

FIRE /PUBLIC SAFETY BOND REFERRALIF YOU WISH TO SPEAK TO CITY COUNCIL, **PRINT** YOUR NAME, ADDRESS, AND EMAIL.

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**Subject: Testimony to the Portland City Council on the proposed Fire Bureau bond measure,  
July 15, 2010**

Once again the taxpayers are being confronted with a narrow focused political spin to pay extra for a basic service because some of equipment used is identified as "aging", while at the same time, public dollars are being spent on frills such as the arts, street parties and bicycle logos painted on the streets some 500 feet apart. A change in direction is needed. The taxpayers can no longer afford these misaligned priorities that cater budgets to the desires of the special interests. The City's basic services need to be fully funded first – and that must include some new conservative spending strategies along with bringing back some older cost effective models that are financially prudent.

Over the past 100 hundred years, American cities large and small have refurbished, rebuilt and re-powered their fire fighting equipment, prolonging its life and extending its usefulness – sometimes for many decades - thereby saving taxpayers the high cost of short term replacements. Included in my handout is a sheet with examples of what some resourceful cities have done in days past. Portland too has demonstrated a willingness to keep a rein on spending by refurbishing the central fire station instead of constructing a new building on different site; and also by adding a new truck bay and repurposing the existing historical building of the fire station located at Northeast 56<sup>th</sup> and Sandy Boulevard. Now Portland needs to extend that same kind of sustainable re-use re-thinking for its trucks and engines.

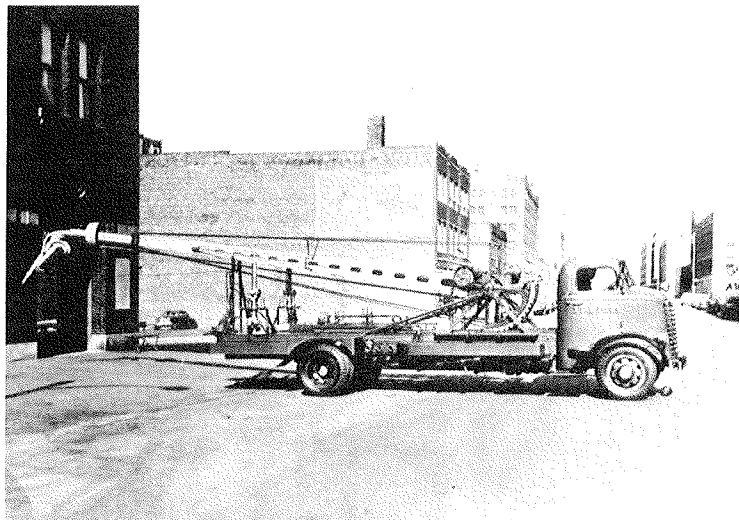
Secondly, if and when the replacement of the rolling equipment is truly needed, some outside of the box concepts need to be implemented. Again, in the information I provided you, there is an Oregonian article about how Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue is responding to medical emergencies with small four wheel drive vehicles instead of 30 foot \$400,000 fire trucks. This not only reduces the use of fossil fuels, but it also saves wear and tear on the big rigs that are needed to respond to fires. Portland needs to follow suit with a similar kind of concept that better fits the environment – maybe even responding to medical emergencies with lightweight electric vehicles that can be charged at fire stations, or even with something smaller than Tualatin Valley uses such as mini cars or motorcycles and scooters. As with Tualatin Valley, medical response times on congested and constrained roadways can be improved with the use of smaller vehicles. All emergency response times could also be improved with the removal of artificial constraints such as curb extensions, sharp turns on couplets and speed bumps.

In closing, all these concepts must be fully explored and examined if and before any additional funding is requested. Moreover, in this new economy of high unemployment, under employment and excessive government spending, financial sustainability requires no longer staying the high priced course where everything must be must be new, replaced or socially engineered. Furthermore, the question on ballot should be asking the people if they want to fund the arts, street parties and bicycle infrastructure – not the funding needs for basic services such as the Fire Bureau.

