

December 11, 2006

James C. VanGorder
Fire Chief
Zionsville Fire Department
P.O. Box 459
Zionsville, IN 46077

Dear Chief VanGorder:

We recently received your letter to Boone County Fire Department Chief Brian Cope dated November 16, 2006 in which you expressed concerns about the abilities and capabilities of Boone County Fire Department. Before we address your concerns, we would like to say that we are surprised and disappointed that another forum such as a professional conversation among elected and appointed officials, or a discussion between chiefs at the monthly County Fire Chiefs' meeting was not utilized to raise these issues. It is particularly troubling since it is our understanding that the intent of the County-wide Fire Chiefs' meeting is to provide an open environment for the chiefs to freely discuss concerns such as these, thus making it a more professional and appropriate arena than email, desktops and the media. With that said, in this letter, we intend to offer a response to the some of the content of your widely-distributed letter.

If indeed there has been an unnecessary delay between the time our volunteer department receives a fire emergency 911 call and when we respond or request assistance from a neighboring fire department, then we share your concerns. However, we believe that our officers exercise good judgment as to whether the department will be able to respond on its own or if assistance is needed. Of course, sometimes it is difficult to know solely based on the initial dispatch call, and we admit that there may be a short delay in determining which is appropriate. In every emergency call, our goal is to assure a proper prompt response is initiated, without unnecessarily burdening our mutual aid partners.

For those times that we have needed assistance, we are grateful to all of the departments that have helped, including the Zionsville Fire Department. We do not believe that our requests for assistance have been unnecessarily frequent. In fact, between January 1, 2006 and December 1, 2006, Boone County Fire responded to 240 emergency 911 calls, of which 10 required requests to Zionsville Fire Department for

assistance. During this same time period, Boone County Fire was dispatched to assist Zionsville/Eagle Township 21 times. Given our relative run loads, this seems to be about equal.

Both departments have provided equipment and manpower to each other's response areas, and we will freely continue to do so in the future. We will also be prepared to send our ALS ambulance any time it is needed in a neighboring area. As a provider of emergency service, we continue to work with just one agenda. That is, responding in the best interest of the public.

So, Chief VanGorder, rest assured, we certainly intend to address any specific procedure that may be delaying our response. At the same time, we continue to strive to strengthen all aspects of our program including training, fire suppression, inspection, investigation and EMS in order to meet the demands of our community. However, we are working within certain financial limitations.

You may recall that over 45% of taxable resources in Boone County are located in Zionsville/Eagle Township which supports:

- * One fire station
- * One paid standby/ volunteer fire department

The remaining taxable resources (less than 55%) support:

- * Ten fire stations
- * Five volunteer fire departments
- * One career/ volunteer fire department
- * One paid standby/volunteer fire department
- * One totally career fire department

Simply put, no other fire department in the county has access to the financial resources that your department has. Therefore, at this time we cannot begin to compete with Zionsville Fire Department when it comes to having access to financial resources and on-station manpower.

However, contrary to recent political and community comments that have been expressed based on reading your letter, rather than on first-hand knowledge of the reality of the situation, **Boone County Fire is a valuable asset to Boone County.** In 2005, after examining the needs of our community and the available emergency response resources in Boone County at that time, the decision was made to staff an Advanced Life Support ambulance with a paramedic and an EMT 24 hours a day, seven days a week for 2006 and beyond. We are still very much dependent on highly trained volunteers to support our fire program. Currently 88% of our volunteers have a Firefighter I and II certification and 14 of them live within 5 miles of our station.

The reality in Boone County is that there is only one totally career fire department - the Lebanon Fire Department. The other eight fire departments in the county including Zionsville F.D. are dependent upon volunteers to provide adequate fire protection. We value our volunteers and appreciate what they do for the residents of Worth and Union Township, as well as for our neighbors.

In your letter you ask the question, "What are the plans of Boone County Fire/Worth Township for providing services in the future?" The answer to that question has never changed. Our plans are to pursue creative solutions to problems and to continue to build a first-class fire program in response to the development and growth in our area, keeping in mind what our residents and taxable resources can afford to fund.

Your second question was, "How can the Zionsville Fire Department assist Boone County Fire/Worth Township? You can assist by working with us to protect this area of Boone County and to plan for the future. To start, we would appreciate it if, in the future, you would genuinely express your concerns in an objective manner using a forum that was designed for that purpose. The Zionsville Fire Department and the Boone County Fire Department are, and always will be, neighbors. We believe that it is time we become good neighbors.

Respectfully,

Robert L. Guest
Worth Township Trustee

Jacqueline H. Carr
Union Township Trustee

Jeff Kaser
Worth Township Board President

Marc Applegate
Union Township Board President

CC: R. Crane
J. Essex
C. Ulmer
Zionsville Town Council
Eagle Township Board
Whitestown Town Council