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June 8, 2010

Christopher Molitor  
President  
IAFF, Local 73  
4271 Delor  
St. Louis, MO 63116

Dear Chris,

As you are aware, the City's FY11 budget process is painful for all involved. In this era of declining revenue and increasing costs, difficult choices were inevitable. We had hoped to spare public safety from significant budget cuts because everyone in my administration believes that effective police and fire protection are the most essential core services we offer to our community. That's why the Board of Estimate and Apportionment made a very small cut in the police department budget, and approved a significant increase in the Fire Department budget.

Unfortunately, the Board of Aldermen was unable to balance the City's budget to provide what the Board feels are other essential services without reducing the proposed increase in the Fire Department's budget. As a result, the Fire Department budget will only go up by 3.3%. While that is largest increase in City government, it will result in a reduction in the number of firefighters. As challenging and painful as that was, it is very reasonable to assume that the process will be even more difficult next year and beyond.

The City of St. Louis has always had tremendous respect for the men and women of the Fire Department, and also of the International Association of Firefighters and Local 73. Despite the acrimony between our two parties over recent legislation regarding residency, it is essential that we make every effort possible to set aside the differences of today and focus on the challenges of tomorrow. Those challenges undoubtedly will be significant, and it is in anticipation of lean years to come that we request that the leadership of Local 73 formally seek assistance from the IAFF to work with us to help us answer the following questions:



1. Is it prudent for the City of St. Louis to continue providing taxpayer based emergency medical services to our citizens and visitors, or would the IAFF recommend that we aggressively seek to allow skilled, qualified private companies to provide the service?
2. Is the St. Louis Fire Department the right size considering that our current population is 357,000, that we have far fewer fires now than we did even ten years ago, and that the last time the Fire Department's size was adjusted the City's population and the number of fires were far greater?
3. If it is prudent to downsize the St. Louis Fire Department, where would the IAFF recommend that the city locate fire stations and apparatus to provide optimum response times and service delivery?
4. Are the St. Louis Fire Department's Standards of Cover up to date and do they accurately reflect the current economic environment? If not, what changes would the IAFF recommend to that document?
5. Is it prudent for the City of St. Louis to continue subsidizing the Fire Department pension system, can the rising costs be brought under control, or would the IAFF recommend switching to a defined contribution pension system or transitioning to a state-run plan such as LAGERS?
6. Are there other efficiencies that can be achieved in the way we equip and deliver support services to our Fire Department?

As mentioned earlier, the City's relationship with Local 73 and the IAFF is extremely important to everyone in the Mayor's administration. We have heard good things about the technical services offered through the IAFF. We would much rather seek answers to these questions openly and collaboratively through an institution you and your members trust than to seek such advice from a consultant found on the open market.

Please forward this request with haste to whomever appropriate, and please contact me if there is anything you need from the City to facilitate this process.

Sincerely,



Jeff Rainford  
Chief of Staff