

Between Alarms



Local 366

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Congratulations to our 2006 Executive Board

President--Bill Smith

Vice President--Tony Vazquez

Treasurer--Todd VanderWall

Secretary--John Zinn

Steward at Large-- Joe Dubay

40 hr steward--Steve Chicklon

Dispatch Steward--Ron Truer

*A-shift Stewards Dan Gazdecki and
Rich Clark*

*B-shift Stewards David Olivier and Mark
Noorman*

*C-shift Stewards Tony Beurkens Sr and
James Gonzales*



Contact Bill Smith To Contribute to Our Local's PAC Fund

President Bill Smith

Brothers and Sisters,

I take great pride in assuming the role of President for our Local. Each of the members you have elected to the Executive Board recognizes the trust you have bestowed upon them. This is truly a great team, one that is full of strong personalities that understand how to take care of business. At our first Executive meeting, I asked our board to consider priority issues facing our membership. These issues regard our contract, staffing, resources, political involvement and lastly, health and safety. Currently, we have many items of interest happening right now that concern the aforementioned priorities.

The Citizens Budget Advisory Committee (CBAC) has been meeting in order to make recommendations to the City Commission on where City Staff should focus to provide a positive impact on the city's budget. I have attended a few of these meetings and recognized instantly that there are some people who have been involved for many years in the community. It was also equally recognizable that city staff, in one meeting, had an almost 1 to 1 ratio in assisting with this group.

Hats off to Pension Representative Craig VanderWall in bringing forth timely information regarding our Defined Benefit Pension Plan, and how the City has contributed very little in the past dozen years to the plan. The CBAC is ready to make a recommendation that more or less states, "during the next bargaining session, the city should make movement on bringing the units into a Defined Contribution Plan." Craig was curious as to how this group came to the decision, so he asked the question. The response was, "We don't know." Perhaps it had something to do with the 1 to 1 ratio. The CBAC appreciated what Craig had to say, and are now aware of the truth regarding the plan.

The Chief Financial Officer for the City, Mr. Scott Buhner is a proponent of Defined Contribution Pension Plans. I have had the pleasure of meeting Scott numerous times, and he really is a nice person. I like him, although we differ on how pensions should operate. At any rate, I will tell you that I am impressed with his willingness to get involved, as he has been serving on a Governor's Task Force for quite a while now, and I think it has something to do with pensions. I certainly hope that Governor Granholm has kept an eye on what has been going on in California, especially to the challenges made to California Firefighters and their Defined Benefit Pensions by the "Terminator". Coincidentally, Mr. Buhner worked in California. At a recent LEAN meeting with Scott, he shared that there was a Request for Proposal seeking a consultant to work for the city to provide an un-biased opinion to finally settle the question of city employee wages, insurance, and pensions. Just seems to

me that we have enough smart people in the city, already on the payroll, that might be able to call around for these answers. Besides, can a consultant truly render an un-biased report if the City is writing the check? I will reserve my thoughts to that. I will say that I don't understand why Mr Kimball has been behind showcasing pension issues, which have required such large budget contributions, when TOP City Staff retires off of this very pension.

Your Vice-President and I met with Chief VanSolkema and Sotko this past week to open the Department Survey. We all agreed that there are areas to be worked on. Chief VanSolkema invited us to participate in forming a group that would determine the best course of direction in dealing with the concerns. Once we have the names of those who will comprise the group, the survey summary will be made available for your review.

Recently, our staffing was affected to such a degree that the Chief opted to drop an Engine from service, instead of calling back. I also read his opinion as to who the responsibility of daily staffing falls upon. I fail to understand how one can say this to the troops, when we do not hold the reigns of call back. On this particular date, I checked around to see what was happening. I did not find one, not one case, of sick leave that was not for good reason. Furthermore, I was told that the Police Department suffered many sick leaves due to a flu like illness that kept or sent much of their shift home. This occurred in a relatively close proximity of time. The oncoming shift was apparently told to disinfect their cruisers prior to patrol.

But, here is a subject that both the Chief and I agree. We need to do the best job we can in documenting what types of calls we respond to. In a recent discussion, Chief VanSolkema reported that we responded to 19,744 alarms in 2005. 5,261 of those alarms reflect good intent, fire alarms, structure fires, and vehicle fires. So, respectfully I ask that we all review what is a good intent call. I will also stand by the Chief seeking to find new revenue generators that will assist with our bottom line. Chief Knapp has worked diligently to get this going, so thank you Laura.

