

**SHOW LOW FIRE DEPARTMENT HONOR GUARD SURVIVAL: A BUSINESS  
PLAN FOR HONOR GUARD SURVIVAL IN AN ECONOMIC RECESSION**

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## **CERTIFICATION STATEMENT**

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions or writings of another.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Since the beginning of the current economic recession, States, counties, cities and other political subdivisions have experienced significant decreases in budget funds. The Show Low Fire District is no exception. How will the Show Low Fire Department Honor Guard survive?

The problem is the Show Low Fire Department (SLFD) Honor Guard is a stress on the SLFD budget. How will the SLFD Honor Guard survive the current and future economic recessions? Fire Departments nationwide are experiencing budget reductions that require cuts in fire department programs and services. What fire department programs or services are most important? The purpose of this research is to determine what fire department programs the public, Fire Chiefs and line firefighters perceive as most important. This project will also explore what fire departments, individuals and businesses have done to preserve valuable programs that may be considered a low priority. Using the Action Research method, Firefighters, Fire Chiefs and the general public were surveyed, interviews with Firefighters and Chief Officers were conducted. Books, other publications and the internet were researched to establish where Fire Chiefs, fire department line personnel and the general public ranked Honor Guard activities as compared to other operational activities, and is this service worth keeping. The information gathered was used to develop a business plan for Fire Department Honor Guard survival, which is appendix E of this project. In order to survive, Honor Guards and other low priority but necessary fire department services must find the right people, develop non-fire department revenue streams, partner with the public and build themselves into “non-profit like” organizations.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Show Low Fire Department is funded through property taxes collected by Navajo County in Arizona. A small “mill rate” for fire department services is assessed on all property within the Show Low Fire District. Property values in Arizona had been steadily increasing for several years which correlated to regular increases in the SLFD budget but the current economic recession has caused a drop in property values and given a constant fire district property tax mill rate, (SLFD did not raise the tax mill rate between FY09 and 11) the SLFD budget has decreased steadily. What SLFD services or programs have the highest priority? What services or programs do the citizens expect? Because of the current economic recession, SLFD and fire departments nation wide are experiencing reductions in budget funding. What will the Fire Chief, City Manager, and Fire Board do to balance the budget?

The problem is the SLFD Honor Guard is a stress on the SLFD budget. How will the SLFD Honor Guard survive the reduction in budget caused by the current economic recession and how will it survive future budget cuts? The purpose of this research is to develop a business plan that will serve as a survival guide for fire department honor guards. Using the action research method, the following questions will be answered: What SLFD services do the citizens of Show Low consider most important?; What fire department services do chief fire officers consider most important?; and what fire department services do fire department line personnel consider most important? Finally, what is being done in the fire service and the private sector to preserve important yet low priority services. The results of this research will be used to develop a business plan for

fire department honor guard survival in poor economic times. It is clear that important yet low priority fire department programs are going to have to change the way they are financed, managed and funded in order to survive in the future.

## **BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

The SLFD budget is mainly funded by a property tax “mill rate” on property within the Show Low Fire District. This mill rate is based on property values that until 2008 had been steadily increasing. So, given a constant mill rate, increased property values equaled increased budget dollars for SLFD and other fire districts in Arizona. The State of Arizona was booming, construction and housing, which relied heavily on the lending industry were booming also. Property values in Arizona were on a continuous rise, which equated to a continuous rise in SLFD annual budgets. With these increases in budget dollars, SLFD added staffing, stations, apparatus and programs like the Honor Guard including a pipe and drum band.

The SLFD was in a financial position to purchase formal uniforms for members and to provide overtime staffing coverage while members traveled to participate in ceremonies including the IAFF Fallen Firefighter Memorial in Colorado Springs and the US Fire Administration Fallen Firefighter Memorial at the National Fire Academy.

Then in 2008 the financial bubble burst, the booming US real estate industry experienced an “adjustment”. Property values plummeted and Arizona was one of the states hardest hit. For example, according to the Arizona State University (ASU) Morrison School of Management and Agribusiness, the median price of a new single family residence in Maricopa County in 2007 was \$267,645. (ASU 2011) By 2011 that

amount had fallen to \$208,930 which equates to a 23% drop in property value. The resulting drop in property values were devastating to all governmental agencies that relied on property tax levies for budget dollars. For example; SLFD budget for FY 09-10 was \$4,450,080. FY 10-11 was \$4,411,425. Despite a small increase in the tax mill rate, the SLFD FY 11-12 budget is \$4,040,000. (SLFD 2011). Over three years later, the housing industry has not recovered, property values remain low and there is no relief in sight for SLFD budget increases that are tied to property values.

