



Cobb Professional Fire Fighters Local 2563

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Commissioner
100 Cherokee St
Marietta, GA 30090

Dear Commissioner -

You are receiving this letter on behalf of the members of The Cobb Professional Firefighters Local 2563.

First of all we would like to express our gratitude for all the Board has done for Cobb Fire and Emergency Services Department. But there are some concerns that our Local has brought to our attention that we would like to share with you.

We understand that your job is to oversee the budget for all of Cobb County and our concerns have nothing to do with the management of our fire department. But we feel that our concerns need to be brought directly to you.

There is a concern going through the County that there may not be funds for a raise this year for Cobb employees. Recently we watched and were discouraged that the board was not able to come to an agreement on raising the millage rate. We heard how the priority was on the Parks Bond and how it had to be funded because you made a promise to fulfill that. You should fulfill your promise, but we feel that public safety should always be first priority when considering these funding's. There is a concern that things will go like they did in 2012 when we were furloughed and lost a lot of pay. An example of how this affected firefighters was the ones that were retiring within a five year time period there was no way to recover those lost wages. For everything we lose now is lost forever and that affects our retirement. We do appreciate the overtime that some receive now. It's a way to up our yearly pay and helps with our retirement.

At times we feel that the fire department employees are overlooked because we don't have the turnover rate that other departments do and it makes it look like everything is okay within our department. But with our command staff not out in front for us fighting for what we need and deserve, our needs don't get heard. We understand that the police department's job is a tough job and has daily inherent dangers. But we cannot overlook that the fire employees are in inherent danger also. Our dangers are not sensationalized in the media on a daily basis but they are there. We have a higher rate of getting cancer than the general public; we have health issues that are caused from our work habits, and many more dangers. Because at the end of the day whether you get shot and die or die from cancer the end result is the same. I believe at this time we have 33 present and past employees that have retired from the fire department and all of them have some form of cancer now. Just because it is not broadcasted on the news every night there are deadly dangers to our job.

We get accused of having a job where we come to work and sleep at night. But most nights that is not the case, we run every 911 call that comes in whether it is a stomach ache, burning house or building. As the crime and community grows our calls increase all times of the day. We work 2,990 hours a year compared to a 40 hour employee who work 2,080. That's 900 more hours a year we are away from our families making the same salary. We work holidays and even report to work during inclement weather days when the rest of the county is closed. We do it because that's our job to serve the citizens no matter what.

With all of that being said, we feel that we deserve our merit raises each year. If we lose a merit raise it not only affects our pay now but affects our future. Every percent affects percentages down the line. For example, a little over a year ago we started giving a Lieutenant being promoted to Captain a fifteen percent raise and the same for Captains being promoted to Chiefs a ten percent raise. Now newly promoted Chiefs and Captains are making more than Chiefs and Captains that have been in that position 4, 5, 6 years or more. When they were promoted they didn't even receive that much. So this makes their percentages that they have received over the years less. This affects their retirement in a big way. It's the same thing that happens when we don't receive a merit raise or we are furloughed. We are not asking for big raises just the merit raise we feel we deserve. We are not even keeping up with inflation, from 2016-17 inflation rose 1.16%. With our current retirement we currently have our firefighters needing all they can receive. We share the same benefits with the rest of the county employees but our job risk is on a higher level. We are asking our firefighters to give the citizens the best years of their lives and when they retire they do not have a lot to show for those years. As a county we do not offer health insurance when they retire. But yet they have to spend the rest of their lives wondering if they have cancer for a job that they gave their all to. You may receive some push back on this letter but this is a REAL concern. There are other voices out there that also need to be heard, the firefighters. Police seem to be on the top of the agenda, but we should be up there to. We feel that Public Safety should be a top priority for merit raises.

In closing, we hope that we can come to some kind of resolution that benefits both the firefighters and the public. We would also like to meet with each board member in the near future to discuss any questions or concerns you may have.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,
Cobb Professional Fire Fighters Local 2563
Board and Members