



## Item No. 18 Town of Atherton

### **CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT – REGULAR AGENDA**

**TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL**

**FROM: GEORGE RODERICKS, CITY MANAGER**

**DATE: FEBRUARY 19, 2020**

**SUBJECT: REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE FIRE SERVICES SPECIAL EDITION  
ATHERTONIAN**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

Review and approve the Special Edition Athertonian – Fire Services.

#### **BACKGROUND | ANALYSIS**

At the December 18 Regular Meeting, the City Council provided direction to staff for next steps for the Fire Services Fiscal Review:

- Pursuit of further public education and outreach
- Completion of an application before the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) for possible detachment
- Further conversation with County and/or State legislators

Staff returned at the January 15 Council meeting for direction on the cost of further public education and outreach and will return at the March 4 Study Session for direction on the cost of the application before LAFCO.

Council directed that staff prepare a 4-page Special Edition Athertonian Newsletter for distribution (to be reviewed by the Subcommittee and approved by the Council before release); and schedule 1 or 2 community information meetings.

Attached is a *draft* of the Special Edition Athertonian Newsletter. Community information meetings are tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, March 10 and Wednesday, March 11 (pending review and approval this evening).

The Special Edition Athertonian focuses on the tax revenue provided to the District by Atherton residents; the calls for service from Atherton to the District; the true cost of basic fire services; and the difference between the cost of service and the revenue provided.

Issues not addressed are salaries and benefits, District organization, fiscal transparency and/or fiscal efficiencies. Attached is a March 28, 2019 Almanac article entitled, “*Who are Menlo Park Fire District’s Highest Paid staff?*” The article discusses the 25 employees of the Fire District with total compensation exceeding \$300,000 per year, with one exceeding \$400,000 per year putting the Fire District at the top of the State’s public employee compensation data for fire districts.

The State Controller’s Website lists the Fire District with 146 employees. The table lists 25 employees with total compensation above \$300,000; 33 with total compensation between \$250,000 and \$300,000; and 34 with total compensation between \$200,000 and \$250,000. As noted in the article, 92 of its 146 listed employees (inclusive of compensated Board members) have total compensation exceeding \$200,000.

This information is not included in the attached Newsletter.

### **POLICY FOCUS**

The Council is considering release of a public education newsletter designed to provide the public with data related to an upcoming policy decision of the City Council. Discussion of what should be included in the newsletter, its distribution, and the dates and attendance (Council or Subcommittee) at the pending Community Information Meetings should be discussed.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

None at this time.

### **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Public notification was achieved by posting the agenda, with this agenda item being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting in print and electronically. Information about the project is also disseminated via the Town’s electronic News Flash and Atherton Online. There are approximately 1,200 subscribers to the Town’s electronic News Flash publications. Subscribers include residents as well as stakeholders – to include, but be not limited to, media outlets, school districts, Menlo Park Fire District, service providers (water, power, and sewer), and regional elected officials.

### **COMMISSION/COMMITTEE FEEDBACK/REFERRAL**

This item \_\_\_ has or X has not been before a Town Committee or Commission.

- Audit/Finance Committee (meets every other month)
- Bicycle/Pedestrian Committee (meets as needed)
- Civic Center Advisory Committee (meets as needed)
- Environmental Programs Committee (meets every other month)
- Park and Recreation Committee (meets each month)
- Planning Commission (meets each month)
- Rail Committee (meets every other month)
- Transportation Committee (meets every other month)

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Draft Athertonian Newsletter
2. Almanac Article, with public comments – March 28, 2019



# ATHERTONIAN

## Fire Service Next Steps

### Special Edition

## Executive Summary

Atherton residents contribute more than \$18 million a year to the Fire District in property taxes for the provision of basic fire services. According to the Fire District and the Town’s independent analysis, the cost to provide basic fire services to the Town of Atherton ranges from \$4.6 million to \$7.4 million.

The difference between revenue received and cost incurred (a revenue surplus of \$10.9 million to \$13.7 million per year) allows the District to purchase infrastructure and equipment, fund salaries, benefits, and overhead and fund services in other communities, The Town is seeking to redistribute the excess in revenue to other taxing agencies in order to reduce reliance by those agencies on additional bonds and taxes thereby reducing the overall potential tax burden to Atherton residents.

## Details

Property owners in Atherton contribute 1% of their property’s assessed value to basic property taxes. The various service agencies throughout the County receive a portion of that 1% base property tax. These agencies include county government, schools, mosquito abatement, sewer, library, etc. The Town receives approximately 10.6%

of that 1%, or 10.6 cents of every dollar of property tax paid to provide base services to Atherton residents – police, public works, building, planning, administration, finance, and capital infrastructure. The Fire District receives approximately 15.7% of that 1%, or 15.7 cents of every dollar of property tax is used to provide basic fire services.

The table above reflects the assessed value of all properties in Atherton from Tax Year 2011/12 forward, the total amount of the Base Tax, and the amounts received by Fire District and the Town (for comparative purposes only). Over the nine-year period, the Town received \$84.9 million and the Fire District received \$125.8 million – approximately \$41 million more. Neither the Town, nor the Fire

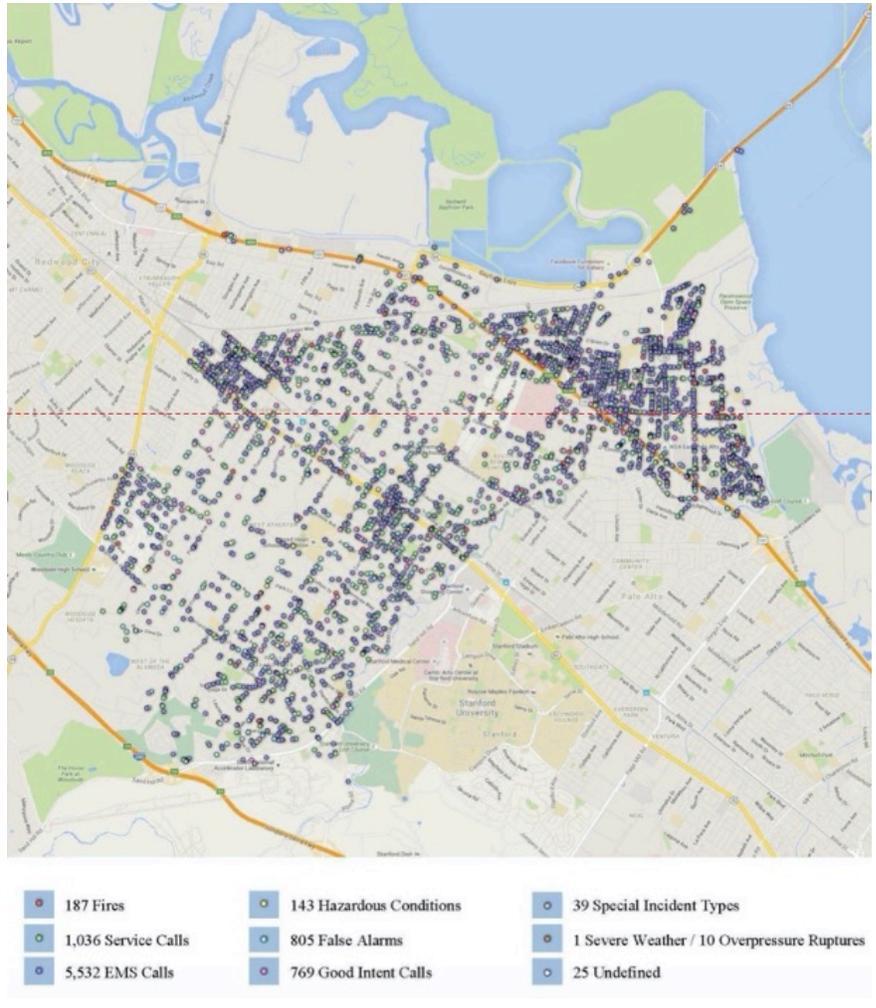
Tax Year	Assessed Value	1% Base Tax	Atherton (10.6%)	MPFPD (15.7%)
2011/12	\$ 6,373,832,577	\$ 63,738,326	\$ 6,756,263	\$ 10,006,917
2012/13	\$ 6,949,217,818	\$ 69,492,178	\$ 7,366,171	\$ 10,910,272
2013/14	\$ 7,575,935,532	\$ 75,759,355	\$ 8,030,492	\$ 11,894,219
2014/15	\$ 8,068,565,397	\$ 80,685,654	\$ 8,552,679	\$ 12,667,648
2015/16	\$ 8,791,201,962	\$ 87,912,020	\$ 9,318,674	\$ 13,802,187
2016/17	\$ 9,512,555,665	\$ 95,125,557	\$ 10,083,309	\$ 14,934,712
2017/18	\$ 10,220,091,841	\$ 102,200,918	\$ 10,833,297	\$ 16,045,544
2018/19	\$ 10,941,160,453	\$ 109,411,605	\$ 11,597,630	\$ 17,177,622
2019/20	\$ 11,664,530,505	\$ 116,645,305	\$ 12,364,402	\$ 18,313,313
*ERAF Included			<b>\$ 84,902,917</b>	<b>\$ 125,752,434</b>

