

The Palmer

Charlotte FireFighter Association Newsletter

January 2024

www.cffa660.org

704-331-9515



By Law Change

Dont forget the membership meetings are now:

Section 1. Regular meeting of this Local shall be held on the second Tuesday of each of the following alternating between 9am and 7pm. January-Officer Swear in, March, May, August, October-Nominations, November-Elections. Twelve (12) members, exclusive of the Executive Board shall constitute a quorum.

How do we get better as a Local?

What can we do as members to make Local 660 better? You will hear people say " I'm not a very good union member I never go to meetings." Can we make the Local better? As members, there are other ways to make the Local better other than going to meetings such as: Being involved in Political action, being in attendance at a call to action, emailing City and State leaders when asked, and explaining to non-union members why you are a union member. We must strive to make the local better and that includes the Executive Board but this also lies with the members of local 660

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INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF FIRE FIGHTERS



an advanced approach to patient care

Created in partnership with Advanced Recovery Systems (ARS), the IAFF Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health Treatment and Recovery is a flagship recovery center exclusively for IAFF members struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder, addiction, substance and alcohol abuse, depression, anxiety and other behavioral health conditions to receive the help they need in taking the first steps toward recovery.

The Center of Excellence is a voluntary treatment facility designed by fire fighters for fire fighters with a mission to address the unique medical, psychological and social needs of IAFF members facing behavioral health issues.

Staff are trained to understand the cumulative effect of occupational trauma, as well as the clinical implications of fire service culture and lifestyle. Treatment plans are designed to return fire fighters to the career, community and family they love.

This process is completely confidential. Center staff cannot discuss treatment with anyone — the fire department, family or friends — unless given explicit permission by the client. This applies before, during and after treatment at the IAFF Center of Excellence.

The IAFF Center of Excellence has earned the Joint Commission's Gold Seal of Approval for Behavioral Healthcare Accreditation.



UPDATE

Local 660 needs you to update your email address and phone number. If you have changed any of these or are still using a city email address please contact us or email:

**Secretary@cffa660.org
or call the office
at: 704-331-9515**

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President Report Tom Brewer

Just a few reasons why you Should join Local 660

"Voicing the Unvoiced: The Role of Charlotte Fire Fighters Local 660 & the IAFF in Championing Firefighter Rights"

In the dynamic and challenging landscape of firefighting, the voice of an advocate is not just a luxury, but a necessity. This is where Charlotte Fire Fighters Local 660 stands apart from any other organization in CFD, providing an unwavering voice for issues that others might shy away from due to their complexity, unpopularity, or potential for retaliation. Local 660 and the IAFF is not just a union; it's a fearless champion for the rights and needs of its members. Here's why this is pivotal:

1. **Advocating for a Worker's Bill of Rights:** In a profession where risk is an everyday reality, Local 660 pushes for a comprehensive Worker's Bill of Rights. This Bill goes beyond standard protections, seeking to enshrine the rights and dignities that every firefighter and city worker deserves, ensuring that their service is met with respect and fairness.

2. **Addressing Medic Holds and Staffing Shortages:** Frontline experiences have shown the critical impact of medic holds and staffing shortages on both firefighter safety and community service quality. Local 660 does not hesitate to speak out on these issues, advocating for policies and resources to address these challenges head-on, ensuring that firefighters have the support they need to do their jobs effectively and safely.

3. **Fighting for better and more affordable Health Insurance for both active and retired firefighters:** Recognizing the service and sacrifice of those who have dedicated their careers to firefighting, Local 660 actively campaigns for fair retiree health insurance. This commitment reflects a deep respect for the continued welfare of members, even after their active service ends.

4. **Ensuring a Fair and Equitable Promotional Process:** Career advancement in firefighting should be based on merit, skills, and dedication. Local 660 stands for a fair and transparent promotional process, ensuring that all firefighters have equal opportunities to advance in their careers without bias or unfair practices.

5. **Speaking Out When Others Can't:** Perhaps the most significant role of Local 660 is its readiness to address sensitive issues that individual firefighters might be hesitant to raise. Whether it's due to fear of retaliation, concern over unpopularity, or the complex nature of the issues, Local 660 provides a safe and powerful platform for these concerns to be heard and addressed.

6. **Collective Strength in Advocacy:** The collective voice of Local 660 members amplifies the impact of advocacy efforts. When one speaks, it is with the strength of many, ensuring that concerns are not just heard, but acted upon. It may take years to affect the change we need but Local 660 has an over 80 year history of advocacy.

