



Garden City Eastern Property Owners' Association

August 1, 2018

Neighbors –

One of the most important responsibilities of the Garden City Eastern Property Owners' Association (EPOA), in addition to providing the mechanism for nominating candidates for election as village and school trustees, is to keep residents of the East informed on issues of importance in our village. We do this through our website, Facebook, Twitter, a monthly e-Bulletin, a comprehensive bi-annual newsletter, and our public meetings.

The officers, directors and liaisons understand the paid firefighter matter is a very sensitive issue and we take our roles in providing input on this seriously. There are many polarizing views on this topic, which can create concern and misunderstanding among us. Further, we are cognizant that the jobs of 11 active paid firefighters are impacted. As a property association promoting your property interests, we have an obligation to review this matter. It is our duty to consider what is in the best interest of East residents, based upon the facts presented to us.

As background, on July 25, the Village Board of Trustees (BOT) voted, in a 6 to 1 decision (with one member absent), to terminate the positions of 11 paid firefighters from the Garden City Fire Department, which currently consists of 113 firefighters in total (11 paid; 102 volunteers). Although the EPOA was not notified of the BOT's proposal until July 23, we were fully aware of the poor working relationship between the paid firefighters and the Village occurring over many years and the dysfunction these labor issues have caused within the GC Fire Department.

In response to the decision, the Paid Firefighters' Union will conduct a petition drive through late August to force a majority public vote to overturn the BOT's decision. Failure by the Paid Firefighters' Union to obtain sufficient petition signatures (20% of registered village voters) will result in the termination of the 11 paid firefighters. If the Paid Firefighters' Union obtains sufficient signatures, there will be a public vote to either affirm or deny the BOT's decision. If the public vote affirms the BOT's decision, its decision will stand. Alternatively, if the public vote denies the BOT's decision, the paid firefighters will retain their jobs and the Village will likely be required to hire an additional 11 to 12 paid firefighters pursuant to a recent arbitration decision, as described below.

As a service to East residents, enclosed below is a factual summary. Further, we have adopted the below resolution by a unanimous vote with respect to the BOT's decision to terminate the paid firefighters. Although two EPOA directors are long-time volunteer firefighters in the Village, neither director participated in nor was present for the board of directors' vote.

Based on the facts, the Board of Directors of the EPOA unanimously supports the resolution by the Village's Board of Trustees to terminate all eleven paid firefighters and recommends that residents do not sign any petitions from the Paid Firefighters' Union (Garden City Professional Firefighters IAFF Local 1588).



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The facts are contained below (also available at www.gcepoa.org) and were obtained from the following sources: (i) publicly available information; (ii) Village data and communications; (iii) Paid Firefighters' Union communications, public statements, and social media information; and (iv) data provided by the Garden City Fire Department.

The facts are organized as follows: (I) Information to Respond to Residents' Public Safety Concerns; (II) Analysis of the Relationship of the Village and the Paid Firefighters; and (III) Potential Impact of Overturning the BOT July 25 Decision.

Based on these facts, in summary, we find:

- There is no public safety concern as the current staff of 102 volunteers will continue to provide a high level of service to the residents of Garden City. In fact, over the last ten years, the Garden City Fire Department has decreased from 36 paid active firefighters to 11 paid active firefighters in 2018 and we are aware of no diminution in service.
- Every other town on Long Island (177 fire departments in Nassau & Suffolk) uses volunteers, except Garden City and Long Beach.
- The potential loss of the Village's control over whether a volunteer firefighter or a paid firefighter operates the fire trucks pursuant to a recent arbitration decision leaves Garden City with the choice of either hiring additional paid firefighters (potentially 11 to 12 additional paid firefighters, doubling the paid staff and total compensation) or immediately terminating the 11 paid firefighters.

It was our intention to provide a fair review of the facts in order to come to this decision and provide information so our neighbors can be properly educated on this matter. We hope we have served that purpose for your benefit.

