



Salem City Current

By Sally Burbridge, City Administrator

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Salem's 1932 Firetruck

There has been a lot of interest generated with the City of Salem posting a Request for Bids to sell the old firetruck. Many are upset and feel it is inappropriate for the City to sell a piece of our communities history. Many of us would prefer this truck to stay in our community in some way. The question is, who is the appropriate entity that can take care of it and has available resources to keep it in good condition and in the public eye?

For the past few years, the truck has been on display at the Dent County Fire Department inside the glass enclosure. While this has been satisfactory to the public, it was cumbersome for the Fire Department. This facility is used on many occasions for various purposes, one being as a voting location for the public. When these other uses of the Fire Department were occurring, the Fire Department would have to move the truck to storage in one of the bays and since it is not operational (it does not currently run) the members of the Dent County Fire Department, our firefighters, would have to push the truck out of the display area into a bay and then back out again when the event was over. While no one has any good estimates on the weight of the truck, we will simply say it is very heavy and does not freely roll on it's own, so requires quite a bit of effort to move.

With the recent remodel of the Dent County Fire Station, the glass enclosure is no more. This has allowed the Fire Department to utilize this space in a different and necessary way for both the Fire Department's needs and those of the public. However, this means the display space for the old firetruck no longer exists and it is relegated to simply sitting in a bay, taking up needed space and not publicly visible. This situation prompted the Dent County Fire Department to give the firetruck back to the City, which was a stipulation when the City of Salem "gave" it to the Fire Department – that if the Fire Department decided they no longer wanted it, it would come back to the City...and here we are. The city previously couldn't figure out how to properly care for and store the truck, so we gave it to someone else – and now we have it back.

There are a few issues with the truck coming back to the City. First, where should we store it? The city currently does not have additional space to store the truck and certainly not anywhere that would be on display for the public. The truck must be kept inside to prevent the leather seat and other fixtures from deteriorating as it is an open cab.

Assuming we could find space in a shop somewhere and tarp the truck, then what? We let it sit and slowly deteriorate from damp, age and lack of attention. Out of sight, out of mind? The City neither has the facility to properly store or display the truck, nor do we have staff who specialize in preservation of antique vehicles and extra funds to ensure it does anything other than slowly deteriorate or rot in place.

A few people have insinuated that the City is selling the firetruck to fix budget issues. This is not the case and the decision was made by our Board of Aldermen in a public meeting to surplus the truck and put it up for bid, with the hope that someone or some entity has the ability and resources to buy it and give it



the care and attention it needs and use it for some public good, preserving it and showing it in parades and other public events.

This firetruck is a part of our history, and as such it needs a steward who is equipped to take care of it properly. While cities may partner with other entities like fire departments, museums, historical societies and such, that isn't the role of city government, and we are hopeful that someone or some entity with that other focus, comes forward to put a bid on our firetruck to help us preserve our community's history in a way that the City of Salem cannot.