



June 1, 2023

Dear Citizens Served by the Long Lake Fire Department (LLFD), Members of the LLFD and the Orono City Council:

Long Lake City Council members attended the Orono City Council meeting held on May 22 in which their Council received a presentation on their Fire Department Needs Assessment. We were disappointed by several aspects of the presentation, most notably that none of the four Courses of Action (COA) included partnering with Long Lake for fire service under a joint powers agreement with an independent fire board that would have full operational authority of the Fire Department. This was Option A from our last offer letter to Orono dated January 27, 2023. Instead, the staff-recommended COA that several Council members voiced support for involves forming a new Orono Fire Department to duplicate fire resources already provided to our communities by the LLFD. Further, we are troubled by actual and apparent additional planned breaches by Orono to our 2002 Contract Agreement and Contract for Fire Protection and related Addendum to Contract for Fire Protection regarding Station 2.

Late last year, Orono and Long Lake had multiple negotiation meetings between Council members, and we were close to agreeing on a new model involving shared oversight of a Fire Department serving our cities and any neighboring cities interested in a partnership. The proposal was nearly identical to when five local cities came together over 20 years ago to create the Excelsior Fire District. From the beginning of negotiations, Long Lake has been willing to meet Orono halfway and jointly operate a Fire Department under a new funding model that would decrease Orono's share of costs from 85% to 75% if Minnetonka Beach was added to the partnership. However, based on Orono's Needs Assessment and the actions Orono has taken over the last year, including hiring a Fire Chief, Orono is going down a unique and isolated path. As was mentioned in a letter from four former Orono Mayors and four former Long Lake Mayors last year, Orono's endeavor is "an expensive way to tamper with a public safety service that is not broken."

It was clear from Orono's meeting on May 22 that Orono rejected our Option B; however, we continue to be open to discussing Option A or other partnership models. In the meantime, Long Lake will focus on continuing the great traditions and service the LLFD has been providing to our communities since 1915. To ensure we can continue providing quality fire services to our community, Long Lake has taken the following steps over the last few months:

- Hired Chief Mike Heiland as our new Fire Chief. Chief Heiland has over 30 years of experience in fire service, including as an Assistant Chief in the Excelsior Fire District, which is a model of how fire districts in our area could operate.
- Authorized the purchase of the following vehicles and land:
 - A new utility/rescue truck
 - A new command vehicle/Chevrolet Tahoe
 - A used fire engine from the Excelsior Fire District to replace an aging fire engine.
 - Purchased 1.7 acres of land on the north side of Station 1, which could be used to future-proof the utility of Station 1 for the continued delivery of our fire services.

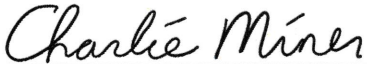
With Orono indicating they are not interested in exploring a jointly operated Fire Department with Long Lake, Medina, or Minnetonka Beach, Long Lake is actively considering other opportunities to partner with neighboring jurisdictions and Fire Departments that are open to collaboration. In addition, we are asking the LLFD leadership to help create a plan for the future of our Fire Department, including resource and equipment needs, as well as any partnerships with surrounding Fire Departments that should be explored. Information regarding fire service options for the City of Orono will be included in the event the Orono City Council decides to return to a partnership model in the future.

To be clear, the Orono City Council is choosing to go in a direction that is entirely against the advice of most fire service professionals. Orono will soon be surrounded by Fire Departments that either have merged or are in merger discussions. They are taking these actions in the face of ongoing firefighter labor shortages, critical fire equipment ordering and delivery delays, and economic challenges. The City of Long Lake cannot risk public safety by being a part of this misguided move. If Orono changes its mind on its COA, a draft joint powers agreement created in 2020 by its current Chief Van Eyll, its former City Administrator, and the City Administrators of Medina and Long Lake is ready for review.

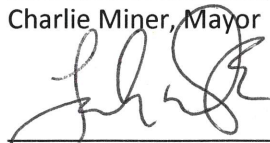
It is extremely unfortunate that, after 108 years of a highly functioning Fire Department, the Orono City Council feels they need to try to fix something that is not broken, and the Orono Mayor and City Council have demonstrated that they are truly not interested in what is best for the firefighters, or our communities.

In closing, the Long Lake City Council wants to assure our valued firefighters that we will continue operating our Fire Department, and we want our firefighters to be a part of our future. While our path may or may not include Orono, our department will grow to involve other jurisdictions, better equipment, and stronger resources. When it comes to fire services, both now and in the future, the Long Lake City Council's primary goal is to do what is right for our greater community, not just our own city.

Sincerely,
Long Lake City Council



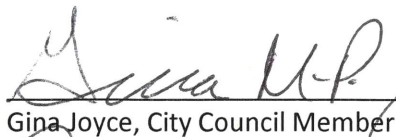
Charlie Miner, Mayor



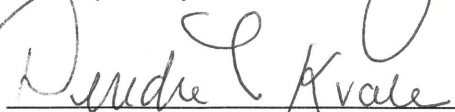
Jahn Dyvik, City Council Member



Mike Feldmann, City Council Member



Gina Joyce, City Council Member



Deirdre Kvale, City Council Member