And in my best Andy Rooney rant, have you paid attention to some of the commercials on TV lately? Some are really pretty amusing, my favorite being the suited up chimps representing corporate honchos, bossing their employees around to do absurd things. I bet ENRON ran their corporation in much that same manner, don't you Mr. Union Philosopher? Cracks me up every time I see them. But, another commercial "IT" really disturbs me, in fact, more recently that ever. I mean, what is IT, and who is IT, and why did IT just grab \$600,000 from our budget? As far as I am concerned, IT can take a flying leap off of city hall. I mean really, shouldn't we have more firefighters than more IT? I have had enough of IT....

In closing, we have another special year facing us.

I sincerely appreciate all that you do, your talent and conviction to our profession is important to the community and to all of us. I want to also thank those who have been taking care of MAYDAY training. I hope we never have to use it. And thanks to the Gumbo Team, for doing what you did in the face of POSERS! Emeril has promised to be on our team next year.

Fraternally,
Bill Smith

CISM

Greetings to all. Your CISM team wants to remind you of some important things you can do to help yourselves during these stressful times.

1. Get enough sleep.
2. Don't eat or drink to excess. If you usually have a drink or two, continue. Don't OVER indulge.
3. Spend time with a hobby you enjoy. It can take your mind off work stresses. From experience, I can tell you that golf is not nearly as relaxing as it is supposed to be.
4. Be patient with yourself, and others. We are all going to make mistakes. Examine your reaction to others and try to determine if you are mad at them, or mad at something else, and taking it out on them.
5. Talk. Holding things in do not make them go away.
6. Keep an eye on each other. We are all frustrated and concerned about the condition of our department. It is going to affect us all in different ways. Be aware of unusual unexplained mood swings.
7. EAP is a confidential resource. Use it when there is a need or when you think there might be a need.
8. Officers, don't be afraid to call in the CISM team. There is a lot of uncertainty, frustration, and anger out there. Events that would not ordinarily trigger a stress response, may do so this time. Pay attention.

In case you missed the e-mail, the CISM team is always looking for new members. Steve Lohman would love to be inundated with requests to join. Take care of yourselves.

Outside Activities **Travis Gurd**

Brothers and Sisters,

Spring will soon be upon us, with plenty of sun to at least brighten up our "blue" moods. There is a new year upon us, which means new goals for charities and hopefully more participation for Union sponsored activities.

As you recall from last year, we participated in quite a few new charities, which I feel is a good thing. We raised far more money for MDA than ever before which, without your help, would never have happened. We raised over \$19,000 for the Hurricane Katrina victims. We also participated in many more charity events. We need to keep in mind that raising money or doing any kind of charity work entails lots of time and commitment from a lot of people. I feel that everyone in the local participated to some extent, whether it was words of encouragement, actually assisting in the charity itself, or helping to do some of the leg work. Everyone deserves credit for the accomplishments this local has achieved.

The Shriner's circus has asked for our assistance once again this year. The dates and times are as follows:

Wednesday, March 15th (C-shift L-8)
0900 hrs Delta Plex 2500 Turner NW GR

Thursday, March 16th (A-shift L-7)
1000 hrs Delta Plex 2500 Turner NW GR

Friday, March 17th (B-shift L-7)
0900 hrs Delta Plex 2500 Turner NW GR

If you are able and willing to assist, your help is always needed.

For ease of remembering dates, I will try to keep upcoming events in the newsletter each issue, so that members may plan ahead and hopefully attend as many events as possible

Remember that we are hosting the MPFFU convention here in town. You may go to the website to see the dates and any other information that it may have.

WWW.MPFFU.ORG

If you are wanting to help, any and all help is needed. There are over 200 members in the local. We could use all 200 to assist.

Respectfully,
Travis Gurd
Outside Activities

Horse Stories . . and more Grand Rapids Fire Department History #17

The Grand Rapids Herald – August 1924

A fireman's life is more than just fighting fires.

