



**SARASOTA COUNTY**  
*"Dedicated to Quality Service"*

November 4, 2015

Mr. Edward F. Lavallee  
City Manager  
City of Venice  
401 W. Venice Avenue  
Venice, FL 34285

**RE: Key Concepts for Service Agreement**

Dear Mr. Lavallee:

Based upon our recent discussions, and the outcome of Tuesday's City Council meeting, I understand the City is currently not moving forward with a referendum to change the City Charter. Per your email of July 20, 2015, a change in the Venice City Charter is a pre-requisite to any formal action, such as an interlocal agreement.

As you are aware, the County has been working with the City on the eight key concepts outlined in my letter of June 1, 2015. These key concepts were to form the basis of an interlocal agreement should the charter language referendum be approved by the voters.

Based on our joint efforts, I am providing you with the current key concepts for consideration should the City reevaluate their interest in pursuing a change to the City Charter in order to consider a fire service agreement with the County.

**SERVICES:**

1. The County would maintain a level and quality of fire protection and response services equal to or better than that level currently enjoyed by the City.
2. The County would provide and maintain all of the current City fire department services, specializations, marine unit, and Fire Marshal services.
3. The County would provide other services consistent with level of service in the unincorporated County including: SWAT medic program, Technical Rescue and Confined Space Team, Wild Fire Mitigation Program, Mass Casualty Equipment and Services, and Hazardous Materials Response.
4. To the extent feasible, the County would extend its current Insurance Service Organization (ISO) rating of 2/Y2 to the City contingent upon an ISO inspection and approval.

**EMPLOYEES:**

1. The County would transfer the City's current operations-level employees from the rank of firefighter through battalion chief, as well as the two fire prevention officers, to the Sarasota County Fire Department.

**OFFICE OF THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**

1660 Ringling Boulevard, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor • Sarasota FL 34236 • telephone: 941.861.5111 • fax: 941.861.5987

2. Employees transferred to the County would be placed within the County bargaining unit and would be “fit” within the County current pay plans according to seniority, contractual language, and County policy.
3. Pension options for transferred employees would be evaluated during the development of a future interlocal agreement.
4. The City would retain the obligation for any unfunded pension liability and ensuing cost related to the City’s private pension fund.
5. The County would initially maintain current station assignments for City personnel; however, employees may, subject to department policy and union contract, elect through an internal bid process to be reassigned to other fire stations within the County.

**FACILITIES:**

1. The City would lease to the County the three current fire stations and adjoining grounds for the duration of an agreement at \$1.00 per year per fire station.
2. The City and the County would coordinate an in-depth evaluation to assess the condition, remaining useful life, and potential need for replacement of the current three Venice fire stations.
3. Based upon the agreed-upon evaluation, both parties would agree on some type of negotiated capital contribution and method for compensation from the City to assist with identified repair or replacement needs
4. The County would then accept ongoing maintenance and repairs at the existing fire stations.

**EQUIPMENT:**

1. City-owned fire trucks and vehicles of the City fire department would be transferred to the County and would remain in the possession of the County fire for the vehicles remaining useful life.
2. The City and County would use a mutually agreeable depreciation schedule to assign a value to each of the City’s fire department vehicles and equipment. The City and County would develop a cost to the City for depreciated vehicles/equipment as well as an agreed-upon method and timeline for compensation as part of the transfer.
3. Upon transfer of vehicles, equipment, and compensation for depreciation, the County would accept responsibility for maintenance of vehicles as well as future replacement.

**FINANCIAL:**

1. The County Fire Assessment Fee would be applied to the properties within the City.
2. County Fire Impact Fees would be collected on new construction within the City and applied to capital projects related to expanded capacity of the fire department.
3. County Fire Inspection Fees would be applied within the City based upon rates established by County ordinance.

**MISCELLANEOUS:**

1. The projected start date for an agreement would be October, 2016.
2. The term of the agreement would be 20 years and automatically extend for additional 10-year periods unless either party informs the other in writing at least two years prior to agreement expiration of intent not to renew.

As we have discussed before, obviously any agreement would be subject to our elected bodies' review and approval.

I believe these key concepts provide the nexus for a potential interlocal agreement and the initial information needed to understand the approach to a mutual plan for County-provided services. There are some details still to be determined, but I think the concepts provide a reasonable framework for a final agreement.

As we have worked through these concepts together, it appears that there may be some misinformation in the community on level of service and cost impacts. We would be happy to continue to help the City clarify those issues. We have also offered to meet with our respective labor representatives (IAFF) to discuss the concepts and help address questions and minimize any misinformation regarding the potential agreement.

Based on the recent City Council action, we will hold off on any additional formal work on this issue until we receive further requests from the City.

I look forward to continuing to explore ways to collaborate and improve our service delivery to our residents and visitors. Please contact me if you have any questions or would like to discuss further.

Sincerely,



Thomas A. Harmer, ICMA – CM  
County Administrator

- c: Kathleen F. Schneider, Deputy County Attorney  
Lee Ann Lowery, Assistant County Administrator  
Rich Collins, Director of Emergency Services