Special Edition - Newsletter

District have the ability to modify the basic property tax amount. Fire services, like the services provided by the Town, are commonly thought of as *municipal services* and the Council expressed an interest in determining the true cost of fire services for Atherton residents.

Based on a cursory review of the preceding table, the taxes paid to the Fire District by Atherton residents likely far exceed the actual cost to provide fire service. Even more concerning was the fact that the taxes paid appear only to be increasing year after year, in a way that could significantly increase the gap between the taxes paid and the actual cost of service.

The Fire District’s service area covers about 30 square miles and includes the communities of Atherton, Menlo Park, East Palo Alto and some areas of unincorporated San Mateo County. The District service population is around 90,000. The Town has 7,207 residents or 8% of the District’s total population. The map shows 8,517 calls for service in 2015 across the entire District. The map reflects that the bulk of calls for service go to communities outside of the Town. Service calls to Atherton residents represent **6% of the total calls for service**.



Source: Fire District 206/17 Budget

In Fiscal Year 2016/17, Atherton residents paid \$14.9 million in tax revenue to the Fire District (**35% of the District’s total revenue of \$43 million for the year**). That’s significant given that Atherton represents 8% of the District population and only 6% of the District’s total calls for service. **94% of District’s calls for service are to areas outside of the Town of Atherton.**

Data from the District provided for October 2015 to October 2016 showed that there were 517 calls for service to Atherton.

The Town’s Fire Services Analysis reported on the potential cost of services if the Town were required to provide the

Incident Type	# of Calls	%
Fire Response (cooking fire, property fire, vehicle fire, grass fire, etc.)	8	1.54%
Rescue & EMS (medical assist, EMS, vehicle accident) - note: the District assists but does not transport	242	46.80%
Hazardous Condition (no fire - power lines, short circuits, gas leak, etc.)	16	3.09%
General Service Call (water problem, smoke/odors, animal rescue, public assist)	103	19.92%
Good Intent Calls (cancelled enroute, no incident found, etc.)	55	10.63%
False Alarm/False Calls	93	17.98%
<b>Total Calls</b>	<b>517</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

service independently. The Town would not form its own fire department; rather, the Town could separately contract for services, either back with the Fire District or with another neighboring jurisdiction. Extracting the dispatch and response data from the Fire District and reviewing data from other similar contract models, the District, and the Town independently, determined that the cost to provide basic fire services to the Town would be a low of \$4.6 million to a high of \$7.4 million per year.

Using the above estimates of cost to contract for fire services, a more accurate taxing percentage would be a high of 8% instead of 15.7%. That means that a property owner in Atherton with an assessed property value of \$7.1 million (the median property value) would pay \$5,680 per year to the Fire District versus the current \$11,147. The table below reflects what is currently paid versus what might be paid based on a few hypothetical assessed valuations.

Assessed Property Value	Current Taxes Paid to Fire District per Property per Year	Assumed Cost of Fire Services per Property per Year
\$3,000,000	\$4,710	\$2,400
\$5,000,000	\$7,850	\$4,000
\$7,000,000	\$10,990	\$5,600
\$10,000,000	\$15,700	\$8,000
\$13,000,000	\$20,410	\$10,400
\$15,000,000	\$23,550	\$12,000

While the Town cannot change the tax amount collected by the Fire District, there are other options that could be considered. The Town met with the District in the hopes of identifying some equity solutions that would allow the District to invest directly in the Town by providing public safety infrastructure to improve congestion, emergency response routes, safe routes to school, etc. Ultimately, the District declined to work with the Town to address the issue. This forced the Town to move toward a detachment solution in the hopes of a reallocation of the basic tax amount amongst the current taxing entities. In the end, this is an effort to equalize revenues amongst the taxing entities and reduce the reliance by other agencies on special tax levies or parcel tax assessments. That, in turn, would have the effect of potentially reducing the long-term tax burden on local residents. Some *examples* of special taxes and charges for a hypothetical \$3 million assessed value include:

Entity	Tax Amount (2016)
Redwood City BDS Bonds	\$2,879 (based on value)
Sequoia High School Bonds	\$2,442 (based on value)
San Mateo College Bonds	\$1,543 (based on value)
West Bay Sanitary District Special Charge	\$1,031 (flat charge)

If the Town detached from the District, the residual taxes collected (the difference between a negotiated cost to provide services and the taxes collected) would be redistributed amongst the existing taxing entities. Each taxing entity would receive its proportional share of the taxes collected and thereby

hopefully reduce the reliance upon additional special taxes and charges – reducing the long-term tax burden on local residents.

As noted, the higher the assessed valuation of a property, the more that that property owner pays in taxes based on assessed valuation. If the amount of property taxes allocated to one taxing entity is reduced to reflect a more accurate cost of service and the residual redistributed, the resident’s overall tax burden remains the same, but the less the other agencies have to rely on additional bonds or special parcel tax assessments.

To learn more about this issue and the Town’s intended next steps, please attend one of the upcoming information sessions. Visit the Town’s Fire Services Fiscal Review website for additional information - [www.ci.atherton.ca.us/FireServices](http://www.ci.atherton.ca.us/FireServices).

**Tuesday, March 10**

6:30 pm to 8:30 pm

Main House @ Holbrook-Palmer

**Wednesday, March 11**

6:30 pm to 8:30 pm

Main House @ Holbrook-Palmer

---

**PRESORTED  
STANDARD U.S.  
POSTAGE PAID  
MENLO PARK, CA  
PERMIT NO. 26**

**Atherton Resident  
Atherton, CA 94027**

50°  
High: 73° Low: 42°  
Wed Thu Fri Sat

**Join our team!** **BE PART OF OUR DIGITAL FUTURE**  
We're looking for an experienced **Digital Sales Manager** with 3+ years of sales eager to be a part of our transformative shift.  
Salary + Commission | Benefits 401K | Profit Sharing Work life balance  
**APPLY TODAY**

Logout | Member Center

# The Almanac

MENLO PARK • ATHERTON • PORTOLA VALLEY • WOODSIDE

Join

- Home News Town Square Blogs A&E Real Estate Sports Print Edition Join Contact

81

Uploaded: Thu, Mar 28, 2019, 10:25 am

## Who are Menlo Park fire district's highest-paid staff?

District reports 25 employees compensated more than \$300K each in 2018

by Barbara Wood / Almanac

The number of Menlo Park Fire Protection District employees whose compensation surpassed \$300,000 continued to increase in 2018, with 25 employees making over that amount, and one — Deputy Chief Don Long — passing the \$400,000 mark.

