



# CHARLOTTE FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

## Charlotte Fire Fighters Requests for consideration for the FY2021 Budget

**REQUEST:** Fully fund the Public Safety Pay Plan as recommended by the Pay Plan Committee. Fully fund the Public Safety Pay Plan as recommended by the Pay Plan Committee. A 3.5% raise for Captain, 5% top pay step for Engineer, and 2.5% step for Firefighter II. We would further request that these adjustments be made in July and not wait until November. Giving these raises in July would place us in line with the Cities fiscal calendar. In addition, consolidate the 2.5% steps in the Firefighter II and Engineer ranks to bring us in line with CMPD. The goal would be to have this accomplished by FY22.

**JUSTIFICATION:** The hard work put forth by the Pay Plan Committee is a good starting point to bring the Public Safety salaries to a minimum of median with the 20 comparable cities. However, because of increases within those cities, Charlotte continues to fall further behind and below the median. Furthermore, last year's un-coupling of police and fire in the public safety pay plan has created discrepancies in the Pay Plan.

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**REQUEST:** Individual Cancer Policies for firefighters. Assign City Staff to work with Local 660 to research policy options and have a recommendation to CLTCC no later than 60 days after formation of the work group.

**JUSTIFICATION:** Numerous firefighter cancer studies show that the occupation of firefighting has a higher rate of certain cancers than the general population. While most state legislative bodies have passed Presumptive Cancer Legislation for their fire fighters, NC has not. The North Carolina League of Municipalities, which Charlotte belongs too, has successfully lobbied against this legislation. In November of 2019 individuals representing the League told 660 that it is the cities responsibility to provide this coverage. We are asking CLTCC to take the lead in NC and become the first city in the state to provide firefighters with a supplemental Cancer Policy to help financially protect them and their families.

**REQUEST:** Affordable / Quality Health Insurance

**JUSTIFICATION:** While the City has done a good job over the past few years slowing down the rate at which insurance premiums have risen employees have seen substantial increases in their co-pays and deductibles. Feedback from the Employee Group states while employees can afford the premiums, it is very costly to use the insurance with due to high deductibles and out of pocket expense. While the preventive costs are low, if there is any major health issue, employees will be out thousands of dollars before the insurance begins to pay.

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**REQUEST:** Reinstate Retiree Health Insurance Benefits for Employees

**JUSTIFICATION:** Benefits, such as healthcare, are a critical recruitment and retention tool for the city. Fire fighters can retire after 30 years of service or 25 years of service and 50 years of age, whichever comes first. Lack of health insurance benefits will force many fire fighters to attempt to remain on duty until the Social Security retirement age of 67 in order to qualify for Medicare. Firefighting is a physically and mentally demanding profession and as fire fighters age the risk of injury increases. The expected increase in injuries will likely result in increased cost associated with workers compensation claims and overtime expenses to fill vacancies caused by injuries. Science has proven that we are exposed to dangerous chemicals and byproducts of combustion. Having to work 17 years longer than is typical would greatly increase the risk of Line of Duty Death associated with common fire fighter illnesses, as well as insurance costs due to an increase in injuries and illnesses.

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**REQUEST:** Increase Cities Retirement Contribution to the Charlotte Fire Department Retirement System (CFRS). Local 660 would like CLTCC to increase the amount to the CFRS Actual's Recommendation which will at a minimum CLTCC should agree to pay the same amount

**JUSTIFICATION:** Local 660 is currently working with the Charlotte Firefighter's Retirement Board to create a plan to add funding to our retirement system to ensure its' longevity. We will support the Boards recommendations and pass on the final numbers to our members and the City Council as soon as they are complete.

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**REQUEST:** Increase city contribution to Health Savings Account (HSA)

**JUSTIFICATION:** The 2020 maximum contributions allowed are \$3550 for a single and \$7100 for a family plan. We are requesting that the City of Charlotte contribute the maximum allowed as well give employees the choice to be allowed to contribute. This will allow employees to have some control over their health care costs in the future.

**REQUEST:** Educational Incentive Pay for Fire Captains

**JUSTIFICATION:** Within the PSPP, firefighters and engineers are compensated for their educational experience when one obtains a college degree. Those with an associate degree receive an additional 5%, and those with a bachelor's degree are awarded 10%. However, Captains are excluded from the Education Incentive program even though a degree is mandatory for promotion to Captain. City Human Resources have told us that the Educational Incentive is "baked-in" the captains pay however this is no longer the case since CMPD has changed its educational requirements for police sergeants. There are 2 points that prove this:

1. When Captains are promoted, they all start at the same pay regardless of having an Associate's Degree or higher.
2. Looking at the PSPP you see fire captains and police sergeants are equivalent rank and it shows the 5% pay gap that exist throughout the plan. However, police sergeants are no longer required to have a degree for promotion to this rank. If the educational incentive is indeed baked-in than individuals without degrees are being awarded an incentive pay when they have not achieved the educational requirements.

Furthermore, when looking at the twenty comparable cities, fourteen of them offer degree incentives for all ranks, and some include Masters and PhD. The City of Charlotte should be offering this incentive at the Captain rank and higher to keep with common practice of our comparable cities.

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**REQUEST:** Pay differential for members that work above their class, (Examples include: Captain riding the Battalion Car, Engineer or firefighter riding the Captain Seat or firefighter filling in for an engineer.)

**JUSTIFICATION:** Using the twenty comparable cities, more than half of them offer a pay differential for members working above their class. More and more the Charlotte Fire Department is using members to work above their grade for extended periods of time because of the shortage of personnel. We would like to work with the administration and the city to develop a formula so there is a monetary incentive to compensate those who are taking on the additional responsibilities while working above their class.

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