Sincerely,

The Board of Directors of the EPOA

Tom Hogan, President
Paul Dircks, Corresponding Secretary
Joe Courtade, Director
Philip Foote, Director
Tom Mastanduono, Director
Bob Rymers, Director
Ted Ucinski, Director

Steve Ilardi, Vice President
Sal Norberto, Treasurer
Andy de Lannoy, Director
Danielle Kilkenny, Director
Mike Nagler, Director
Bob Schoelle, Director



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Fact Sheet Summary of the Fire Department Matter (Dated 08/01/2018)

The Board of Directors of the Garden City Eastern Property Owners' Association ("EPOA") is publishing the following facts about the operation of the Garden City Fire Department in response to questions raised by residents regarding the recent decision by the Village's Board of Trustees ("BOT") to pass a resolution terminating all 11 paid firefighters. These are thoroughly researched facts, not opinion, and incorporate publicly available information as well as communications from the Village, the Garden City Professional Firefighters IAFF Local 1588 (the "Paid Firefighters' Union"), and the Garden City Fire Department.

I. Information to Respond to Residents' Public Safety Concerns

- Of the 113 total active Garden City Firefighters, 102 are volunteers and 11 are paid.
- Out of the approximately 177 fire departments in Nassau and Suffolk Counties, Garden City and Long Beach are the only 2 employing paid firefighters.
- There are at most 3 paid firefighters working in Garden City at any one time.
- The main function of the paid firefighters is to drive the first line response fire apparatus to the fire and it is the volunteer firefighters who typically enter the fire.
- In 2017, of the 1,020 alarms, 3 were fires and the others were for car accidents, severe weather events, gas alarms, and false smoke alarms. In 2018 to date, there have been no fires.
- In 2008, there were approximately 36 paid firefighters, and we are aware of no diminution in service over the last 10 years.
- The volunteer ranks have continued to be successful in recruiting new volunteers.

II. Analysis of the Relationship of the Village and the Paid Firefighters

- As indicated by both the Paid Firefighters' Union and the Village and, as discussed at numerous EPOA meetings over the years, labor relations between these two parties have been strained.
- The 11 paid firefighters are currently on administrative paid leave for 30 days, during which time the Paid Firefighters' Union will seek to obtain signatures from 20 percent of registered voters in the Village of Garden City in order to force a majority public vote to overturn this decision. If the Paid Firefighters' Union's petition fails to obtain the required number of signatures to force a public vote, the decision of the Board of Trustees to terminate the 11 paid firefighters stands.
- On July 6, the Paid Firefighters' Union obtained a favorable arbitration decision (the "July 6 Arbitration"), which can be found on the website of the law firm representing the Paid Firefighters' Union (available at www.msek.com/news/favorable-arbitration-decision-award-meyer-suozzi-client-garden-city-professional-fire-fighters). The law firm





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representing the Paid Firefighters' Union, in summarizing this decision, stated that the arbitrator "ruled that volunteers may continue to be called but only after paid career firefighters respond with first line fire apparatus."

- As a result of the July 6 Arbitration, unless a compromise is reached, Garden City will need to hire additional paid firefighters (potentially double the current number) or immediately terminate the 11 paid firefighters. This is due to the Paid Firefighters' Union's contractual jurisdiction over the operation of the first line response fire apparatus, which the arbitrator upheld. This is notwithstanding the fact that approximately 40 volunteers are fully qualified to operate the trucks.

III. Potential Impact of Overturning the BOT July 25 Decision

- The Paid Firefighters' Union will have full operational control over the first line response fire apparatus, as provided under the arbitration decision.
- The 11 paid active firefighters will retain their jobs and the Paid Firefighters' Union will likely enforce the arbitration decision which would potentially at least double the number of paid firefighters.
- Based on Village information, the current annual total compensation cost of the 11 paid firefighters is about \$2.2 million, \$1.3 million in salary and \$900K in benefits. This will potentially double next year with the need to hire another 11 to 12 paid firefighters based on the arbitrator's decision.

Based on the facts, the Board of Directors of the EPOA unanimously supports the resolution by the Village's Board of Trustees to terminate all eleven paid firefighters and recommends that residents do not sign any petitions from the Paid Firefighters' Union (Garden City Professional Firefighters IAFF Local 1588).

