign the letter, then the amendment can read “Providence VFD and Wesley Chapel VFD (listed in alphabetical order) commit to the following...” Councilwoman Hadley's amended motion was to include Jack Parks' letter on the Town's Facebook page and to mail it to the Sunshine List.

Mayor Deter summarized for clarity, saying that if Providence accepts the letter, then it will say Wesley Chapel VFD and Providence VFD agree and will include the areas of agreement. If Providence does not accept the letter, the letter will be as stated here. The Mayor reminded everyone that there is an amended motion on the floor. Councilmember Hadley recounted what the motion includes: regardless of one or two signatures, the letter will still go out to the Sunshine List and be posted on the website. She followed up by saying that this would be done with no consideration that there could be a letter from

each fire department with their concerns and commitments and agreements. The Mayor's stance is that fire departments are independent businesses separate from the Town. She clarified that there would be no consideration for having two letters being sent out, as opposed to agreeing on one letter. Councilmember Harrison added the letter in question is coming from the Town Council. She is not in favor of making this situation more complicated and extended. The focus is to communicate with citizens to make sure they know that they will have fire service. Mayor Deter asked if Council is clear on the motion. The vote was called for. Councilmember Hadley's amendment to Mayor Pro Tem Titherington's motion did not pass (3 nays and 1 aye). Mayor Pro Tem Titherington's motion passed and the votes are recorded as follows:

AYE: Councilmembers Harrison, Smith and Mayor Pro Tem Titherington

NAY: Councilmember Hadley

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