



ORANGE COUNTY  
PROFESSIONAL FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION  
IAFF LOCAL 3631



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## Placentia City Leaders Vote to Decimate Fire and Emergency Medical Services

*Placentia City Council Vote to Privatize EMS and end 23-year Partnership with the Orange County Fire Authority will Jeopardize the Safety of Placentia Residents*

On Tuesday, June 4<sup>th</sup>, the Placentia City Council voted 3 to 1 in support of a reckless plan to completely overhaul Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) for the residents of their City.

Despite their promise that the passage of Measure U in November of 2018 would increase revenue for the City of Placentia and improve emergency response times and Fire services in their City, the Placentia City Council decided to change course in a classic “Bait and Switch” that will diminish public safety for their residents. At the same time that the City is now receiving an additional \$5 million per year in new revenue with Placentia voters approving this Sales Tax increase in order to protect vital city services – starting with Fire, EMS, and public safety, the City Council voted to privatize their paramedic services with a for-profit, untested private ambulance company to serve their residents and also to create their own fire department that will be staffed with volunteer Firefighters. All of these actions – including the creation of an entirely new fire department from scratch, are supposed to be implemented in just under one year, on July 1, 2020.

Both parts of this newly approved plan are fundamentally flawed and will jeopardize the public safety of Placentia residents unless the City Council realizes the tremendous mistake that they have made and decides to scrap this doomed plan before July of 2020.

Let’s start with the first part of the plan – the idea to create their own fire department which will be known as the **Placentia Fire and Life Safety Department**.

**It is going to be IMPOSSIBLE for the City of Placentia to start their own fully functioning fire department in just 12 months.** After receiving more than 23-years of the best professional fire prevention and suppression services possible through their partnership with the Orange County Fire Authority, Placentia city leaders have an expectation that they will be able to establish their own, brand new fire department in just one year. Unfortunately, they did

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not consider some basic questions that will ultimately prevent the creation of this fictional department.

Questions such as:

- How do they plan to purchase the proper fire engines, trucks, and related equipment for a fully functioning fire department in such a short time period, especially when they will be starting with ZERO equipment?
- How does Placentia plan to recruit, screen, and train new Firefighters who will come to this unproven and not yet established fire department in just one year?
- More importantly, what type of applicants will be interested in working for this new fire department for what the city council has already admitted will be below average pay, benefits, and retirement security? Do they really expect that the very best available first responders – which Placentia has had for more than 23-years with the professionals from the OCFA – will apply to this new fire department for substandard wages and benefits?
- Where will these new Firefighters be trained? For decades they have been trained by the professionals of the Orange County Fire Authority at OCFA training grounds. Do Placentia city leaders know where their fire academy will be held?
- Just as importantly, WHO is going to train these new individuals? Professional fire academies are run by seasoned Firefighters with decades of experience in training new Firefighters for this incredibly dangerous job. Where do Placentia leaders expect to find available trainers with the necessary expertise and experience to conduct this specialized training.
- Along those lines, WHO is going to screen new Firefighter applications, conduct the interviews and critical background checks, put them through psychiatric evaluations, and so much more? And once again, how in the world can anybody expect to accomplish this in just one year?
- This plan also includes the involvement of “volunteer” Firefighters to play an essential life-saving role in the newly created fire department. Once again, where do they plan to get these volunteers? How and where will they be trained?

There are dozens of other problems that will prevent the Placentia Fire and Life Safety Department from ever getting off of the ground. Which leads us to the most important question that the City of Placentia will be facing as it pertains to fire prevention and suppression:

- What is the City of Placentia going to do as they approach July 1, 2020 and their fantasyland fire department is nowhere near ready to be functional to protect the residents of Placentia? Are these Placentia

officials counting on the goodwill and mutual aid of the Firefighters that work for the professional fire departments that surround their City to step in and help because they approved a plan that is DESTINED TO FAIL? That is a faulty assumption and an incredible gamble that the Placentia City Council is playing with the lives of their residents.

Now, turning to the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Paramedic portion of the changes that were approved by the Placentia City Council on June 4<sup>th</sup>, there are just as many problems associated with this part of the faulty plan – which calls for an unproven, untested, private for-profit ambulance company to provide a service that they have NEVER PROVIDED BEFORE IN THE HISTORY OF THEIR COMPANY for an entire City.

Since they were first created, the for-profit ambulance company that Placentia selected to provide all 911 medical services in their City starting in July of 2020, Lynch EMS, Inc., has never provided immediate, on demand life-saving services for an entire city. Until this point, they have functioned primarily as a transportation company, taking a sick patient from a hospice care facility or a nursing home to the hospital upon request. They have NEVER fielded 911 calls from an entire city that have required them to respond to life threatening car accidents, cardiac arrest calls, drug overdose calls, burn victims or any of the hundreds of types of medical emergencies that the professional Paramedics and EMTs with the OCFA have responded to in the City of Placentia for more than two decades.

In looking closer at the RFP process, you have to ask why was Lynch EMS (which is one of the smaller ambulance companies in the region) the ONLY company to apply for this service under the terms that were offered? The answer to this is simple. Other private companies realized that the proposal as currently written is not achievable and will only set the City and the new EMS providers up for failure.

This vote was the ultimate betrayal of the residents of Placentia, who placed their faith in their elected leaders and voted to support Measure U just a few months ago in order to TAX THEMSELVES an additional amount to maintain first class fire and EMS services. Now that this ballot measure was approved on the backs of our Firefighters and first responders, Placentia city leaders have voted to approve inferior service for their residents.

This was a shameful action made by three members of the Placentia City Council who voted to approve this reckless program. These individuals are:

**Mayor Rhonda Shader**  
**Mayor Pro Tempore Ward Smith**  
**Councilmember Craig Green**

Thankfully, Councilmember Jeremy Yamaguchi voted AGAINST this reckless plan, while Councilmember Chad Wanke was absent from the meeting.

At the June 4<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting, speaker after speaker told the City Council that they support the current professional service that they receive from the Firefighters and Paramedics of the Orange County Fire Authority. They urged the City Council to maintain this partnership.

Despite the pleas from their residents and the professional Firefighters who were in attendance, the City Council majority voted to move forward in supporting this plan.

Since this proposal was put on the City Council agenda at the last minute, late on a Friday night, it can be assumed that the overwhelming majority of the residents and families living in Placentia have no idea that this vote took place and their city is on the brink of becoming the ONLY city in all of Orange County that will be served by volunteer Firefighters and a private, for-profit ambulance company. For this reason, Orange County Firefighters will continue our efforts to get the word out to the residents of this community that we have served and cared for since 1995. Because in the end, it is the residents of Placentia who will suffer from inferior emergency medical service and the promise of a new fire department that will never come to fruition.

When making decisions that impact the health and wellbeing of tens of thousands of people in a major Orange County city, all outstanding questions must be addressed first. It is not a scare tactic and it is not an over-exaggeration to say that the vote that was made on June 4<sup>th</sup> by the Placentia City Council will have life and death consequences for the residents of this City. That is shameful and it should not be accepted by anybody, inside or outside the City of Placentia.

Sincerely,

Executive Board  
Orange County Professional Firefighters Association  
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