



# CITY OF PHILADELPHIA FIRE DEPARTMENT

240 SPRING GARDEN STREET, PHILADELPHIA, PA 19123-2991

ADAM K. THIEL  
FIRE COMMISSIONER

(215) 686-1300  
FAX (215) 922-3952

April 9, 2019

The Honorable Darrell Clarke  
City Council President  
City Hall, Room 490  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Dear Council President Clarke:

This letter is in response to questions about the Philadelphia Fire Department (PFD) raised at the March 25, 2019 hearing before the Committee of the Whole on the Five Year Plan. At this hearing, the following questions were asked:

***Councilman Greenlee: Of the seven engine/ladder companies being reopened, will this return the Fire Department to pre-Recession levels?***

Yes, the seven engine/ladder companies will re-open those companies closed during the 2008-2009 Recession. There are other companies that were closed decades ago, but the Department is not seeking to re-open those specific companies or stations at this time. The PFD continually evaluates service demand against response capabilities as the city's population grows and the built environment changes.

***Councilman Green: How many paramedics does the Fire Department expect to hire this year?***

The Department hopes to hire as many paramedics as possible this year. Ideally, we would hire 70 new paramedics, to fill the 70 vacancies in the Department. Unfortunately, there is a regional shortage of paramedics. The most recent paramedic class graduated eight new paramedics.

We continually try to recruit and encourage potential candidates to apply for the Fire Service Paramedic title. The Office of Human Resources has worked together with the Fire Department to announce the title once every several months – which is a shorter cycle than typical. We have seen these efforts be successful in attracting candidates to apply; we sometimes see dozens of candidates on the list. However, many candidates ultimately decide not to pursue a career with the PFD. Informally, our HR staff has heard from applicants that the time to hire, the daily workload, and compensation have been the biggest drivers for their decision not to join the Department.

The Department is currently looking at other ways to recruit and retain paramedics. First, we recently changed our department tuition reimbursement policy to allow for areas of study other than fire science, public safety, or health administration. This allows reimbursement for pre-paramedic courses and paramedic certification programs. We have also begun a collaboration with Chestnut Hill Hospital and Tower Health in January 2019 to train 17 current Fire Service Emergency Medical Technicians to become Fire Service Paramedics. To broaden these efforts, the PFD is exploring opportunities to provide Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) training to the community to support existing city workforce development initiatives and create a sustainable pipeline of emergency medical service providers for the PFD and our healthcare partners.

If you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact my office.

In service,



Adam K. Thiel  
Fire Commissioner