

Between ~ ~ Alarms



Local 366

Grand Rapids, Michigan : Spring 2008

WERE BACK!

After a slight hiatus Between Alarms is back in action. Your Editors are Paul Mason and Bill Smith. Have something you would like to contribute to the newsletter? Contact the Editors at L366News@comcast.net



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

President Joe Dubay

Dear Members,

For those of you who have not heard, this bargaining season has been the most unique I have ever experienced. I have never seen a city that claims to be in such dire straits do nothing short of waste the better part of six months with fictitious proposals. To say that your bargaining team is frustrated would be an understatement, not only with bargaining, but with the total lack of direction and leadership from the other side of the table and City Hall.

The only solution to this well orchestrated ruse of financially dire times seems to be, to cut the over head by treating the work force as indentured servants. It is in times like these that we must say we are happy to see that the department and city leadership truly care about us and have our concerns in mind. Also, our fair citizens and City Leaders who live in the City should feel confident that we will have enough people to respond to their emergencies when ever they call....eventually. In a statement given to the public safety commission by the chief of the department, "We're rolling the dice". I myself like to play craps, the most I lose when a 7 comes up is the money I have bet... what is there to lose if the Department rolls a 7?

We recently were informed by one of our leaders that we are still sending the same 14 people to every structure assignment albeit from several spokes of the wagon wheel. I realize with my limited time in the department I may have been dreaming, but didn't we send 16 on an alarm and 19 when dispatch thought we had something? Not to mention, that if we really had something it went to 22. We also now have commanders for every side of the structure which in a safety aspect is a good thing, however, that is 3-4 more people who are not in doing actual firefighting. Management of the Fire Service **MUST** have the backbone to stand up for staffing of the machines in the manner that is safe and not try to satisfy their bosses at the potential senseless cost of citizens or our lives! They **MUST** stop telling us "we didn't lose anyone this time" and should be attempting to grow this department! Staffing should be 3 on every Engine, 4 on every Truck minimum. The Medical Squads are a great help and very necessary machine but not at the expense of staffing. They should be an enhancement.

We all know the same mantra that is delivered on a daily basis...."We have to do more with less!" I agree, because we have less, this is true. That, however, doesn't seem to be the example set by our City and Department leadership. We have seen City hall grow while we continue to shrink on the streets. Again we are informed that we are losing jobs in the Fire Service. Has our workload diminished? Absolutely not!

Now, on the heels of all that has gone on, Mr. Kimball stated in the press that with a \$45 per payday increase in our contribution to healthcare, all would be well. First off, that is not true. The City has dug their heels in on more than just your current healthcare. The

City wants a **large** portion of your retirement healthcare as well, and the less time you have in the department the worse it would be. The City also has no plan in their limiting of your gap coverage (insurance between 55 and 65) to take into account how you would be covered if you were disabled on or off duty. Your pay increase would amount to scraps at the table and forget about any other improvements in the contract in pension or other realms. Even when we, your bargaining team, have made movements to try and bring about a fair and equitable contract, we are met with blank stares and the same reoccurring statement, "**that is not enough**". The reason for this I believe is that, again stated in the Press, they had a unit ready to settle. Well at the time of this article, I am here to tell you that the unit they assumed would swallow the bitter pill was Dispatch. We know of the arrogance conveyed to your bargaining team as City leaders salivated over scared employee's accepting whatever is thrown at them. Well, not only did Dispatch vote down their proposed contract, they shot it down hard. Perhaps now our City commission will see the resolve at the unfair treatment of the employees they represent and start to scrutinize the "**story and the numbers**" they are being fed by top management.

Many of you have expressed your support to me, the leadership of the Union, and bargaining team, for that we are grateful. The job we all face seems to be for the City and their delegates to open the floodgates and to see what gets missed. It is in times like these when we all must be watching each others backs as I have already seen in action. Please don't ever assume that your leadership is given the common courtesy and notice from anyone above. If you hear of something, by all means drop one of us a line. You have my commitment to do my best for all of you while I am serving this fine organization.

In closing, a few other items that are being done by our management that the Union is taking issue with are: the demotion of a Fire Inspector, management using members to subvert Brother Martinez's Fire investigation duties, and transferring department work to the police in the realm of fire investigation. We have numerous arbitrations on the horizon and the list of them continues to grow. One can only hope that City Commissioners will see the growing expense in arbitrating and **LOSING** issues to the local and wonder who really is at fault for poor labor management relations.

I commit to you that I will continue as your representative to advance what is important to all of us as a whole. Thank you for your service to this department and your support for the Union.

