

City of Glenns Ferry

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Mayors Corner

Dear City Council and Citizens,

Hello Glenns Ferry,



Good afternoon Glenns Ferry! I hope this message finds you well. There have been some questions and frankly some misinformation out there that I'd like to clear up.

Over the course of the past two years, I have been going through each department and considering several things; safety, (which was the first topic in my campaign), efficiency, and fiscal responsibility; and doing so in a proactive manner. Along those lines, I have made changes to departments within the confines of the Council approved budgets. I've done this in Animal Control, Code Enforcement, the Building Department and now in the Fire Department. One of the many things I have considered is the cost benefit to the taxpayers, but that is not the only basis upon which I made the decision to change departments around or to change the Fire Chief from a part time to a full-time position. First, I would like you to consider safety, which should be a reasonable answer to any question of first responder evaluation.

Recently, October 4th in fact, a fire call for a structure went out on East Arthur. The department was able to respond to that call and be on site within 6 minutes. Although this is an older house, that did not follow current fire rates and the fire luckily was stopped rather quickly keeping the loss to mostly exterior damage and smoke damage within the home. But it could have been worse.

Take for example a typical timeline of a 2-story house being engulfed by fire:

At 0:30 minutes, the fire starts and rapidly grows.

At 1:04 minutes, the fire spreads from the initial flame, and the room begins to fill with smoke.

At 1:35 minutes, the temperature of the house goes higher than 190°F while the smoke layer rapidly descends.

At 1:50 minutes, the smoke detector goes off, and there is still remaining time to get out of the house.

At 2:30 minutes, the temperature in the source room climbs above 400°F.

At 2:48 minutes, smoke will start pouring into the other rooms of the house.

At 3:03 minutes, the temperature in the room where the fire began will reach over 500°F. No human can survive that kind of heat.

At 3:20 minutes, escaping will be very challenging, with the upstairs halls filled with smoke.

At 3:41 minutes, a "flashover" occurs. Everything in the room where the fire originated will ignite, with the temperature exceeding 1,400°F.

At 3:50 minutes, two minutes after the smoke detector went off, the only possible way out is the second exit.

At 4:33 minutes, flames will have engulfed the home's exterior. Rescue is no longer possible.

It takes less than five minutes for a fire to completely engulf most homes. There is not much time to decide what to do. Fire waits for no man. It is critical to make a plan in advance. Hesitation could mean the difference between life and death.

Imagine for a moment that you live in a mobile or manufactured home. That exponentially decreases the time available to pull people to safety and or stop the spread of a fire. This is a priority in my mind.

Second, ISO ratings. This is what the insurance companies use to determine what they charge you for homeowners' insurance or structural insurance on your business. We all like to save money, and so when we can make an appropriate change that allows us to respond to calls quicker, it is in the public's best interest to make such changes.

Third, the taxing of man hours over the past year to fill out Public Information Requests has greatly increased and some of these go back ten years. Two things happened. I have had to pull admin employees off other tasks to complete this work as well as pull the Fire Chief from his duties in public works sometimes for a few days to complete these tasks. I am fully aware of the necessity of doing this, but it is better served with a dedicated employee to serve these duties rather than hodgepodge from several departments. This is where I see a more efficient process for employees and for the public.

And fourth and last, when I considered this during this last budget cycle, it became clear that cutting the cost of a full-time employee plus part-time fire chief salary down to a simple method of a full-time salary dedicated employee, there was simply no logic to not making the change. While there was a minimal increase to the fire department staff budget, this was compensated through deleting the employee from the Public Works Department thereby saving the taxpayers of Glenns Ferry approximately \$35,000 while increasing our ability to lower our ISO rating and cutting costs for property owners within the city.

As the City Council, and those who attended or read the minutes of our budget hearings, is well aware, the 2023 budget is \$906,129 leaner than 2022 and \$450,257 less than 2021, and while we have more work to do, we are looking for cost cutting savings everywhere while at the same time looking for ways to take this city into the future in a safe and efficient manner as possible.

All this being said, I will not mix words when it comes to public safety. Cutting First Responder funding or challenging moves that put safety at the front places lives in danger. These departments are not here for what happened in the past, but what could happen at any moment and change the lives of countless in our community. Not thinking proactively about emergency services puts people and property at risk and I simply will have to agree to disagree with current lay-assessments. As always, you are all welcome and encouraged to come to Council meetings on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month or stop by with your thoughts, questions, or suggestions. We may not always agree, but I am always willing to listen.

Until next time, remember #bekind!

Sincerely,

William L. Galloska, DMin.

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Mayor, City of Glenns Ferry