



Bunker Hill Volunteer

Fire & Rescue Company, Inc.

Thursday, November 15, 2018

Mayor and City Council
City of Mt. Rainier
1 Municipal Place
Mt. Rainier, MD 20712

Mayor and Town Council
Town of Brentwood
4300 39th Place
Brentwood, MD 20722

Mayor and Town Council
Town of North Brentwood
4009 Wallace Road
North Brentwood, MD 20722

Mayor and Town Council
Town of Cottage City
3820 40th Avenue
Cottage City, MD 20722

Mayor and Town Council
Town of Colmar Manor
3701 Lawrence Street
Colmar Manor, MD 20722

Mayors and Council members,

We would like to take this opportunity to address many false and misleading statements that have been, and are being made about the Bunker Hill Vol. Fire & Rescue Company to the local municipalities.

The Bunker Hill Vol. Fire & Rescue Co. Inc., formerly the Mt. Rainier Vol. Fire Department has been in existence since 1911 serving the citizens of Mt. Rainier, the surrounding communities as well as the entire Prince Georges County area. We are a viable and recognized 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation operating out of the Bunker Hill Fire Station. We are a member of the Maryland State Firemens Association and we are a founding member of the Prince Georges County Volunteer Fire & Rescue Association.

Much has been said about the number of our membership and their qualifications. Our membership includes people from government, trades and law enforcement, to many individuals that are career firefighters and fire officers in other local jurisdictions. Our members hold certifications and training to allow them to operate as a firefighter/EMT, to fire officer positions up to and including Fire Chief. And contrary to what has been said, our members "are" qualified to operate the fire apparatus.

Formerly The Volunteer Fire Department of Mt. Rainier
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Web ~ <http://www.bhvfr.com>

We have members that have been, and continue to be actively involved in our corporation and service to the citizens of Mt. Rainier and the surrounding communities for 30, 40 and 50+ years.

It is true that many of our members have not kept up with the burdensome yearly certifications forced upon all volunteers in Prince Georges County by the Prince Georges County Fire/EMS Department, certifications that are not required by volunteers in other jurisdictions. And yes, some of our members have completely walked away from service in the Bunker Hill Fire Station. The reason is mainly due to the blatant disrespect, hostility and harassment shown towards our members in the Bunker Hill Fire Station. This disrespect, hostility and harassment has created an extremely hostile work environment for our members to deal with on a daily basis, an environment a lot of our members have chosen to just simply walk away from.

We have tried to rebuild our membership and bring back members that want to return to active service but we have been thwarted in our efforts. Our efforts have been thwarted because after 107 years of service to the citizens of Mt. Rainier and the surrounding communities, the Fire Chief of the Prince Georges County Fire/EMS Department and the Prince Georges County Fire Commission made an arbitrary decision to cease recognizing our corporation as a volunteer fire department in Prince Georges County. This decision was made without our knowledge, participation or input. This adverse and harmful action is unprecedented.

The arbitrary decision has removed our ability to recruit new members, retain current members and process many of our inactive members who wish to return to active service. It has also hampered our ability to maintain our pumper that runs as the main pumper out of the Bunker Hill Fire Station.

The first line pumper that responds from the Bunker Hill Fire Station is a 2007 Pierce pumper, owned by us, the Bunker Hill Vol. Fire & Rescue Company. And although it is the first line pumper in the station, we have to fight to get repairs and maintenance done on the pumper because the organization that the tax payer funds are given to in the Bunker Hill Fire Station that are earmarked for this purpose refuse to do so because they don't own the pumper. Often times we have to use our own corporation funds to do maintenance and repairs.

In 2014, members of our corporation met with then County Fire Chief Mark Bashoor. We brought to Chief Bashoor's attention the fact that both the Cottage City VFD and the Brentwood VFD had their 501(c)(3) certifications revoked by the IRS. And according to Chief Bashoor, in order to be recognized as a volunteer fire company in Prince Georges County you must be a non-profit corporation.

The following is part of a subsequent email from Chief Bashoor after our meeting,

"The recognition of a VFD as a non-profit is relative to the County Charter (relative section below). If their status as a non-profit has lapsed, an argument could be made that the County has rights to take ownership of the corporate assets relative to Fire/EMS."

He also stated that he had researched everything he could and would need to seek legal and/or professional council to move forward. That was the last we heard from him about it.

We also eventually found out that the group that was formed to represent the 3 individual volunteer corporations that moved into the Bunker Hill Fire Station and received the county funding for the fire station that was to be shared by the 3 corporations also had their 501(c)(3) status revoked by the IRS and was subsequently illegally dissolved.

Prior to their illegal dissolution, at a 2014 meeting of the Bunker Hill Vol. Fire & Rescue Association, the President of the Brentwood VFD made a presentation to the Bunker Hill Association. He proclaimed that the leadership of the Brentwood VFD had had decided to turn over all of their assets to the Bunker Hill Association and cease to exist as a corporation. He said that they had informed the Maryland State Firemens Association and the Prince Georges County Fire & Rescue Association of that decision and turned over all of their assets to the President of the Bunker Hill Association at the meeting.

Not long after, during a meeting of the Bunker Hill Association, then President of the Association Steven King informed the membership of the Bunker Hill Association that they were changing the name of the Bunker Hill Volunteer Rescue Association to the Brentwood Volunteer Fire Department. This is when the Bunker Hill Association was illegally dissolved.