Sincerely,
Joe Dubay



Membership of Local 366 past and present,

I hope everyone is well. Summer appears to be breaking through and quickly filling up schedules. Please don't forget to make time for your Union meetings and events. The more at a meeting the better. Your president and I have made every effort to keep all of you well informed of goings on at the regular meetings. I personally feel that an informed Union is a strong Union, the same holds true for the individual. Stories as well as goings on can change from the time heard at a meeting to the time repeated at the engine house.

Bargaining is moving along however the process for me (being a first timer) is painfully slow. I guess that is just the way it is when dealing with so many busy schedules, on both sides of the table, and topics that often require research and debate. As all of you well know many changes have been proposed by the City and we have handed a large package to them also, this only lengthens the process.

Changing gears a bit, I think I have finally settled into the job I have been elected to now that I have been here for over a year. I have developed my own style and it seems to be working. The job has its trying times but the encouragement from the membership as well as the battles won help immensely. Things are progressing: we have several grievances going to arbitration, all of which I feel we have a good case on. Your executives put in a lot of hard work in on every single case, and no decision is taken or made lightly. We have some new stewards on board and they doing very well in their positions, as are the gluttons who stayed. To those executives that left, thank you for your service.

I know that this is the same old song but I do appreciate that all of you are utilizing your stewards. Stewards lessen my work load and the workload of the president as well. I caution all of you to be vigilant, do not let an issue go by without notifying your representatives when something comes up. When an issue is not challenged or recognized it becomes very difficult to rectify. On a related note and as an exception to my last statement, the South Battalion Chiefs have assumed the job of daily manpower. I ask all of you to show some patience as the learning process is undertaken. With many different persons doing the task (BC5, BC6, acting BCs, deputy chiefs, and the chief himself) many different paths are taken, not always to the same end. Speak up if you think you have been violated contractually but work with your stewards on issues between members.

Speaking of that, I had heard (not recently) questions on why we as a membership were taking on manpower compilation. Who do we grieve? We have enough on our plate etc... My answer is: the task was performed in the past by members (dispatch) and I believe that the job was going to be given to the Chief Officers in a short time anyway. In this case, we were able to negotiate for a monetary benefit to those doing the task

before it was forced upon them. I will reiterate that I do not have facts backing the forcing of this job on them but I could see the writing on the wall and took action in the best interest of our membership. I believe I was correct in this case.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to thank President Smith (RET) for all he has done for this Union both as President and all other posts he has held. He is still playing an active role on Newsletter, PAC, Bargaining team, etc... But I wanted to acknowledge him for his work as a Principal Officer. I was fortunate to have worked for him and with him. I learned quite a lot about politics and patience, somewhere along the line I got to know Bill, and made a friend, something not to be taken lightly. I watched him give all he had to the positions he held, often times to the sacrifice of his personal life, something that is all but impossible to avoid in the president's position. Bill did it all in stride. When you see him around the Engine Houses, please take the time to pass on your gratitude for his labor.

Fraternally
Rich Clark
Vice President L366

City Manager 3/Firefighters 0

He has done it again! No surprise here but Mr. Kimball has successfully reduced our Total Authorized Strength via a vote of the City Commissioners on June 3rd, 2008. City Commissioners were not in unanimous support of the budget that takes away from our staffing and our safety. Commissioner David LeGrand and Commissioner Jim Jendrsiak voted against the budget that lowers our suppression ranks. All of the commissioners did approve a resolution to bring our staffing up IF the city is successful in gaining money from the County Jail. The trend of lowering our numbers will most likely continue as we know our chief will never take a view opposite of his boss. Afterall, he is an at-will employee.

“Keep this in mind as you faithfully conduct your duties. You are never more than one incident that embarrasses the powers that be from having your life turned upside down. You are little more than collateral damage to them in the price of doing business.”

-Dave Leonard (quote from police newsletter)

Horse Stories.....and more Grand Rapids Fire Department History #20

1921 – Grand Rapids Newspaper Article

With the arrival recently of the motor pumper at Engine House #7, Grand Rapids passed from the list of those cities classed as being partially motorized into the category of completely motorized firefighting apparatus. Whether elimination of the last horse-drawn fire engine will give Grand Rapids a better rating in the lists of the National Underwriters Association remains to be seen. Before the addition of the last (motorized) apparatus it was rated first class with only 120 demerits giving the department 87.4 percent perfect fire protection. That is an enviable reputation for a wooden roofed city as cold as Grand Rapids is for four months of the year.