There was a time in the early days when a city fireman's job was considered a soft one. It was never the sort of life that would appeal to the fearful or weak person. Yet, even in those days before "fireproof" was entered into dictionaries as a descriptive adjective and while the generality of frame buildings made fires more numerous in comparison with population than nowadays, there were often sizeable intervals of idleness in which firemen were free of work. Those days are gone and they will never return in Grand Rapids. And none is more gratified at the new order than the firemen themselves. A visit today to any of the twelve engine houses, or for that matter at any time of the year, will reveal the firemen at some activity for the betterment of the department or improvement of their quarters.

At **Engine House #3** (Front & 2nd St. N.W.) are the repair shops where all the wagons and apparatus of the entire department are kept in constant good order by the corps of skilled mechanic-firemen which the city may count itself fortunate at having. The Master Mechanic at 3's is **Frank G. Hill**, who entered the department in 1895 and who is the oldest employee at that station. He was a competent machinist when he started working in the fire department as he had been employed as a millwright at Sweet's Furniture Factory, for two years and prior to that had belonged to the mechanical force of the Michigan Iron Works. Even earlier than this he was a machinist at the Lietelt Iron Works. Soon after coming to No. 3 he became assistant engineer and in 1899 was appointed engineer (Equipment Operator). He later worked under **Henry Bettinghouse** (Assistant Fire Chief and Master Mechanic) as assistant master mechanic until 1915 when, Bettinghouse retired on pension, he became Master Mechanic. The master mechanic was paid the same rate as the Assistant Fire Chief and later the position was re-named Chief Master Mechanic and the pay rate was reduced to that of a Battalion Chief (the modern day equivalent is Captain, Apparatus Maintenance).

Peter Slovinski, engineer of No. 3 engine house has been an employee of the department for over 26 years, learned the machinist trade at the Alexander Dodd's Company of Grand Rapids, and he devotes about four days a week to the craft at 3's. Also at 3's, Engineer **Russell Parish**, prior to his entry into the fire department in 1918, had been an auto mechanic at the Standard Automobile Company. Pipeman **Charles Kozminski** who has served the city since 1911, was an automobile repairman prior to that date.

Ferdinand (Fred) Brocker, who became a pipeman at No. 3 about a year ago, had worked with the Dodge Motor Service in this city and also at Continental Motor Company of Muskegon.

Pipeman **James Riordan** entered the department in 1910, after nine years employment at the blacksmith and horse-shoeing establishment of Commissioner Harry Baldwin.

John Sawasko (later Captain of Engine Company No. 3) had no machinist experience when he entered the department in 1920, having been in the Mexican Border Service of the U.S. Army, but he was an apt pupil with such an array of mechanical talent and is now proficient in his craft.

Much is accomplished.

Within the last eight years the machinist corps at **Engine House #3** has rebuilt five hose wagons from the ground and has also rebuilt five tractors which are used for drawing the steam engines. The ten vehicles are still in service at various engine houses.

Besides keeping up the current repair work on all the fire engines, which City Manager Fred H. Locke estimates saves the city \$20,000 annually; they also make deck nozzles, steamer and shut-off pipes, hydrant and steamer wrenches and hydrant valves. There is an excellent lathe at No. 3, the repair shop is well equipped and the firemen declare it is much more pleasant to be thus engaged between calls than to find time hanging heavy, as it did under the old regime.

The machinists at No. 3 receive 10 cents an hour additional for their work but city officials consider this conservative re-numeration when machinists at local shops are getting 90 cents an hour.

The paint shops of the Grand Rapids Fire Department are at **Engine House #2** (Barclay near Michigan Street) and besides keeping all the fire wagons in spick and span condition, the firemen there are engaged in remodeling the shop. It has been necessary to tear down a portion of a brick wall for enlargement to admit the big pumpers the city is now using. This year alone the boys at 2's have painted one hose wagon, one pumper, two chemicals and two chief cars.

John Ahrens of the Ahrens Fox Fire Engine Company of Cincinnati, Ohio, who was recently in Grand Rapids checking the fire department's two Ahrens Fox engines, declared that a job of painting a fire engine, which 2's firemen turned out at a net cost of \$50 would have cost the city \$500.00 had the work been done in an outside factory.