7. **Impacting Policy and Change:** Local 660's vocal advocacy plays a crucial role in shaping policies at both local and national levels. By actively engaging in dialogue with policymakers and stakeholders, the union ensures that the interests of Charlotte's firefighters are represented and prioritized in decision-making processes. Policies such as our retirement, cancer legislation and Line of Duty Death Benefits didn't just happen. They are the result of Local 660 and the IAFF.

In conclusion, joining Charlotte Fire Fighters Local 660 and the IAFF means being part of a bold and courageous body that dares to speak out on critical issues. Local 660's commitment to advocacy ensures that every firefighter's voice is heard, their rights are protected, and their welfare is prioritized. Together, under the banner of Local 660 and the IAFF, Charlotte's firefighters stand strong, advocating for a safer, fairer, and more supportive profession. "Stay Safe, Stay Strong, Stay Union!" with Local 660.



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Vice President Report Mike Feneis

As we start the new year, your union leadership met to set goals for 2024. It is one thing to just set goals, that's fine and dandy, but we are looking to measure the goals. We want to be able to determine if we have achieved the goals and if not how we missed the mark. By doing this we can measure success and weakness. Here are the goals set forth by the executive board.

1. Increase Union Membership:

Goal: Aim to grow our Union's membership by 7-10%

2. Enhance Member Engagement:

Goal: Increase member involvement in Union activities and initiatives.

3. Advocate for Members' Rights and Interests:

Goal: Strengthen the Union's advocacy efforts on behalf of its members.

4. Improve Communication:

Goal: Enhance communication both internally and externally.

5. Professional Development:

Goal: Offer more opportunities for members to develop their skills and knowledge.

6. Financial Sustainability:

Goal: Ensure the Union's financial stability and growth.

7. Diversity and Inclusion:

Goal: Promote diversity and inclusion within the Union.

8. Strengthen or ability to influence CFD and CLTCC to affect positive change:

Goal: Enhance the Union's ability to effect positive change on behalf of members.

9. Measure and Evaluate Progress:

Goal: Implement a system to track and evaluate progress toward these goals.

10. Strengthen Member Solidarity:

Goal: Foster a sense of unity and solidarity among Union members.

To accomplish these goals and to strengthen your union we need you, the membership, to get involved. This is your union and if you want change you have to be a part of it. Get involved.

Brothers and Sisters, we start 2024 with issues your Local will continue to push for. At the top of the list is the Worker Bill of Rights. Did you know if you are called for a disciplinary meeting or questions you are not allowed Union representation? Did you know you don't need to be notified if you are under investigation? These are some of the basic rights we should have as employees. The Worker Bill of Rights addresses these issues not just for the CFD but for all city workers. I can not impress upon you how important it is for us to attain this. If you don't think it's important just ask one of our brothers and ask what happened to him this month. The city council will need to vote to pass this but we need your help. We need you to email the city council and ask them to pass the Worker Bill of Rights.



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Secretary Report Travis Cash

Brothers and sisters, Having been elected as secretary for The Local, I've been asked to introduce myself and share some of my goals with you all. I'm currently assigned to R-11 "The Original" on C shift and have been a part of CFD for 6 years. Prior to this, I was a G% and Lincoln County firefighter. It wasn't until I was stationed with Engineer Feneis at station 3 that I learned what all the Local did for us. I was intrigued to hear of the possible training, conferences, discounts, and connections that the IAFF provides. My first interaction with The 660 was prior to my employment with CFD. While working as an assistant at Gaston College filling SCBA bottles (which is probably why I transferred to the rescue), the union brought Nozzle Forward to the members which was amazing to witness. I would love to have the pleasure to organize similar training that the members want or that the department may not be able to provide. However, such resources and events can only be made available if the concerns in this letter are addressed. While there were a number of reasons I threw my name into the hat for the secretary position, I wish it were because I happen to be the most qualified. Ultimately though, it was because no one else sought any interest in the position. I saw how much time and effort the E-board members dedicated, only to have very little participation at meetings, voting, and other events. Retiree health care is an immensely important topic that is frequently spoken about and yet only a handful of votes were cast. It was eye-opening and unfortunate to see Station 11-C shift composed the majority of the votes for the MERP. The turnout was an embarrassment for us and more participation is greatly needed! The MERP is not a fix-all, but as we actively work toward a better solution, we must admit it was better than what was in place- which was nothing. Speaking with Mike, Anjie, and Capt Brewer, I believe this union is suffering at the hands of its members. We have no power, voice, or influence when members are just paying their dues for a sickle and a t-shirt. We have the opportunity to positively impact this city, our department, and every one who gets on and off the rigs. The Public Works Union (UE150) had numerous members show up to a council