For years the district has had the distinction of paying the highest average wages of any state or local public agency in California, according to the [California state controller's website](#), which puts together a list based on information supplied by the agencies.

The district recently [posted a spreadsheet](#) with the 2018 figures sent to the state, and they appear likely to put the agency at the head of that list again. The fire district was No. 1 for average wages on the state website in 2014, 2016 and 2017. In 2015 it was No. 2.

The compensation figures are also likely to go up even more for 2019 because firefighters in the district received [a new five-year contract](#) that gave them raises averaging 5.35 percent a year starting in July 2018. Other district employees' pay increases tend to be tied to those of the firefighters.

In 2018, the spreadsheet shows, compensation was more than \$200,000 for 92 of the 146 employees listed (including five board members, five interns and several employees who worked less than a full year).

The district offers a generous benefits package including annual paid time off (vacation plus sick and other leave) starting at more than five weeks for brand new employees, going up to more than nine weeks for longtime senior employees. The leave time is paid out as cash if not used.

The district's document shows that Chief Harold Schapelhouman received the highest benefits, worth \$90,657, but that 15 other employees each had benefits worth more than \$60,000.

Regular base pay for district employees was

Job Title	Total Regular Pay	Overtime Pay	Other Pay	Total Payroll Earnings	Total Compensation
Deputy Fire Chief	\$280,684	-	\$65,036	\$341,720	\$400,033
Battalion Chief	\$201,574	-	\$130,675	\$345,906	\$398,977
Fire Marshal	\$221,875	-	\$24,700	\$301,699	\$378,610
Fire Chief	\$285,072	-	-	\$285,072	\$375,729
Division Chief Facilities	\$233,857	-	\$2,706	\$297,402	\$374,198
Captain	\$147,858	\$102,974	\$32,131	\$311,267	\$374,173
Division Chief Operations	\$238,198	-	\$14,061	\$290,312	\$368,748
Battalion Chief	\$201,574	-	\$86,218	\$287,792	\$362,395
Division Chief Facilities	\$219,889	-	\$29,200	\$303,137	\$358,036
Division Chief Training	\$221,102	-	\$9,600	\$270,972	\$347,669
Captain	\$147,706	\$104,596	\$43,371	\$295,672	\$335,943
Captain	\$144,391	\$70,511	\$26,962	\$269,067	\$331,576
Battalion Chief	\$167,892	\$18,510	\$78,614	\$264,464	\$329,637
Captain	\$141,326	\$92,766	\$23,189	\$257,281	\$318,590
Captain	\$147,229	\$82,081	\$30,473	\$259,783	\$318,191
Captain	\$147,069	\$58,773	\$55,812	\$261,654	\$312,915
Engineer	\$121,344	\$99,439	\$30,495	\$251,305	\$310,123
Captain	\$143,173	\$75,163	\$14,612	\$247,236	\$307,177
Captain	\$144,503	\$81,223	\$16,028	\$247,230	\$307,110
Captain	\$140,775	\$69,782	\$23,349	\$244,625	\$306,758
Captain	\$147,106	\$82,169	\$38,518	\$251,793	\$305,166
Captain	\$141,227	\$62,888	\$32,436	\$242,653	\$305,018
Engineer	\$126,025	\$74,137	\$39,895	\$240,057	\$303,670
Engineer	\$140,499	\$82,510	\$15,680	\$244,989	\$303,013
Engineer	\$125,426	\$93,640	\$25,824	\$244,889	\$302,362

This chart shows the most highly compensated employees in the Menlo Park Fire Protection District in 2018. "Other pay" includes car allowances, meeting stipends, incentives, bonuses, bilingual, on-call and retention pay while total compensation includes benefits. (Graphic by Kristin Brown/The Almanac)



SEE MORE PHOTOS

### TOP BLOGS

- Downtown Los Altos is getting a massive food hall**  
By Elena Kadvanly | 30 comments | 16,962 views
- Free Pizza and Recipes!**  
By Laura Stec | 8 comments | 2,005 views

**"Don't Compare Your Insides with Someone Else's Outside"**  
By Chandrama Anderson | 0 comments | 1,616 views

**Clouds of Uncertainty**  
By Sherry Listgarten | 1 comment | 1,556 views

**Please Apply So We Can Reject You!**  
By John Raftrey and Lori McCormick | 1 comment | 408 views

[View all local blogs](#)

**LIST YOUR HOME WITH The DeLeon Team**

# #1

**REAL ESTATE TEAM IN THE NATION\***  
\*As ranked by REAL Trends 2019 Team Volume list. Published in the Wall Street Journal in June 2019.

Michael Repka, Managing Broker, DRE #01854880  
DeLeon Realty, Inc. DRE #01903224

**Need a Fictitious Business Name Statement?**

We can help you with all your legal publishing needs

**GET INFO**

considerably less than the total salary each received. The top 10 employees in that category received between \$175,000 and \$285,000.

Part of the reason that figure is so far below the total compensation most employees receive is that most also get "other" pay not considered part of their base salary. Other pay includes: car allowances; meeting stipends; incentives; bonuses; and bilingual, on-call and retention pay. A battalion chief received more than \$130,000 in such pay, while four others received between \$55,000 and more than \$86,000. Schapelhouman was the only district employee to not receive any "other pay."

Overtime pay topped out at \$104,596 for a fire captain; another captain made \$102,974 in overtime pay. There were 13 employees who each made more than \$80,000 in overtime pay. There were 117 district employees who reported overtime pay in 2018, almost all of the district's non-salaried employees.

In the past, district officials have argued that a fair chunk of the overtime pay is for district employees deployed to state and federal disasters, such as last year's many wildfires and several hurricanes, and is repaid by other agencies.

This year's spreadsheet does not contain that information, and Schapelhouman said he didn't immediately have access to it. He said, however, that at least \$60,000 of Long's nearly \$410,000 in compensation was reimbursed to the district and that more reimbursements are due for the November and December deployments to the Camp Fire in Butte County.

**Board response**

Fire board President Virginia Chang Kiraly and board member Chuck Bernstein serve on the district's Finance Committee, but said they had not been shown the spreadsheet before it was posted on the district's website. The spreadsheet was mentioned in Schapelhouman's report to the board at its March 19 meeting, but was not discussed.

Both Chang Kiraly and Bernstein pointed out after the meeting that the salaries and total compensation are high, even for the Bay Area.

"Overall, I think salaries and compensation are high, especially if you look at the median household income of our two neighboring cities, Redwood City and Palo Alto," Chang Kiraly said, pointing to statistics showing that Redwood City's median income is \$90,461, and Palo Alto's is \$137,043. In San Francisco, she said, the average salary for a chief public administrator is \$167,300.

Bernstein, who runs a company providing early childhood education and child care, said that on a personal level, "as an educator, it troubles me deeply to be paying (his employees), many of whom have gone into debt to pursue college and graduate-level degrees, so much less than the district is paying its employees." He said that statistics show the average Bay Area physician makes less than the district's average paramedic, at \$252,821.

"Local teachers and physicians are paying the local property taxes to support all this, and the situation does not make sense to me," Bernstein said.

Chang Kiraly said she also worries about the district's increasing liabilities for pensions, which are tied to the compensation. "The main concern for me is unfunded accrued liabilities that continue to escalate," she said. The fire district's pension contributions range from 7 to 23 percent of employees' salaries, she said, and she wants the district to explore moving to a defined contribution plan to cut back those liabilities.

