



Local 3535

# APTOS/LA SELVA FIREFIGHTERS

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March 2017

President Bob Spisak  
Board of Directors  
Aptos/La Selva Fire Protection District  
6934 Soquel Drive  
Aptos, CA 95003

Dear President Spisak and Honorable Board Members:

**The dedicated Firefighters of the Aptos/La Selva Fire District have made the unprecedented decision to call for and receive a UNANIMOUS Vote of No Confidence in Fire Chief Jon Jones.**

We have not taken this action lightly. In fact, it is our understanding that in the proud 87-year history of the Aptos/La Selva Fire District, a Vote of No Confidence has never been taken regarding a Fire Chief.

This decision was made by every single Firefighter in our District. Our Fire District is at a crossroads and we felt compelled to take this action because it is our fundamental belief that without a change in leadership, our once proud Aptos/La Selva Fire District will continue to decline and public safety will be put at risk for local residents.

Unlike many other Fire Departments and Fire Districts throughout California, our Fire District has never been plagued with a hostile or combative relationship between labor and its Fire Chief. In fact, under the leadership of our three previous Fire Chiefs - Chief Gary Smith (1999-2003), Chief Tom Crosser (2003-2010), and Chief Jeff Terpstra (2010-2014) - our Firefighters and Division Chiefs worked collaboratively with our Fire Chief for the benefit of our Fire District and the people that we serve.

Because of this longstanding tradition of cooperative Labor – Management relations in our Fire District, when Jon Jones became the Fire Chief in October of 2014, our Firefighters and Division Chiefs welcomed him with open arms. After spending the majority of his professional career in Orange County, we were excited to work with our new Chief and we anticipated having the same type of collaborative, respectful working relationship with him that we have had with every single Chief of our Fire District for the past 20+ years.

Unfortunately, after nearly three years of failed leadership, a complete lack of communication, the inability to compromise, and the absence of a strategic plan for our future, we have come to the firm conclusion that the only way to save our Fire District is to change the leadership with a new Chief.

It is important to emphasize that this decision is NOT based on the pay or benefits of our Firefighters. Quite frankly, this decision is not about us – it's about the community that we serve and the people of our Fire District who we have dedicated our professional lives to.



Most of our Firefighters grew up in this community and are still raising our families in the local area. The people we serve on a regular basis are the men and women who we went to school with and have known for decades. We love this Fire District because we are committed to this community. They are our neighbors and our childhood friends. This is OUR community - we are committed to it, and we know that our residents are currently being shortchanged by a Fire District that is underachieving and not providing the level of service that people deserve.

Our Fire District has a long history of being guided by outstanding, visionary leaders who have been focused on the communities that we serve. These leaders had the ability and interpersonal skills to develop short and long-term goals, effectively communicate them to our organization, and empower the men and women of our District. Under their leadership, our service delivery blossomed to include surf rescue teams, cutting edge advancements in the delivery of Emergency Medical Services (EMS), modernized fire suppression, advanced rescue services, and an enhanced fire prevention program. We stayed true to our mission and we were seen as leaders in the County and State of California with our excellent service delivery.

It is truly tragic that the gains that were made after decades of effective leadership have been reversed over the past three years during Chief Jones' tenure as our Fire Chief. Our current lack of leadership, vision, and communication has weakened our organization, diminished our morale, and most importantly, it has impaired our ability to serve the public.

Our Fire Prevention Bureau has been decimated and is now being outsourced. Our busiest fire engine is regularly taken out of service – even as our call load has increased exponentially, thereby diminishing our ability to provide quality service. Community assets, such as our well-regarded car seat program for expecting families, have been shutdown. Our Fire Investigation program has also been unfunded and is no longer in operation as our Fire District has become increasingly disconnected from the communities that we serve.

Internally, our Firefighters' morale has never been lower. Chief Jones' management style has alienated our Division Chiefs and Firefighters alike, resulting in an organization that is in disarray without direction. The threat of discipline is frequently used as a tool for intimidation and retaliation. Lawsuits are now a regular part of our District as the Firefighter Bill of Rights and labor standards are consistently violated.

For decades, our Fire District was a "destination agency" that Firefighters throughout California wanted to be a part of. Firefighters left well-established Fire Departments to join our Fire District because of our innovation, community service, and family environment. Now, for the first time in our history, members of our organization are looking to leave because of the dysfunction, poor working environment, low morale, and fundamental lack of trust in our administration.

Our Firefighters have taken a sworn oath to protect our communities - the communities we live in and have dedicated our careers to. Every single member of our District has done everything possible to work with Chief Jones for the benefit of our residents. After nearly three years of failed leadership and poor results, we have come to the unanimous

conclusion that this assignment has simply been a poor fit for Chief Jones and our Fire District. A change is desperately required.

For the benefit of the Aptos/La Selva Fire District and the future of emergency services in Santa Cruz County, the undersigned Firefighters stand unanimous in our firm belief that we no longer have confidence in the leadership of Fire Chief Jon Jones.

Our Fire District was established in 1930. For the first time in the history of our proud District, our Firefighters are compelled to take this drastic measure. That is how strongly we feel about the current direction of our District and the overwhelming need for a change in leadership.

**As Chief Jones is finishing the third and final year of his contract with the Aptos/La Selva Fire District, we realize that he will likely be requesting a two-year extension of his contract. We implore you to deny any such request.**

Thank you for your careful consideration of our position on this critical issue.

Sincerely submitted by the undersigned with our total respective years in public service,



Steve Andrews  
Firefighter  
37 years



Dan Biagiotti  
Firefighter  
8 years



John Buchner  
Captain  
20 years



Nathan Calcagno  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
14 years



Luke Carson  
Firefighter  
6 years



James Collender  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
7 years



Jake Finley  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
16 years



Matt Garcia  
Firefighter  
4 years



Greg Grabost  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
28 years



Dan Hamilton  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
10 years



Greg Hansen  
Captain  
40 years



Aaron Hershey  
Captain  
22 years

  
Tim Hornstein  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
9 years

  
Brandon Houston  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
16 years

  
Todd Korver  
Captain  
30 years

  
Mike Kretsch  
Captain  
30 years

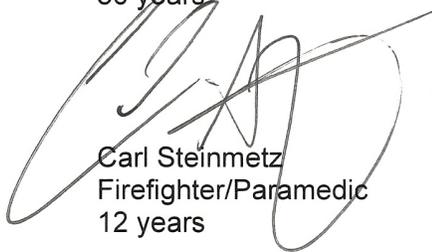
  
Nigel Miller  
Captain  
12 years

  
Ricardo Molinar  
Firefighter  
36 years

  
Aaron Paasch  
Captain  
30 years

  
Ryan Peters  
Captain  
25 years

  
Dana Rayfield  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
16 years

  
Carl Steinmetz  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
12 years

  
Steve Vratny  
Firefighter  
27 years

  
Jason Wichelmann  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
25 years

  
Zachary Wilson  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
16 years

  
Will Wingert  
Captain  
19 years

CC: Aptos/La Selva Fire Protection District Board of Directors  
Supervisor Zach Friend, Santa Cruz County