When times are good, fire department program management is easy, add staffing, build new stations, buy new apparatus, add programs to training, public education and form honor guards then report these improvements to the fire board, or county council. This was the case at SLFD, an Honor Guard was formed, uniforms, flags and other equipment were purchased. When an event required honor guard participation, members were allowed time off and their positions were staffed with call back personnel on overtime.

However, times, and budgets have changed, SLFD executive officers and honor guard members must step up and display true leadership. SLFD executive officers must display integrity, seek feedback from the fire board and citizens within the district, they must use good decision making skills, correctly use power and influence, negotiation and influence (EL, 2010) They must fund the programs and services that best fulfill the mission of the fire department and meet the expectations of the community, these programs and services will survive. The programs and services viewed as low priority will be cut, modified or left to die a natural death due to the loss of funding in the following years budget. In order to survive, changes must be made in how honor guards

are funded, organized and managed. According to the book *Leadership on the Line*, “When you ask people to make changes and even sacrifices, it’s almost inevitable that you will frustrate some of your closest colleagues and supporters” (Heifetz & Linsky, p. 141, 2002). SLFD Honor Guard members are frustrated. How will the SLFD Honor Guard adapt and keep this important service and tradition alive?

This research is focused on fire department Honor Guards including pipe and drum bands, how they are perceived by the public, fire department chief officers and fire department line personnel. The subject of the research specifically addresses priority number four of the United States Fire Administration (USFA) operational objectives, to “respond appropriately in a timely manner to emerging issues”. What is the appropriate response to the emerging issue of a line of duty firefighter death? The appropriate response is to honor the fallen members actions through formal public ceremonies and show support to his/her family through programs such as the Public Safety Officer Death Benefit and Fallen Firefighter Memorials such as the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) memorial held in Colorado Springs and the US Fire Administration (USFA) memorial held at the National Fire Academy. So, despite the fact that fire department honor guards are not considered a high priority service, Honor Guards do play an important role in the firefighting community and in the communities that they serve serving at funerals, parades, holiday celebrations and other ceremonies.

Honor Guard activities are a “value added” service offered by fire departments. Pipe and drum bands are a US fire service tradition brought to us by European immigrants in the 1800’s. (Lone Star, 2011) If fire department Honor Guards and pipe

and drum bands go away, how will we properly honor the fallen, how will the fire service maintain this honorable tradition?

How do Honor Guard activities and functions compare in priority to other fire department services? A number of surveys were conducted in order to obtain the perspective of citizens, fire officers and fire department line personnel. The first survey (APPENDIX 1) of this document surveyed citizens and business owners. Only residents or those who owned or operated businesses in the Show Low Fire District were surveyed. The survey was designed to establish what SLFD services citizens were aware of, how they prioritized the various services and what services they thought should not be financed with SLFD funds. The surveys were completed during a City of Show Low public gathering at the city park, 43 surveys were completed. The following information was extrapolated from the surveys:

Only 12 of the 43 persons who completed the survey were aware that SLFD offered Honor Guard/pipes and drums services.

22 of 43 or about half of the citizens who took the survey indicated that SLFD funds should NOT be spent on Honor Guard/pipes and drums. Citizens also ranked Honor Guard/pipes and drums as the lowest priority (average rank 8.8) when asked to rank 10 different fire department services in order of importance.

A similar survey was completed by fire department Chief Officers. At the Arizona Fire Chiefs Association (AFCA) annual conference, Chief Officers were asked to complete the survey, 27 Chief Officers including Battalion Chiefs, Deputy Chiefs, Assistant Chiefs and Fire Chiefs completed surveys. The following information was extrapolated from the completed surveys:

22 of the Chief Officers indicated that fire department Honor Guards DO fulfill a necessary role in fire department operations while 2 of the 27 indicated Honor Guards DO NOT, 1 was unsure and 2 did not answer the survey question. When asked to rank the same ten fire department services as citizens, Fire Chiefs ranked Honor Guard/pipes and drums lowest priority (average rank 9). Honor Guard members surveyed were asked to rank the same 10 services and ranked honor guard activities 9<sup>th</sup>, just ahead of assisting at public events.

