

Opinion- A Fire Chief, Three Fire Captains, and Now an Administrative Lieutenant: Just How Many More Paid Firemen?

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Opinion

Despite being assured by Crescent Fire and Rescue's Chief Kevin Carey, the Crescent Fire and Rescue (CCFR) does not intend to stray from its volunteer roots. The recent push by the Chief to include an administrative lieutenant in this year's City budget (2025-2026) seems wildly at odds with his statement. Adding to his claim a professional urban style department is not in the future of the CCFR due to lack of the necessary funding to accomplish the formation of such a department.

So, just where is the funding going come from when the CCFR is already on the hook for the Chief's salary, his administrative assistant, and three recently hired career fire captains? Then most recently, he was found trying to quietly add an administrative lieutenant to the already growing population of paid fire employees. Will this become the Chief's strategy to add paid employees during each budget process to complete what is clearly his goal of a professional fire department? Not so fast, Chief!

The newly proposed position of Administrative Lieutenant at \$130,000 per year is a 9 to 5 job which would couple administration with firefighting duties ostensibly to cover daytime fire calls when volunteers are most likely to be working. Clearly the picture now becomes a daytime call for services provided by the full-time Chief, a Fire Captain also hired, and the recently hired Administrative Lieutenant. Sounds more like a hired

full-time fire crew than an all-volunteered crew. So, what say you, Chief Carey, professional or volunteer? The truth now.

In a world where fire calls are among the least attended by the volunteer fire companies in all of Del Norte County, why is there a push by our local fire chief for more expensive fire equipment (near \$750,000), more paid employees, and more attention to the fire side of the volunteer fire departments than where they truly spent a vast majority of call outs, medical emergencies?

Clearly, the Chief's ambitions are moving towards a professional urban style department, and with it his leadership is going down the wrong track. The current hires of three fire captains are not only without merit, but pointlessly wasteful. The addition of any more paid fire personnel is wildly out of touch with the community he purports to serve. He, Chief Carey, needs to get a grip on his ambitions. If Chief Carey cannot conform to the reality the community cannot afford his fantasies, then the Crescent City Council and the Board of the Crescent Fire Protection District need to rein him in.

Barring that, if neither the City Council, nor the Crescent Fire Protection District (CFPD) chooses to act, City residents and the property owners in the CFPD in the district can count an effort by Chief Carey for a sharp increase in local taxes. The City will likely resort to an increase in sales tax, while the CFPD will initiate an effort to add to the already yearly increasing fire district assessment with another higher property tax assessment. Other citizens in the County will have the delightful task of paying into the City's increased sales tax with no benefit to them at all. Thanks a lot, Chief.

Such is the world we currently live in the State of California and Del Norte County where taxes never seem to match with the services being offered. Less need for services offered by an ambitious Fire Chief, yet clearly the direction the fire department is headed will no longer be volunteer. Fire service, ambulance service, rescue service, and everything in between, paid for by you, the PUBLIC. No consideration for cost or the financial wellbeing of those who live in the County.

This is reckless! Services and employees of the fire department, the community simply cannot afford. An ambitious Fire Chief who is blind to the community's actual requirements for service and ability to pay for those services. Get a grip Kevinn Carey. Know your community and the services absolutely necessary for its wellbeing before you satisfy your personal ambitions. If you cannot rein it in, then know this, We cannot afford you or your "urban-style salary".