

The Palmer

Charlotte FireFighter Association

October 2023

www.cffa660.org

704-331-9515

The Palmer

We are excited to launch *The Palmer*, our new quarterly newsletter. We hope to bring light to issues that we are working on as well as articles from Union leaders. There will also be pictures of you at work our brothers and sisters of Local 660. If you have something to add let us know, if you have pictures send them to us for the next issue.

Send information to Secretary@cffa660.org

Local 660 executive board



Medic Holds are they helping or hurting?

As we get ready to enter another year with MEDIC "Holds" we have to ask if are they helping us or hurting us. We have all been on calls as we wait for MEDIC for 15, 30, 45 minutes to arrive. Is this good for the patient? We have also been on calls that are MEDIC holds that involve CMPD (see clip below) and can tell before we even get on scene MEDIC should be coming with lights and sirens. I think it is also safe to say that some medical calls we go on may not be a priority call. So the question is, does the new response configuration help or hurt the patients?

The new response configuration seems to be here to stay. Local 660 has been monitoring the situation since the inception of the new program. For more insight on this subject, we need input from you on any call you feel should have been dispatched from MEDIC differently:

*Email your chain of command in regards to the call including incident #

*Email us at Local 660 with pertinent information that is not in violation of HIPAA

We must collect the information to tell if this program is helping us or hurting us. Email any questions or incidents to: Secretary@cffa660.org



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Being UNION



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As an IAFF Union member for the past 45 years, I am extremely proud to be your District Vice President. The 12th District has grown tremendously and now represents over 40,000 firefighters in North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Georgia and the Caribbean islands.

Labor unions are organizations that represent workers over wages, benefits, working conditions, health, safety, and wellness matters, along with other workplace issues. We work diligently to protect and persevere your retirement benefits.

There are many benefits to being an IAFF Local 660 Union member. Union members typically earn higher wages than non-union workers, and they also receive better benefits, such as union sponsored health insurance, supplemental insurance, paid time off, and retirement plans. Union members also have more job security than non-union workers, and they are more likely to be protected from discrimination and harassment.

Our IAFF continually seeks to improve the safety, health, and wellness of our members.

In addition to the economic benefits, Union membership can also provide workers with a sense of community and belonging. Unions can help workers to learn about their rights and how to advocate for themselves in the workplace. They can also provide workers with support and representation if they have a problem with their employer.

If you are a firefighter, you should seriously consider joining Local 660. Unions are a powerful force for good in the workplace, and they can help you to improve your wages, benefits, and working conditions.

Here are some of the specific benefits of being a Union member:

- **Higher wages:** Union members earn an average of 11.2% more than non-union workers.
- **Better benefits:** Union members are more likely to have better health insurance, paid sick leave, and retirement plans.
- **More job security:** Union members are less likely to be fired or laid off than non-union workers.
- **Protection from discrimination:** Unions can help to ensure that workers are not discriminated against on the basis of race, gender, age, or other factors.
- **A voice in the workplace:** Your Union gives Charlotte firefighters a voice in the workplace, so they can have a say in decisions that affect their jobs.

There are a few things you should keep in mind. First, you should make sure you're your Union represents your interests. Second, you should be willing to participate in Union activities, such as voting in Union elections and regularly attending Union meetings.

As a Charlotte Firefighter, I encourage you to learn more about your Union, participate in Union activities, and consider asking your colleagues to join with you. Unions are a powerful force for good in the workplace, and they can help you to improve your wages, benefits, and working conditions. Always feel free to call or write to me with comments and questions. Fraternally

Walter J. Dix
IAFF 12th District Vice President

Local 660 will be having elections for the position of Vice President and Secretary. Currently, the Vice President is held by Tripp Fincher and the Secretary is held by Mike Feneis. To be eligible for the November election you must be nominated in the October membership meeting. Get involved and you can help determine the future of Local 660. Any questions please contact us.

Make your voice heard

VOTE!

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President Report

Tom Brewer

The Importance of Politics

I hope this report finds you in good health and high spirits. I want to address a topic that is of paramount importance to each and every one of us: the role of politics in our careers as firefighters, and why our union is deeply involved in political matters.

The Significance of Politics in Our Careers

While the word "politics" often conjures thoughts of debates on social issues and partisan disputes, it is crucial to recognize that politics permeates every facet of our professional lives. It touches upon matters that are intrinsically linked to our jobs, our retirements, our health and safety, and our paychecks. We, as firefighters, cannot afford to ignore its influence. It's not just about taxes or social issues; it's about the fundamental aspects that determine the course of our careers.