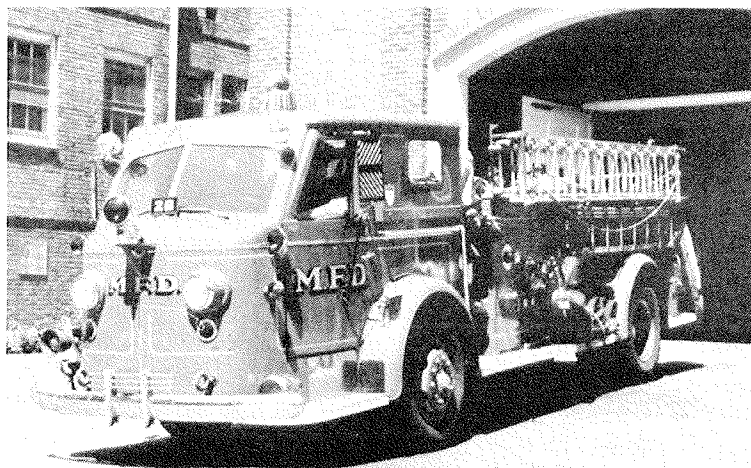
Respectfully submitted,

Terry Parker

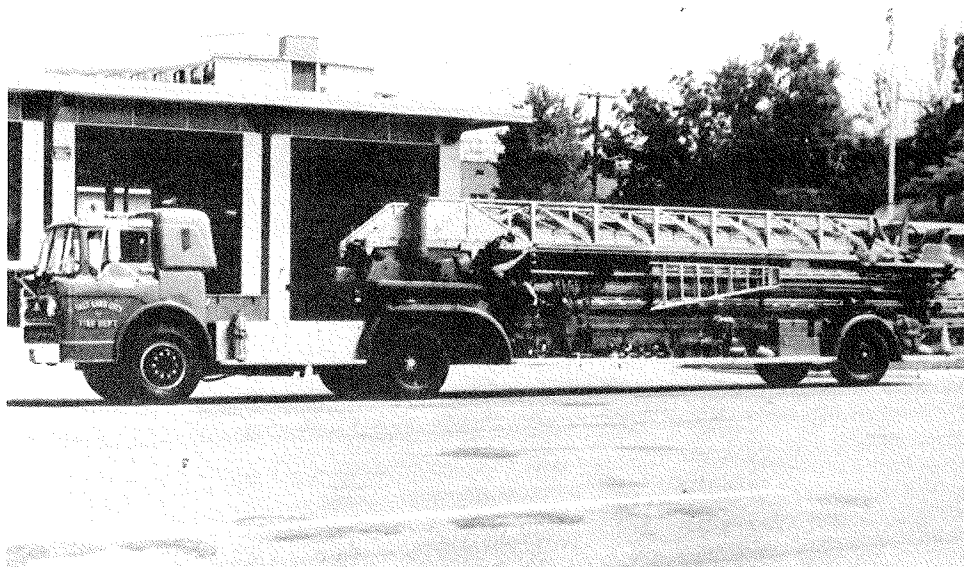
## Examples of fire fighting equipment refurbished, rebuilt or re-powered to extend their useful longevity.



Water towers tended to lead long, multiple-faceted lives. A case in point is one used for many years by the Omaha, Neb. Fire Dept. This 55-foot Hale water tower was built in 1888. It was motorized in 1918, and 20 years later, in 1938, was modernized once more and remounted on a GMC cab-over truck chassis. At last report the old tower was still going strong after an incredible 87 years on the firing line!



This 1948 American LaFrance 700 Series pumper, modernized and rebuilt by the Minneapolis Fire Dept. shops, is barely recognizable. The 1,500 gallon-per-minute open-cab pumper has been repainted, and is equipped with a locally-fabricated protective cab. Note the second set of ground ladders mounted above the short attic ladder. This pumper responded as Engine Co. No. 28 on the M.F.D.



Salt Lake City, Utah prolonged the service life of a 30-year-old ladder truck by equipping it with a new tractor. A 1968 Ford C-1000 tractor complete with sleeper compartment behind the crew seat, was placed under the department's 1938 American LaFrance 100-foot aerial trailer. It isn't known if the bunker cab ever saw service at a fire. This appears to be a shop conversion.



## **Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue is tailoring its emergency responses to what's needed, and that may mean a medic car instead of a Big Red Truck**

Published: Friday, May 14, 2010, 2:31 AM    Updated: Friday, May 14, 2010, 8:22 AM

It's always been a puzzle. The elderly neighbor falls in the bathroom, and a fire engine comes to help. Four geared-up firefighters clomp around without much to do while a 30-foot, \$400,000 truck idles outside.

There's always been an explanation. Fire stations are distributed throughout the Portland area, so firefighters are almost always closer at hand and can get there faster than an ambulance crew. The mentality has always been: Go.

But it's a system with glaring problems coming into view. Actual fires are rare. Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue, which covers suburban Washington County, sends firefighters to twice as many falls, about 2,000 a year, than fires. Of 32,000 emergency calls in 2008, only 1,042 involved actual fires.

