

December 19, 2022

TO: Meghan James
Stefanie Garman
Carrie Jones
Jeremy Ruderman
Jeff Foster

FROM: Scot Wrighton

RE: Remarks at December 5 City Council Meeting

Thank you for coming to the December 5 City Council meeting and participating. This memo is intended to provide additional feedback about the comments you and others representing the fire union made concerning fire department services and the pending labor contract.

First, whatever disagreements the city may have with the fire union, we all greatly appreciate the firefighters' service to the city of Decatur. There is no doubt that our Fire Department employees are dedicated to performing essential first responder work, for which I am grateful.

Although it may have been taken out-of-context, it is true that close to two-thirds of calls for service to the Decatur Fire Department are for emergency medical service (EMS) related matters. This category of 9-1-1 call has increased over the years for several reasons: 1) changes and fundamental restructurings in the healthcare industry, driven by cost containment; 2) more people are living alone without friends or family to help care for them; and 3) emergency dispatchers sometimes refer minor medical calls to local ambulance services, fire department EMTs, and others based on new protocols, increased liability concerns, and because they have nowhere else to refer them.

Fire Departments across the country are struggling with a growing number of non-emergency, non-life threatening calls for service that divert them from their primary mission of emergency response, fire suppression, rescue, recovery and handling hazardous material threats, etc. Responding to non-emergency medical complaints in a million-dollar fire apparatus is an inefficient use of equipment and manpower. Of course, the city will continue to respond to all types of emergencies with the professionalism, training and care our citizens have come to expect from the Decatur Fire Department; but it is prudent and appropriate for the city to examine alternative strategies for reducing the number of non-emergency EMS calls it handles.

Finally, it is true Decatur firefighters have been working without a new collective bargaining contract for almost 3 years, meaning the previous contract remains in place. This is unfortunate. But for most of those 3 years, the city has been waiting on responses from the union. Written schedules and meeting minutes will reflect that months have gone by while the city waited for the union to respond to updated proposals. For example, at the end of the summer of 2021, the city and the union reached a conceptual agreement covering all issues. As agreed by both parties, the city committed the conceptual agreement to writing and gave it back to the union at the end of October, 2021. We then waited for almost an entire year for the union leadership's response (despite nearly monthly prodding from the city's attorney to the union's attorney). After a year of no communication from the union, the union's leadership decided to entirely repudiate the conceptual agreement (including some sections of the

contract that had been tentatively agreed to in writing). After a year of waiting on the union leadership, this development pushed the process to mediation. At the end of the mediation process, the city gave the union three different options to consider. This was about 3 weeks ago, and again the city is still waiting on a response from the union's leadership.

The city wants to bring this impasse to an amicable and mutually acceptable conclusion. That is why the city has made its responses in a timely fashion. But for most of 3 years, we have been waiting on the union. Of course, I realize that the union's protracted delays are connected, in part, to fundamental differences of opinion about how to structure and manage the Fire Department. I recently had an opportunity to address these issues in response to a letter sent by Josh Jackson to the City Council. I have attached a copy of my letter to Mr. Jackson, in case you have not seen it.

I hope this addresses some of the questions you raised on December 5. If you have other questions, it would probably be best if you used the normal chain of command and collective bargaining process in the future.

Mr. Jackson:

Mayor Moore Wolfe has forwarded to me the email you sent to her and the rest of the City Council. I appreciate that you took the time to communicate your views to the City Council, and I wanted to add my perspectives.

First, the entire City Council and I greatly appreciate and value your efforts (and those of your Fire Department colleagues) to keep Decatur safe every day. I know that the overwhelming number of DFD employees are committed public servants who take pride in their work, and that they are dedicated to keeping our community safe. The Mayor, City Council, Fire Chief and I have been pleased to assist this mission with new stations, equipment, training and more. Thank you for your service to the city.

Second, I agree that installation of smoke and CO detectors can make a significant difference in community-wide efforts to save lives and prevent tragedies. I also agree that Decatur Firefighters are ideally suited to help educate persons of all ages on the value and importance of these and other fire prevention strategies. At some point in the future I look forward to increasing the public presence of DFD staff in advancing this public education and hazard abatement mission.

Third, I want to see firefighters involved again in installing detectors, visiting schools with the message of fire safety, and taking other meaningful steps to educate the public about all the ways they can keep themselves and their families safe.

