

Linda Elam
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City of Mt. Juliet

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City Manager

MEMORANDUM

To: County Mayor Robert Dedman
Chairman Rusty Thompson and Members of the Finance Committee
Chairman Bob Lannom and Members of the Emergency Management Committee

From: Rob Shearer, Mt. Juliet City Manager

Date: January 12, 2006

Subject: **County Attorney Mike Jennings' Memorandum (1/5/06) on Fire Service in Wilson County**

First, let me commend County Attorney Mike Jennings for his thorough work in researching the history of WEMA and the legal status of fire service in Wilson County.

There are, however, two areas in which I think his Memorandum would benefit from some additional information. One is the history of the Volunteer Fire Department in Mt. Juliet. The second is the establishment and ongoing work of the CERT program which began in Mt. Juliet in 2002 and has since grown into a county-wide program.

On page six of Mike's memo, he states "It appears that WEMA has always provided firefighting service to Mt. Juliet." This statement is not accurate, though in Mike's defense I'm not sure he could have known the history of the Volunteer Fire Department in Mt. Juliet without access to records maintained at Mt. Juliet City Hall.

I have done a quick review of the ordinances passed by the City of Mt. Juliet and have compiled the following list which shows clearly that a volunteer fire department existed and was supported by the City from 1974 to 1986, when the current contract with WEMA was approved.

- In December of 1974, less than a year after incorporating, the City of Mt. Juliet passed an ordinance (74-19) authorizing the purchase of a fire engine.
- In July of 1975, the City of Mt. Juliet passed an ordinance (75-9) authorizing the use of the fire truck owned by the City outside the city limits in order to aid the citizens of west Wilson County.
- In July of 1980, the City passed an ordinance (80-9) for the construction of a fire hall for its Volunteer Fire Department.
- In May of 1981, the City passed an ordinance (81-07) appropriating funds to purchase equipment for its Volunteer Fire Department.

- In May of 1982, the City passed an ordinance (82-06) appropriating funds to purchase equipment for its Volunteer Fire Department.
- In August of 1984, the City passed an ordinance (84-29) appropriating funds for the construction of an extension building to the City Fire Hall.
- In October of 1986, the City passed an ordinance (86-31) terminating the prior arrangement with Wilson County and withdrawing permission for the use of the City fire fighting equipment outside the City limits.
- In December of 1986, the City passed an ordinance (86-39) approving a new contract with Wilson County authorizing the transfer of the City's fire fighting equipment to WEMA and the lease to WEMA of the City fire hall for one dollar per year.

Since the County was unaware of the existence of a contract with Mt. Juliet for fire service, you may also be unaware that Mt. Juliet's volunteer fire department was disbanded at the request of the County when WEMA was created as a County-wide fire service.

On the second topic, I think it is important for the Wilson County Commission and the Finance and Emergency Management Committees to know more about the CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) that was created in Mt. Juliet three years ago in conjunction with WEMA. The CERT program began in the Willoughby Station subdivision of Mt Juliet. With City and WEMA support, it was later expanded into a City wide program and ultimately became a County wide adjunct to WEMA. The CERT program provides an important and ongoing level of volunteer support to WEMA without duplicating bureaucracy or creating competing interests. Over the past three years, the CERT program has conducted six training classes and trained approximately 90 volunteers. WEMA now requires that all WEMA volunteers first complete the CERT training class as a requirement for participation with WEMA.

The WEMA volunteer / CERT program now holds two monthly meetings, one in Mt. Juliet and one in Lebanon. CERT volunteers are not restricted to merely assisting the Mt. Juliet WEMA station, as the Mt. Juliet members are available for County wide service and frequently lend manpower at the County Fair, the Lebanon Christmas Parade and at WEMA Station 1 in Lebanon.

One additional point concerning WEMA operations is worth mentioning. WEMA provides the ONLY public ambulance service in the entire County. As such, it must maintain a physical presence in each densely populated area of the county, including both Mt. Juliet and Lebanon. It seems clear then that a WEMA station in Mt. Juliet would be required in order to continue to provide ambulance service regardless of how the issue of fire service may be resolved.

It should also be noted that the Mt. Juliet owned fire station serves approximately 78 square miles of West Wilson County, of which only 20 square miles is inside the city limits of Mt. Juliet. In order to provide adequate fire service in West Wilson County, a fire station in the Mt. Juliet area would be required under any conceivable scenario.