

PASADENA FIRE MUSEUM FOUNDATION
199 South Los Robles Avenue
Pasadena, California 91101

October 26, 1999

Members of the Public Safety Committee
Pasadena City Council
100 No. Garfield Avenue
Pasadena, CA 91101

Dear Councilmembers Streator, Haderlein and Madison:

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide you with background information on plans which have been underway for approximately two years to create a Fire Museum and Learning Center for Pasadena, and to request your support for the use of old Fire Station 34 on Oak Knoll Avenue as a location for this project. We understand that this subject will be on the agenda for the November 1, 1999 meeting of your Committee. The Pasadena Fire Department Fire Museum Foundation was established in 1997 as a charitable foundation under the provisions of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code as a tax exempt organization. Although this project is independent of the Pasadena Fire Department, it has the full support of Fire Chief Mitchell. Personnel of the Fire Department who devote effort to the project will do so as volunteers on their own time and not while on duty.

The project has two distinct purposes. The first is to create a Fire Museum to perpetuate the traditions and history of the Pasadena Fire Department. The second purpose is to provide a Learning Center to enhance the awareness of fire safety and prevention in our community and to serve as a training center for our youth who are attracted by the prospect of working with members of the Fire Department, both past and present, and others in the restoration of antique fire apparatus once owned by Pasadena.

1. **Fire Museum**

Pasadena was one of the first cities to be incorporated in Southern California. Shortly after its incorporation in 1886 the City Trustees passed a resolution authorizing a Fire Department and creating the office of Chief of the Department. After a few false starts and some labor turmoil, the Pasadena Fire Department finally became a permanent reality in 1889 when, on December 3 of that year, the Department moved into its first permanent station on Dayton Street between Fair Oaks and Delacy Street which stands to this day.

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From these meager beginnings the Pasadena Fire Department has developed a long and rich history. It was the first fire department west of the Mississippi River to acquire a motorized piece of fire apparatus when it bought a 1909 Seagrave chemical engine which has been restored and is on permanent display at Fire Station 31 on South Fair Oaks. The Pasadena Fire Museum Foundation has acquired or is about to acquire other fire apparatus owned by Pasadena in times past, namely, a 1915 Seagrave pumper, a 1927 Seagrave pumper and a 1957 Seagrave pumper. Moreover, the Foundation is aware of the location of Seagrave pumpers once owned by Pasadena of 1935 and 1945 vintage. We are also aware of the location of a 1957 Seagrave ladder truck which remained in service until the early 1980's. The Foundation may or may not be able to acquire the latter three pieces of apparatus depending on the disposition of the present owners. All of this apparatus will require substantial restoration.

The Foundation is also in the process of acquiring a substantial amount of equipment used by the Department over the years, such as helmets, alarm systems, tools, fire suppression equipment and the like. We have compiled a very substantial photographic record of the Department dating from around the turn of the century to the present which have been computer enhanced. Finally, in due course we will compile a detailed written history of the Department.

To better understand the issues which must be addressed in connection with the creation of a fire museum, representatives of the Foundation have visited fire museums in Phoenix, Seattle, New York and Long Beach, among others, and have discussed these issues with the executive directors or other administrators of these museums. We have also accumulated a substantial amount of material from the Internet on issues which must be addressed for the successful operation of a fire museum.

We contemplate that, in addition to displaying restored antique fire apparatus once owned by Pasadena, the Museum will feature an extensive display of equipment, photographs, and historical records and writings about the Department. Fire museums in other cities which have these characteristics have often become tourist attractions and have added significantly to perpetuate the history and culture of the city.

2. Learning Center

A. Fire Prevention and Safety

An integral part of the Museum will be a Learning Center which will focus on educating Pasadena's youngest and oldest citizens in matters of fire

prevention and safety. Many fires can be avoided through an increased awareness of the danger of fire and the steps that can be taken to prevent fire. For example, many fires originate in kitchens in private dwellings as a result of inadequate attention to the dangers of fire. Smoking is also a principal cause of residential fires. Overtaxing of electrical appliances is another preventable cause. Moreover, death and injury from fires can be reduced substantially by educating our citizens how to equip their homes for escape in the event of fire and how to react if a fire should occur.

The Pasadena Fire Department currently has a public education program directed at children through the sixth grade. The program of the Foundation will not compete with or supplant this existing program, but rather will supplement it. Our focus will be on educating young people from the seventh to the twelfth grade and the senior members of our community in matters of fire prevention and safety. We will give particular attention to people who are elderly or disabled and who may have special needs to escape the dangers of fire. We will enhance public awareness of these issues by providing instruction at the site of the Museum and distributing literature and videos which can help our citizens learn ways to make their homes and businesses safer and to successfully escape in the event a fire should occur. The Fire Department currently has a training program to provide our citizens with an enhanced awareness of basic life support issues such as CPR and other life saving methods which can be used prior to the arrival of paramedics. We will work with the Department to make this program as effective and comprehensive as possible, which may include providing a site for classes in basic life support.