meeting to support and introduce a worker's bill of rights, drafted by The 660, to fight for ALL city employees. The only support we could muster up was 4 members, which is disheartening. This tells me that the numerous complaints voiced across the stations are nothing more than just people with nothing better to do than complain. We have the members, leadership, resources, and influence to make Local 660 a voice in the ear of every Council member, City leader, and department head. Change starts from within, and once our members inside of the Union Hall, not just those in the courtroom, speak up and become present, we can do some real work for all members - past, present, and future! Unfortunately, I realize that I may have upset some folks by the things I've stated in this article. I hope, in turn, it energizes you to become more involved. Nothing would make me happier than having enough people show up to vote me out! However, that would require members to actually show up to a meeting. In the end, we are only 4 people and we need you all to help us to help you! I am more than willing to have a conversation and hear your frustrations or concerns. I will come by the station to have lunch, or meet up at Hardee's at 6 am with any retirees. I will do everything in my power for any brother or sister, member or non-member, that asks. Feel free to call, text, or email me with any questions or concerns. I look forward to serving you all and getting things done! Fraternally, Travis Cash CFFA Local 660



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Divisions

Health & Safety Division

Greetings from the H&S Division. We hope that everyone has had a great holiday season. A few things to be aware of from the H&S Division.

- The "On Shift Fire Safety Committees" are being formed. This will be committees for each shift to have a voice in making suggestions concerning safety and health of the department. Meetings are expected to begin in January, if interested see IB 23-113-20.

- Safety Officer Class- The National Fire Academy (NFA) Incident Safety Officer class will be offered in two sections: Section 1 January 26th & 29th, Section 2 February 23rd & 26th.

- Vehicle Accident Review Board (VARB)- The board continually sees the same type of incidents in the department. Incidents involving apparatus striking objects while moving forward seems to be an ongoing issue. With the city becoming busier and areas denser, crews should deploy spotters when faced with diminished access. Awareness that apparatus may not need to be directly in front of a call should be recognized and crews may need to walk to an area. Priority of incident, type of call, and need for apparatus should be considered when faced with these areas.

- The Charlotte Fire Department initiated procedures in 2016 for cancer prevention and reduction. These initiatives are covered in CFD Policies GO 210.01 and 210.02. These policies reference on scene decon and the procedure for removing SCBAs after a 45-minute timer. For Fires, remember to have members set up the "red buckets"

for decon. Fire wipes should also be set out for member use. These items can be placed near water coolers for easy access and high visibility for members to utilize. Performing a quick decon of gear and using the wipes is a big step in cancer prevention. 45-minute timer- Remember to start the 45-minute timer after the IDLH area has been cleared by a gas monitor. Limit crew access in these areas unless SCBA is being utilized.

- PPE- Ensure that appropriate PPE is being worn in and around IDLH atmospheres. It's a great thing to see all members active on the fire ground and providing equipment when needed. If members are throwing ladders and taking equipment to crews involved in IDLH atmospheres, PPE needs to be donned. We have witnessed several close calls by members nearly being struck by falling objects while setting ladders up or fire conditions changing rapidly. Please reach out to our division if you have any suggestions for the Health & Safety of our members. Your Shift Safety Officer is willing to meet with members at the stations to discuss issues and answer any questions. Please reach out.

By: Capt Will Keller



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History

In our second installment of Fireside Chats of History, today we discuss Fire Chief Hendrix Palmer. The longest serving Fire Chief in Charlotte's History, Chief Palmer served as Fire Chief for 21 years, only a year longer than Chief Fincher. Chief Palmer had a humble beginning with the CFD. As a kid a young Hendrix Palmer would be seen hanging out at the fire station. Later Hendrix Palmer would become a On Call Firefighter in 1904 and then come to work for the CFD full time in 1906 when the fire department became totally paid under Chief William Silas Orr. Chief Orr was well known to drive himself in his Black Chief's Buggy but it would be a young Hendrix Palmer that would take the reins when Chief Orr wanted a Driver. This would pay off years later. On July 1, 1914 when a barn exploded on South Cedar Street killing Captain William Glenn (formerly Fire Chief) instantly and injuring Fire Chief J. Harvey Wallace it would be Firemen Hendrix Palmer who would come to Chief Wallace's aid and almost single handily pick him up and put him in a car where he was rushed to the hospital where he would die a few hours later. Hendrix Palmer would serve as a Huckle Bearer at the double funeral.



Hendrix Palmer was ahead of the curve and started learning how to work on gasoline engines and became a master mechanic. Serving the department for years as they transitioned to motorized apparatus. Hendrix Palmer would be promoted to CAPTAIN then Assistant Chief and finally was appointed to the Fire Chiefs Office by City Council in 1927. His accomplishments as Chief are still felt today. No Chief since has had the impact on a fundamental scale and only Chief Fincher has had the organizational impacts like Chief Palmer. Chief Palmer presided over the construction of New Station 3 at Belmont and Allen, Station 5, 6, 7 and started service for the Airport. Approved plans for new Station 2 and 8. The Palmer School and Training Tower were

built under his tenure.

