

**DETROIT CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION**  
**PROPOSAL/ISSUE REVIEW SUMMARY**

**ISSUE NUMBER:** EPS 12

**ISSUE CATEGORY:** Enforcement & Public Safety

**SOURCE:** Daniel F. McNamara, President

**RELATED CHARTER SECTIONS:** §7-801 (Department)

Detroit Fire Fighters Assn, Letter dated

November 1, 2010

**RELEVANT ORDINANCE SECTION:**

**RELEVANT LAW(S):**

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**ISSUE/PROPOSAL STATEMENT:** Make Chief of Fire Operations and Fire Marshal responsible for their respective Divisions as heads of the Detroit Fire Department and remove power of mayor to appoint fire commissioner and deputy fire commissioner.

**Sec. 7-801. Department**

~~The fire department is headed by the fire commissioner.~~ **The Chief of Fire Operations and Fire Marshal shall be responsible for their respective Division(s) as heads of the Detroit Fire Department.**

~~The fire commissioner and the deputy fire commissioner shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the mayor.~~  
**City Code reference — Fire department generally, 19-2-1 et seq.**

**RATIONALE:** None originally provided. Requested November 3, 2010 and the following was provided on November 15, 2010: "There are four reasons for the elimination of the fire commissioner and deputy fire commissioner:

1. The fire department is too top heavy with paid political appointees. In these financial times, it makes sense to eliminate costs where feasible. The Chief of Fire Operations and the Fire Marshal are part of the chain of command in a paramilitary department and have progressed through the uniformed ranks over decades. They have defined job specifications that detail their responsibilities and can prove their economic worth. They have risen through the ranks while serving on the streets of Detroit.
2. The positions of fire commissioner and deputy fire commissioner are appointed positions. They have no job specifications and serve politically. They could come right off the street with no experience or working knowledge. These positions hold the danger of not understanding the mission or structure of the fire department and, therefore, have the possibility of decision making that may not be in the best interests of the citizens and/or the city or be financially prudent. Turnover can be significant and at the whim of periodic elections.
3. In comparable sized cities, research shows that positions above Chiefs in fire departments are fewer overall. The Detroit Fire Department is very top heavy in comparison.
4. The duties of a fire commissioner used to be handled by the Chief of Fire Operations until changed for political reasons. Back then the city was more populated and could afford to pay for extra administration (dual workers performing the same duties). Now, the city and its fire department are forced to cut back (do more with less). The DFFA is proposing doing the same with less with the amount needed way back when. The Chief of Fire Operations and his/her Deputies and the Fire Marshal are able to run the fire department and answer to the Mayor without this extra level of bureaucracy. This is a money savings to the city and its taxpayers." —*Daniel McNamara, President, Detroit Fire Fighters Assn.*

**ANALYSIS:** Currently the fire commissioner heads the fire department pursuant to charter.

**DISPOSITION/COMMISSION ACTION:**

**NOTES:**