Kitchen Table Issues

At the heart of our union's political involvement lies our commitment to addressing "kitchen table issues." These are the issues that you and your families grapple with daily, matters that directly affect your livelihoods. We prioritize these issues because they are the pillars upon which our careers and futures are built. Here are some of the critical aspects influenced by politics:

1. Retirement: The structure and security of our retirement plans are subject to political decisions. Ensuring a robust and stable retirement system for our members requires active political engagement.
2. Pay and Benefits: Our salaries, healthcare benefits, and other financial perks are directly influenced by political actions. Advocating for fair compensation is

a responsibility we take seriously. You saw first hand last May when this local called on all firefighters to attend the city council meeting where public comment was allowed on the budget. Not only did firefighters attend and speak, hundreds of you emailed city council and we were able to not only restore the 5% pay separation with CMPD we also got additional funding for training. While it was one thing for your Union to make the all call this would have fallen flat without your engagement. We need to build upon this and that can only happen with your help, it takes all of us working together.



Want to get involved?
Local 660 has several opportunities to get involved, from committees to political action. Contact Local 660 for more information.

**ATTEND
YOUR**



**UNION
MEETINGS**

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Secretary Report Mike Feneis

What does it mean to be Union; is it a feeling, a way we act, or how we hold ourselves? Being Union is none of these individually but it is all of these things together. What the heck does that mean? Let's dive into this rabbit hole.

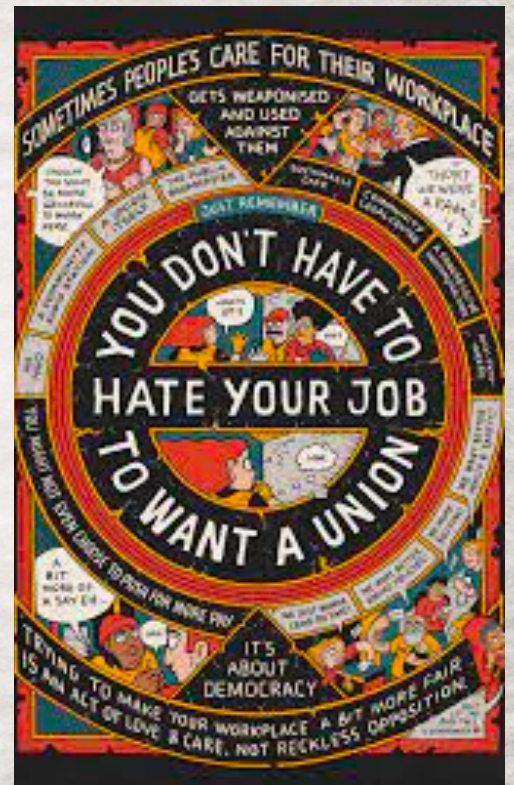
Being Union is an obtainable feeling. The feeling of knowing you have support from all your union brothers and sisters across this country and Canada. There are many stories of union brothers and sisters taking care of other union members they have never met, simply because they were union. It is not the feeling of being invincible or feeling you can't get in trouble. Contrary to popular belief, it is also the responsibility of a union to tell a member that they are in the wrong and should be disciplined.

Being Union is also how we act. As mentioned earlier, it is not acting outside of policy on purpose because you think your union will get you out of

trouble."Acting Union" means you stand strong in solidarity with your fellow brothers and sisters. It means you fight for what is right and just. It means you help your brothers and sisters when they are in need. How we act is part of being Union.

Being Union is also how we present ourselves. Do we hold ourselves high, head up proud to be a union member and standing with our brothers and sisters for a cause or do we coward down when officials bark back? Being union does not give you a bigger bark but it helps you know all the information so you know your bark is the right bark and not a whimper.

Being Union is a good thing! Unions have accomplished amazing things for workers. Be a proud Union member, our past brothers and sisters worked hard to give you that right, cherish it. Staysafe.Staystrong.Stay Union



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Members History

Marvin Wilson

by:Shane Nantz

When we talk about Modern history, the Charlotte Fire Dept, and Local 660 one name always seems to come up, Marvin Wilson.

Marvin came to work for the CFD in 1969 and served assignments at Old Station 4 on 5th Street, Station 16, and Station 19 among others, retiring as a Captain in June 1995. Marvin received his Recruit School Training at the Historic Palmer School on Seventh Street. What Marvin is probably best known for is his involvement with both the Charlotte Firefighters Retirement System and Local 660. It was during Marvin Smith's tenure on the Retirement System Board that the system would be restructured and the multiplier would be increased to 2.6 percent per year. To fund this, members would go from 10.1 percent, eventually to 12.65. It would also be during his tenure that an early retirement option of 25 years would become available to members, the purchase of military time, and a total rewrite of the Retirement System Act. If you want to know anything about how the system was formed in 1947 and then again reformed in the 1950s, restructured in the 1990s to ensure an appropriate funding mechanism, or just understand how the Chief's Office worked with the Retirement system during Rightsizing to make sure the system would be funded moving forward, talk to Marvin. Oftentimes discounted by younger members of the Board, there is no one before or since that has put the time or effort into making sure every one of us who rides a fire truck receives a proper retirement than Marvin Wilson, No One!!!