Bernstein, who cast the only vote against the new firefighter contract last year, said he believes the district board has not fully discussed the labor contracts' impacts. "There is a myth that firefighters cannot afford to live in the district, but the compensation figures prove otherwise," he said.

Bernstein said he wants local residents to be given priority when recruiting future firefighters, so "they could be summoned quickly in the event of a regional catastrophe."

The district includes Menlo Park, Atherton, East Palo Alto and adjacent unincorporated San Mateo County neighborhoods.

--

- [Sign up for Almanac Express](#) to get news updates. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).



Or show your [support for local journalism](#) by subscribing.



The Almanac Online banner with the text: "What is democracy worth to you? Support local journalism." and a "Join" button.



### Comments

Posted by **Question** + 24 people like this  
 a resident of Menlo Park: Downtown  
 on Mar 28, 2019 at 10:47 am

Has Kiraly ever voted against a pay raise?  
 Worrying after the fact doesn't help much.  
 How many pay raises and compensation packages has Kiraly voted for during her time on the Board?  
 At least Bernstein votes like he talks.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter** + 4 people like this  
 a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood  
 on Mar 28, 2019 at 11:24 am  
*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

Once again Wood ignores the data (provided to her many, many times) that shows that literally thousands of firefighters and hundreds of fire chiefs in California are paid more than their highest paid MPFPD counterparts.

[Web Link](#)

[Web Link=](#)

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **menlo park resident** + 31 people like this  
 a resident of Menlo Park: Allied Arts/Stanford Park  
 on Mar 28, 2019 at 12:49 pm

Every year this Board salary gorging gets worse with no one to stop this out of control fire board operation. Peter Carpenter as long time board member propogated these type of expenditures of tax payer money and now continues to be a shill for the fire board and will defend this outrageous compensation behavior. This salary raid on taxpayer money is only part of the outrageous Board spending as buying high priced real estate. It makes your stomach churn to see such unabashed chutzpah in lining Board employee pockets with over the top compensation and lunacy spending.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Taxpayer** + 21 people like this  
 a resident of Menlo Park: Downtown  
 on Mar 28, 2019 at 12:50 pm

I would like to see in-district overtime and "other" pay capped at a reasonable amount. What people earn from outside the district is not our concern, unless it affects our pension liabilities, service provided locally, or we are paying excessive overtime to staff to cover for those that are providing services elsewhere.

Please provide these specifics.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter**

2 people like this

a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood  
on Mar 28, 2019 at 12:54 pm  
*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

"over the top compensation"

Note that thousands of firefighters and hundreds of fire chiefs in California are paid more than their highest paid MPFPD counterparts.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **John Ullom**

31 people like this

a resident of another community  
on Mar 28, 2019 at 1:04 pm

Chang Kiraly has never voted against paying firefighters more. The unions love her. She is busy bankrupting the Harbor District too.

Carpenter can only respond with babble about other individuals getting more. He will not address the fact that the department he is imposing on you all pays his union supporters more than any other fire department in all the realm.

And now the department wants to buy housing for its well paid staff.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **4 legs to the table**

22 people like this

a resident of Menlo Park: Downtown  
on Mar 28, 2019 at 1:36 pm

300k? 400k?

Yeah, Peter, nothing to see here.

Amazing.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter**

4 people like this

a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood  
on Mar 28, 2019 at 1:53 pm  
*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

"pays his union supporters "

John - I am a private citizen and I don't have any union supporters. And when I was a Director the union begged me not to run and opposed me when I ran anyway.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter**

3 people like this

a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood  
on Mar 28, 2019 at 2:02 pm  
*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

"Yeah, Peter, nothing to see here."

There is a LOT to see but not if you speculate about what other agencies might report or if you ignore the most fundamental factor in employee compensation which is job by job compensation data. As noted there are hundreds of fire chiefs and thousands of firefighters in California who make more than their MPFPD counterparts.

So look but look carefully rather than thru wooden blinders.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **medical dental pension AND shopping!** + 26 people like this

a resident of Menlo Park: Park Forest

on Mar 28, 2019 at 2:15 pm

> Yeah, Peter, nothing to see here.

Followed by a tone deaf response - when any one else looks at \$300K & \$400K compensation and is rather stunned.

I guess we all see what we want to see (or miss seeing.) Please, filibuster on...

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Inon** + 28 people like this

a resident of Menlo Park: Sharon Heights

on Mar 28, 2019 at 2:51 pm

Fact of the matter is that MP Fire are extremely high paid, and it appears to be going up at the rate of over 5% a year for the next 5 years. What is wrong with the folks who are supposed to be watching over these people? This is a joke! Chang Kirally and the rest of her buddies on the board need to be replaced and there needs to be a true, non rubber-stamping group brought in to get these people under control. 25 people making over \$300k and one over \$400k? Totally ridiculous! And I don't really care what Peter Carpenter says, he's just an apologist for the district and an enabler of the ridiculous practices that got us into this position in the first place.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter** + 4 people like this

a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood

on Mar 28, 2019 at 2:57 pm

*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

"I don't really care what Peter Carpenter says, "

Thats fine but do take the time to look at the facts:

[Web Link](#)=

Where in this list is the first MPFPD chief officer?

[Web Link](#)

Where in this list is the first MPFPD firefighter?

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Been There** + 17 people like this

a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood

on Mar 28, 2019 at 4:25 pm

*Been There is a registered user.*

Clearly something is wrong with this pay scale. It does not represent what firefighters are being paid at large. When an opening is made for another firefighter and there are 1,000 applications for

the one job the pay is clearly out of wack.  
A classic example of the voters serving the government, not the other way around, as it should be.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **sjtaffee** + 29 people like this  
a resident of Menlo Park: The Willows  
on Mar 28, 2019 at 4:28 pm  
*sjtaffee is a registered user.*

I am not sure how any reasonable person can take a look at some of these salaries and conclude that there's something wrong here when public servants are making money like this. The fact that there other jurisdictions who pay more is, to me, irrelevant.

Such salaries don't pass the smell test.

I appreciate all of the hard work, training, and risk associated with being a firefighter. But salaries as high as these are out of whack for other public employees who we, the taxpayers, also value such as teachers and child care workers who make so much less.

Right now the MPFD is in a situation w widespread perception is that it is flush with money and irresponsible in spending it. They need to do a much better job in explaining themselves and taking a look the many people in the community they serve wh can barely make ends meet. And with money like that the idea that they need to live outside of Menlo Park because it's too expensive here rings pretty hollow.

steve taffee

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter** + 4 people like this  
a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood  
on Mar 28, 2019 at 4:33 pm  
*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

"It does not represent what firefighters are being paid at large."

Please look at the facts:

[Web Link](#)

[Web Link=](#)

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter** + 5 people like this  
a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood  
on Mar 28, 2019 at 6:29 pm  
*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

""Overall, I think salaries and compensation are high, especially if you look at the median household income of our two neighboring cities, Redwood City and Palo Alto," Chang Kiraly said, pointing to statistics showing that Redwood City's median income is \$90,461, and Palo Alto's is \$137,043. In San Francisco, she said, the average salary for a chief public administrator is \$167,300.

Bernstein, who runs a company providing early childhood education and child care, said that on a personal level, "as an educator, it troubles me deeply to be paying (his employees), many of whom have gone into debt to pursue college and graduate-level degrees, so much less than the district is paying its employees."

Sadly both Kiraly and Bernstein are politician who are more concerned with their political futures than with their stewardship of the Fire District. It is interesting and instructive that the reporter

choose these two Board members to interview.