We sent a letter, through our Attorney to the Prince Georges County Fire Commission and the Fire Chief of the Prince Georges County Fire/EMS Department advising them of the of the above information and requested that being the only corporation left in the Bunker Hill Fire Station that was a recognized 501(c)(3) corporation that we should be recognized as the authorized volunteer fire company in the Bunker Hill Fire Station. We did not receive a reply to this letter and subsequently the Fire Commission designated the Brentwood VFD as the sole volunteer fire department in the Bunker Hill Fire Station during a Fire Commission meeting in December 2014.

We have been verbally told that the reason the Fire Commission chose to recognize the Brentwood VFD as the sole volunteer fire department in the Bunker Hill Fire Station was because they were the only corporation that provided proof that they were a non-profit corporation. This is outright false! Up until September of 2017, according to the IRS website, the 501(c)(3) certification for the Brentwood VFD was revoked and had been since 2010. We on the other hand were never asked to provide any such information to the Fire Commission and were not even aware that the Fire Commission was going to act as they did. In fact, and contrary to what they said, before the Fire Commission made their arbitrary decision we "did" notify them as mentioned above, and the Prince Georges County Fire Chief by letter through our Attorney of the fact that we were the only authorized non-profit corporation left in the Bunker Hill Fire Station at the time.

It is our contention that part of the reason that the Fire Commission chose to designate the Brentwood VFD as the only authorized volunteer fire department in the Bunker Hill Fire Station is that at the time, the Vice Chairman of the Fire Commission was William King. Mr. King is the father of Steven King who at the time was the President of the

Brentwood Vol. Fire Department. Mr. William King is also a member of the Brentwood VFD. Vice Chairman William King, whose son was the President and he was a member of the Brentwood VFD was the commissioner that made the motion at a Fire Commission meeting on December 14, 2014 to only recognize the Brentwood Vol. Fire Department in the Bunker Hill Fire Station.

It is worth noting that during this period of time the then President, Steven King was embezzling funds from the Brentwood Vol. Fire Department to which he recently plead guilty to in court.

We also feel that another part of the decision is harassment and retaliation for our filing a lawsuit about issues that are plaguing the Bunker Hill Fire Station. This litigation is scheduled to go to trial in February, 2019.

We recently submitted an official request to the Prince Georges County Fire & EMS Department to review and change the arbitrary decision to not recognize our corporation so we can proceed with processing our current member's and recruit new applicants and rebuild our membership. But unfortunately, we received a reply from Chief James McClelland, Volunteer Services Commander of the Prince Georges County Fire/EMS Department that said the Fire Chief will take no action on our request until our lawsuit is settled. This in our view constitutes harassment and retaliation for us filing our lawsuit.

Most recently, Chief Barksdale of the Prince Georges County Fire/EMS Department addressed the Brentwood City Council at their meeting on October 17, 2018. At this meeting Chief Barksdale made at least two false comments. 1 – The pumper owned by the Bunker Hill Vol. Fire & Rescue Co. Inc. was a 1996 pumper. This is incorrect, the pumper is a 2007 Pierce pumper and it is the primary pumper in the Bunker Hill Fire Station. 2 – Chief Barksdale claimed that the Brentwood Vol. Fire Department was the only corporation in the Bunker Hill Fire Station with an active charter. This too is flat out false. As mentioned above the Prince Georges County Fire/EMS Department and the Prince Georges County Fire Commission were given documented proof that the 501(c)(3) status of the Brentwood Vol. Fire Department had been revoked by the IRS in 2010. And up until September of 2017 according to the official IRS website was still revoked. So at the time the Fire Commission gave total control of the Bunker Hill Fire Station to the Brentwood Vol. Fire Department, they did so knowing that they were not in compliance as a non-profit corporation.

Over the years the members of the Bunker Hill Vol. Fire & Rescue Co. Inc. tried to get the other two corporations to start discussions of merging the 3 corporations into one. The consolidation of the 3 corporations would have bolstered the viability and strength of the volunteers in the Bunker Hill Fire Station. But to our dismay and disappointment, each time we attempted to start consolidation talks were basically told that there would be no merging. There are many other reasons as to why the consolidation of the Bunker Hill Fire Station failed but are too lengthy to go into here.

We would like you to know that if at any time you have any questions about our corporation, or why the planned merge of the 3 corporations never happened, instead of listening to people who have nothing to do with, or have no knowledge of our corporation

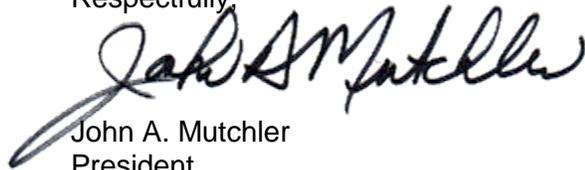
we would appreciate and encourage you to contact us directly. We meet on the first Tuesday, and fourth Saturday of every month and you are welcome to attend. Our meeting dates are posted on our website, www.bhvfr.com in case these dates change for any reason. You can also learn of the long and proud history of our corporation on our website.

Our point of contact for the local municipalities is our Vice President, John Hines. Mr. Hines is a resident of Mt. Rainier and will be able to facilitate any questions or requests you may have. You can contact him at, 301-219-2748 or jhines@bhvfr.com. You can also contact me individually with the contact information below. And as mentioned above, you are welcome to bring your questions or concerns to one of our meetings.

In closing, we would like to assure you and the citizens of Mt. Rainier and the surrounding communities that the City of Mt. Rainier does have a volunteer fire department and we are trying to get back to providing fire and EMS services to our communities. But for some reason the Fire Chief of the Prince Georges County Fire & EMS Department and the Prince Georges County Fire Commission does not want us to, and are preventing us from functioning as a volunteer fire department.

Thank you for your time and we look forward to hearing from you if you have any questions.

Respectfully,



John A. Mutchler
President
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