Firemen at **No. 7 Engine House** are repainting the interior of the station, while at **No.4 Engine House** the big wooden trusses supporting the roof and ceiling, which had commenced to buckle, are being reinforced by the firemen. Whenever there is something to be done for the betterment of the department either in the twelve stations or as a whole the firemen are doing it. At the other stations the firemen paint, repair and maintain their quarters and surrounding property. The city allows a total of \$1500.00 annually for maintenance of all 12 engine houses and so it is just naturally up to the firemen to keep busy to keep repair and reconstruction costs within this amount. It is only due to the skilled artisan knowledge mixed with plenty of "elbow grease" that the firemen keep the engine houses in a condition beyond criticism.

Personal note: My father, Wallace Imhoff, entered the fire department in 1938 after being employed at Keeler Brass and later Monarch Road Machine Company and became a machinist in the shops at Engine House #3 operating the big lathe making nozzles, valves and other equipment used by the firefighters. When I entered the fire department in 1967 I used the nozzles and valves manufactured by my father years earlier and today you may still find a few of those items in the storage areas of some of the fire stations.

First Police Precinct

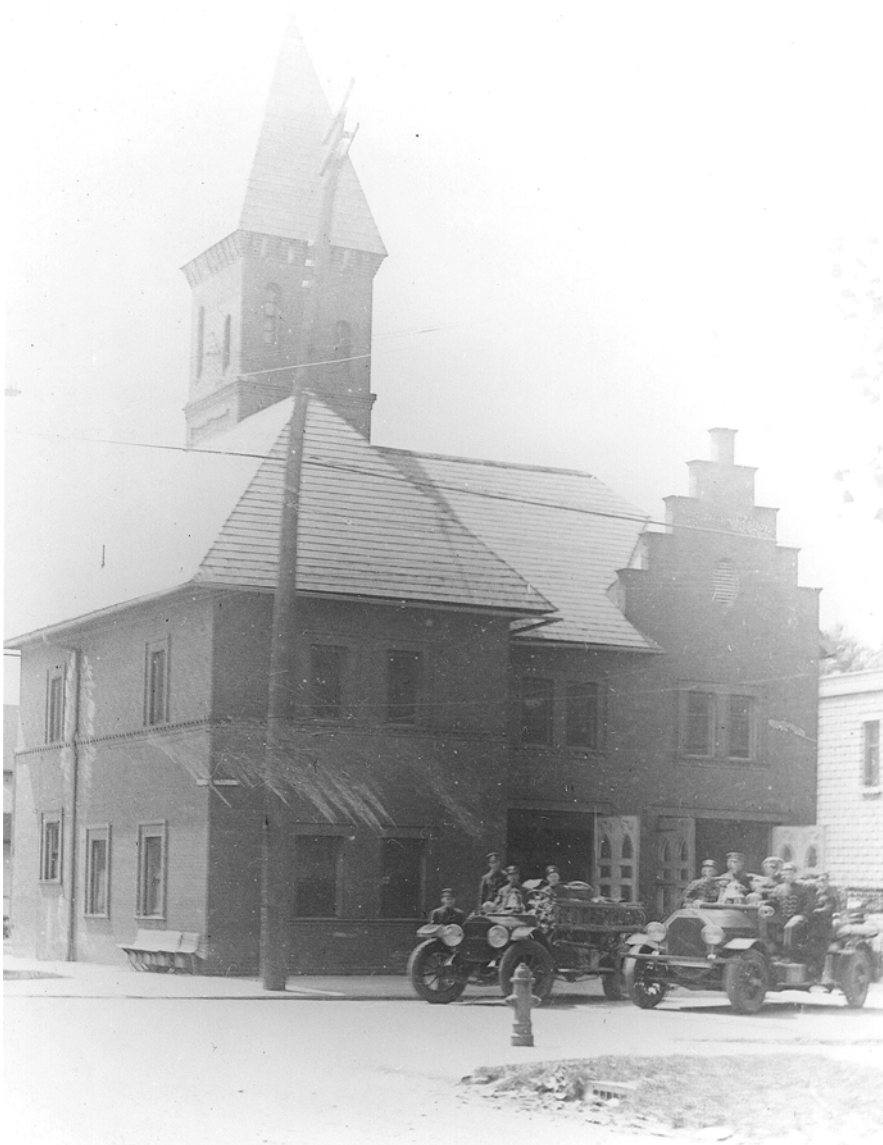
The firemen at **Engine House #10** on the corner of Hall Street and Ionia SW are building the first police precinct in Grand Rapids and this station will house both Engine Company #10 and the police squad vehicle until the new Engine House #10 is opened in a few years at Division and Brown SE.

