Brent McConnell
Battalion Chief

Lincolnton NC
Near the City. Near the Mountains. Near Perfect.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

To: City Manager, Richard Haynes
CC: Assistant City Manager, Scott Clark
From: Battalion Chief, B. McConnell
Date: 12/17/2025

Mr. Haynes,

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration regarding the critical Ladder 1 replacement project. I recognize the budgetary complexities you manage, and I assure you the Fire Department's request is grounded in operational necessity and fiscal prudence. Specifically, while a new custom-ordered aerial is currently projected to cost between $3 million and $3.5 million, this production opportunity allows us to secure an apparatus for $2.25 million saving the city of Lincolnton approximately $1 million while accelerating the delivery time.

After nearly two decades of heavy frontline service, our 2007 Pierce Dash shows the significant physical toll of constant emergency response. We are now seeing the compounding effects of years of high-idle time and hard miles, resulting in maintenance requirements that are increasingly frequent, costly, and difficult to forecast.

- Repair Costs: Over the last three years, repair costs have totaled $116,100.41. This substantial amount represents approximately 67% of the department's annual equipment and vehicle maintenance line items on average.
- Downtime: This apparatus has been out of service for a considerable amount of time over this same time period. Notably our department had to rely on a neighboring volunteer fire department's aerial apparatus to perform a high angle rescue at Emmanuel Lutheran Church on September 10th, 2025.
- Impending Major Failure Risk: These figures exclude any major drivetrain or component replacements, which based on the vehicle's age and my experience in emergency vehicle maintenance, are highly probable and could easily exceed $100,000. We are at a point where costly, foreseeable repairs are imminent.

The Unprecedented Opportunity: Reduced Cost and Accelerated Delivery

We have been presented with a compelling, time-sensitive opportunity to secure a retail production slot from our trusted dealer, Safe Industries. This is a chance to acquire a new, high-quality apparatus with significant advantages over the traditional custom-build process:

Key Advantage	Custom-Specified Unit	Retail Production Slot (This Offer)	Benefit to City
Cost	$3M - $3.5M	$2.25M	$1M in Capital Savings
Standard Wait Time	42+ months	14-18 months	Eliminates Long Operational Risk Period
Production Target	4 Years	1.5 Years	Rapid Deployment

This production unit is a reputable KME apparatus, a brand trusted by major North Carolina departments including Asheville and many other local municipalities. While offering substantial cost savings, the unit still affords us the flexibility to make crucial modifications to best suit the City's specific operational needs.

By contrast, our neighbor, North 321 Volunteer Fire Department, recently experienced a wait time of over 48 months for their apparatus. This opportunity bypasses those typical, debilitating delays.

I have personally inspected a similar KME unit and am strongly confident that this apparatus will meet the rigorous demands of the city and the department for many years to come.

In summary, a review of historical data, maintenance records, and consensus standards makes a compelling case that it is fiscally and operationally necessary to begin working on a solution for the replacement of Ladder 1.

As the City continues its trajectory of growth, with an increasing density of multistory and multi-family structures, the reliance on a fully functional, reliable aerial apparatus is paramount for community safety. This retail production slot offers us the rare chance to secure a critical asset while delivering maximum value through significant cost reduction and unprecedentedly fast deployment.

I look forward to discussing this time-sensitive proposal with you at your earliest convenience.

Respectfully,

Brent N McConnell

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