

Untitled

Commission Meeting

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Comments:

To the County Commissioners of Sandoval County:

I am writing to urge you to vote NO on the proposal from Chief Masterson that eliminates the volunteer fire fighting personnel at La Madera station and replaces it with an intergovernmental agreement with Bernalillo County.

As I write this, our LMFVD are responding to a fire in Bernalillo County - even though they have been essentially fired by Masterson.

As a resident in the east mountain area of Sandoval County, I am deeply concerned about this proposed change. Chief Masterson is simply wrong that this will improve the services to this mostly forgotten area of Sandoval County. What Masterson is proposing will leave us with fewer highly trained firefighting personnel, increased response times, and a risk to the lives and safety of our community.

Many can and will provide you the statistics to prove this point but as an example:

In our current LMFVD membership we have 18 trained and experienced volunteers that include 5 Firefighter IIs (having more advanced training in fire behavior, firefighting theory, practical training with tools, ladder training) and 7 certified Firefighter Is. In addition, we have 1 advanced EMT, 4 EMTs, and 3 Emergency Medical Responders. 14 members carry a red card certification as wildland firefighters. Does it make sense to disband this highly trained crew, especially during fire season? The average response time for LMFVD is 6.5 minutes. With an additional area to cover, there is no way to ensure that the Bernalillo County team can match that. This could mean the difference between life and death - literally - for the hundreds of taxpaying families that live here. Are you really willing to take a chance like that?

There is no way our ISO rating will improve from a 5 to 4 with increased response times and the distance from the nearest fire station. As a matter of fact, our current ISO of 5 is the best in the county. Response capability can only decrease with the additional area that BernCo will have to cover. Additionally, LMFVD is highly proficient in water drafting - we don't have fire hydrants. Our volunteers maintain their proficiency regularly. I have to ask - what exactly is motivating this proposal? Perhaps you are saving money...but at what cost?

Masterson does not believe in the professionalism and capability of the LMFVD. His lack of respect for the hard work, proficiency, time, training, and commitment of these women and men is beyond my comprehension. Perhaps he doesn't believe it is sustainable. He lacks an understanding of the longevity of this organization (22 years!). The short notice via email and his referral to CERT is an insult to LMFVD and this community. In a meeting at our fire station in 2019 at a community event he stood before us and said he would never remove these volunteers from our community. Can you imagine what it will be like for these firefighters to see a fire burning in their community and not be able to do anything but watch as we wait for a response from our neighboring county? What if BernCo is on another call? But it's ok - you're saving money.

LMFVD provides support TO BernCo and has since 2003. BernCo will now lose the mutual aid provided by LMFVD with water tender and wildland fire support. The LMFVD is the backup response team for Bernalillo County Frost Road station. So as of May 22, instead of up to 33 first responders available to handle emergencies, there will be 11. Not exactly the net gain Masterson describes.

La Madera Wildland personnel have deployed on actual fires across the state (including the Thompson Ridge and Dog Head fires), served with the Cibola National Forest in both the Sandia and Mt Taylor Districts, as well as out of state deployments to fires and National Forests in California and Oregon, living in tents and working 16-hour days. Doesn't sound like our community is gaining anything, only losing a tremendous asset.

Please, for our safety and wellbeing, vote NO. LMFVD are heroes, a truly professional, well trained, committed, and valuable asset to Sandoval County and the entire State of New Mexico. Please know, if you vote for this proposal, you will be voting against the very constituents you purport to serve.