The Horse Story for this issue is as follows:

One of the Grand Rapids Fire Department horses not previously mentioned was named **Argo** and how he was given his name is the subject of this short story.

During the 1880's several horses were brought by ship from Chicago to Muskegon to be

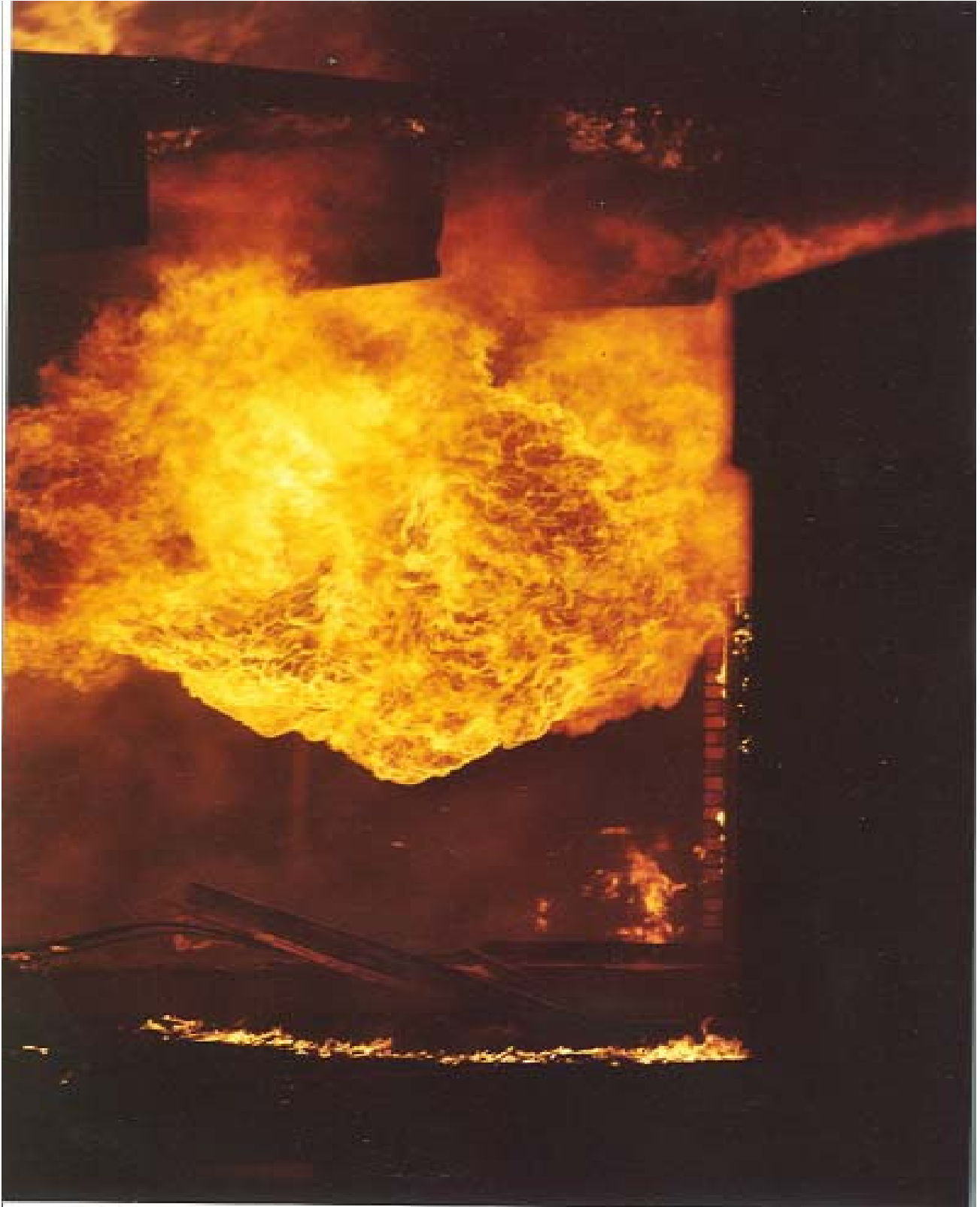
used for all types of work in Western Michigan. These horses were from the U.S. Calvary, cattle ranches and buffalo hunters that no longer needed them. One such shipload of horses and other stock was nearing port and ran into a severe storm which caused the ship to flounder. One horse that escaped the sinking ship and swam to shore was purchased by the Grand Rapids Fire Department and after hearing the story named him **Argo**. In Greek mythology Argo was the name of the ship in which Jason and the Argonauts sailed in quest for the Golden Fleece. There is a modern day company by the name of ARGO that manufactures amphibious 6 x 6 or 8 x 8 all-terrain off-road ATV vehicles. A record of where **Argo** (the horse) served the department has not been located, but I am still searching.