Based on survey results, Citizens of Show Low and Chief Officers in the state of Arizona rank Honor Guar/pipe and drum activities as the lowest priority of ten fire department services. However, a majority of Chief Officers consider Honor Guard activities a necessary fire operations function. On the other hand, half of the citizens of Show Low don't think SLFD funds should be spent on Honor Guard activities. With a shrinking budget it seems logical to eliminate the lowest priority service. However, the IAFF and the USFA both expend significant effort and funds to honor firefighters who lose their lives in the line of duty and to recognize the sacrifice of their families and loved ones. Both organizations stage large, formal memorial ceremonies that are organized and executed by Fire Department Honor Guards from across the US and Canada. Not to mention state and local ceremonies. What will happen if Honor Guard pipe and drum bands are eliminated? Who will Honor the fallen?

Tough questions that require real, modern fire service leadership to answer. Fire department Honor Guards including pipe and drum bands will always be part of the fire service. Formal ceremonies that honor the fallen, escort flags, begin and end fire department and public gatherings are too important to eliminate, it is a question of

integrity. According to John F Kennedy, “were we truly people of integrity, people who never ran out on either the principles in which we believed or the people who believed in us, people whom neither financial gain nor political ambition could ever divert from the fulfillment of our sacred trust?” (JFK)The challenge for fire department leaders is how to fulfill this sacred trust in a shrinking budget environment. The Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) offered by the NFA provides fire officers with leadership knowledge skills and abilities required to deal with this and other modern fire service issues. How will the SLFD Honor Guard survive this and other budget reductions? Through good leadership, out of the box thinking and financing and choosing the right people to do the job.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Fire service leadership in a growing budget environment is easy, buy new trucks, add personnel and stations, overtime to cover vacation and sick leave staffing shortages, add new services and report these “successes” to the council, fire board, county board of supervisors, etc. Honor Guards will grow and thrive in this environment but how will Honor Guard pipe and drum bands and the unique service they provide survive when things get tight? Raising taxes to maintain or continue growth is not an option. Honor guards must seek out and develop new ways to fund themselves, staff themselves with the right people, find good partners and find new ways to survive.

According to Leadership on the Line “Partners provide protection, and they create alliances for you with factions other than your own. With partners, you are not simply relying on the logical power of your arguments and evidence, your building political power as well. (Heifetz, Linsky, P.78) A conversation with former Mesa Fire

Department Deputy Chief, Vic Curtis illustrates this point. Chief Curtis explained the following: Soon after they got started, Mesa Fire Honor Guard Pipes and Drums were struggling to purchase needed uniform equipment. “We received a call from a lady wanting us to do a pipe ceremony formally opening a new rose garden at Mesa Community College. The woman was extremely pleased with the job we did. The woman also happened to be the wife of the president of a beneficial organization called the Mesa Public Safety Foundation (MPSF)”. Chief Curtis then explained that the MPSF sponsors a benefit golf tournament each year and the proceeds go to meet public safety needs not provided by the City of Mesa. The MPSF made a \$5,000 donation to the Mesa Fire Honor Guard to assist in purchasing uniform items (Curtis 2011). Because the unique service provided by the MFD Honor Guard and a willingness to do an out of the box performance, a beneficial partnership developed between the MFD Honor Guard and MPSF enabling the MFD Honor Guard to purchase needed uniform items not funded by the MFD.

The story of Firefighter Allison Antoni of the SLFD, who found a non-standard way to improve the fire prevention school program in the White Mountain region is an excellent example of how honor guards should organize themselves in order to survive. According Firefighter Antoni, she has held a rummage sale for the last three years in order to fund local fire prevention education. When asked “Why did you start the rummage sale?”, she answered “ The smoke trailer (fire prevention home safety training trailer) was ten years old and in need of some repairs, when I asked the Chief for the money to make the repairs, I was told there is no money in the budget for this. The smoke trailer had to be fixed so I came up a unique idea and had a rummage sale. I made

over \$800.00 at the first rummage sale and this year, I made over \$2,300.00.” (Antoni, 2011) While the smoke trailer/rummage sale story is not honor guard related, it has a direct relationship with how to preserve necessary yet low priority programs. When asked “What would you recommend to someone in the fire service wanting to start something like this?”. Antoni had a number of recommendations, which are summarized into bullet points:

- Brainstorm your plan, develop a plan that is inspired and can not fail.
- Don’t accept no for an answer. When you are told no, it usually means there is no money currently budgeted for your idea so come up with a plan that includes it’s own financing so you can’t be told no.
- The plan/program must be of benefit to the community, something needed.
- Be creative and make it fun. If it’s boring, people will lose interest and the program will fail.
- Find partners in the community that share your interest and enthusiasm and will also benefit in some way from the program.
- Find volunteers with the same drive, and motivation as you have and choose partners with the other talents needed for success (finance, business, legal, etc.)
- Don’t worry about what others say can’t be done, focus on what you know you and your group can do and make it happen.
- My hands were tied with the normal fire department budget process so I am setting up as a non-profit organization. (Antoni, 2011) All the questions asked Firefighter Antoni can be found in Appendix D of this paper.

Because of her passion for the fire prevention public education program, Firefighter Antoni stepped up and lead the change needed to keep the program moving forward.

Honor guards must display this passion in order to survive. Without creative leadership and members passionate about the service they deliver, the SLFD honor guard may find itself in the position described in the January/February issue of the “International Firefighter”. The magazine article explains budget problems that the city of Philadelphia was experiencing. A mayoral commission acting without fire department input severely cut the Philadelphia fire departments budget, “The Nutter administration based the cuts on an internal study conducted by mayoral appointed commissioners. Unfortunately, the study did not take into consideration significant safety issues” (IAFF, 2009) Making decisions based on incomplete information can lead to problems. SLFD honor guard leaders must learn to be innovative, we must partner with the community so that the program does not cause a strain on the SLFD budget and find creative ways to maintain important, if low priority programs such as the Honor Guard.

According to a Harvard Business Review article entitled “ Three Big Assumptions Leaders Should Question”, one of the assumptions is that Quick wins are essential to managers in transition. The article points out that managers seek quick wins during transitional times, the article states “ Such wins may end up sabotaging the executives ability to succeed in the longer term...Knowing that they must rack up quick wins to prove themselves, new leaders often trip up during the quest for early results.” (Harvard Business Review, 2011) In the last few years, Fire Officers have been trying to rack up quick wins by cutting “low priority” fire department services. Decisions made in haste in order to balance a budget may violate the “sacred trust” placed upon us by the

public and the fire service members we promise to protect. The September/October 2011 issue of the International Fire Fighter magazine is dedicated to the ten year remembrance of the September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center. The bottom sub title on the front page claims “We Will Never Forget” (IAFF, 2011)

In regards to the financial struggles, even crisis most fire departments are facing today, Ben May states in Firehouse magazine “Many of us have heard that translation of the Chinese character for crisis: ‘dangerous opportunity.’ We have challenges before us, no question. We need to get out of our own way as we grapple with innovative ways to deliver our service for the public’s protection.” (May, 2011). Mr. May is suggesting that as fire service leaders we must improve our creativity and become better leaders. He also includes a warning to the fire service “we can waste no time in figuring out how to do this or we will not be in business.” (May, 2011) This statement from Mr. May clearly defines the current “dangerous opportunity” situation that SLFD and other fire departments are facing. Like Firefighter Allison Antoni, honor guards must find creative ways to continue delivering their important yet low priority services. The SLFD and the fire service must also keep the promises we make to ourselves, such as the one stated on the front page of the September/October issue of the International Fire Fighter “We Will Never Forget”(IAFF, 2011) and protect the sacred trust placed upon us by citizens and our own. The SLFD honor guard and all fire service honor guards must find a way to survive and continue to provide the service that assures we keep our sacred trust.

## PROCEDURES

Assumptions and limitations: In order to control survey returns, all surveys were handed out, completed and collected on the spot so there are no sent vs. returned

statistics. While all surveys handed out were completed and collected on the spot, not all surveys were completed or were filled out improperly. Those survey questions not answered or answered incorrectly were not included in the statistical analysis of that particular question. Citizen surveys were collected at the Show Low city park which meant that only citizens who chose to come to the event were surveyed, this may not represent an accurate cross section of Show Low citizens. Because of the other events going on at the park, it was difficult to get busy family members to take the time to complete surveys. Many of the chief officers who took the survey used a different priority process than was described in the instructions on the survey. Some of the line firefighters who completed honor guard member surveys did not know or were not aware of what their fire department budget was and how it affected their unit.