After the Guthrie Apartment Fire Chief Palmer would take the opportunity to write a City Fire Code and start the Fire Prevention Bureau. Chief Palmer was Chief when the Civil Service Commission was formed and when the city changed to a Council Manager form of government was installed. He was instrumental in the total rewrite of the city Charter in 1935 and 1939 and it was his responsibility to have the fire department rules approved by Ordinance by City Council to meet the requirements of the Charter.

The basic rules of conduct we use today were approved in 1943.

Chief Palmer's accomplishments could fill volumes. He is the father of our retirement system, he was on the original board of the Shrine Bowl and he knew how to play the political game. Getting a Kelly day added in 1946. This was the first reduction in hours since 1919. There wouldn't be another until 1968. To put it in perspective we haven't had a reduction in hours since 1969 in the CFD. The busiest company was Engine 5, they ran 848 calls in 1969. Chief Palmer would retire June 24, 1948 serving 44 years with the CFD and 21 years as Chief. His lasting impacts are felt today. Some of his fire stations are still in use today and have been used, other than remodels, since he was Chief.

The Palmer also has had a Facelift but looks very similar to the way it did in 1940. Chief Palmer is buried in Sharon Memorial Gardens. It should be noted that when he retired the CFD line crew had a work order to go to his home on Circle Drive to remove one fire gong. I bet his wife loved that at 3 am.

Written By Chief Shane Nantz

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FireFighter close calls

"Let no man's ghost come back to say, 'My training let me down.'"

This quote was our guiding principle in recruit school. To me, it means that we engage in some type of training every day, learn from each other, and continually hone our skills throughout our entire careers. But someone doesn't have to die for us to realize that we need to improve. Experience is what makes us better. We respond to a fire, learn what went right, and identify areas for improvement. No one must

die or even get hurt, but we get out on the next shift and train to be better. We should be passing on these experiences to the entire department.

I would like to capture these experiences, especially when there is an injury

to a firefighter or a near miss. I have been attempting to collect this information for

almost three years, and the hardest part is just finding out about them. CFD has the near-miss form, and there have been very few submissions. I believe that we can capture and produce training material better than official means through the department.

In 2024, I hope to see an increase in the number of documented close calls. This includes, but is not limited to, smoke explosions, collapses, lost or missing firefighters, and MAYDAYS. My current solution is to handle them personally through email submissions to: CloseCallsCFD@gmail.com. If you are involved with, know

about, or even heard about a close call, please send me an email. You can remain completely anonymous if you would like.

Captain Matt Clark

Engine 29

A Shift



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Looking to advertise, you are in luck We are looking for people to advertise. Contact Local 660 for more information.



Health Care

We are looking for members who want to be on a Healthcare committee. On this committee, we will address the rising cost of our current healthcare yet decreased coverage and also look into self-funded health insurance. There are locals across the country that fund their own health care for its members. If you are interested in joining this committee please contact:

Mike Feneis

-vicepresident@cffa660.org or

803-833-4476

WHAT EVENTS DO YOU WANT TO SEE LOCAL 660 HAVE AT THE PALMER BUILDING? LET US KNOW. ALSO, REMEMBER THE PALMER BUILDING IS FOR RENT AT A DISCOUNTED RATE TO UNION MEMBERS. CALL THE OFFICE TODAY. 704-331-9515

REBOOT

FIRST RESPONDERS



12 WEEKS FOCUSED ON HEALING FROM SERVICE-RELATED TRAUMA

The first to respond to others are often the last to seek help for themselves.

But through **REBOOT FIRST RESPONDERS**, those within the law enforcement, fire, EMS, emergency communications, hospital emergency department and corrections communities and their families are discovering there is hope after trauma.

This program started January 8th, 2024. But it is not too late to join. Contact Jody Wetta for more information @ (980)622-5527 or thecajunpreacher@hotmail.com. The group meets at The Palmer Building at 6:30-8:30pm on Mondays.

Have a article or idea for next issue send it to us:
Secretary@cffa660.org



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The Palmer Building



Welcome to The Palmer Building, where history meets modern convenience, just minutes from uptown Charlotte. Our distinguished historical venue offers a unique blend of timeless elegance and contemporary amenities, making it the perfect choice for your next event. With its rich heritage and prime location, The Palmer Building provides a captivating backdrop that will leave a lasting impression on your guests. Discover the charm and versatility of our venue, where your vision for a successful event becomes a reality.

Local 660 members receive a discount off of rentals. If you or your spouse are interested in working events please give us a call.

