

April 18, 2017

We all want Fire Protection.

We all want our tax dollars spent wisely.

In 2012, Luminant decreased the appraised value of their Power Plant and Coal Mine. The loss in tax Dollars to the County was about \$1,600,000.00. When this happened, the Commissioner's Court increased the tax rate for taxpayers by 11.16 percent in order to make up for the Luminant loss of revenue to the County. Incidentally, the County sued Luminant and they agreed to increase the value from their original appraised amount. This alleviated some of the revenue loss to the County. The Commissioner's Court handled the problem of getting more tax dollars than expected by doing what? They spent it on themselves - by giving themselves and all County Employees a \$1250.00 per year salary increase!

The County signed a 10-year contract in 2015 to pay the city of Mount Pleasant for assisting Titus County volunteer firemen for almost \$398,916.00 per year, with built in annual increases based on one half of the Consumer Price Index. By September 2015 the County agreed to increase the amount of the contract by \$90,000.00 per year - plus \$25,000.00 to help VFDs recruit more volunteer firemen. These increases now make our annual payment to the City approximately \$500,000.00 per year. This is an extremely large increase for any service or product.

The City now demands that the County increase their payment to the city by an additional \$120,000.00 per year for 6 years, plus shared cost of a pumper truck, and two new brush trucks. At the end of five years, the County will be paying the City \$1,100,000.00 per year. If the County does not increase payments to the City, the Fire Department has declared they will live by the current contract and only send two men and two trucks to assist the VFDs. I consider their communications a threat to the County.

It is hard for me to believe that the City and County have been living with the current agreement for a number of years, and, now, suddenly, the City says there is a shortage of Volunteers and needs more money from the County to make up for this 'sudden' Volunteer shortage! The County increased payments more than a hundred thousand dollars per year already - and the City wants more! The information available indicates that the number of volunteers has not radically changed. Does the City want to do away with the VFDs?

We all complain that the Government is too big and taxes are too high - Federal, State and County. This is why and how Government grows and grows! The City making these threats and demanding more than double the amount of payments from this County is shocking!

PS: All the taxpayers, City and County, will pay additional taxes to finance this demand.

*Little Men worry about Power & Control for themselves.
Big Men worry about Fairness, Equity & Justice for all men.*

Riddle



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August 10, 2016

Honorable Brian Lee
Titus County Judge
100 W First Street, Suite 200
Mount Pleasant, Texas 75455

Judge Lee,

In the interest of starting a dialogue between the City of Mount Pleasant and Titus County in regard to rural fire response, the City of Mount Pleasant offers the following proposal. I understand this will take extensive negotiations, however I believe that putting a proposal on the table can be the impetus for a meaningful discussion.

It is the position of the City that the manpower issue as has been presented in numerous discussions over the past year, and as presented in the recent consultant study, is ultimately the responsibility of Titus County. It is the City's desire to continue to assist with fire and rescue response to areas outside of the city limits, however our ability to continue to offer the level of response without adequate compensation continues to diminish. With the declining number of adequately trained volunteers, the ability to respond to and properly fight fires – especially structure fires – will continue to be effected. As the workload of our fire department continues to increase, without additional personnel the City may be forced at some point, or in some situations, to abide strictly by the terms of the current contract in our response abilities which specifies a response of two firefighters on two trucks. This level of response in essence means we have two drivers delivering equipment to the scene of a fire, as two firefighters are able to undertake only minimal firefighting activities.

While the following proposal specifies numbers of firefighters and budget years of implementation, I believe these areas are subject to negotiation and budget considerations.

PROPOSAL

- In today's dollars, each basic firefighter position costs approximately \$60,000 in salary and benefits.
- The City intends to assume all "soft" costs of any newly funded positions including uniforms, training, liability insurance, overtime, administrative overhead, etc.

- At the point that additional funding from Titus County allows for the hiring of 9 – 12 additional firefighters, the City of Mount Pleasant will build a third fire station in the southwest area of the City at the City's cost.
- Upon the building of a new fire station, the City of Mount Pleasant and Titus County will equally share the cost of a new pumper truck and two new brush trucks for that third station.
- As additional firefighters are added, the City of Mount Pleasant will agree to changes in the contract to ensure a larger minimum response from the City to each fire call – based on the type of call.

Year 1 (2016-2017)

Change terms of contract to allow for the hiring of 6 additional firefighters at Titus County's cost.

City will agree to send a minimum of 4 firefighters on 2 trucks when needed, i.e. structure fires.

In addition, the City will send a minimum of one truck with two firefighters immediately upon receipt of any call (current agreement has a delay in Mount Pleasant's response to see if a volunteer department responds).

Year 3 (2018-2019)

Change terms of contract for Titus County to fund an additional 3 firefighters.

City will begin planning/ design phase for 3rd fire station.

Year 5 (2020-2021)

Change terms of contract for Titus County to fund an additional 3 firefighters.


City will fund and build a new fire station.

City and County will each fund 50% of a new pumper truck and two new brush trucks.

City will agree to send a minimum of 6 firefighters (when needed, i.e. structure fires).

I look forward to working with you and the Commissioners Court as we work to ensure the continued safety of our community.

Sincerely,



Mike Ahrens, City Manager