Three different surveys were used to gather information for this research, a citizen survey, a survey of Arizona fire department Chief Officers and an honor guard member survey. All honor guard members surveyed were either active or retired fire department line members (Firefighters, Engineers or Captains). The citizen survey was conducted at a City of Show Low public event held at a local park. Citizens who either lived or owned a business in Show Low were invited to complete a survey, 43 people chose to complete a survey. The Chief Officer survey was conducted at the 2011 AFCA annual conference held in Glendale, 27 Chief Officers chose to complete surveys. And finally, Honor Guard members from fire departments across the US and Canada were surveyed at the annual IAFF Fallen Firefighter Memorial held in Colorado Springs, 52 honor guard members, all of which were active or retired line personnel (Firefighters, Engineers and Captains) chose to complete surveys. The surveys demonstrate a consistency in how

citizens, chief officers and line fire personnel prioritize ten different fire department services. However, the disparity between chief officers and citizens regarding the importance of honor guard services, 81% of chief officers believe honor guard services are necessary whereas 51% of citizens state that fire department funds should not be spent on honor guard service illustrates the need for honor guard service but clearly suggests that honor guards and fire chiefs need to find alternative ways of funding honor guard services.

Along with the surveys, leadership books, NFA course materials, fire service periodicals and business internet sites were searched for information related to the subject of this research. Interviews were also conducted with individuals who had personal experience related to the subject of this research. The interviews provide specific examples of the importance of community partnerships and learning creative and new ways to fund fire department services that are important, yet have a low priority as compared to other fire department services. Information contained in leadership books and articles as well as information contained in NFA leadership course manuals shows the need for new and innovative leadership methods in order to maintain fire department services in these times of “dangerous opportunities”. These sources also provide the information necessary to create the business plan model honor guards could embrace in order to survive this and future economic down turns.

## RESULTS

The following results were obtained based on the answers to survey questions.

Research Question 1.

What fire department services do citizens consider most important?

According to a citizen survey (Appendix A), citizens of Show Low rank SLFD services in order of importance as follows:

1. Structure fire response, average rating 2.1
2. Medical response, average rating 2.9
3. Wildland fire response, average rating 3.3
4. Haz mat response, average rating 4.9
5. Public Education, average rating 5.4
6. Aircraft Rescue/Firefighting, average rating 5.5
7. Code enforcement, average rating 5.9
8. Rope rescue, average rating 7.0
9. Assist with public events, average rating 8.4
10. Honor Guard/pipes and drums, average rating 8.8

This survey also asked citizens if they thought any of the above fire department services should NOT receive public funds. Of the 43 citizens who took the survey, 21 of those stated that public funds should NOT be spent on honor guard services. This is an interesting contrast to the chief officer survey which shows that 22 of the 27 chiefs surveyed think that fire department honor guards fulfill a necessary role in fire department operations. This survey clearly shows that citizens of Show Low consider honor guard service as a low priority and about half think that public funds should NOT be spent on honor guard activity.

Research question 2.

What fire department services do fire chiefs consider most important?

According to a survey of Arizona Chief Officers (Appendix B), Chief Officers rate fire department services in order of importance as follows:

1. Medical response, average rating 1.8
2. Structure fire response, average rating 2.4
3. Code enforcement, average rating 3.2
4. Public Education, average rating 3.4
5. Haz mat response, average rating 5.8
6. Wildland fire response, average rating 6.1
7. Rope rescue, average rating 6.7
8. Assist with public events, average rating 7.0
9. Aircraft rescue/Firefighting, average rating 8.1
10. Honor Guard/pipes and drums, average rating 9.0

All three surveys put structure fire and medical response as the top two priorities.

However, fire chief officers rank medical response as priority 1, whereas the public and line firefighters rank structure fire response as the top priority. The major difference in the rankings is how fire chief officers rank code enforcement (priority 3) as opposed to the public (priority 7) and line firefighters (priority 6). This finding shows that fire chief officers don't always see eye to eye with the public and line fire personnel regarding fire department priorities. This is an example of fire department leadership protecting the "sacred trust" mentioned by JFK. While honor guards march in parades, open fire stations and participate in other non essential functions, they also fulfill the sacred trust obligation to fire department internal members and to the public. This is supported by the

fact that 22 of the 27 chief officers surveyed think that honor guards fulfill a necessary role in fire department operations.

Research Question 3.