Marvin's second passion and many will say his first is Local 660. A Member since the Rechartering in 1969, when he was hired, he came to work for the CFD on the heels of the victory of Julius Chambers in the Supreme Court. Following in the footsteps of Bob Middleton and Bill Brawley, Marvin would serve as President for many years being a strong advocate for the firefighter. Oftentimes firefighters think of the Union as only the supporter of the afflicted but this has not always been the case. From 1969 until well into the mid-2000s Policies in the CFD would be sent to the Union for review. Civil Service Rules would be sent by the City Clerk directly to the Union President for review before they were voted on by the Board.

It would be President Marvin Wilson, in a Letter to the City Manager, Wendell White, in 1988 that first mentioned of issuing Leather Fire Helmets to all members. Until the CFD started issuing Leather Helmets, Members bought them out of their own pocket. It was Marvin, in the same correspondence that continued to push hard on members becoming sick from the Baxter Harris Fire. This Single Fire probably led Marvin to compile a comprehensive list of every firefighter's death back to 1955, a list he continued up until a year ago when he passed it off for others to maintain. An actual spreadsheet with every firefighter's cause of death back to 1955! This is a huge resource for all of us today and moving forward.

Marvin has a way of not only building relationships but maintaining them for years. The relationship he built with then-Mayor Harvey Gantt led to the CFD getting Station Commanders, a position that we enjoyed at Two Piece Stations that were attrition out after rightsizing. The Public Safety Pay Plan was instituted during Marvin's tenure as President of Local 660, working closely with the CFD Pay Group. It was under Marvin's Leadership that then Chief Fincher added to CFD Policy that the Accident Review Board would have a Local 660 Representative which worked into all committees having a Union Representative.

Many of Marvin's accomplishments, and there are too many to mention, have not occurred in a called meeting but maybe at the Hockey Game, or while printing campaign signs, or even eating lunch, but his ability to recall history or why things are done the way they are done is amazing. Marvin Wilson is an absolute walking History Lesson so it's fitting the first History Piece to be written about the Man, the Myth, the Legend, **Marvin Wilson.**



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Health Care

When we were hired in the public sector we knew pay would not be that of individuals in the private sector. The offset was the good benefits.

Traditionally, that was the case. Although our healthcare rates have not increased, our coverage has decreased. From ER visit to seeing a specialist the cost has increased dramatically. Your executive board is looking into this matter and has just received the documentation from a *Freedom of Information request*. We are using a company that takes this information and puts it into a form where we can understand more. We will keep you updated as we find out more.

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



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FireFighter close calls

In 2014, while riding on the back of Engine 1 we were dispatched to a working fire in a commercial building. As we approached the scene, a MAYDAY call came across the radio. A firefighter from the first due company was missing, and we were immediately assigned to RIT. Fortunately, the outcome was positive; he was quickly located, and the MAYDAY was canceled. We were then reassigned to regular fireground activities. Although we never had to perform RIT operations, this experience left a lasting impact on my career.

The incident left me wanting to be better prepared for future RIT deployments. I wanted to ensure that, if faced with a similar situation, I would be even more effective. However, everyone else seemed to just move on. We didn't really discuss it at the firehouse, and there was no official after-action review highlighting lessons learned. It left me thinking that we should be tracking our close calls and trying to learn from these situations. Initially, I attempted to document these incidents officially through the department, but I realized that the most effective way to capture them was to take matters into my own hands. A few years ago, I started recording close calls and near-miss situations I came across. While it's far from perfect or comprehensive, it serves as a source for these events. We've even created a few training videos to help us learn from each other.

Here are just a few of the incidents I've documented since 2021:

- A firefighter suffered severe burns to his hands during an apartment fire.

- Two firemen became trapped in the basement of a midrise building while rescuing a victim from a fire.
- A firefighter was struck by another fire truck while responding to a working fire.
- A fire truck was struck by gunfire, two separate times.
- Multiple fire trucks have been hit while responding to and operating on emergency scenes.
- A firefighter accidentally fell into a vent hole, briefly becoming engulfed by fire.

Did any of these incidents surprise you, knowing that they occurred within our department in recent times?

We've had success in tracking victim rescues, and now we officially record these incidents through the fire department. However, I believe it's time to expand our efforts to capture more close calls. If you've been a part of, or know about a close call, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at Closecallscfd@gmail.com.

Our collection is only as strong as the information we receive. Please send in any incident you believe qualifies as a close call. This could encompass vehicle accidents, near-miss scenarios, injuries, or any situation you think other members could learn from. Your contribution can remain anonymous if necessary.

-Captain Matt Clark

Engine 29

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Chief Palmer & Tony



Volunteers rebuilding Marvin Wilson's deck



Volunteers rebuilding Marvin Wilson's deck

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