Apart from COVID, the reason why many of these activities have not resumed at previous levels is because the city and the fire union are quarrelling about how to staff this important function. I believe there are more efficient ways to organize and provide the inspections, investigations and fire prevention activities, as an alternative to using 3, 40-hour/week employees. While the city has the right to set its staffing levels, organize the work, and establish the structure of the department, we acknowledge that some organizational decisions made by the city require a discussion with the union as to "impact." In other words, we are supposed to meet and talk about the effect of some organizational change decisions. We have done so for almost 3 years. For the most part, during these 3 years, the union leadership has shown no serious interest in discussing "impact" or the city's alternative ideas and plans for providing inspection, investigation and fire prevention services to our citizens. They have used "impact" bargaining to block any organizational changes and have instead demanded a return to the status quo. The union leadership's insistence that the city can *only* return to 3, 40-hour/week, inspectors arrangement, and cannot consider any alternative ways of providing these services is the reason why the collective bargaining contract remains unresolved, and why DFD has not been able to resume more robust inspections, investigations and fire prevention/education efforts.

The services you and your colleagues perform every day are important to our community; but there is more than one way to provide them and organize them. I do not seek to cut-back service levels; I seek to provide services more efficiently and do so in a manner that reduces the city's long-term pension costs. The city's costs of providing fire pensions are higher than they are for any other employee group and constitute **69% of annual fire payroll** costs in the new 2023 budget. This obligation continues to grow. By comparison, the city's combined cost of IMRF & Social Security for pensions provided to regular city employees is less than 19% of payroll. Police pension costs are higher than regular employee pensions, but lower than fire pension costs.

Please do not misunderstand where I am going with this argument. You have worked hard for your pension and you deserve a pension. I have never sought to reduce or eliminate anyone's pension. But I am trying to find ways to reduce the rate that fire pension costs are increasing, because they are unsustainable as currently structured. Fire pensions are already the largest single component of the local property tax levy in Decatur; there is a limit to how much property tax payers should be asked to pay for pensions. The Illinois General Assembly and the AFFI have recklessly driven up fire pension costs. Without help from the State, the only ways the city can slow the rate of growth in fire pension costs is by: 1) providing a portion of your compensation in ways that are off the pensionable base, and 2) by reducing the number of positions covered by the fire pension fund. Your union leadership has refused to consider any of the proposals that advance either one of these strategies. In the long-term, I think this places your pension, and the city, in peril. My job is to protect the long term financial health of the city; and I believe examining more efficient ways of providing these important inspection, investigation and fire prevention services fulfills that responsibility. I have offered the union several new options to resolve this impasse which I hope they will share with you and your DFD colleagues.

Like you, I want to get firefighters back to using their training and expertise to perform needed inspections, essential investigations, and valuable fire prevention initiatives, for the benefit of Decatur citizens and taxpayers. I hope this provides a fuller perspective about why these services are temporarily provided at a lower activity level.

Thank you again for your selfless service to the city of Decatur.



Scot Wrighton
City Manager, City of Decatur
217-424-2801
wrighton@decaturil.gov | decaturil.gov
1 Gary K Anderson Plaza, Decatur IL 62523

Althoff, Kim L

From: Wrighton, Scot <wrighton@decaturil.gov>
Sent: Friday, February 28, 2020 5:21 PM
To: Cox, Todd D.
Subject: Re: City of Decatur and IAFF-AFFI

Todd:

Thanks for your email. I suggest you get 3 or so dates and times that will work for Jerry and the rest of your bargaining team. My guess is that one of them will work for me. Alternatively, you could call Angela Harper and get dates (in half-day segments) that are clear on my calendar and then pick the ones that work for you and Jerry. Okay?



Scot Wrighton
City Manager, City of Decatur
217-424-2801
wrighton@decaturil.gov | decaturil.gov

1 Gary K Anderson Plaza, Decatur IL 62523

From: "Cox, Todd D." <TCox@decaturil.gov>
Date: Friday, February 28, 2020 at 5:18 PM
To: "Wrighton, Scot" <wrighton@decaturil.gov>
Cc: "Abbott, Jeffrey S" <JAbbott@decaturil.gov>, "jmarzullo@pgm-law.com" <jmarzullo@pgm-law.com>
Subject: Re: City of Decatur and IAFF-AFFI

Scot,

I spoke with Chief Abbott and informed him that 3pm on March 4th would work for us. He said we would be meeting at Firehouse #1. If you would be willing I wanna honk we could go ahead and get another bargaining session time lined out in order to keep this process moving and not lose time. Hope you have a great weekend!