What fire department services do honor guard members (Firefighter, Engineer, Captain, etc.) consider most important? According to a survey of fire department line personnel (all of which were Honor Guard members) fire department services were ranked in order of importance :

1. Structure fire response, average rating 1.3
2. Medical response, average rating 2.0
3. Haz mat response, average rating 4.7
4. Rope rescue, average rating 5.2
5. Public Education, average rating 5.3
6. Code enforcement, average response 5.6
7. Wildland fire response, average response 6.7
8. Honor Guard/pipes and drums, average response 7.4
9. Aircraft rescue/Firefighting, average response 7.5
10. Assist with public events, average response 8.0

Fire department honor guard members are consistent with citizens and chief officers in rating honor guard services as a low priority (honor guard members 8<sup>th</sup>, citizens and fire chiefs 10<sup>th</sup>). This survey also asked honor guard members if their honor guard was fully, partially or not funded by the fire department they represented. Only 6 (11%) honor guard members indicated that their honor guard is fully financially supported by fire department funds. 26 (50%) departments provide partial financial support to honor guards

and 20 (38%) provide no financial support. Of the 32 departments who receive support, 22 (73%) had experienced a decrease in funds over the last three years. Of the 20 honor guards that receive no financial support from their departments 13 (69%) indicated that the fire department uses them for city, county and other civic events. Most fire department honor guards who receive financial support from their fire department have received cuts in the last three years and most fire department honor guards who receive no financial support from their fire department are used by the fire department to support city, county and other civic events.

Research question 4.

What is being done in the fire service to preserve low priority, yet important programs?

Honor guard members surveyed were asked the question: Has your honor guard had to make any adjustments in the last three years to remain functional? Please explain. Only 37 chose to answer this question. Of the 37, 24 indicated that they had to make adjustments. Those adjustments include but are not limited to: more voluntary time, change in practice schedule, recruitment is more difficult, charge to perform, form 501c3 corporation. All of these answers point to new and creative ways to preserve honor guard services and were a factor in the creation of the business model for honor guard success.

## DISCUSSION

Based on survey information gathered during this research, over half of the citizens of Show Low think that SLFD funds should not be spent on Honor Guard services (22 of 43 or 51%). However, a large majority (81%) of fire Department Chief Officers in Arizona believe that Honor Guards fulfill a necessary role in fire department operations. Moreover, according to Honor Guard members surveyed, 45 out of 52 or

86% of fire department honor guards who completed the survey, honor guard services including pipes and drums are used by the city, county or state their fire department represents.

All groups surveyed ranked honor guard services as a low priority, 7 out of 10 or lower as compared to other fire department services but most fire department Chief Officers believe that fire department honor guards serve a necessary role. This paradox may seem confusing until the two are contrasted with how code enforcement is prioritized by Fire Chiefs (priority 3) as opposed to Citizens (priority 7) or line fire department personnel (priority 6). Because of their role in the community, Fire Chiefs are professionally and/or ethically bound to make decisions based on experience, training and other factors that the public may not agree with or understand. It is also the role of the Fire Chief to set policy and “require” engine company personnel to participate in unpopular yet important activities such as code enforcement business inspections, building surveys, etc. As the top ranking fire department officer and as a leader in the community, Fire Chiefs must do the right thing and preserve and protect programs and services that may not be popular with either the public or fire department line personnel. Although honor guard services are a low priority with citizens, fire chiefs and fire department line personnel, there will always be a need for honor guards and their services. Using advice from Firefighter Antoni, honor guards should not take no for an answer and brainstorm a plan that the Fire Chief can not say no to, in other words, they must be financially independent of fire department budget funds.

Each year, firefighters will die in the line of duty. These firefighters will be honored at community memorials and private funerals. The IAFF and the USFA will

continue to recognize the sacrifice made by the fallen and honor them and their families in large, formal ceremonies. Moreover, new fire stations, city, county and state buildings will have formal openings, parades, civic events and St. Patricks day parties will continue. Despite the economic down turn, fire department honor guards and pipe and drum bands will be relied upon to provide their unique service to the community.

