



**Pompano Beach  
Fire Rescue**

**FIRE ADMINISTRATION  
MEMO # 21-A111**

**To:** Greg Harrison, City Manager  
**From:** Chad Brocato, Fire Chief  
**Date:** 08/31/2021  
**Re:** Fire Academy Business Entity Formation

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I am requesting permission to open, operate, and manage a fire and emergency training academy within Pompano Beach. There are many reasons for taking the approach of opening and operating our own facility. First, we continue to strive to be self-sufficient with the goal of needing little to no external resources to conduct our fire and emergency skills training. Currently, we have a training tower, classrooms and a training field; however, we lack the ability to conduct live fire training. We accomplish the latter type of training at external facilities, such as Coral Springs Regional Public Safety Institute or Broward Fire Academy. Establishing our own facility will negate the need to send units out of the city for live fire training.

Second, we have long strived to improve the hiring opportunities for minority applicants, but the applicant pool remains low. Many other departments are seeking to hire minority firefighters, and the high demand with a reduced number of applicants makes it difficult to hire minorities. Having individuals trained here in Pompano Beach increases the likelihood that more minorities will be placed into the applicant pool. Moreover, fire academy students who excel can be identified early and be provided information on how to apply for the City of Pompano Beach while the candidate is still in the program.

Third, we are seeking to institute a firefighter training program directly in our local high schools, including Pompano Beach High School and Blanche Ely High School. Once the Pompano Beach charter school is open, the program will be instituted there as a direct connection to the city efforts. The goal of this aspect of our program is to encourage students to consider a role in the fire and emergency services industry where employment of firefighters and paramedics is expected to grow 6 percent in the next ten years, faster than the average for all occupations in the nation, according

to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. These students would take courses as electives and eventually graduate as a certified Firefighter I. Our goal would be to have a transition program for the newly graduated high school student to complete the Firefighter II program at our training facility. This would help to increase minority applicants and facilitate hiring people who have a direct connection to our city.

Lastly, it is expected that the continuing education and initial training programs that would be offered through the training facility would generate revenue. Those funds could then be used to offset the overall cost of operating the fire department or simply be placed into the general fund to be used as the city commission deems appropriate. We have existing training programs that can be launched when all of the licensing elements are completed, and we have online curriculum that can be used to reach an audience throughout Florida. These efforts are expected to be able to generate revenue expeditiously upon being given approval to proceed forward.

Efforts are currently underway to facilitate the end goal of a city owned and operated academy. From a grassroots approach, we have constructed a training area designed to be able to provide live fire training. A concrete slab has been poured adjacent to the existing training tower, and shipping containers (Conex boxes) have been converted into training structures to facilitate several types of training, including search and rescue, firefighting operations, and technical rescue operations. The Florida State Fire College has already approved our training facility to conduct continuing education courses, and we expect to be approved for initial firefighter training once the burn facility is completed and approved.

The academy will be an innovative vocational training center devoted to building skills and spreading ideas. It is also expected that We will host presentations from national-level speakers in both the training facility and the future Emergency Operations Center. We have been hosting classes on an ad hoc basis, and that effort can be expanded to include a higher number of offerings as well as a more expansive scope of courses being provided. Area hospitals have offered to provide neurologists, cardiologists, and emergency room physicians to teach to an audience of emergency medical technicians and paramedics from the region. We also have a network of nationally recognized speakers who would be expected to offer courses throughout the year. Community and local business leaders will also be invited from time to time

to help our students grasp the timeline of Pompano Beach history from the dawn of its agricultural past to its present diversity of human cultures and economies.

At a tuition cost lower than the median in the region, the center will combine classroom and workplace learning to graduate highly skilled and employable local talents that will in no way be second-class relative to college graduates. At a time of ballooning student loan debt and limited opportunity for a growing number of people, the academy offers a realistic entrepreneurial avenue we can all feel excited about.

For these reasons, we are requesting that the City Commission direct City Attorney Mark Berman to establish a legal entity to be owned by the city for the purpose of establishing the Pompano Beach Regional Training Facility. This is a critical step towards completing the licensure and accreditation processes as we move toward offering the first courses in the near future. The conviction that we have supportive officials and a dedicated fire department staff ready to take on this formidable challenge provides the inspiration to strive for excellence, and we intend to make you and the City Commission proud of our efforts.