We have one of the very best fire agencies in the entire Nation and Bernstein would destroy it with the imposition of the below market salaries that he pays his employees and Kiraly would do whatever advanced her political fortunes regardless of the impact on the level of emergency services that resulted.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Brian**

[+](#) 25 people like this

a resident of Menlo Park: The Willows  
on Mar 28, 2019 at 6:39 pm

This is disgusting. There is someone in our fire department that gets paid more than the President of the United States. There are interns making more than \$200,000 a year? Seriously? Remember we are not just paying this exorbitant salary once, it gets factored into their pensions and so the more we pay them now the more we pay them for the rest of their lives as part of their pension package.

Something needs to change and it needs to change soon. Even if that change needs to take place in Sacramento, this district is an example of having too much money and not enough common sense.

Oh and here comes peter with his attempts to whitewash the ridiculous amount being paid by pointing out that there are other individuals that earn more. Peter, that is not the point, the point is that "The fire district was No. 1 for average wages on the state website in 2014, 2016 and 2017. In 2015 it was No. 2." and they look like they get to keep the #1 spot for 2018 all paid for by us the tax payers in the district. Argue what ever you will, this is wrong.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Jimmy**

[+](#) 12 people like this

a resident of Menlo Park: Central Menlo Park  
on Mar 28, 2019 at 7:43 pm

I'd like to know the total budget, and the total amount spent on salaries, for how many workers. And what exactly we get for it. How many people and structures are protected. How many fires get put out, how many emergency medical calls, how many kittens rescued. I'd rather spend the money on education.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter**

[+](#) 2 people like this

a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood  
on Mar 28, 2019 at 7:55 pm  
*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

[Web Link](#)

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **2020**

[+](#) 9 people like this

a resident of Menlo Park: Sharon Heights  
on Mar 28, 2019 at 8:15 pm

Don't complain. Vote. We need candidates to run against the incumbents in the next election. End the madness.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Inon**

[+](#) 17 people like this

a resident of Menlo Park: Sharon Heights  
on Mar 28, 2019 at 8:20 pm

There are no prizes for having the highest paid FD in the state (and, therefore, probably, the country). It just shows how the citizens here have taken our eyes off the ball and allowed this form of governmental theft to occur. Yes, the FD is awash in cash. Even after outspending their budget by \$11M last year, they still have \$55M of our taxpayer's dollar in their coffers. Ridiculous. And, please, Peter. No more apologies for their budget. We've had enough—time to take it to the voting booth.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Jenson**

 30 people like this

a resident of Menlo Park: The Willows  
on Mar 28, 2019 at 8:25 pm

Peter just spouts the same old story about how fire personnel in other cities make more money. Divert attention away from the MP fire district and the fact that they are overpaid for what they have to do in the small area they serve. The board has no teeth to do anything they are a paper tiger with no guts to stop the misuse of our tax dollars. Can't count the number of times the fire trucks go racing out of the station and return in 10 minutes because there was no major problem. No checks and balance procedures in place means more of the same.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter**

 4 people like this

a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood  
on Mar 28, 2019 at 8:31 pm  
*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

It would be great if there were concerned citizens who were willing to run for the Fire Board.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Menlo Voter.**

 2 people like this

a resident of Menlo Park: other  
on Mar 28, 2019 at 8:33 pm  
*Menlo Voter. is a registered user.*

To you folks that are upset by how much money the fire district takes in, you need to educate yourselves on how that money is allocated. If you want it changed, you need to talk to the STATE. That's who allocates your property taxes. If you don't like how they are allocated, THE STATE is the one in control of that. You can complain on this forum all you want and it will have ZERO effect. THE STATE determines how much money the district gets. You want it reduced? TALK TO YOUR STATE REPRESENTATIVES OR PUT AN INITIATIVE ON THE BALLOT TO CHANGE IT. [Portion removed] You just show your ignorance of how the fire district gets its money.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **2020**

 38 people like this

a resident of Menlo Park: Sharon Heights  
on Mar 28, 2019 at 9:04 pm

@menlovoter, we know the District gets its money from property taxes. We just disagree with how the District and the Fire Board spends taxpayer dollars. It's time for new management.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Jimmy**

 9 people like this

a resident of Menlo Park: Central Menlo Park  
on Mar 28, 2019 at 9:39 pm

Overpaid firefighters must be some kind of union deal. They're overpaid all over the place.

Why is there no competition, given the number of people who want to be firemen?

Is it that the firefighters union is limiting supply on a regional basis?

Or that the union pays for a big lobby in Sacramento. Like the prison guard union does.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Jimmy**  
a resident of Menlo Park: Central Menlo Park  
on Mar 28, 2019 at 11:18 pm

 9 people like this

[Web Link](#)

I don't get why we spend so much on fire. I'd rather spend it on schools. Who can change this?

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Menlo Voter.**  
a resident of Menlo Park: other  
on Mar 29, 2019 at 7:24 am  
*Menlo Voter. is a registered user.*

 1 person likes this

"I don't get why we spend so much on fire. I'd rather spend it on schools. Who can change this?"

Pay attention. THE STATE is the ONLY one that can change this.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Menlo Voter.**  
a resident of Menlo Park: other  
on Mar 29, 2019 at 7:25 am  
*Menlo Voter. is a registered user.*

 2 people like this

2020:

So, they should just sit on a pile of cash? I think if you do any looking you will find that MPFPD is one of the best fiscally managed public entities in the state.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Inon**  
a resident of Menlo Park: Sharon Heights  
on Mar 29, 2019 at 12:42 pm

 15 people like this

@menlo voter:

Why do you say that? Seems to me they are grossly overfunded, are awash in cash, and all they do is manage not to spend more than the huge amount they get every year. I guess that in government circles, that's considered good fiscal management.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Bob**  
a resident of Menlo Park: Downtown  
on Mar 29, 2019 at 7:55 pm

 5 people like this

While it may be true that Menlo firefighters are highly paid, maybe the highest, despite all the arguments to counter -- we need to get the best, it's a comparable salary, etc. The PERCEPTION is

that the FD is over paid, cash-cow, and id buying up property, and more.

They are supposed to be public servants, but the perception is causing a black cloud to hover over the department every time this topic comes up.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter**

 5 people like this

a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood  
on Mar 29, 2019 at 9:09 pm  
*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

" but the perception is causing a black cloud "

Of course - that was the reporter's intention. Why else write an article in which she can only speculate about what the data will be from other agencies - "The district recently posted a spreadsheet with the 2018 figures sent to the state, and they appear likely to put the agency at the head of that list again". That is not reporting facts but rather speculating on what might happen.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **William**

 Like this comment

a resident of Atherton: Lloyd Park  
on Mar 29, 2019 at 11:57 pm

THANKS  
[Web Link](#)

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Inon**

 6 people like this

a resident of Menlo Park: Sharon Heights  
on Mar 30, 2019 at 6:46 am

@Bob : The "perception" is that they are overpaid? No. The REALITY is that they are overpaid. There is a black cloud over the department and it's due to the ridiculously high pay these folks receive. If there was ever an example of an out of control public process, it's when you have people like our ex-board member and the current ones bowing to the union and granting pretty much every pay raise and benefit in the book. Where is the contentious process between the department/union and its citizen overseers? There is none. It appears to be an open loop system.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter**

 6 people like this

a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood  
on Mar 30, 2019 at 7:06 am  
*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

"Where is the contentious process between the department/union and its citizen overseers? There is none."

Oh how quickly the uninformed forget:

Oct 30, 2011 Almanac:

"District firefighters have not had a raise since July 2007 because the district and the Menlo Park Firefighters Association Local 2400 have been unable to agree on a new contract. Their last contract expired in June 2008. "

This was finally ended by a new five year contract in 2015! Almost 8 years without a contract because the Board refused the union's wage demands.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Menlo Voter.**

+ 3 people like this

a resident of Menlo Park: other  
on Mar 30, 2019 at 8:27 am  
*Menlo Voter. is a registered user.*

Inon:

The district does not spend more than it receives. Have you even looked at their financials?