Engine House #10 in the 1920s

More Horse Stories and G.R.F.D. history next issue along with a story about the steam fire engine whistle signals used by the department.

Robert Imhoff
Retired, Apparatus Captain



***Pension Representative
Craig VanderWall***

Over the past year, I have continued to see articles and editorials voicing concern over the cost of the defined benefit pension plans that employees receive as a benefit of employment with the City of Grand Rapids. The latest editorial dated Wednesday, February 1, 2006 went so far as to say that the city must switch to a defined contribution plan. The interesting thing is that the city already has a defined contribution plan in place for top management employees. In this plan, the city contributes 15% of salary plus 7.65% for Social Security taxes for a total contribution of 22.65%.

The general system employees (non-uniformed) plan is currently at 16.4% plus 7.65% for Social Security. It has just recently surpassed the cost of the defined contribution plan for top management. In prior years, the contribution rate was as low as 0% plus 7.65%.

The current cost for the Police and Fire defined benefit plan is 0% and has been for almost 12 consecutive years. In addition, the city does not pay the 7.65% into Social Security for Police and Fire employees.

I find it interesting that these articles and editorials consistently reference the cost of the general system pension plan, gloss over the Police and Fire plan, and never mention the cost of the defined contribution plan enjoyed by the top management of the city. I called the pension office to see how many requests for information they have received from the press for these articles and editorials. It was not surprising to find that they have not been contacted. So, where is the information coming from? My guess is that it is from the people receiving 22.65% every year.

There is information on the internet comparing the benefits of both types of plans. Use a search engine and type in defined benefit vs. defined contribution pension plans. You can find a lengthy study completed by CALPERS on the benefits and shortcomings of each type of plan. Other websites include;
afscme.org/workplace/pensfact.html and mcpers.org/artman/publish2/article_160.asp

I hope that any future articles or editorials include complete information and not just one sided reporting.

Craig VanderWall
Police & Fire Pension Representative

***Building Corp. Meeting
(Party) April 26th B-1***

***Please make a note, Building Corp.
Meeting/Party is always the 4th
Wednesday in April***

***Hall will be open all day, and the
meeting to start at 1900 hrs with meal
immediately following. Open to mem-
bers only, retired and active.***

Charity Hockey Game

K.A.L.E. Kent Area Law Enforcement

vs.

Guns and Hoses

***March 25th, 2006 at Southside Ice
Center***

***festivities to start at 1400 hrs
game at 1500 hrs***

***proceeds to U of M Bone Marrow
Transplant Program c/o David Sheiber
Family***

**GRAND RAPIDS FIREFIGHTER'S UNION
POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE
AFFIRMATIVE CONSENT FORM**

January 1st 2006 through December 31st, 2006
Payroll Deduction for Automatic Contribution

AFFIRMATIVE CONSENT TO POLITICAL CONTRIBUTION

SECTION 55(6) OF THE CAMPAIGN FINANCE ACT PROVIDES THAT A FOR PROFIT OR NON-PROFIT CORPORATION, A JOINT STOCK COMPANY, A DOMESTIC DEPENDENT SOVEREIGN, OR A LABOR ORGANIZATION MAY SOLICIT OR OBTAIN CONTRIBUTIONS FOR A SEPARATE SEGREGATED FUND ON AN AUTOMATIC BASIS, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO A PAYROLL DEDUCTION PLAN, ONLY IF THE INDIVIDUAL WHO IS CONTRIBUTING TO THE FUND AFFIRMATIVELY CONSENTS TO THE CONTRIBUTION AT LEAST ONCE IN EVERY CALENDAR YEAR.

