

## Flint's Fire Department, More than 100 Strong

With the budget cuts and string of fires across the city this year, the strength and effectiveness of our fire fighters is on the minds of many people in Flint. Thankfully, a two-year federal grant has given Flint some much needed breathing room and allowed the reopening of the closed fire stations and the rehiring of fire fighters. Today, the Flint Fire Department has more than 100 personnel and the firefighting force is larger than it was when Mayor Dayne Walling took office.

There are currently more than 100 personnel in the Flint Fire Department and five fire stations are fully staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A \$6.76-million Federal SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Program ) stimulus grant was awarded to Flint in May of this year allowing 39 firefighters to be rehired and the reopening of the two closed fire stations.

This award has more than compensated for the cut backs earlier this year. In March 2009, Flint's shrinking tax base necessitated staffing cuts across the board in all departments. Since the firefighters union did not agree to contract concessions or days without pay, more than 20 firefighters were laid off and two fire stations were closed.

Because of Mayor Walling's leadership, the grant was supported in Washington D.C. by Congressman Dale E. Kildee and Dr. Ed Montgomery from the White House Task Force on Auto Communities. Flint was awarded the full amount that was requested. It was the largest grant of its kind made in Michigan and the largest ever personnel grant the city has ever received. With the community's support by calling in fires as quickly as possible and reporting suspicious behavior around vacant structures, the Flint Fire Department is ready, willing and able to meet the daily challenges from fires across the city each day and night.

Flint's fire fighters still have a dangerous and demanding job. The Federal SAFER grant has helped to stabilize the size of the force for two years and has given the city time to address the shrinking tax base by aggressively pursuing new economic development. With Flint finally on the right track, new businesses are opening and new jobs are being created. These developments will, in the long run, allow Flint's tax base to stabilize and grow once again. Flint's citizens can rest assured that our fire fighting force is currently well staffed and equipped, and that the Walling administration is doing all it can to revitalize our city's economy, so that cuts to the force will not be required in the future.