



City of Beacon, New York

Office of the Mayor
Lee Kyriacou, Mayor

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845.838.5011 | mayor@CityofBeacon.org

BEACON EXPANDS FIRE DEPARTMENT WITH FOUR FULL-TIME HIRES; MAYOR CALLS FOR REGIONALIZED FIRE PROTECTION

Beacon, NY: At a Council Meeting on February 18th Beacon Mayor Lee Kyriacou announced today the hiring of four career firefighters, as part of the largest expansion of Beacon Fire Department in decades, while calling for local governments to come together and find tax-efficient regional solutions to dwindling volunteers.

Beacon Fire Chief Gary VanVoorhis introduced the city's four newest firefighters, following unanimous approval of the City Council:

- **Dar Sims** served six years as a firefighter and EMT with the Castle Point Fire Department, six years in the Marine Corps, and holds numerous national and state firefighting certifications.
- **Kevin Glinks** is an experienced firefighter and EMT who served two years with the Global Foundries Emergency Control, and holds several firefighting certifications.
- **Kari-Leigh Lahey** has served as a volunteer firefighter in Beacon for seven years, and has four years of EMT experience with Mobile Life Support Services.
- **Ahmed Ismail** is a volunteer Lieutenant and Captain for the East Fishkill Fire Department, and has served as an EMS Officer at Grand Central Terminal in New York City.

Chief VanVoorhis said: "All of the new firefighters are exceptionally qualified, and Beacon is fortunate to attract them. They each earned perfect scores on the county civil service exam, served as career or volunteer firefighters in the past, and are EMT trained and experienced.

"With these new hires, every shift will increase from three to four career firefighters, 24/7. They will all work out of our Tompkins Hose firehouse during the day, and at night a pair each will be housed in Mase Hook & Ladder and Tompkins Hose. This improves both community safety and the safety of all our firefighters."

Mayor Kyriacou added, "Welcome aboard. Speaking for the entire Council, we are pleased to see both a stronger and more diverse firefighting capability. Our commitment is to modernize the City's firefighting facilities, encourage hiring diversity, and limit tax increases while keeping our city safe."

Three new full-time positions are partially funded by a federal Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant that the City received in 2019. All SAFER funding will end after three years, and thereafter city taxpayers must bear the full expense.

The Mayor spoke about dwindling fire and emergency volunteer counts. "Volunteers – in particular those capable of fighting an interior fire – continue to decline in Beacon and the nearby five fire districts; it is a national trend that affects every community. As interior fire-capable volunteers continue to decline, Beacon cannot afford to be the only municipality in Southern Dutchess with paid

responders (the federal VA hospital also has full-time firefighters). Current arrangements, including mutual aid, will not solve this problem. For the safety of our communities, and the pocketbooks of our taxpayers, I respectfully call for fire services in Southern Dutchess to begin a dialogue on how best to address this common crisis facing us all.”

Marc Molinaro, Dutchess County Executive, agreed: “I congratulate Beacon on its expanded career firefighter staff, and agree with Beacon’s Mayor that declining fire and emergency volunteers will not be solved without municipal cooperation. As County Executive, I stand ready to encourage and potentially offer exploratory funding for municipalities working together to tackle this difficult problem.”

About the Beacon Fire Department

The City of Beacon Fire Department currently has 13 full-time career firefighters (16 are approved in this year’s budget), over 18 volunteer firefighters and two support personnel, with five fire apparatuses in three stations: Beacon Engine (built 1886 at 57 East Main Street), Mase Hook & Ladder (built 1911 at 42 Main Street) and Lewis Tompkins Hose (current building built in 1982 at South Avenue and Route 9D; original 1886 Main Street building now owned by Hudson Beach Glass). The Department responds to more than 1,800 emergency and fire calls per year, and boasts the county’s fastest response time. The fully allocated cost of police and fire services represents an estimated 50% of the budget.

About the City of Beacon:

Beacon, New York is located on the eastern shore of the Hudson River 60 miles north of New York City, with a population of 15,000. Originally a Native American settlement, the area was purchased from the Wappinger Tribe in 1683 and settled by Dutch and other Europeans, leading to the riverfront community of Fishkill Landing on the Hudson, and the mill community of Matteawan on Fishkill Creek. The two communities were incorporated together as the City of Beacon in 1913, named for the Revolutionary War signal fires on Mount Beacon. Beacon thrived as a 19th and 20th Century factory city, but as factories closed after WWII and the local economy declined, the city went through a period of hard times. Today, Beacon has successfully reinvented itself as a 21st Century river community centered around tourism, the arts and access to the scenic Hudson River heritage area. A diverse and thriving small city, it is now home to DIA:Beacon (one of the largest exhibition spaces in the country for modern and contemporary art), a network of Hudson River parks connecting to Fishkill Creek and Mount Beacon trails, and a vibrant historic Main Street of art galleries, shops, cultural venues and restaurants.

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One Municipal Plaza | Beacon, NY 12508 | CityofBeacon.org
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