

TITUS COUNTY COMMISSIONER'S COURT

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION FORM

Instructions: Fill out all appropriate blanks. Please print or write legibly.

ACCORDING TO: THE RULES OF PROCEDURE, CONDUCT AND DECORUM AT MEETINGS OF THE TITUS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' COURT SEC. IV. A., EACH MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC WHO APPEARS BEFORE THE COMMISSIONERS' COURT SHALL BE LIMITED TO A MAXIMUM OF FIVE (5) MINUTES TO MAKE HIS/HER REMARKS.

NAME: Joe Eberhard

ADDRESS: 108 RR 1311

Please be specific and state the nature of the subject matter of the item (or items) you wish to address. #5

Do you wish to make an inquiry under section 551.042 of the Open Meetings Act?

Signature: Joe Eberhard Date: 3/27/17

NOTE: THIS PUBLIC PARTICIPATION FORM **MUST BE PRESENTED TO THE COUNTY CLERK PRIOR** TO THE TIME THAT THE AGENDA ITEM (OR ITEMS) YOU WISH TO ADDRESS ARE DISCUSSED BEFORE THE COURT.

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NAME: JUDY KEWT

ADDRESS: 900CR 4220, Mt Pleasant, TX 75455

Please be specific and state the nature of the subject matter of the item (or items) you wish to address.

5

Do you wish to make an inquiry under section 551.042 of the Open Meetings Act?

Signature: _____

Judy Kewt

Date: _____

3/27/17

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NAME: NIGEL CHRISTOPHER

ADDRESS: 163 CR 1130, MP. TX

Please be specific and state the nature of the subject matter of the item (or items) you wish to address.

#5. FIRE PROTECTION

Do you wish to make an inquiry under section 551.042 of the Open Meetings Act?

Signature: N. Christopher Date: 3-27-17

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Comments on ESCI Fire Service Study for the City of Mount Pleasant and Titus County, Texas dated July 2016

While the ESCI report is detailed a number of it's conclusions are not supported by the data and lead to the overly expensive solutions for a City and County that is still recovering from the 2008 recession.

DATA: The 124 page ESCI report contains a considerable amount of data but is incomplete in several areas including:

Page 9, Survey Table – no attempt was made to calculate the value of property exposed to loss or lost to fire. Given the relatively low number of structure fires in Titus County and using Titus County Appraisal District information, a reasonable estimate of this could have been made. You would think that the annual reporting of such numbers would be included in the assessment of the effectiveness of MPFD and the VFDs.

Pages 103 – 118 The Incident Density Maps are clearly missing Cookeville and Talco information. The Cookeville information was definitely submitted.

LACK OF VOLUNTEERS AND AGING OF VOLUNTEERS

At several places in the report, executive summary and conclusions, the statement is made that Titus County is suffering from declining numbers of volunteer fire fighters and the ones we have are aging.

There is zero data offered to support these claims but these statements are used as the primary justification for the County needing more help from the City and hence the City needing to build a third fire station.

The chart on page 16 shows that MPFD has 26 people while the VFDs have a total of 96 volunteers. There is no historical data on volunteer numbers. Also there is no data at all on the average age of the volunteers either current or historical.

Looking at this a bit closer we see that all the VFDs have 12 or more volunteers except for Sugarhill with only 9. Just to the west of Sugarhill is Talco with 26 volunteers drawn from an almost identical population size of about 1000.

Tri-Lakes was at 14 volunteers and since the report has increased to 16, which includes 5 from the former Winfield FD and several younger members.

Cookeville is in excellent shape at 20 volunteers (plus 2 support personnel) but was not always in as robust shape. About 10 years ago they were down to only 4 volunteers but have rebounded strongly under better leadership.

The failure at Winfield and the low levels of volunteers at Sugarhill are indicative of local leadership issues rather than a widespread issue affecting all Titus County VFDs.

PHYSICAL RESOURCES (number of City fire stations)

The charts on pages 17 and 18 purport to show that we have an insufficient number of fire stations within the City of Mount Pleasant. Reference is made to 'NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) benchmarks for departments serving similar populations in the region'. It is not explained what those benchmarks are or where they can be found.

Looking at *NFPA 1710 Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments*, the focus for measuring service is on response times with 4 minutes or less travel time for the first unit to arrive at the fire being a key metric. They also use 8 minutes travel time for full

deployment as a secondary metric NFPA does not appear to get into any population based guidelines in NFPA 1710 or elsewhere on their website. They leave it to the local jurisdiction to decide what is acceptable.

The maps of page 116 and 117 show that nearly all of the City of Mount Pleasant, including all the main residential areas, are within the 4 minute travel time from the existing two MPFD stations. The only area that is not is the mostly industrial area on the far south side of the city along 271, but this area is within the 8 minute travel time.

Looking locally it appears that one fire station per 10,000 of population is a good average. Tyler with a rapidly growing population approaching 100,000 has 10 stations while Longview with 80,000 residents has 8 stations. Mount Pleasant with about 16,000 people currently has 2 stations for an average of 8,000 people per station. With a third station the Mount Pleasant average will drop to near 5,000 residents per station making the per capita fire prevention costs nearly double that of Tyler and Longview.

ALTERNATIVE CONCLUSIONS

1. Fiscal Analysis on pages 25-58 confirms what many of us already know in that the Mount Pleasant and Titus County economy has still not recovered to the pre-recession levels last seen in 2007. While we hope that Mount Pleasant grows enough to justify a third fire station it is premature to build one at this time.
2. Most of the Volunteer Fire Departments currently have a reasonable to good level of volunteers but many of them commute to work away from their VFD area.
3. As shown on by the chart on page 102 and knowing that many VFD volunteers are at work during the day, the key issue for Titus County is how to economically provide sufficient fire coverage Monday to Friday from 8 AM to 4 PM. From 4 PM to 8AM M-F and on weekends the VFDs should be able to handle most things except structure fires.
4. The key issue for the City of Mount Pleasant is how to economically provide better fire coverage to the industrial areas at the south end of town, particularly during the day when the businesses are most active.

ALTERNATIVE RECCOMENDATIONS

A There is considerable friction between many VFDs and MPFD due to management style. The more successful VFDs have strong, inclusive leadership whereas MPFD and at least one weaker VFD are more command orientated. To help break down these barriers, best practices on recruitment, leadership and team building need to be shared between the stronger and weaker VFDs and MPFD management. Such training needs to be facilitated by a neutral third party not involved with this study.

B. The existing City – County agreement should be replaced with one where Titus County funds MPFD to provide two fire engines with 3 firefighters per vehicle for Monday to Friday 8.00AM to 4.00PM for a total personnel cost of $6 \times \$60,000 = \$360,000$, plus capital costs of vehicles, not already paid for by the County. Any additional call outs into the county, outside these times, for assistance with structure fires etc. could be covered by a fixed price per call out or an annual fee.

C. To provide better fire coverage during the day to the industrial area at the south end of Mount Pleasant, rather than build and man an expensive third station, why not see if Prieferts would be amenable to basing some sort of fire truck on their property. When needed it could be called out and manned by some of the many Volunteer Fire Fighters that work at Prieferts and other nearby plants. Their familiarity with the plants and processes would be of value in dealing with industrial incidents.

D. We understand that since the report was first presented, the City Manager has made changes to what sort of EMS calls the MPFD responds to and this has significantly reduced their call out volume, without impacting EMS service provision. We support this sensible move.