



# **PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Councilor Martinson Responds to Tulsa FOP President's Press Release**

On Saturday, Phillip Evans, President of the Tulsa Fraternal Order of Police, issued a press release challenging the presentation I made to the City Council on Thursday, June 18<sup>th</sup> concerning the City's budget for the fiscal year that begins July 1. I found the content disturbing, especially considering the importance and sensitivity of Public Safety to the community.

Tulsa is facing a budget crisis. Our sales tax collections for the last three months are \$3.1 million less than during the same period a year ago. Should this trend continue, Tulsa will be facing a revenue shortfall of \$10 million to \$12 million compared to the budget the Mayor submitted to the Council on April 28th. The proposals the Mayor presented to deal with this situation fall well short of the mark.

As I stated to both Chief LaCroix and Chief Palmer on Thursday night, my intent was not to attack, but rather to prepare both departments for a drastic decline in funding dictated by economic reality. Since Police and Fire have managed to consume 100% of our sales tax operating revenue, I feel they must be prepared to adjust their operating structure to keep expenses in line with those revenues. My proposal Thursday night accomplished just that. The choices were theirs to make and, despite the budget approved by the Council and their hopes to the contrary, they may still face those choices and sooner than they think.

We have a system run amuck when our two public safety departments operate with impunity when it comes to their union members; deciding which laws to obey or what information they feel inclined to disclose.

The public safety unions have done a masterful job of dictating policy. This needs to stop and elected officials must assume responsibility for the Citizens.

The unions, Administration, and certain City Councilors argue that the only option in reduced funding is to reduce staffing. *This is true only if they wish it to be.* They, not I, nor the other three Councilors voting against the Mayor's budget view the issue with such limited perspective; a limited perspective certain to instill fear in the citizens and union members and sure to divide the City. Extreme measures can often be avoided with sufficient planning. For example, it is not unusual for the City to re-negotiate contract terms, and while I have not been a party to any of the pending contract negotiations, prudent business practice would be to include language allowing for a revision in compensation structure, including perks, should conditions so dictate. If a relief provision is not incorporated in the agreements, one must wonder why, or one must ask why protecting certain union paychecks is more important than protecting the City. This intransigent position also protects some union members at the expense of others – so much for

the concept of brotherhood. The issue is with the unions, not with the individual cop or fireman. Appropriately, the rank and file focuses on fighting crime or fire, not reading financial statements. However, when they are misled, all are done a disservice. Look at the fates of the railroads, steel industry, certain airlines and automobile manufacturers, and the recent bankruptcy of city of Vallejo, California, if you doubt the catastrophic potential of uncompromising union leadership and weak management.

Before addressing the issue of compensation and staffing, I must respond to the charge that available data were “hidden” from my presentation. We attempted to conduct a thorough analysis and began gathering data several months ago and focused on information that was objective and in the public domain. Since we considered transparency and objectivity paramount, one of our sources of information was the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reports that seem to provide the most reliable and consistent reports. The statistics for 2007 were the most recent available when we assembled that portion of our analysis. Mr. Evans states in his press release that the data for 2008 were available, and that in 2008 Tulsa experienced 4,992 violent crimes. Granted, preliminary 2008 data were just released by the FBI on June 1<sup>st</sup> but they differ from the data cited by Mr. Evans. *Although common sense would dictate some inverse correlation between crime rates and staffing levels, that is one analysis we could not run since manpower levels have remained relatively stable despite significant funding increases.*

Mr. Evans and the FOP consistently and conveniently refer to the “universe of comparable cities” as the benchmark for determining compensation. For years, this approach has enabled the FOP in Tulsa and the unions in the other participating cities to leverage off each other to increase compensation for their members. Mr. Evans refers to this comparison as a tactic and indeed, it is just that, a tactic to influence compensation levels for HIS union members to the detriment of all other city employees and the public.

The FOP allegation that a substantial reduction in funding is an active “attempt to get rid of 20% of public safety officers from both Police and Fire service” is inflammatory, untrue and self-serving. Police and Fire budgets have consumed an increasing share of our operating revenue. Funding for those two departments has increased over \$37 million per year from 2000 to 2009. In the Mayor’s budget approved by the Council last Thursday, they will now consume more than 100% of the 2 cent sales tax Tulsa depends on to fund many other services including code enforcement, maintenance and parks. Contrary to their persistent cries for more manpower, the Police and Fire unions have parlayed this unabated 35% increase in funding into fewer positions rather than more. Not only have the unions successfully negotiated with the Administration to utilize the additional funding to enrich their members rather than increase staffing to serve the City, but the Mayor, Chief Palmer, and the FOP have all ignored Tulsa’s ordinance pertaining to take home vehicles. With a take home car for every officer, coupled with their 4 day work week and the fact that less than 50% of our Police officers live in the City, the total cost and potential savings relating to vehicles alone is staggering. How many officers are patrolling at peak times? We know the 4-day workweek increases the number of necessary vehicles. How are Tulsa citizens any safer with our patrol cars parked in Owasso, Collinsville, Bixby, Broken Arrow, etc, etc?

Firefighters receive premium pay for EMT certification. Following a report from the Oklahoma State Department of Health that cited falsification of EMT training records, the City Council directed the City Auditor to investigate the implications, including those relating to funding and compensation. In a report dated yesterday, June 22, 2009, the Auditor, states that the president of the Firefighters' Union informed the Office of the City Auditor that his membership was instructed not to respond to the Auditor's questionnaire except to state whether or not they were an EMT. As a result, "The City Auditor is effectively obstructed from efficiently gathering information necessary for completion of the Special Project". So much for accountability.

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