How will fire department honor guards including pipe and drum bands survive in an economic recession? Based on survey information, the citizens of Show Low do not want to spend SLFD funds on the honor guard. On the other hand, Fire Chiefs believe that honor guards do play a necessary role in fire department operations. Fire department honor guards are going to have to adapt and learn to fund themselves. In fact, many honor guards have begun this process. This will require “out of the box” thinking, new means of financing and finding people who are willing to put in their own time to keep this important tradition alive. Fortunately there are examples from fire departments and private industry on how to do this.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to survive the current and future economic recession fire department honor guards must cultivate support from the Fire Chief, choose the right people, find alternative funding sources outside the fire department budget and finally, find community partners that will champion the honor guard. Support of the Fire Chief may come in various degrees that range from tolerance to enthusiasm. In order to represent a fire department, Fire Chief approval is must. Don't accept no for an answer and follow the lead of Firefighter Allison Antoni, come up with a plan and make sure it will work before you ask the Chief.

Once Fire Chief approval is obtained, the right people must assembled.

According to Mark Smiciklas, there are three basic principals for success in starting a small business, these principals directly relate to starting a fire department honor guard. “The first step your small business should take is to hire the right people, even before establishing a strategic direction. The idea: getting the right people working together will help your organization manage change.” (Smiciklas) Smiciklas further states “The right people are driven, self motivated and responsible. (Smiciklas) His final principal states “Your small business will never maximize its potential with the right strategic direction but the wrong people. To quote Jim Collins “Great vision without great people is irrelevant.”” (Smiciklas) Honor guards must choose members who are there for the right reasons, are willing to put in the time to practice, purchase uniforms and instruments and show up to “gigs”.

Along with choosing the right people, the next step in building a successful honor guard is to find a way to finance the program outside of the fire department budget. Honor guard member surveys provide a number of ways this is being done including forming 501c3 or non-profit organizations, this provides honor guards with certain legal and tax protection that allows them to raise money in order to support themselves. As long as they are legal, there are no restrictions to money raising activities, many bands charge fees for performance and/or “pass the hat” at local gigs, and many (like Mesa FD) find community business partners with funds to support non-profit organizations. The SLFD honor guard and many other honor guards associated with IAFF local chapters solicit and receive donations from the IAFF local. Honor Guards must assure that all

funds are properly and legally separated from the fire department budget, federal, state and other local laws and banking rules must be adhered to.

While finding community partners is an important part of financing the honor guard, it is also important to cultivate partnerships with other community entities who may not provide financial support. Civic clubs like the Lions, Elks and Rotary clubs and military organizations, active and retired are always staffed with community leaders and decision makers. Honor guards that partner with and provide services for these types of organizations will become an indispensable part of community events, like General Motors, they will become “too important to fail”.

There are literally millions of business plan examples on the internet, each is tailored to the needs of the particular business. Fire department honor guards interested in starting up or existing honor guards struggling to survive under old financial methods should develop a plan that works for their particular organization, community and location. What should a fire department business plan look like? An example business plan is provided in Appendix E of this paper.

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## SHOW LOW FIRE DEPARTMENT CITIZEN QUESTIONAIR

INSTRUCTIONS: Thank you for taking a few minutes to provide us with your input. Please read each question and prioritize or circle the answer that most closely reflects your opinion.

1. I am aware that Show Low Fire Department provides the following services:
 

1) Haz Mat,	2) Paramedic level medical response
3) Public Education for schools	4) Aircraft Rescue/Firefighting (ARFF)
5) Fire (and life safety) code enforcement	6) Honor Guard / pipes and drums
7) Wildland Fire Response	8) Rope/Technical Rescue
9) Structure Fire Response	10) Assist with Public events (parades, Show Low Days, etc)
  
2. With 1 being the highest priority and 10 being the lowest, please rank the services you feel are the most important:
 

___ Haz Mat	___ Medical response
___ Public Education	___ Aircraft Rescue/Firefighting
___ Fire Code Enforcement	___ Honor Guard Pipes/Drums
___ Wildland Fire Response	___ Rope/Technical Rescue
___ Structure Fire Response	___ Assist with Public Events
  
3. In my opinion, public funds should NOT be spent on: (please circle any or all that apply)
 

1) Haz Mat	2) Medical Response
3) Public Education for schools	4) Aircraft Rescue/Firefighting
5) Fire Code Enforcement	6) Honor Guard Pipes/Drums
7) Wildland Fire Response	8) Rope/Technical Rescue
9) Structure Fire Response	10) Assist with Public Events
11) I think it is appropriate to spend public funds on all current SLFD services	
  
4. My overall satisfaction with the services provided by Show Low Fire Department:
 

High	Low
1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10	
  
5. In your opinion, would it be beneficial for the Show Low Fire Department to merge with other local fire departments?
 

YES	NO
-----	----
  
6. I am a full or part time citizen of Show Low
 

YES	NO
-----	----

Thank you for your input.



