



## **IAFC Candidate Questions– 2018 Election**

### **Chief Porter “Chip” Welch, Scioto Township (Ohio) Fire Department**

- 1. What should be done to increase/encourage collaboration between career, combination and volunteer fire departments?**

Increasing and encouraging collaboration starts with us – the leaders of the fire service. The issues we face are the same regardless of the amount or manner in which our firefighters are compensated. Recruitment, retention, mental health, cancer, funding, personnel issues – the scope and magnitude may vary, but every organization has the same problems. As the leaders of the fire service, we must work together to craft solutions rather than look at challenges solely as a “volunteer problem” or “big city issue.” If we think together and solve problems together, it puts us in the mindset of one profession rather than in silos.

- 2. What are your thoughts on the growing behavioral health issues in the fire service and how do you propose to deal with it?**

I believe behavioral health issues have a significant impact on our firefighters and organizations; well beyond the unfortunate circumstances of firefighter suicide. Behavioral health and wellbeing also encompasses one’s attitude, their treatment of coworkers and family, and chemical abuse/dependence. Behavioral health is a significant underlying factor to firefighter suicide, discrimination, harassment, divorce, and drug/alcohol abuse. To address behavioral health, we as a profession have to establish key personality traits that well-balanced firefighters exhibit, as well as traits that identify with possible harmful behaviors. Also, we as fire service leaders must stop the negative, abusive treatment of our youngest firefighters. We must put the right people in a position to succeed and support them throughout their career.

- 3. How would you at a national level, educate the media and public that the fire service is now the “all-risk” response to any emergency?**

I would educate the media and public that the fire service is now an “all-risk” agency by first developing a single, simple, message. After formulating a message, I would utilize social media to communicate that message – all the while capitalizing on the success of our members and the Association. Our local fire departments, news organizations, and Fortune 500 companies have a person or an entire staff dedicated to ensuring their organization and “brand” has a positive social media presence – so should the IAFC. The IAFC should be selling the fire service through inexpensive and simple Facebook and Twitter messaging. We can also educate the public by producing simple videos and outtakes for our membership to use in advertising themselves and communicating our “all risk” message.

**4. What would you do to foster a more diverse and inclusive IAFC?**

To foster a more diverse and inclusive IAFC I would begin by reaching out to company officers to involve them with the IAFC, its programs, and initiatives. Diversity and inclusiveness will require a culture shift over time. This culture shift begins by involving the youngest officers in our organization before they become chief officers and giving them the opportunity to develop a vested interest in the IAFC. In addition, I would utilize the social media avenues mentioned above to stay engaged with members and provide the information and resources that they need in a format that they find appealing.

**5. What role does the IAFC play in incorporating technology into the fire service?**

I believe the most important and useful role that the IAFC can play in incorporating technology into the fire service is by being a clearinghouse, developer, and proponent of standardized data platforms across the industry. The IAFC has excelled at several projects that aid in data collection and analysis for the fire service. These projects should continue and grow. One of the issues that hinder data collection and analysis within a particular fire department, in a region, or at the national level, is the lack of a standardized backbone or system. NFIRS is supposed to be this standardized system, but it is antiquated at best. The IAFC can be most helpful by developing a standardized code or language (like P-25 for radios) so that software developers and government agencies can ensure their programs work together.

**6. How have you incorporated community risk reduction into the planning, structure and operations of your department? How would you advocate for community risk reduction as an IAFC officer?**

We have incorporated community risk reduction in our organization in several ways. Our strategic plan outlines expansion of our staffing and physical infrastructure as our community continues to grow. We provide health and safety education focused on our at-risk populations. Our staff is trained and oriented to the requirements of our disabled and special needs residents. Our service area consists of two state prisons and we work closely with their staff to provide fire and life safety instruction and code enforcement. Finally, we have implemented a mass notification system to allow company officers to notify residents of an emergency situation. I would advocate for community risk reduction as an IAFC officer by using success stories of our membership in forums and engagements with our members and elected officials. I also think that success stories should be a part of the IAFC's social media channels. Finally, the major goal of my tenure as an officer of the IAFC is to engage our members and stakeholders to develop a vision of the fire service of tomorrow and formulate a plan to achieve that vision. Community risk reduction is an integral part of that vision.

**7. Describe your current department and explain how your role helps you serve the IAFC.**

The Scioto Township Fire Department is comprised of 13 full-time and 13 part-time professionals. While we are a fire department that responds to fire, rescue, and hazardous materials incidents, the majority of our calls for service are EMS and we provide paramedic-level transport. I serve as the fire chief and the only management-level employee in the Township. My responsibilities encompass every aspect of leading the Fire Department and the Township – strategic planning, budgeting, finance, human resources, government relations, etc. I believe my

role at Scioto Township helps me serve the IAFC as I must be resourceful, ingenuitive, and collaborate with others for our organization to succeed and to be a successful fire chief – the same type of characteristics necessary to be a successful member and officer of the IAFC. The varied responsibilities of my role have also given me a well-rounded perspective and insight to the changing, future roles of our departments in our communities.