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter**

+ 5 people like this

a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood  
on Mar 30, 2019 at 8:43 am  
*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

Inon is confusing the use of reserves that were carefully accumulated for fire station replacements with the annual operating costs of the District.

Note that the District's capital expenditures were paid for in cash from those carefully accumulated reserves. In the private sector it is called funding depreciation. That is seldom done in the public sector - your Fire District is a wonderful exception. Most public sector capital expenditures are funded by bonds/debt. The Fire District charges itself depreciation and hence has accumulated the necessary funds by the time a station replacement is needed. When was the last time you saw a school district or a city do the same?

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter**

+ 6 people like this

a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood  
on Mar 30, 2019 at 8:58 am  
*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

MPFPD 2018:  
Total Expenditures \$68,564,919  
minus Capital Outlay \$22,364,246  
Net annual operating expenses of \$46,200,673 vs Total Revenues \$52,826,863

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Inon**

+ 5 people like this

a resident of Menlo Park: Sharon Heights  
on Mar 30, 2019 at 12:51 pm

@menlo voter: where did I say they spend more than they take in? Take a minute and read it again —slow down, take your time.

There are no prizes for having the highest paid FD in the state (country) except for also having the highest ongoing pension liability...

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter**

+ 3 people like this

a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood  
on Mar 30, 2019 at 12:55 pm  
*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

Inon  
a resident of Menlo Park: Sharon Heights

on Mar 28, 2019

"Even after outspending their budget by \$11M last year,"

That it what happens when a poster does not understand how to read financial statements.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Menlo Voter.**

[+ Like this comment](#)

a resident of Menlo Park: other

on Mar 30, 2019 at 6:07 pm

*Menlo Voter. is a registered user.*

Inon:

you need to pay attention to what you post. You said the district overspent their income. Own it. The fact is you don't know what you're talking about. If you really want to reduce the amount of money the district receives you need to talk to the STATE. What part of that don't you understand?

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Inon**

[+ 5 people like this](#)

a resident of Menlo Park: Sharon Heights

on Mar 30, 2019 at 6:10 pm

Peter: fact. They did outspend their budget by \$11M last year. Yes, they have a \$55M "surplus." So what. Many people in the state fire system make more than individuals in MP. MP is still the highest paid in the state. That's where the problem lies

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter**

[+ 2 people like this](#)

a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood

on Mar 30, 2019 at 6:32 pm

*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

": fact. They did outspend their budget by \$11M last year"

No, the OPERATING BUDGET did not and could not have included the property acquisitions that occurred.

How dumb would it be for a public entity to issue a public budget listing properties that it hoped to acquire and how much it was prepared to pay for those properties that were not then even on the market!!

How would you like to then negotiate that property purchase?

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Menlo Voter.**

[+ 2 people like this](#)

a resident of Menlo Park: other

on Mar 30, 2019 at 6:37 pm

*Menlo Voter. is a registered user.*

Inon:

When someone sets money aside specifically for the time they might need it, they are being fiscally responsible. When they spend that money, they are not over spending their budget. They are spending money they budgeted via a set aside. What don't you understand about that? Do you have any understanding of budgets? Or is it that you're just upset that fire fighters make more than you? It's ok if that's what you're upset about. Just be honest about it and stop making yourself look foolish with you lack of knowledge.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter**

 3 people like this

a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood  
on Mar 30, 2019 at 6:38 pm  
*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

"MP is still the highest paid in the state."

Wrong! There are hundreds of chiefs in California who are paid more than the highest paid MPFPD chief officer and thousands of firefighters in California that are paid more than the highest paid MPFPD firefighter.

Please do your homework before making such unsupported statements.

Where in this list is the first MPFPD chief officer?  
[Web Link](#)

Where in this list is the first MPFPD firefighter?  
[Web Link](#)=

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter**

 3 people like this

a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood  
on Mar 30, 2019 at 7:03 pm  
*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

Inon - Please be respectful and truthful in your postings so Town Square will continue to be a thoughtful gathering place for sharing community information and opinion.

This Forum cannot be a thoughtful gathering place for sharing community information and opinion if reporters and posters do not do their homework.

So please answer the questions:

Where in this list is the first MPFPD chief officer?

Where in this list is the first MPFPD firefighter?

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter**

 2 people like this

a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood  
on Mar 30, 2019 at 8:06 pm  
*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

Inon - where did you go?

Please answer the questions.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter**

 2 people like this

a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood

on Mar 30, 2019 at 9:28 pm  
*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

Inon - where did you go?

Please answer the questions.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Inon** + 4 people like this  
a resident of Menlo Park: Sharon Heights  
on Mar 31, 2019 at 1:02 am

In the MPFPD 2018 summary, 2nd page, it shows "revenues \$52,000,000 and expenditures \$68,000,000" (give or take). Unless that means something other than what any corporation means when they state these things (yes, I do know this is government, so the arithmetic is different) then they spent roughly \$16,000,000 more than than they took in last year. And if that is not what happened, please do enlighten us so we Silicon Vally business types can learn the double-speak of the government.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Citizen** + 2 people like this  
a resident of Menlo Park: other  
on Mar 31, 2019 at 7:06 am

TAKEN FROM DIRECTOR SILANO'S FACEBOOK PAGE REGARDING THE LAST PAY RAISE.

IT APPEARS WE NEED TO CHANGE STATE LAW! THESE REASONS APPEAR TO BE IN LINE WITH GOOD LEADERSHIP AND BUDGET REVIEW:

My Reasons to Approve the Current Fire Labor Contract:

I stand by my comment in the Almanac; It's costly like everything else for local residents, I feel they should have the best services and the best firefighters around. We have that, and we can afford to pay for that"

My Reasons:

The 17 million dollars cost for 5 years:

It appears, the 6.7 million dollars would have been costs the fire agency would have incurred anyway so 10. 3 million is the actual cost of the 5 year raise. That's, \$2,060,000 a year,for 5 years.

Negotiations for the Current Contract:

There were many amount of meetings during the negotiations. In fact, we had our legal council and an independent consultant to be part of the negotiations team. All agreed upon by the enitre fire board.

A Review of Reserves, Surplus Tax Funds:

The last 5 years, the fire district had over 20 million dollars in surplus tax funds. This includes a reserve fund of over 45 million dollars.

CALPERS Debt:

A 39 million dollar debt. Way under all the community agencies we serve, and way below many of the members of the CALPERS system. If today, the district could pay off our CALPERS debt....Not many agencies can even come close to that future accomplishment. Let's not forget for the last 2 years we have paid down our CALPERS debt.

Per Cent of Salary on Budget:

A 67% of the total fire district budget.

This per cent is way below many agencies of the communities the fire district serves and many agencies in the cities, counties, and state.

Balanced Budget:

A balanced budget with a surplus of funding.

Member of US Department of Homeland Security ( FEMA), Task Force 3:

The Fire district uses these depolymets and training to enhance their skills to better serve the our community, state, and country. This is at no cost to the local propey taxpayers within the district. All costs are reimbursed by FEMA.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter**

 2 people like this

a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood  
on Mar 31, 2019 at 8:31 am  
*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

" then they spent roughly \$16,000,000 more than than they took in last year"

Correct - and they did it because IN PRIOR YEARS they had set aside (Reserves) money for future obligations such as paying down pension liabilities and station replacements. That \$16 M came from carefully planned and accumulated RESERVES.

It is called Finance 101.

