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Firefighters Local 1230 Vote "No Confidence" in Chief Henderson

written by ECT | Jul 7, 2015



The union representing East Contra Costa Fire Protection District firefighters took a vote of no confidence in Fire Chief **Hugh Henderson** last week.

district.

According to the letter, the vote is not a personal attack on Chief Henderson, but rather a lack in confidence in his ineffective leadership after the district has been reduced to just 3-stations with 9-firefighters covering 2 square miles. They also cite communication gaps with firefighters and the public.

Chief Henderson, who has two years remaining on his contract, says he plans to continue through the remainder of his contract and hopes to strengthen the relationship with the firefighters.

"My plans are to continue to serve the community through the end of my contract. Firefighter safety has been and always will be my number one priority. Our firefighters do an outstanding job of trying to protect the community with the lack of adequate resources due funding. I will continue to work with our firefighters in building and strengthening our relationships," said Henderson Tuesday morning.

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In May of 2014, Directors of the District voted unanimously to give Chief Henderson a three-year contract extension which included a \$13,000 raise. Under that agreement, the chief is now making \$139,654.

According to **Vince Wells**, president of Local 1230, only the firefighters within the ECCFPD voted on the no confidence vote rather than the entire union which includes Contra Costa County Fire. Well said the vote was unanimous.

The District serves Brentwood, Oakley, Discovery Bay, Bethel Island, Byron, Knightsen and Marsh Creek-McCormick Territory.

The Letter, published below, was sent on June 26 which outlines Local 1230 concerns.

June 26, 2015

East Contra Costa Fire Protection District

Joel Bryant, President

134 Oak Street

Brentwood, CA 94513

RE: Vote of No Confidence



The firefighters of the East Contra Costa Fire Protection District, represented by the United Professional Firefighters Contra Costa County, Local 1230, have lost all confidence in Fire Chief Hugh Henderson's ability to lead this Fire District and voted to present this "Vote of No Confidence" to the Fire Board of Directors.

The facts supporting the "Vote of No Confidence" were brought before the membership pursuant to Local 1230's Constitution and By-laws. The "Vote of No Confidence" was unanimously approved.

We would like to make clear that, despite this vote, we remain fully committed to serving the community and performing our duties to protect lives and property to the best of our abilities and will not be swayed from that mission. This vote is not a personal attack on Chief Henderson. Rather, the lack of confidence is based on Chief Henderson's ineffective leadership.

We believe that Chief Henderson's failure to lead the Fire District has been manifested in several ways: his lack of communication with employees; his inability to effectively manage or represent the issues faced by the organization; his failure to provide the leadership necessary to assure the safety and well-being of the firefighters under his command; and his recent unilateral actions that have violated his own policies and jeopardized firefighter safety.

We believe that Chief Henderson faces the many challenges of the Fire District by "keeping his head in the sand". He has not provided the leadership necessary to resolve the many issues facing the Fire District. Instead, his approach has been to make only minor adjustments while failing to tackle the larger problems. We believe this approach could eventually result in a catastrophic event that could jeopardize the lives of firefighters or members of the community.

We believe that Chief Henderson's lack of leadership has fostered a lack of trust of the firefighters under his command and has allowed the public to be apathetic to the impact of station closures.

After several failed attempts to raise the necessary revenue to properly fund the Fire District through a parcel tax and a benefit assessment, Chief Henderson did not take aggressive actions to inform the public and community leaders of the safety ramifications of staffing levels and their relationship to the protection of the citizens of the Fire District. Instead, he just proceeded with his marching orders and closed fire stations without adequate warning.

We do not believe Chief Henderson has communicated effectively with the fire board, staff, line personnel, or the community as these critical changes were being made to the fire district's operational capabilities. Instead, he has created a disconnection among himself, management and line personnel. We believe his failure regularly to communicate critical updates to line personnel leads to an unsafe work environment for firefighters who must nonetheless respond to emergencies on a moment's notice.

failed to apply accountability equally from the top down. This has led to further distrust of his ability to lead this organization through these challenging times.

Although we understand that not all of these challenges were created by Chief Henderson, it is clear to the firefig that he lacks the leadership qualities necessary to address the major issues facing the Fire District. We believe a change in leadership is necessary for the Fire District to move forward productively.

We have a long list of examples that support our difficult decision to bring this vote to your attention. The membership has felt this way for a long time but did not take formal action in order to avoid a distraction that c jeopardize the Board's efforts to make a positive change. The Fire Chief should be able to lead the Board, the firefighters, and the community to a resolution. We do not feel that Chief Henderson has the qualities necessary i accomplish this.

Recent decisions made by Chief Henderson and the reality of the situation we faced with, has given us no choice, bring these concerns forward for your immediate attention.

Please let us know when you would like to meet so we can provide any necessary details and respond to any questions. Again, this vote comes from the members of the ECCFPD represented by Local 1230; it was not initiate the Local 1230 leadership.

We believe these issues are significant not only to Fire District employees, but also to the public we serve.

Respectfully,

Vincent Wells, President

United Professional Firefighters of Contra Costa County, Local 1230

CC:

Vice President Ronald Johansen

Director Greg Cooper

Director Robert Kenny

Director Jonathan Michaelson

Director Cheryl Morgan

Director Randy Pope

Director Stephen Smith

Director Joe Young