The men of Engine House #7 are enthusiastic over the acquisition of the new apparatus, a 1921 American LaFrance, 750 gpm, triple combination pumper, chiefly because it adds to the efficiency of the company by enabling it to get to the scene of a fire more rapidly and by permitting six men to work the hose lines and ladders where only five were available before. "It is considerably faster getting on the road," said Captain William Spencer in discussing the advantages of the new engine. "Two or three minutes cut from our running time means we can get to the fire that much sooner. Those two or three minutes frequently tell the story. Give them to the fire department, especially in roof fires which are by far the most frequent and the loss will be small, give them to the fire and no one can tell how much damage will result. It is axiomatic among firemen that the first few minutes make the fire. Once at the fire it again is time that counts, the time that it takes the men to get at the fire and combat it effectively."

The new pumper carries a 24 foot extension ladder and a 12 foot roof ladder. It is equipped with a booster pump attached with a small stream hose to a 60 gallon water tank. "As soon as we get to a fire the water in this tank is available without waiting for connection to one of the city water mains. More often than not it proves sufficient to put out the fire without resorting to the big pump and city mains." The new pump, rated at a 750 gallon per minute capacity, threw 840 gallons per minute at its official acceptance test. This compares favorably with the 600 gpm capacity of the supplanted steam fire engine. It enables six of the seven men of the engine company to take part in the actual work of handling the hose and ladders as against five out of seven available when one man was required to hold the horses and one to keep the pump in action.

"It is cheaper, in that it takes the place of two apparatus – a steam fire engine and a combination chemical and hose wagon. Feed for the horses and the fuel required to keep the water in the steamer constantly at the boiling point more than balances the cost of upkeep of the new pumper," said Captain Spencer. "In spite of attempts to keep the steam gauge at a point where a working pressure could be reached during a run to a fire, steam power pumps could never be depended upon to work at maximum capacity as soon as they were connected to the mains. Gas driven pumps pick up their maximum load as soon as they are attached."

Only one man at Engine House #7 feels a tinge of regret because of the change. That man is William C. Bremer, who drove the first horse drawn apparatus at Engine House #7 on December 19, 1891, when the company first came into existence. For 30 years he drove continuously without an accident and without a runaway. During the first 20 years of his service "Bill" was the driver of the hose wagon. Ten years ago when a motor driven hose wagon replaced the team of horses, Captain Spencer wanted Bremer to learn to drive it, but "Bill" refused. Instead he asked that he be shifted to the steam fire engine to drive those horses. His request was granted and he became the last regular driver of the last horse drawn Grand Rapids Fire Department apparatus.

Now there are no more horses left for "Bill" to drive. After 30 years his teams are gone never to return. He and his friends, Ned and Duke, are of the order that has passed. They did their utmost, and a thrilling, romantic utmost it was – Ned and Duke straining in mighty effort down sleet-covered or snow clad streets, "Bill" holding them in their course, urging here, restraining there, but ever with one idea in mind, to reach the fire as quickly as possible. But, the old order changes, and with every change isolated human beings find progress for the good of the many casts them aside without regard of the individual. Romantic though they were, pathetic as they now appear, other drivers in other cities have gone the way that "Bill" now goes. Other horses have preceded Ned and Duke to garbage wagon hauling. Meanwhile, "Bill", now a pipeman on Engine #7, gradually is recovering from the blow. For two days after his pets had left he spoke to none of his company mates. "Bill" having served faithfully for 30 years can now retire on a pension when he pleases.

A few steam fire engines were still in the fire department as late as 1923 but were used only in reserve. Horses were not needed as these steamers had been converted to (electric or gasoline tractor driven).

The following are examples of tractor driven and electric driven fire apparatus used in the Grand Rapids Fire Department as well as one of the last pictures of Steamer #7 (horse drawn) and the new Engine #7, triple combination, American LaFrance 750 gpm pumper.



STEAMER # 4 – at Engine House # 4 – Crescent & Bond Street



STEAMER #3 – Christie Tractor Driven



STEAMER #7 – The last run for Ned & Duke

More Horse Stories and Grand Rapids Fire Department History – next issue.

Robert Imhoff, Retired Captain – Apparatus Division



Congratulations Steve!



Most of us have been with him on one scene or another and some have been fortunate enough to have been stationed with him. Steve Lohman is simply one of those who is always seen but not always heard. Soft spoken, polite, thoughtful and committed to the service of all are accurate descriptions of his character. Commonly known amongs our membership is the fact that you can count on Steve be be right next to you when there is work needed to be done. Dedicated to his brother and sister firefighters, Steve is a member of the Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Team since 2000 and is always just a phone call away.