The old way of doing things -- sometimes described as "sending everyone to everything" -- is no longer economically or environmentally sustainable, Tualatin Assistant Fire Chief Dustin Morrow says. The public increasingly asks why an expensive engine races across the city when there's clearly no fire. Fuel consumption and diesel emissions have become carbon footprint issues. Vehicle maintenance and replacement is costly.

Tualatin Valley's real work is medical calls, nearly 19,000 of them in 2008. Old people falling down. Middle-aged men clutching their chests. Pregnant women. Kids with scrapes. People banged up in car wrecks. Another 11,000 calls were generously classified as "other," which included fender benders, malfunctioning smoke detectors and suspicious smells.

But Tualatin Valley, like nearly every fire agency in America, sent a fire engine or truck anyway.

That's about to change. Beginning this spring, the department will put paramedics in cars -- nimble, four-wheel drive Toyota FJ Cruisers -- and send them on many routine calls alone.

Tualatin is the first in the metro area and one of less than half a dozen departments nationally to try such a change.

There are inherent risks: The lone medic may find him or herself in a situation more complex than first thought, or that spirals into a full-blown emergency requiring more help. It places great pressure on 9-1-1 dispatchers to obtain accurate information. If the caller says, "I'm not feeling well," what does that mean?

Other changes are afoot. The department's suburban Washington County district is home to 440,000 people and is projected to grow by more than 100,000 people by 2020. An aging population will generate more medical calls. The county's new development, built to tougher code and often with built-in sprinkler systems, is less susceptible to raging fires.

Meanwhile, worsening traffic makes it hard for lumbering fire engines to get anywhere fast anyway.

"Ten years ago you could cruise Tualatin-Sherwood Road with ease," says Morrow. Now, more than 30,000 cars a day crowd the road connecting Interstate 5 and Oregon 99W. Crews out of the department's station on Tualatin-Sherwood Road have to drive the wrong way on a side street to squeeze their way onto the main road.

Those complications, coupled with tight money and sharp public scrutiny of government operations, have fire departments rethinking their traditional response to trouble.

Over the past three years, Tualatin Valley conducted demographic and deployment research, mining its emergency call data for type, time, trends and outcomes. The information was a revelation.

"In the past we sent everyone within 30 seconds," says Dr. Mohamud Daya of [Oregon Health & Science University](#), who is the department's supervising physician. "The traditional method is to send everything fast. Many times, the patient doesn't need anything fast."

Often, people just need help, and that's where the new medic cars come in.

To start, the four cars will be staffed 40 hours a week, Tuesday through Friday. The cars are equipped with heart defibrillators, bandages, intravenous tubes and a firefighter's protective clothing, but also a broom for sweeping windshield glass and kitty litter to sop up oil drips.

Dispatchers have been trained to ask an expanded series of questions to determine which rig is sent -- a "C" for a medic car, or a "BRT" or Big Red Truck. Any flame gets a BRT.

"If they're (the patient) not breathing, they'll get a response immediately," says Daya, the supervising physician. "If it's arm pain, we'll ask a few more questions before we send resources."

The cars cost about \$25,000 each. Outfitting them with equipment compartments, medical supplies, and computer and communications gear cost about \$6,000 each. Funding came from a \$77.5 million bond measure approved by voters in 2006. The department also purchased three larger medical units that can transport patients if private ambulance companies are not available.

Morrow, the assistant chief who is overseeing the restructuring, says the department's capability to surround and drown large fires won't diminish.

"We still have a need for all the big stuff," he says. "We'll keep the heavy-hitting assets in place."

--**Eric Mortenson**



Randy L. Rasmussen, The Oregonian

Lt. Stacie Peterson, a paramedic with Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue, spends time checking out Randy L. Rasmussen, The Oregonian the equipment in her new single-person vehicle during training as paramedics transition from riding on fire trucks to going out in 4-wheel-drive cars.

Moore-Love, Karla

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From: Fritz, Amanda  
Sent: Wednesday, July 14, 2010 9:56 PM  
To: City Elected Officials; City Elected Officials Exec's  
Cc: Moore-Love, Karla  
Subject: Comments on Fire Bond referral

Dear Colleagues.

**I firmly support maintaining and improving fire service, staffing, equipment, in Portland Fire & Rescue, and emergency preparedness in all City bureaus.** Public safety has been and should continue to be the top priority for spending General Fund money. If the serious deficiencies in Portland Fire & Rescue's facilities and apparatus had been highlighted during the budget process, I would have asked more questions and perhaps made different choices in allocating the 2010-11 General Fund budget.