I HEARBY AUTHORIZE THE GRAND RAPIDS FIRE FIGHTERS UNION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE (GRFFUPAC) AND THE CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS PAYROLL DEPARTMENT, EFFECTIVE UPON RECEIPT OF THIS NOTICE, TO DEDUCT THE BELOW INDICATED AMOUNT PER PAYCHECK AND APPLY THE SAME AS A SEPARATE ENTITY TO THE GRAND RAPIDS FIREFIGHTERS UNION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE ACCOUNT.

**LOCATED AT:
INDEPENDENT BANK
78 SOUTH MAIN
ROCKFORD, MI 49341**

**GRAND RAPIDS FIRE FIGHTERS POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE
ORGANIZED AS AN INDEPENDENT COMMITTEE
STATE OF MICHIGAN, BUREAU OF ELECTIONS IDENTIFICATION NUMBER 509494-1**

THIS IS FOR THE CALENDAR YEAR OF 2006 AND WILL EXPIRE ON DECEMBER 31ST, 2006

THIS AUTHORIZATION IS VOLUNTARY BASED UPON MY SPECIFIC UNDERSTANDING THAT:

CONTRIBUTIONS OR GIFTS TO THE INDEPENDENT COMMITTEE NAME ABOVE ARE NOT TAX-DEDUCTIBLE AS CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS FOR STATE OR FEDERAL INCOME TAX PURPOSES, AND

...THE SIGNING OF THIS AUTHORIZATION FORM AND MAKING OF THESE VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS WERE NOT OBTAINED BY COERCION, USE OF PHYSICAL FORCE, THREAT, JOB DISCRIMINATION OR FINANCIAL REPRISALS AND ARE NOT CONDITIONS OF MEMBERSHIP IN THE UNION OR EMPLOYMENT BY MY EMPLOYER, AND

...I MAY REFUSE TO CONTRIBUTE OR TERMINATE THIS ENROLLMENT AT ANY TIME WITHOUT REPRISAL; AND ...THE GRAND RAPIDS FIRE FIGHTERS UNION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE WILL USE THE MONIES FOR STATE AND LOCAL OFFICES, CONTRIBUTIONS TO OTHER ORGANIZATIONS OR VARIOUS COMMITTEES AND ADDRESSING POLITICAL ISSUES OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE.

THIS AUTHORIZATION SHALL REMAIN IN FULL FORCE AND EFFECT UNTIL REVOKED BY MYSELF, OR FOR ONE CALENDAR YEAR, WHICHEVER OCCURS FIRST.

BY SIGNING BELOW YOU ACKNOWLEDGE THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD ALL OF THE ABOVE.
YOU MAY TERMINATE THIS ENROLLMENT AT ANYTIME BY CONTACTING THE UNION SECRETARY

I WISH TO CONTRIBUTE (PLEASE CIRCLE) \$1.00, \$2.00, \$3.00, OR OTHER _____ PER PAY PERIOD

PRINTED NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

SIGNATURE AND DATE

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER _____

Reminder
Retirees Breakfast
1st Tuesday of every month
Russ' Restaurant 28th & Byron Center
Call Don Poll
878-1829

CLASSIFIEDS:
House For Sale:
For Sale by Owner- 1666 Oswego St. NW Grand Rapids.
Great house, all brick. Check it out at 1666Oswego.blogspot.com
Must sell.

WE ALWAYS NEED PICTURES!! PLEASE SEND ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN PRINT TO OUR NEWSLETTER STAFF. PICTURES OF EVENTS, HUMOROUS, OR ANYTHING (WITHIN REASON) THANK YOU

Union Meetings

April 10th & 11th
May 8th & 9th

Newsletter Deadline
April 21st

TO RETIREES THAT ENJOY THE WINTER IN A FAR WARMER PLACE, PLEASE NOTIFY "BETWEEN ALARMS" OF WHEN YOU LEAVE, AND WHEN YOU RETURN, SO THAT YOU MAY RECEIVE THE NEWSLETTER WHEREVER YOU MAY BE, THANK YOU FOR YOUR PAST AND PRESENT CONTRIBUTIONS.

To place your ad in this newsletter, contact Tony Jr. or Paul Mason @ Bridge St.

place label here

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