



Monterey Firefighters Association • Local 3707

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PRESS RELEASE

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Monterey Firefighters React to Civil Grand Jury Report

Monterey, CA - The Monterey County Civil Grand Jury recently released a scathing report on the management of the City of Monterey Fire Department. The report identified numerous critical deficiencies in management and leadership while the former fire chief, Gaudenz Panholzer, was at the helm. Panholzer resigned in December of 2023 and was subsequently replaced by Fire Chief Andrew Miller. This personnel change was preceded by a Vote of No Confidence in Panholzer from the Monterey Firefighters Association (MFFA) in November of 2023.

MFFA President Ross Pounds responded to the report by saying, “Unfortunately, we are not too surprised by the Grand Jury’s report, and we can’t help but feel somewhat vindicated by the findings. Many of the charges named in our Vote of No Confidence Resolution are corroborated in the report.” Pounds continued, “The intent in voicing our concerns was always to improve the fire department. Our labor union is optimistic about the future of the Monterey Fire Department and committed to working with the new administration to address the concerns raised in the report.”

According to MFFA Vice President Phil Bezouska, “The issues identified in the [Grand Jury] report and cited in the Vote of No Confidence accumulated over the years, and it all came to a head in late 2023. Our firefighters were fed up with the state of the department and clamoring for change. We did not relish the idea of hashing these things out in the public sphere, but we felt that we had exhausted every possible avenue to affect change.”

That change came in the way of Fire Chief Andrew Miller’s appointment as interim chief in December of 2023, and subsequent permanent reinstatement. Since Miller previously served as Monterey’s Fire Chief from 2008 to 2013, he has an intimate knowledge of the department. Miller has been able to hit the ground running and the firefighters have welcomed his fresh approach.

“While we acknowledge that there is still work to be done, we believe that the Monterey Fire Department is on a positive trajectory. We are grateful for the opportunity to work alongside Chief Miller and the hard-working men and women of the Monterey Fire Administration as we continue to serve and protect the residents of the Monterey Peninsula,” concluded Pounds.