The Fire District does its budgeting in the reverse of most local agencies - it first charges itself for depreciation and unfunded pension liabilities and then it constrains its current year spending to the remaining available revenues. Most local agencies spend every penny they get on current year operations and then when they need something like a new building they go back to the taxpayers with a bond issue or a parcel tax.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Menlo Voter.**

 2 people like this

a resident of Menlo Park: other  
on Mar 31, 2019 at 8:48 am  
*Menlo Voter. is a registered user.*

Inon:

Are you intentionally being obtuse or do you not really understand how reserves work?

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter**

 3 people like this

a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood  
on Mar 31, 2019 at 9:02 am  
*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

Inon - please do your part and answer the questions that have been addressed to you. We cannot have a discussion if you refuse to answer questions and just keep expecting others to answer your questions.

Again:

Where in this list is the first MPFPD chief officer?

[Web Link=](#)

Where in this list is the first MPFPD firefighter?

[Web Link=](#)

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Inon**

 35 people like this

a resident of Menlo Park: Sharon Heights  
on Mar 31, 2019 at 9:22 am

So, Petey, they DID spend more than they took in last year. After all your yapping that they didn't. As I said before , your little list doesn't matter. In this case individuals don't matter; groups do. The fact remains that we have the highest paid FD in the state ( and probably the country) and it's Fire Department groupies and wannabes like you who made it so, with seeming little regard for the longer term financial consequences. I, and many other fiscally conservative fellow MP residents feel this way.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **neighbor**

 2 people like this

a resident of another community  
on Mar 31, 2019 at 11:34 am

Inon: Your last comment was not only disrespectful & snarky, but it also was not convincing since it was devoid of facts and documentation. Mr. Carpenter presented data, what did you do to bolster your argument?

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **inon**

 2 people like this

a resident of Menlo Park: Sharon Heights  
on Mar 31, 2019 at 2:02 pm

Read the article about the department being the highest paid FD in the state for what, 3 or 4 of the last 5 years? What's not a fact.

Over and out--done here

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter**

 3 people like this

a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood  
on Mar 31, 2019 at 2:05 pm

*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

Inon - please understand that we are troubled by your unwillingness/inability to bring new facts to this discussion. Reciting what is in the article accomplishes nothing.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Inon**

 14 people like this

a resident of Menlo Park: Sharon Heights  
on Mar 31, 2019 at 2:53 pm

Well, Pete, you keep throwing lists of FD pay for individuals, which is pretty meaningless (and nothing new there). I keep referring to the desire to do something about having the highest paid FD in the state, year in and year out, with subsequent high pension costs. Year in and year out. Don't see anything new from you either, other than supporting the status quo, which seems to be what got us in this mess to begin with. I guess establishment types never like to see their empires reduced or questioned. I do get it.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Menlo Voter.** 3 people like this

a resident of Menlo Park: other  
on Mar 31, 2019 at 3:52 pm  
*Menlo Voter. is a registered user.*

Inon:

what "mess" are you referring to? The MPFPD is one of the best fiscally managed government organizations in the state. Care to provide an example of any that are better? [Portion removed due to disrespectful comment or offensive language] Show us you're right. The fact is in one year the department spent more than they took in. But, here's the thing, the reason they were able to do that was that they spent less than they took in for many years so in that one year when they needed to spend more than they took in that particular year, they could. Get it now? [Portion removed due to disrespectful comment or offensive language]

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter** 16 people like this

a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood  
on Mar 31, 2019 at 5:16 pm  
*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

Our community is well served by having an intelligent and informed discussion of these issues.

Here is the Fire District's latest budget:

[Web Link](#)

Note:

"The Board places a high priority on closely monitoring the impact of local economic conditions on the District's finances, and upon the District's ability to maintain current service levels, meet infrastructure needs, and to build and maintain healthy reserve balances. The budget preparation and adoption process is guided by several fundamental fiscal tenets:

- Ongoing operating expenditures are to be paid with ongoing operating revenues.
- Services provided by District Staff that have a cost recovery element should be as close to 100 percent cost recovery as is feasible.
- Alternate revenue sources such as grants are encouraged with the caveat that the associated expenditures have a limited life equal to that of the revenue source.
- Paid time off balances, such as annual leave, will be funded at 100 percent pay out values per Memorandum(s) of Understanding and compensation and benefit plans effective at the end of each fiscal year.

The District has incorporated these tenets into its fiscal strategies and uses them to set fiscally responsible short and long-term goals. The District also continues to provide a high level of reliable service to the public. Despite the recent difficult economic conditions, the District's reserves are healthy and its long-term financial outlook is strong. No fire stations were closed and no fire engines were taken out of service. Employees have not been laid off or furloughed and service levels have been maintained. Effective leadership and prudent fiscal practices continue to ensure that the community the District serves will receive the service level that it has come to expect."

The external audit of the Fire District's financial reports:

[Web Link](#)

The District's Fund Balance Policy

[Web Link](#)

Note:

"The Menlo Park Fire Protection District (the District) believes that sound financial management principles require that sufficient funds be retained by the District to provide a stable financial base at all times. To retain this stable financial base, the District needs to maintain a General Fund Balance sufficient to fund all cash flows of the District, to provide financial reserves for replacement of fixed assets such as apparatus and equipment, unanticipated expenditures and/or revenue shortfalls due to unfavorable economic conditions or emergencies, set aside funds to work towards the paydown of the District's CalPERS Unfunded Actuarial Liability (UAL) and to

provide funds for all opportunities that require an expenditures/reimbursement process. The District's reporting and communication relating to fund balance reserves will utilize the classifications outlined in generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP). The District hereby establishes and will maintain reserves of fund balances, as defined herein, in accordance with Governmental Accounting and Financial Standards Board Statement No. 54 (GASB 54), Fund Balance Reporting and Governmental Fund Type Definitions. This policy will ensure that the District maintains adequate fund balances and reserves in order to:

- a) Ensure sufficient funding to support the District's short-term and long-term operating objectives.
- b) Limit adverse annual and multi-year budgetary impacts from anticipated and unanticipated expenditures or revenue shortfalls and thereby stabilizing services fees and changes.
- c) Cover current outstanding liabilities or fund actuarial unfunded liabilities.
- d) Build and maintain the financial resiliency of the District. "

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Dear Peter**  
a resident of Menlo Park: Downtown  
on Apr 1, 2019 at 1:03 pm

 9 people like this

Dear Peter,

It is time for you and others to step down.

I appreciate your attempt to educate others, and to accomplish much with an enormous budget, but you are clearly not representing the will of the voters. You have lost the public will. Responding to each and every comment here with more facts will not change the majority opinion.

Please stop responding to every comment, and think about how to better represent the people you represent.

Many thanks for your service.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter**  
a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood  
on Apr 1, 2019 at 1:12 pm  
*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

 15 people like this

Dear Peter - Relax. I am no longer a Fire District Director.

I now hold the highest office in the land - Citizen.

And I will speak out when I wish and in doing so I only represent myself and the facts that I present.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **George Fisher**  
a resident of Menlo Park: Central Menlo Park  
on Apr 1, 2019 at 5:53 pm  
*George Fisher is a registered user.*

 14 people like this

The disparity between Fire Department Budgets and school budgets is exacerbated by an inequitable division of Property Taxes in connection with Proposition 13 . Easy to pay Firefighters within MPFD allocation, , tough to pay school teachers within School district allocation. Interim adjustments don't solve differences. Time for change?

