



Perris News

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Meet the City's New Fire Chief

Justin McGough says returning to Perris as the City's fire chief is a dream come true.

McGough introduced himself to the Perris City Council this month as the top fire official in town, coming back to the place where he spent years as an engineer and later a fire captain. He returns to Perris in a time of challenges as the City copes with significant growth—a population increase of more than 20,000 in the last decade—during a time of economic recession.

In an interview from his office at Station 90 on Placentia Avenue, McGough said staffing new equipment—like the state-of-the-art ladder truck purchased by the City earlier this year—and replacing Perris' aging fire engines will be very difficult if a public safety ballot measure is defeated in November.

"It will definitely be a lean couple of years," he said. The measure asks Perris residents to pay about \$11 a month for enhanced police, fire and emergency medical services. Many residents north of Nuevo Road and living in the City's southern end, already pay nearly \$300 a year for those services, and under the measure, would see their assessment significantly reduced.

Despite the challenges, McGough is excited about being back in Perris.

He returns from a stint as a CalFire (Riverside County) battalion chief in Indio, where he helped supervise four fire stations and 26 firefighters. His new responsibilities have McGough in charge of nine fire stations, including Station 90 and Station 1 in Perris and seven others in the surrounding communities. McGough said that during his seven years in the City, he got to know members of the City Council and Perris staff as friends as well as colleagues.

"I love working in the City," McGough said. "We've always gotten great support from the City. They definitely fly our flag for us. Many of the people I work with in the command staff of the fire department have either served as mentors to me or I've helped to mentor them. To say I've got a 'Dream Team' to work with here in Perris would be an understatement."

Firefighting in Perris requires high-energy, dedicated personnel, he said. The City's two fire stations are among the busiest in the county. Last year, Perris-based firefighters responded to nearly 5,000 calls for service. More than 80 percent were reports of medical emergencies. With major roadways like Interstate 215, Highway 74 and the Ramona Expressway, entertainment venues like the Southern California Fair, major businesses like Lowe's, Hanes and Whirlpool, firefighters are kept constantly on their toes.

"People want to work here because it's a happening city," McGough said.

City Councilwoman Joanne Evans, who retired from CalFire and worked with McGough for more than 15 years, said his "expertise, experience and background" will be a major plus for Perris.

"Justin is a very dedicated person who loves this area," Evans said. "Speaking as a resident of Perris, I think we are very lucky to have him here."



Battalion Chief Justin McGough at Station 90 in Perris. "People want to work here because it's a happening city," he says.