

Email

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Comments:

Sandoval County Commissioners, State Fire Maarshall-

I am writing to request that Sandoval County put any vote on the proposal by Fire Chief Masterson in abeyance or just vote "NO". The community has had NO opportunity to visit over this proposal with any elected officials in Sandoval County. In fact, we only heard about it indirectly through the internet service called Next Door exactly one week ago today. Interestingly, we found out yesterday that discussions on this proposal with the Bernalillo County Fire Chief have been going on since February. It violates the Principle of Minimum Astonishment that Chief Masterson did not at a minimum disclose his intent to our community after he openly promised that the LMVFD would not be closed a few months ago. It is beyond imagination that such a proposal would be floated without any community involvement!

While there are budget concerns, the La Madera Volunteer Fire Department is a volunteer department. It stands proud of many volunteer fire organizations in that these men and women of LMVFD have achieved excellent levels of training. So much so that our fire insurance rating is a 5, the exact same rating as Bernalillo County's fully paid "professional" fire department. In fact, the residents of San Pedro Creek are so proud of our firefighters that we have created the Telecote auxiliary to help fund their equipment, raise money for a large water storage tank, and much more. The LMVFD has become a focus point for our community, and we annually gather there for a fund raiser and entertainment. We vote there, We have meetings there for our SPCE Board of Directors. Annually the fire crew rents a tree and brush shredder and removes fire growth from our roads. You may say that none of this will change, but you are dead wrong - we know that the facility will slowly degrade and we will have lost the critical services provided by the LMVFD and heart of our community. And we will unquestionably be less safe than we were last week before our fire volunteers were abruptly fired without cause.

If you proceed with this and vote on passage tonight, you are depriving us of the rapid response that we are now so dependent on. The LMVFD responded within 5 minutes to my chimney fire, with several firemen responding in their own vehicles. Then, within 15 minutes, I had around 15 vehicles in my driveway. With the nearest BernCo fire station on Frost Road being 9 miles away, there is absolutely no way they can respond so expeditiously. My home could have been fully involved in fire by the time the BernCo Fire Department would have even arrived. A heart attack victim could have expired. A victim of a serious wound could have bled out and died. Is this the kind of decision and result you really want to make tonight? Do you think we in the far East Mountain corner of Sandoval County will take this lightly? One single litigation over this decision could eradicate any potential monetary gains from dismantling the LMVFD.

Based on all your previous actions, we know that you are not deeply concerned about our small corner at the far reaches of Sandoval County. But we pay our taxes, and we are deeply offended by this proposal. We have had very poor prior relations with Sandoval County, but that is a response to your actions, not something we have sought. Instead, we desire your careful and appropriate considerations, especially in this time of terrible financial uncertainty. Our 18 unpaid volunteers are about as fiscally responsible as it is possible to get, especially for the level of excellence we expect of our fire and health safety.

So, please either defer any vote on this proposal this evening or vote NO and ask Chief Masterson to reinstate the LMVFD crew and properly vet his proposal with those of us in the East Mountains. Chief Masterson, even prior to your decision on his proposal, has already fired the 18 volunteers.

Thank you for your considerations and your service,
Dave Thompson
