



## Press Release

---

### **Press Release From Chief Chris Larmore**

Posted: February 13, 2008

In May 2007, the city informed both the OCVFC and the public that there was "no plan to change the fire service." On 4 December 2007, contrary to the previous word and commitment by the Mayor and City Council (M&CC), the Ocean City Volunteer Fire Company (OCVFC) Fire Chief Chris Larmore was notified that changes and decisions would be made in the delivery of fire service to the citizens of Ocean City, without the participation or agreement of the OCVFC. This followed what has been universally recognized as possibly the most productive and progressive period in the 103-year history of the OCVFC. The commitments and accomplishments of the OCVFC are in verifiable documents, and available to all interested parties.

The M&CC believed that responsibility for fire service (and related directives) could be shared between a city employed director and the existing OCVFC fire chief. (Some city officials intended to transfer this authority without the knowledge of the OCVFC.) This decision maintained a divided fire service under differing directives and policies, an unacceptable public safety practice.

At the City Council work session on 12 February 2008, in an attempt to bring stability to the Ocean City fire service, Chief Larmore appeared before the M&CC. His presentation requested that, in order to unify the fire service under a single operational and administrative leader, the Ocean City Volunteer Company fire chief should be given that temporary appointment. All parties recognized this would be an interim position until the selection of a career fire chief.

Furthermore, the consequences of not making this change were thoroughly explained to council members. Specifically, the current volunteer fire chief would be forced to return to an unsound and dual command structure where truth is alien and duplicity rules. Additionally, the current volunteer fire chief would be forced to return to an equally indefensible and potentially dangerous situation where he has responsibilities for life matters over which he would have no authority. Finally, the union leader informed all parties that his organization could not abide working for a volunteer fire chief. Chief Larmore advised the City Council that no one could operate effectively under those circumstances.

When placed to a vote, the motion failed; the M&CC did not support the OCVFC and the fire chief.

The fire service has consistently been ranked highest in public opinion and trust while local governments have been ranked low. This duplicitous behavior by some of the M&CC clearly demonstrates a basis for this low esteem. The highest priority of the OCVFC has always been to serve our community while building trust and confidence by our actions. To "partner" with the M&CC, and the convoluted management scheme they have constructed, makes this an impossible task. The OCVFC cannot function under this umbrella of distrust and deceit.

Because of these documented facts, the OCVFC has no alternative but to relocate our operations to West Ocean City, and to relinquish the primary delivery of fire and rescue services within the corporate limits to the Town of Ocean City. The Town has been so notified, and has also been further requested to provide a date certain when their career staff is in place, and they no longer require our services. Until that date, the OCVFC will continue to do our best to provide service to the city.