God Bless,

Todd Cox

From: Wrighton, Scot
Sent: Friday, February 28, 2020 2:39:42 PM
To: Cox, Todd D.
Cc: Abbott, Jeffrey S
Subject: Re: City of Decatur and IAFF-AFFI

Todd:

Since I do not have your cell number, I have asked Chief Abbott to reach out to you. The insurance representative and I can meet on Wednesday afternoon, March 4, at 3 pm if you can assemble the members from your bargaining team. I realize this is short notice, but if we can make it happen we won't lose time on the bargaining schedule. Let me know what you decide ASAP so I can confirm. Thanks,



Scot Wrighton
City Manager, City of Decatur
217-424-2801
wrighton@decaturil.gov | decaturil.gov
1 Gary K Anderson Plaza, Decatur IL 62523

From: "Cox, Todd D." <TCox@decaturil.gov>
Date: Friday, February 28, 2020 at 10:03 AM
To: "Wrighton, Scot" <wrighton@decaturil.gov>
Subject: Re: City of Decatur and IAFF-AFFI

My. Wrighton,

While I know we would not be able to have a full bargaining session on March 4th, are you willing to allow the bargaining committee to meet with the insurance representative? There would be no expectation that you have your full bargaining team there unless you so choose. Please let me know ASAP so I can get my team lined up.

Thanks You,

Todd Cox, President
Decatur Fire Fighters Local 505

From: Wrighton, Scot
Sent: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 9:47:01 AM
To: Jerry Marzullo; Robinson, John T.
Cc: Cox, Todd D.; Abbott, Jeffrey S; Pruitt, Richard D.; Kline, Daniel T; Wilson, French S
Subject: Re: City of Decatur and IAFF-AFFI

Our insurance brokers are willing to meet with the Fire Union bargaining team as we discussed at our last meeting. However, the dates they gave me are next week: March 2 or March 4. They are available anytime on either of those 2 days, but I need to let them know very soon if either or neither of the dates will work, so they can plan accordingly. So, Jerry and Todd, we will need to decide ASAP if either of these days will work for a next meeting with your union bargaining team colleagues. The city team will be flexible and try to be available at most any time on either of those 2 days; but please let me know if you can put together a meeting for next week ASAP. Thanks,



Scot Wrighton
City Manager, City of Decatur
217-424-2801
wrighton@decaturil.gov | decaturil.gov
1 Gary K Anderson Plaza, Decatur IL 62523

From: Jerry Marzullo <jmarzullo@pgm-law.com>
Date: Tuesday, February 11, 2020 at 3:43 PM
To: "Robinson, John T." <JRobinson@decaturil.gov>
Cc: "Cox, Todd D." <TCox@decaturil.gov>, "Wrighton, Scot" <wrighton@decaturil.gov>, "Abbott, Jeffrey S" <JAbbott@decaturil.gov>, "Pruitt, Richard D." <RPruitt@decaturil.gov>, "Kline, Daniel T" <DKline@decaturil.gov>, "Wilson, French S" <FWilson@decaturil.gov>
Subject: City of Decatur and IAFF-AFFI Document Production Request

Email Security WARNING: This is an external email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello all, pleasure being in Decatur today and meeting everyone. Attorney Robinson, please see the attached and thank you in advance. Yours, Jerry M.

Jerry J. Marzullo, Esq.
Puchalski Goodloe Marzullo, LLP
2100 Sanders Road, Suite 110
Northbrook, IL 60062
708.415.7771 C.
847.666.5680 O.
847.905.7294 F.

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Althoff, Kim L

From: Kindseth, Jon D <JKindseth@decaturil.gov>
Sent: Thursday, December 22, 2022 8:57 PM
To: Harper, Angela M; CITY
Cc: Brodnicki, Christopher J
Subject: WEATHER-CLOSING OF CITY OFFICES

Colleagues-

For the safety of our employees, our first responders, and the general public we will keep the City Offices closed tomorrow on Friday the 23rd. The temperatures are sub zero and the windchill will likely remain near -20 tomorrow. We will encourage you and all of Decatur to stay home unless necessary, due to the risk it poses. Essential employees will continue to work and others not in the office should remain available as appropriate, so we may continue to serve our residents with necessary services. Those employees who have the ability to work from home may do so.

The weather is expected to improve by Saturday morning in Decatur, and hopefully we can get back to normal as a community. Enjoy the extra day for the long holiday weekend and know that the City of Decatur values and cares for our public servants. Stay safe and warm.

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

Jon Kindseth
Deputy City Manager
City of Decatur, IL
1 Gary K. Anderson Plz.
Decatur, IL 62523-1196
Office: 217-450-2323
jkindseth@decaturil.gov

From: Harper, Angela M <AHarper@decaturil.gov>
Sent: Thursday, December 22, 2022 2:54 PM
To: CITY <CITY@decaturil.gov>
Subject: WEATHER-CLOSING CIVIC CENTER OFFICES

All,

Due to poor visibility and frigid temperatures the Civic Center Offices will be closing at 3:30 p.m. today. No decision has been made about tomorrow.

Drive safe and stay warm.

Thanks!
Angela

Angela Harper
Executive Assistant-Deputy City Clerk