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter**  5 people like this  
a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood  
on Apr 1, 2019 at 6:03 pm  
*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

[Web Link](#)

AB 8 Shift.  
The AB 8 long term solution for the bailout program used to alleviate the effects of the property tax shortfall consisted of a one time adjustment ("shift"), which created a new property tax base for each local agency. Each county's, city's and special district's share of property taxes was increased by an adjusted amount of its' 1978/79 block grant and school districts' property tax shares were reduced by the same aggregate amount. Schools' share of the total property tax base declined from over 50 percent to 36 percent. School reductions were replaced with state funding.  
The property tax base for each local agency was adjusted as follows. Cities received added property taxes equal to 82.91 percent of the city's 1978/79 block grant. Special districts received added property taxes equal to 95.24 percent of the district's 1978/79 block grant.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **George Fisher**  9 people like this  
a resident of Menlo Park: Central Menlo Park  
on Apr 1, 2019 at 8:40 pm  
*George Fisher is a registered user.*

So-o-o,fire district is rich, allowing good proportion of firefighters to be paid over \$300,000, and school teachers are left far behind, struggling to subsist. Seems inequitable to me. Time for change?

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter**  9 people like this  
a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood  
on Apr 1, 2019 at 8:56 pm  
*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

If you want a change in the property tax allocation then look to the state legislature not the fire board.

And it will never happen.

In the meantime the fire board will continue to provide the best services that it can with its SB 8 allocated revenues.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Property Tax Payer**  8 people like this  
a resident of Portola Valley: other  
on Apr 1, 2019 at 10:04 pm

Peter: Never say never!

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter**  9 people like this  
a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood  
on Apr 2, 2019 at 6:07 am  
*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

You are right - never is too strong.

In my opinion the tax allocations established by Prop 13 and AB 8 will not change anytime in the next ten years even if the teeny, tiny Town of Atherton continues to waste taxpayers money to try to change those statewide allocations.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Mark Wilson**

 8 people like this

a resident of Portola Valley: other  
on Apr 2, 2019 at 12:59 pm

Another way to look at these salaries is as a percentage of the property values of MP. By that measure perhaps these salaries are no more out of line than a realtor whose compensation continues to rise as the value of properties bought and sold increase. After all taxpayers who own property are also increasing their wealth in these times of increasing property values. Why should not responders who put their lives at risk for the property owners also benefit.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Menlo Voter.**

 1 person likes this

a resident of Menlo Park: other  
on Apr 2, 2019 at 7:44 pm  
*Menlo Voter. is a registered user.*

@markwilson:

Very good point. The realtors work no harder to sell the properties when they were at a lower value. And firefighters provide an actual value in relation the the property value.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **MPCSD/Atherton resident**

 3 people like this

a resident of Atherton: West Atherton  
on Apr 3, 2019 at 3:58 pm  
*MPCSD/Atherton resident is a registered user.*

So, who is up for contacting our state legislators to request a change to the Prop 13/ AB 8 distributions that have resulted in ridiculous inequities in the funding of our fire district vs. the area school districts?

If enough of us contact our representatives, change may be possible! Below are links to our State Senator's (Jerry Hill) email contact page and our State Assemblyman's, (Marc Berman) contact page.

[Web Link](#)  
[Web Link](#)

If you care about this issue, send these guys your thoughts! And, get your neighbors to, also! Unfortunately, just preaching to the choir on this forum will accomplish very little. A new board could freeze fire district salaries but the fire district reserves will just keep accumulating while the schools continue to be woefully underfunded.

Change needs to start somewhere, be a part of it! And, If you're so inclined, click like to show you're going to take action.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Citizen**

 4 people like this

a resident of Menlo Park: other

on Apr 3, 2019 at 8:24 pm

Atherton resident:

Don't waist your time contacting your state representatives. It is what it is.....

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter**

 3 people like this

a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood  
on Apr 3, 2019 at 8:35 pm  
*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

Prop 13 was passed by the voters and it can only be changed by the voters.

Given how many people derive great benefit from Prop 13 I predict the chances of getting even one state legislator to put her/his name on a constitutional amendment to repeal Prop 13 is zero.

Changing the AB 8 post Prop 13 tax allocations would mean disadvantaging some agencies in order to benefit others - a can of worms that no legislator wants to touch because once you open the debate everything is on the table.

Wise agencies concentrate on maximizing the services that they can provide with the resources that the have been dealt by Prop 13/AB 8 and they leave trying to change the California Constitution and/or the law to the fringe elements like the Atherton Town Council.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **John Ullom**

 3 people like this

a resident of another community  
on Apr 4, 2019 at 12:56 pm

"Our community is well served by having an intelligent and informed discussion of these issues."

True. How it that intresrt seved by your casual insults? You wronte, "fringe elements like the Atherton Town Council,".

[Portion removed; don't attack other posters.]

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **John Ullom**

 Like this comment

a resident of another community  
on Apr 4, 2019 at 12:59 pm

Illeism: -- [Web Link](#)

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Gann Limit**

 3 people like this

a resident of Menlo Park: Downtown  
on Apr 4, 2019 at 3:20 pm

If the citizens want to limit how much money flows into the fire district, they can vote no on the next MPFD Gann Limit override measure. The next vote will likely be in November.

The Gann Limit was instituted by California in 1979 to limit spending growth in state and local government agencies. It limits the spending growth rate to the cost of living and population percentage increases only. If a local agency does not get voter consent to spend in excess of the Gann Limit, it is required to refund the money back to taxpayers.

The fire district has been over this limit for a long time now. It has requested approval for spending

over the Gann Limit every four years for as long as I can remember. And the voters approve the limit override every time since there's never any organized opposition.

Here's the last MPFD Gann Limit Override (Measure Y) from 2015:  
[Web Link](#)

If a group of MPFD residents believe the fire district spends too much, they can organize a campaign against the next measure.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **whatever** + 9 people like this  
a resident of Menlo Park: Central Menlo Park  
on Apr 4, 2019 at 5:03 pm

Wow, 76 "comments" and 28 of them from Peter Carpenter.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Menlo Voter.** + 3 people like this  
a resident of Menlo Park: other  
on Apr 4, 2019 at 8:10 pm  
*Menlo Voter. is a registered user.*

whatever:

ya, whatever. Someone that responds with facts. God forbid.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter** + 4 people like this  
a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood  
on Apr 4, 2019 at 8:50 pm  
*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

The last time an increase in the Gann limit of the Fire District was voted on it received 79% approval.

People approve of the quality of services provided by the Fire district and know that changing the Gann limit has zero impact on their property taxes.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter** + 3 people like this  
a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood  
on Apr 4, 2019 at 9:45 pm  
*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

BTW The FY 18-19 Gann Appropriations Limit is \$130,040,130 which is more than twice the District's current annual expenditures.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Peter Carpenter** + 4 people like this  
a resident of Atherton: Lindenwood  
on Apr 5, 2019 at 2:53 am  
*Peter Carpenter is a registered user.*

Describing the Atherton Town Council as a fringe element is not a casual insult but rather is descriptive of the fact that they are the only agency that has spent tens of thousands of tax payers dollars on an attempt to change the property tax allocation system even AFTER having been told by

experts that doing so was something that the Town could not do.

[Email Town Square Moderator](#) [Report Objectionable Content](#)

**Don't miss out on the discussion!**  
Sign up to be notified of new comments on this topic.

Email:

**SUBMIT**

Sorry, but further commenting on this topic has been closed.

**INDEX**

Home  
News  
TownSquare  
Blogs  
A&E  
Home & Real Estate  
Obituaries

Send News Tips  
Join  
Print Edition/Archives  
Express / Weekend Express  
Special Pubs  
Circulation & Delivery

Promotions  
About Us  
Contact Us  
Advertising Info  
Terms of Use  
Privacy Policy

© 2020 The Almanac  
All rights reserved.

Embarcadero Media

[\[X\] Hide](#)

The Almanac Online  
If not us, who?  
Support local journalism.

**Join**