Classes from both the public and private schools in the Pasadena area frequently visit fire stations where they learn how the Department operates and obtain basic information on fire prevention and safety. We plan to work with the Department in making the Museum and Learning Center one of the focal points for these activities.

B. Technical Learning and Support

Restoring antique fire apparatus which the Foundation has or will acquire will take substantial time and effort by past and present members of the Department and citizens interested in working on the project. Our plan is also to work with the Pasadena Unified School District and youth organizations to involve the youth of our community in these restoration projects. This program will have the benefit of exposing our young people to opportunities in the fire service as a career. It will also expose them to the high level of community service orientation which exists among past

and present members of our Department, thereby generally enhancing community service awareness whether through the fire service or through some other service-oriented career.

This program will also enable our young people to enhance their technical and mechanical skills and knowledge since the restoring of fire apparatus requires a number of different technical skills. We believe this program will develop career opportunities for our youth which might not otherwise be available to them.

We have discussed this aspect of our plan with members of the School Board of the Pasadena Unified School District as well as representatives of Partners in Education. We have received enthusiastic support for our plan from all of the individuals with whom we have spoken.

3. The Proposal

There are three buildings in Pasadena built before 1920 that were used as active fire stations and could serve as a site for a Fire Museum and Learning Center. We first approached the owners of "The Old Fire Station" which was opened in 1889 and is located on the north side of Dayton Street just west of Fair Oaks. We were unsuccessful in obtaining the use of this building which was subsequently sold and is now the location of an advertising agency. We next explored the possibility of obtaining the use of what was once Fire Station 5 on Pasadena Avenue south of the Huntington Hospital. This Station was opened in 1911 and is now owned by CalTrans. The Director of CalTrans was unwilling to pursue discussions with the Foundation on this issue.

The last remaining building in Pasadena which was once an active fire station and which could serve as a site for the Museum and Learning Center is old Fire Station 34 on the west side of Oak Knoll Avenue just north of California Boulevard. This building, which was built in 1915, is owned by the City of Pasadena and is currently on the surplus property list. We have discussed acquiring use of this building with several members of the City Council, including Mayor Bogaard and Councilmember Tyler in whose district the building is located, and with Cynthia Kurtz, the City Manager. Although they will ultimately speak for themselves, we sensed their enthusiasm for the goals of the project subject to working out the details. We have also discussed the matter with some of the neighbors in the area who have enthusiastically supported our use of the building as a Fire Museum.

Restoring this building to its original condition as reflected by photographs and other historical material is consistent with Pasadena's long-standing

program to restore buildings in Old Town and elsewhere. Today, this restoration serves as a constant reminder of our City's rich history. Making old Fire Station 34 available to our citizens and visitors to Pasadena will further enhance Pasadena's reputation as a city which values its past.

We recognize that parking is an issue which must be resolved if the Foundation obtains the use of old Fire Station 34, but we believe it is premature to address this issue in detail until we learn the level of support for our project from your Committee and the City Council.

The Foundation makes the following proposal to the City of Pasadena:

- A. The City would lease former Fire Station 34 to the Foundation for a nominal annual rent for a period of five years, with the City retaining title to the building. The City would provide the services necessary to maintain the building and to cover the cost of normal repairs and utilities. The sole permitted use of the building under the lease would be for the Museum and Learning Center.
- B. The City would cooperate with the Foundation in its efforts to obtain grants from government agencies and private sources to fund retrofitting the building for earthquake safety in order to bring it up to code and to bring the building as close a possible to its original state as reflected by photographs and other historical information.
- C. Representatives of the City and the Foundation will work together to establish a timeline for earthquake retrofitting the building, the opening of the Learning Center, which we contemplate will occur first, and the subsequent opening of the Fire Museum. If the Foundation fails to meet this timeline, the City will have the right to cancel the lease with the Foundation and once again place the building on the surplus property list.
- D. If the Foundation has made substantial progress in meeting its obligations under the original lease, the City agrees to renew the lease for an extended time beyond five years on the same terms and conditions as the original lease in order that the Museum and Learning Center can continue to operate at this location in future years.

We believe that the foregoing proposal provides the City with assurances that the Foundation will live up to its commitments and at the same time gives the Foundation the opportunity to create a Fire Museum and Learning Center which can help

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perpetuate the history of Pasadena and provide significant services to our citizens. We recognize our proposal is in outline form and that many of its details will have to be worked out over time through discussions between the City and the Foundation. Our purpose now is only to obtain your support for the basic concept of creating a Fire Museum and Learning Center at former Fire Station 34, thereby opening the door for much more detailed discussion about the specifics of our understanding and agreement.

We respectfully request that your Committee endorse the Foundation's proposal and recommend to the City Council that it also endorse the proposal subject to working out the details of the lease and other relevant issues.

Sincerely,



Robert A. DeWitt
President



Scott Dandridge
Captain, Pasadena Fire Department
Vice President