

L. W. Chip Yarborough II  
68210 Santelmo Road  
Cathedral City, CA. 92234  
408-483-6708

April 11, 2019

Mayor Mark Carnevale  
Mayor Pro Tem John Aguilar  
Councilmember Raymond Gregory  
Councilmember Ernesto Gutierrez

Dear City Councilmembers,

After watching the latest City Council Study Session, I want to give input on two issues that were discussed. Those issues are Paramedic Service and Fire Department staffing.

Unfortunately for the citizens of the City, Councilmember Gutierrez has misinformation and needs to spend time with the Fire Chief to get the correct information. First, the suggestion that we reduce our Fire staffing from 14 to 12 is a safety issue not only for the Firefighters, but for the citizens of this community. Councilmember Gutierrez needs to understand the importance of having 14 Firefighters on duty 24 hours a day. For many years this City has been understaffed, and still today remains understaffed. A City of our size/population should have 5 fire stations, but we only have 3. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) sets best practice standards for the nation. I would encourage each of the Councilmembers to familiarize themselves with NFPA rule 1221. We also need that staffing to meet the requirements of OSHA. Below is the information on the regulation from OSHA of two-in, two-out:

*In firefighting, the policy of **two-in, two-out** refers to United States Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) policy 29 CFR 1910.134(g)(4)(i) that mandates that firefighters never go into a dangerous situation in a fire or rescue incident alone, and that there be two firefighters outside the hazard area to initiate a rescue of the firefighters inside, should they become in trouble, during the initial stages of the incident where only one crew is operating in the hazard area. Once a second crew is assigned or operating in the hazard area, the incident is no longer considered in the initial stages and a dedicated firefighter assist and search team or rapid intervention crew is required.*

If the staffing level drops below our current levels, the citizens and Firefighter safety is at risk. Imagine if your loved one is inside a burning building and the Fire Department arrives on scene; and because of lack of staffing they cannot enter that building to save your loved one waiting for additional resources to arrive. WE CANNOT REDUCE WHAT WE HAVE WORKED HARD TO ACHIEVE.

The second issue is eliminating the Fire Department ambulance service. This is another area where misinformation has been given. First, the financial information given is not a true picture of reality. Public and private providers all face the same issue when billing Medi-Cal and Medicare. You can bill all you want, but they are only going to pay the

L. W. Chip Yarborough II  
68210 Santelmo Road  
Cathedral City, CA. 92234  
408-483-6708

standard rate, so it is not a true picture of billing vs payment received. Financial records should reflect this to get a true picture.

During the discussion Councilmember Gutierrez suggested getting rid of our ambulance service and then hiring those individuals as "Firefighters". The paramedics who respond on the ambulance are already Firefighter/Paramedics, and they serve a dual role. So, if you get rid of them, you are eliminating a critical public safety need to this community.

Also, of importance in this discussion is the City's 201 rights. If you were to give away ambulance transport you lose those rights and you can never get them back. So, if you do allow AMR to provide service and their service turns out to be not what you had hoped, you are stuck with them. Below is a portion of 1791.201 of the California Health and Safety Code that gives a brief description of the law:

*Upon the request of a city or fire district that contracted for or provided, as of June 1, 1980, prehospital emergency medical services, a county shall enter into a written agreement with the city or fire district regarding the provision of prehospital emergency medical services for that city or fire district. Until such time that an agreement is reached, prehospital emergency medical services shall be continued at not less than the existing level, and the administration of prehospital EMS by cities and fire districts presently providing such services shall be retained by those cities and fire districts, except the level of prehospital EMS may be reduced where the city council, or the governing body of a fire district, pursuant to a public hearing, determines that the reduction is necessary.*

Our current system sends two firefighter paramedics on our ambulance to every call. AMR does not provide that same level of service. Let me explain why that is important; let's say you are having a heart attack and you require CPR. There are a lot of things that need to be done to you as the paramedics work on you. Having two paramedics to establish your airway, start IV's, administer drugs, etc. is imperative to your chance for survival. Having one paramedic and one EMT try to do the same thing, as would be the case with AMR, will reduce your chance of survival.

Any decision to even evaluate this service should be the decision of the community, not the Council. Any action to eliminate this service should be put to the voters. **I will champion that cause should it come to that.**

If you are looking for alternatives, less expensive choices, then the Council should look to other areas to reduce cost. For example:

- The County adopted new policies 4/1/2019 (3308) that allow for the downgrade of ALS to BLS. To accomplish having three ambulances in the City, you could staff an additional ambulance with two civilian EMT's who would respond along with paramedics to calls, and should the patient not need ALS intervention, those EMT's could transport at a lesser cost to the City, thus leaving critical paramedic service available for the next ALS call.
- Evaluate the elimination of the cash cow City Attorney. You pay a lot more for having a contract City Attorney than you would with an actual employee of the City.

L. W. Chip Yarborough II  
68210 Santelmo Road  
Cathedral City, CA. 92234  
408-483-6708

- Consider hiring Police Community Service Officers like our surrounding Cities. These civilian employees can respond to cold reports with no suspect information, vehicle accidents, and many other calls for service where a sworn officer is not needed, thus leaving sworn officers available to respond to high priority calls for service.

I appreciate the fact Councilmember Gutierrez is being watchful of the budget, but it is imperative that we not roll back the progress that has been made in this City. As Councilmember Gregory said, nothing should be a sacred cow, and it's good to reevaluate the way you do business. However, eliminating public safety services is not the answer.

Sincerely,



L. W. Chip Yarborough  
Community Organizer  
Cathedral City