**SHOW LOW FIRE DEPARTMENT  
HONOR GUARD MEMBER QUESTIONAIR**

INSTRUCTIONS: Thank you for taking a few minutes to provide your input regarding Fire Department Honor Guards. Please read each question and prioritize or circle the answer that most closely reflects your opinion.

RANK: \_\_\_\_\_ FIRE DEPARTMENT: \_\_\_\_\_

11. My Fire Department provides the following services:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1) Haz Mat,                                | 2) Paramedic level medical response                            |
| 3) Public Education for schools            | 4) Aircraft Rescue/Firefighting (ARFF)                         |
| 5) Fire (and life safety) code enforcement | 6) Honor Guard / pipes and drums                               |
| 7) Wildland Fire Response                  | 8) Rope/Technical Rescue                                       |
| 9) Structure Fire Response                 | 10) Assist with Public events (parades, community events, etc) |

12. With 1 being the highest priority and 10 being the lowest, please rank the services you feel are the most important:

- |                             |                                  |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ___ Haz Mat                 | ___ Medical response             |
| ___ Public Education        | ___ Aircraft Rescue/Firefighting |
| ___ Fire Code Enforcement   | ___ Honor Guard Pipes/Drums      |
| ___ Wildland Fire Response  | ___ Rope/Technical Rescue        |
| ___ Structure Fire Response | ___ Assist with Public Events    |

3. My department utilizes the Honor Guard for department, city, county and other civic events: YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_

4. My department provides Honor Guard members the following benefits:

- |                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| ___ Paid time off for events      | ___ Uniform allowance for HG uniforms     |
| ___ Travel expenses for HG events | ___ Funds to purchase instruments         |
| ___ On duty Honor Guard events    | ___ On duty time for Honor Guard practice |

5. In the last three years, the following benefits have been cut from my Fire Department's Honor Guard budget:

- |                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| ___ Paid time off for events      | ___ Uniform allowance for HG uniforms     |
| ___ Travel expenses for HG events | ___ Funds to purchase instruments         |
| ___ On duty Honor Guard events    | ___ On duty time for Honor Guard practice |

6. My Honor Guard is COMPLETELY \_\_\_ PARTIALLY \_\_\_ NOT AT ALL \_\_\_ financially supported by my fire department.

7. Has your Honor Guard had to make any adjustments in the last three years to remain functional? Please explain:

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**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ASKED TO FIREFIGHTER  
ALLISON ANTONI, SHOW LOW FIRE DEPARTMENT**

1. Why did you start your rummage sale?
2. Who is involved in the rummage sale?
3. How much do you make?
4. What would you recommend to someone in the fire service wanting to start something like this?

# **A BUSINESS MODEL TO ASSURE FIRE DEPARTMENT HONOR GUARD AND PIPE AND DRUM BAND SUCCESS**

## **STEP 1, OBTAIN THE SUPPORT OF THE FIRE CHIEF**

- Fire Chief support will range from tolerance to enthusiasm.
- Without Fire Chief support, the honor guard will not be a fire department honor guard.
- Professional behavior, appearance and good discipline of members will give the Fire Chief a good reason to support the honor guard.

## **STEP 2, CHOOSE THE RIGHT PEOPLE**

- All honor guard members including band members must be in it for the right reasons.
- Members must be willing to put in the personal time to learn and purchase an instrument, learn drill (marching), learn formal flag protocol, purchase expensive uniforms and accessories and show up to support events even on personal time.
- Members must understand and be supportive that due to shift or work assignments, they will not be able to make it to every performance.
- Members must understand and be supportive of the fact that fire department financial support will come and go based on the current economic environment.

## **STEP 3, FIND ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF FUNDING**

- Golf tournaments, pancake breakfasts, steak dinners, fees for performance, garage/rummage sales, donations from the IAFF local and other businesses, there are essentially no limit to the possibilities.

- Keep it legal and remember you represent the fire department.
- Keep honor guard funds, checking accounts, debit cards, completely separate from fire department funds.
- Look into 501c3 status, depending on the size, make up and financing capabilities of your group, this may or may not be necessary.

#### **STEP 4, CULTIVATE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS**

- Partner with the Elks, Lions, Rotary and other community support and improvement organizations
- Participate in local parades, building dedications, high school, community college and university activities.
- IAFF local chapter if applicable