



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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City of Melissa Selects New Fire Chief

Melissa, TX – City of Grapevine Fire Fighter/Paramedic Harold Watkins has been named the City of Melissa's Fire Chief and will take over the leadership of the Melissa Volunteer Fire Department immediately.

The announcement is being made after an extensive search was conducted to find the best candidate to fill the full time Fire Chief position following the departure of Melissa's Fire Chief Perry Elliott in February. Over fifty qualified applications were received, many even from out of state, and each were reviewed for technical qualifications by a panel of Melissa Volunteer Firefighters. Eight candidates were then interviewed by a panel comprised of City of Melissa Department Heads and experienced career firefighters representing the Melissa Volunteer Fire Department. The top three were recommended to City Administrator, Jason Little who then interviewed each candidate, with Watkins being the top choice.

Chief Watkins comes with a long background of both professional and volunteer firefighting experience. As a Firefighter/Paramedic for the City of Grapevine since 1997, Watkins has served as a member of the following specialized teams: Grapevine Fire Department Dive Team, Buckets Fire Safety Brigade (fire public education and outreach), Grapevine Honor Guard, and Grapevine Pipes and Drums. In addition to working for the Grapevine Fire Department, Watkins has served as Deputy Fire Marshal/Emergency Management Officer for the Hopkins County Fire Department. In this role he has been responsible for the oversight of the communications division of the fire department and the successful completion of an Emergency Management Plan review and update to State of Texas planning standards. Watkins also has been an instructor at the Texas A&M Annual Municipal Fire Training School since 1999.

Along with his 18 years as career firefighter, Watkins has continued to serve as a Volunteer Fire Fighter for the Cooper Volunteer Fire Department for almost 20 years. In this role Watkins has successfully obtained approximately \$750,000 in grant funding to fund fire equipment and coordinated a number of successful fundraiser programs for the volunteer fire department. He also originated the Cooper VFD's Junior Recruit Program to expose high school students with interest in firefighting into the volunteer fire department operations.

Watkins holds a number of certifications in various areas of fire prevention and public safety including Advanced Firefighter, Driver/Operator, EMT/Paramedic, Hazardous Materials (Operations Level), Advanced Arson Investigator, Intermediate Fire Instructor, Fire Officer I, Incident Safety Officer, Master Rescue Diver, Texas Peace Officer, Code Enforcement Officer, and Field Examiner.

The Melissa Volunteer Fire Department has been very successful in providing a quality service for residents and visitors alike, and this position will continue that successful tradition.

"I am thrilled Chief Watkins is coming to Melissa," stated Mr. Little. "This is the community he has been looking for, and we will benefit from his presence. Building upon his past successes, I am looking forward to having him implement activities to further build relationships between the department and community. The Melissa Volunteer Fire Department and the previous leadership have done a good job of building a strong base to grow from. I'm confident of a smooth transition over the next few weeks and am thrilled to have him in Melissa."

"My family and I are very excited to move here and get involved," shared Chief Watkins. "I have always wanted to "grow" a fire department and I feel that this is the place. I am ready to join in the work being done to provide a superior service for the community here. The city and the fire department are both dedicated to providing a level of service above and beyond to the citizens and I want to be a part of that."

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