Shirley and Denny Lohman welcomed their son into the world on October 3rd, 1964. Steve was born in Muskegon and graduated from Whitehall High School in 1982. Lohman went on to attend Muskegon Community College and Western Michigan university. Steve has been married to Christine Tennant, sister of Captain Ron Tennant, since 1987 and likes to work out and travel in his spare time.

Steve was a part-time firefighter in Portage for 3 years before joining the Grand Rapids Fire Department in 1994 and has been working out of the Division Avenue Station for the last 7 years. Steve earned the Medical Service award and was presented with the Medal of Valor for his actions at the Indian Trail Apartments fire this past January. Steve believes that the two most important issues facing our membership today our: taking care of our community and continuing our effort to maintain our staffing levels. We can all agree with that! Please take the time to congratulate Steve when you see him.

- Your Brothers and Sisters of Local 366

iaff366.com

To the membership,

Finally, warm breezes and sunny days have replaced the frigid weather that certainly wore out its welcome with us all. With the return of a more amicable climate we are knee high into “you can’t get there from here” season. Accompanying the road closures and diversions, we ride on some of the best roads the devil himself has to offer. However, be not afraid of our temporary inconveniences, the money to repair those menacing potholes will come from firefighter cutbacks! Did you know that a dozen city workers equates to roughly one million dollars to the annual budget? 227, 217, 210 and so we spiral downward with Total Authorized Strength. Total Authorized Strength is slated to be reduced at Kurt Kimball’s direction to the city commission. Currently, we are supposed to have 217 within our suppression ranks. However, last year a hiring freeze was imposed and our badly needed recruit class never materialized. We have been told that we are slated to hire a dozen firefighters this year yet we’ll need to almost double that to arrive at the current TAS. If the manager has his way with the “recommendation”, we will be at a TAS of 210, supposedly. WAY TO SPIN THE BUDGET Mr. Kimball! and auger safety right into the ground. One can only imagine how this will impact the citizens of Grand Rapids. Already, you know how daily staffing has suffered and we have bemoaned hit or miss closings of machines which appear to occur with little regard to conscience or reason. Couple this with our busy road construction schedule and our response times will be on the rise making those in distress wait and making you less safe. Can you say, “inexcusable”?

We have responded to very serious events this past year: the Indian Trails fire, the Wealthy Street explosion, and the Front Street fire, all fought during terrible temperatures. As if these incidents weren’t enough, the Aeromed crash on the roof of Butterworth Hospital was without doubt the most visible call to service of all. This incident was especially personal to many of our responders and off duty personnel, as so many of us have family and friends who work at Butterworth Hospital. Two of our Fire Attack Group responders had a family member on the OB/GYN floor, just 2 floors down from the roof! It’s truly a wonderment that no one was killed or more seriously injured during the crash. Well done to the Fire Attack Group and all others who responded to this call. I hope that more people in the community recognize the extraordinary effort of the pilot who was able to steady his disable craft and remain on the roof of the hospital. Certainly, this incident could have been a lot worse had it crashed into one of the floors or down to the street. Without a doubt, Aeromed provides a valuable service in getting patients to trauma centers within the “golden hour”. At the finishing of this article, news has just come in that a house exploded on 12th Street NW. And yet, Kurt Kimball recommends reducing our staff once more.

Well that’s all for now, stay safe out there and watch out for one another.

-William Smith,
Editor Between Alarms

P.S. Don’t expect our chief to speak against Kurt’s plan and don’t blame him either. Did you hear about Pontiac’s Fire Chief (now ex-chief) who dared to advocate for more firefighters? Yeah, he was removed from his office with a police escort to the un-employment line.

Special note: With mention of the Indian Trails fire, it should be a point for all to take a moment to note that Pietro’s Restaurant was recognized for providing comfort to the displaced citizens and firefighters engaged in firefighting activities. At the Local’s request, Speaker Pro-term Michael Sak and Rep. Robert Dean provided a Special Recognition award from the Governor’s office celebrating Pietro’s hospitality and both Sak and Dean have helped to protect Act 312.



FOR ALISON



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.

Fire Memorabilia For Sale: I have been collecting fire memorabilia for years and because of health problems, I have decided to sell part, or all of my collection. If you are interested, you can contact me at (616)949-5283. If I am not at home, please leave me a message and I will contact you. Thank you- Don Devlaeminck

Union Meetings

July 14th & 15th
August 11th & 12th

Newsletter Deadline
August 1

Between Alarms is now available on our website, IAFF366.com for members only. If you would like to stop receiving your newsletter in the mail, please send Tony Jr. or Paul Mason an email telling us you would like us to stop sending it.

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

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.

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