

From: Brian Chalfant [bchalfant814@yahoo.com]  
Sent: Thursday, February 08, 2018 11:21 AM  
To: Tracey Khalil; BCHALFANT814@YAHOO.COM  
Subject:

As you know, I'll be out of town for the next 10 days and unable to give the report to Council for February.

But here's what I'd suggest that Rich, or one of you, offer to report:

1. On January 11, 2018, Gill Hall VFC had their attorney email our Task Force that they have engaged an attorney to represent their volunteer fire company for the consolidation discussions. Their attorney requested that he attend the discussion meetings. That request was then referred to Jefferson Council and their solicitor for representation. Fortunately, their attorney didn't attend the first meeting. But this was money expended by Gill Hall at a time when their funding has been cut back, and they've complained that they don't have sufficient funds for hose and/or ladder testing and other equipment maintenance. We feel the Council should know that Gill Hall's decision to spend money on legal representation, rather than equipment safety, has possibly put the safety of their members at risk, and we question their judgment in doing so at this time.
2. All the appointed members of the task force were in attendance at the first meeting, held in the Jefferson Borough Building on January 31. A good discussion was had by all. But I did sense that two members from Gill Hall were still hesitant to openly agree that they are firmly in support of the merger, and willing to give up their charter in support of the consolidation. We therefore requested that all three departments return to their organization after that initial meeting, and verify that they are willing to proceed with these merger negotiations in good faith, consistent with the provisions of the the Borough letter which created the task force dated January 4, 2018. I believe that Jefferson 885 and Floreffe are truly negotiating in good faith, and are very much in support of a borough-wide consolidation. And so is Gill Hall's chief supportive of the merger. But as an at-large facilitator of this Task Force, I have a concern that the other task force members of Gill Hall are not negotiating in good faith at these discussions - especially in light of the letter received from their attorney, and attitudes expressed during previous merger discussions. Because of these concerns, we are requesting that Borough Council issue a statement to publically emphasize and verify to all three fire departments that this consolidation is going to be completed, whether through the negotiations and discussions of the Task Force, or by other actions. And by other actions, I would suggest that Council be specific regarding what their actions will be - such as termination of insurance coverage, curtailing distribution of fire tax funds to any one department, and any other means available to the municipality. We all agreed that we don't want to pursue these other actions, but some of the members of Gill Hall VFC need to be reminded of the possibilities.
3. In addition, one of the members of Gill Hall VFC brought an audio recording device to the meeting and operated it without anyone's consent, nor did he disclose that it was being used. As an At-Large Task force member, I strongly object to the use of this recording device, and hereby call for the return of the recording information and destruction of the data. And the other Task Force members also deny their consent, and call

for the recording to be terminated in the future, and also call for the destruction of the recording data from the first meeting. This recording was done without the consent of the Task Force members, and we request the Jefferson Borough Solicitor be engaged to make sure our rights are not violated, and request his assistance with enforcement action if necessary - especially as volunteer members of the community.

4. And finally, our task force members represent the 60 or so volunteer fire department members within the Borough, whose primary goal is to consolidate all three volunteer fire companies into one centralized entity. And with this consolidation, we firmly believe that we will improve the response time, cost, training, command supervision, recruitment, procedures, report writing, accountability, etc of all the first responders. The large majority of these firefighters are strongly in support of this consolidation. And I want to emphasize that the current Chief of Gill Hall is very supportive. But from my perspective, the safety of the entire community of about 10,000 residents is being jeopardized by the obstructionist actions, inactions and votes of only 5 or 6 members of just one department. Those few members of Gill Hall need to step back and realize this is going to happen, whether they agree with it or not.

Let me know if you have any comments, corrections, or anything else you think we should add

John Thatcher

Sent from my iPhone

