

July 26, 2018

Office of the City Manager  
990 Palm Street  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401-3249

To: Derek Johnson, City Manager  
From: Richard W. Ferris – Victim of San Luis Obispo Fire Department incompetence & their failure to follow SLO City FD written procedures, policies, and guidelines  
Re: You and your predecessors' failure to adequately supervise Fire Department leadership, conduct, policies, and actual practices

Dear Mr. Johnson,

I am in receipt of your letter dated 6/12/18 which was not mailed until July 2<sup>nd</sup> (and received 7/5/18).

Considering we had a meeting with Jon Ansolabehere (Assistant City Attorney), the Assistant City Manager, and City Records Clerk on 6/30/18 at Public Works, I am puzzled why your letter was not mailed before the meeting.

There is nothing unfounded in the research I have done on SLO City FD and The Sub and Square Deal Recordings & Supplies fire.

I am trying to expose a crime of arson and I am trying to expose Fire Department misconduct.

We are certain that the two are closely related and that an actual criminal investigation would be able to show this.

To blindly defend a Fire Department whose reputation already is that of the worst Fire Department in the County, if not the State, is to put your head in the sand and pray it all goes away.

I am also puzzled why, after over two years of investigation of our arson fire, you are just now stepping forward to claim responsibility for overseeing the Fire Department.

**Question #1: Why didn't you contact us right after our fire when it was well known about our claims of arson, incompetence, and cover up? Why did you not step forward then when the Fire Chief refused to talk to us???**

Your second paragraph misstates the intent of the email I sent to inform Council Members sharing what I had discovered. The only third-hand information in our entire investigation was an email I forwarded to Council Members on Chief Garret Olson's prior problems in Mesa, Arizona.

It was not a summary and it was distributed for the purpose of informing my City leadership of a serious problem.

The email about Olson is a very small sidebar to a very large problem – One that you seem unaware of. Yet, it is the email, not the serious problem that seems to concern you.

I sincerely doubt that San Luis Obispo City did due diligence in vetting Chief Olson. You, no doubt, let the previous Fire Chief do the work. We have already had one incident with Chief Olson, so I am surprised you do not value the insight I provided. Only the persons on the email list received this information. There is no other way this type of information gets to our elected leaders as it is very hushed up. When I tried to interview the Scottsdale Fire Chief last September, I thought he was covering for Olson. Now I think he was covering for the Department to keep Olson's issues on the down-low.

**Question #2: Did the City do due diligence on Chief Olson's background or just accept whatever the previous Fire Chief and staff said???**

The basis for my comments, evaluations, and criticisms come from over 2-½ years of serious investigation, research, studying firefighting, hiring multiple professional consultants (all former Fire Chiefs), and more. What is your basis for the comments you make in defending SLO City FD???

**Question #3: Where do you get your knowledge and expertise regarding firefighting rules of engagement, policies, and training that qualify you to supervise and evaluate Fire Department actions? In reading your bio, I can find no such knowledge or experience. Please elaborate.**

I reviewed the SLO City FD training records back through 2012 and it is obvious that they do not train to actually go inside and fight interior fires. I challenge you to find ANY training for a coordinated interior attack (which is actual firefighting) in their written training record!

**Question #4: Can you find any training records where SLO City FD trains or practices coordinated interior attacks?**

I have enclosed a couple of the many monographs I have written which go over the numerous failures of SLO City FD leadership to follow their own rules and guidelines.

If you would read the SLO City FD Emergency Operations Manual, and then my comments, I would greatly appreciate you letting me know which of the many points I make are actually wrong.

**Question #5: Which facts are wrong in the monograph, "SLOFD Fails to Follow Its Own Rules"...???** Please write me and correct me on details where you feel I am factually wrong so I can correct any errors. On any that you do not respond, I will assume you are substantially in agreement.

**Question #6: Do you (and the City) feel SLO City FD has any obligation to consider fighting a fire or do you feel that always doing an accelerated burn is an acceptable City policy for every significant fire???**

**Question #7: If you feel SLO City FD should fight fires in savable structures and always, at least, consider fighting structure fires, then will you please explain BC-1 Neal Berryman's refusal to assign an R.I.T./F.A.S.T. crew at any time during The Sub and Square Deal fire? Without an R.I.T./F.A.S.T., no firemen are allowed to go inside and fight**

**the fire. The fact he did not assign a safety team means NO firefighter could ever go in and fight the fire.**

If you do take seriously genuine concerns, then you have a lot of work to do!

I have enclosed the relevant SLO City and professional firefighter manuals as well as a couple of monographs explaining what is going on with SLO City FD. I hope you can review them seriously as this is a serious problem.

We pay for and deserve actual fire protection, not the faking that is going on!

Twelve minutes into The Sub and Square Deal fire, when I reported to BC-1 Berryman, he stated he was willing to take NO risk in fighting the fire. He stated this without even looking at the actual fire or considering fighting the fire.

**Question #8: Did BC-1 Berryman correctly follow City procedure at The Sub and Square Deal fire when he insisted on zero risk???**

Since we've started our investigation and have been reviewing SLO City FD fires, the Public Records Act procedure has changed multiple times, each time with the Fire Department more distant. We have reviewed every Fire Department leadership NARRATIVE of every fire since 2006. NOW that they are being watched (although only by humble us), they seem to have stopped writing narratives of their activities and are using a check box form with only details of the scene and no details of their actual actions.

**Question #9: Why are SLO City FD leaders no longer writing narratives after each fire as is the standard for professional Fire Departments???**

I await your response to my nine questions.

Sincerely,

Richard W. Ferris  
Square Deal Recordings & Supplies

Encl: SLO City FD Emergency Operations Manual  
10 Rules of Engagement for Structural Fire  
Monographs - SLOFD Fails to Follow Its Own Rules  
- How Can You Believe a Fire Department Would Help Burn a Building  
Rather Than Save It?  
- No R.I.T. or F.A.S.T. Crew Assigned

Cc: Council Members  
John Ansolabehere  
The Tribune  
Central Coast News  
KSBY / KCOY  
Local digital media  
Tolosa Press