**I appreciate the work that has gone in to proposing a bond measure for the Fire Bureau, and the questions and answers between Randy and Dan. I believe we all share in the same goals, values, and belief in the good work of City staff.**

I am very concerned about referring the proposed bond measure at this time, for the following reasons:

1. Many Portlanders are very close to losing their homes. If the majority approves the bond, the minority will be hard-pressed to pay it, in addition to the increase in sewer and water rates approved in the Budget. **I believe one of Council's jobs is protecting the vulnerable minority.** This can only be accomplished by delaying referral of the measure. While \$30 per year may not seem overwhelming, on top of sewer, water, and garbage rate increases it adds to the payment burden Council is asking Portlanders to shoulder.
2. **There has been inadequate public process about the need for the bond, and what should be in it.** The funding requests should have been highlighted during the budget process, when citizens would have had an opportunity to comment.
3. We were not informed of the need to replace Station 21 and move Station 23 in the budget process. **The Council should review the need to replace Station 21, and if necessary prioritize funding for it and for apparatus in the 2011-12 annual budget process.**
4. Portland Fire & Rescue receives \$1.7 million per year in ongoing funding for apparatus replacement, in their base budget. An additional \$640,000 per year is needed to stay on top of a 15 year replacement cycle.
  - **If the bond measure referral or vote fails, we should make funding this need (\$2.34 m ongoing) a priority.**
  - Since a 15 year replacement cycle is already at the edge of acceptable practice, **proposals to cut the PF&R equipment budget should not be allowed, if/when**

bureaus are asked for savings.

- **If the bond measure passes, the Council should re-allocate the \$1.7 million in ongoing funding for apparatus to other identified priorities in PF&R and/or other bureaus,** for the duration of the bond measure. The re-allocation of the ongoing funds should be done in the BuMP immediately after passage of the measure, before the overall budget process, so that the public will be able to help decide and validate how the \$1.7 million is used for true priorities in the General Fund budget.

5. I proposed dedicating \$100,000 in this year's budget to implement OMF's suggestion to look at charging insurance for medical services provided by PF&R, a request that Nick and Dan supported. The money for that study was reduced to \$25,000 during discussions, then disappeared from the adopted budget. OMF said charging insurance companies could bring in \$7 million annually, which would be enough to fund equipment replacement. PF&R's study in 2008 suggested much lower projected income. **An independent study should be funded either now from contingency, or in the 2011-12 budget, to find out whether billing insurance could be a significant revenue recovery mechanism.**

6. Parks went through an inclusive public process, and decided now is not the time to ask voters for more money. Passing another Fire bond now would make it harder to pass a Parks bond in 2012, in my opinion. Housing advocates have also discussed the need for a bond measure, but were asked to wait until after Parks. **Council should review together all desires for additional bond-funded projects projected for the next several years, and decide on priorities and timing in a coordinated manner.**

7. The recently published audit shows PF&R is meeting response time expectations for fire calls. While the medical response times are outside of the desired range, **Council should discuss whether it is the City's job to provide emergency medical services. If so, we should take a year to consider how to provide emergency medical services with less wear-and-tear on fire trucks.** Maybe a bond measure should fund a fleet of rescue vehicles, and the Council should hire additional staff to provide fast response to medical emergencies saving the fire fighters and their vehicles for fires and medical situations needing more than two people. We should study that, rather than going out to voters now asking for more money for big trucks.

8. There has been no discussion regarding adding millions of dollars to the bond measure for the PSSRP updates. A worksession to brief Council on PSSRP was canceled and has not been rescheduled. My understanding is that the patch already purchased keeps the radio system operational through 2012, and that the plan was to prioritize \$1.2 million per year from the General Fund to pay for the new radio system. Radios to keep public safety officers informed and safe are among the most basic of basic services for our brave employees. **Funding the new radio system should be prioritized in the General Fund budget, in my opinion.** I recognize that would mean cuts in other areas.

Now that we know the scope of needs identified for Portland Fire & Rescue, we should

discuss which of these needs we want to pay for, and how those needs can be met in the 2011-12 budget and by other mechanisms. Similarly thoughtful discussions, with public input, should be conducted for PSSRP and the Emergency Communications Center.

Too many Portlanders are on the edge of losing their homes in the recession. Confidence in government making wise choices with taxpayers' dollars is low - a very significant problem at this time, since it is particularly crucial that government, business and community must collaborate to find solutions in this recession. I believe we must prioritize the use of taxes and fees in the General Fund, and explore new fee-for-services, before asking Portlanders to pay higher property taxes.

I will support Dan's proposed amendments, which improve the measure. Unless public input and the discussions among Council provide new insights, it is unlikely I will support the referral.

Amanda

Amanda Fritz  
Commissioner, City of Portland

Please note new e-mail address: **[amanda@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:amanda@portlandoregon.gov)**

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