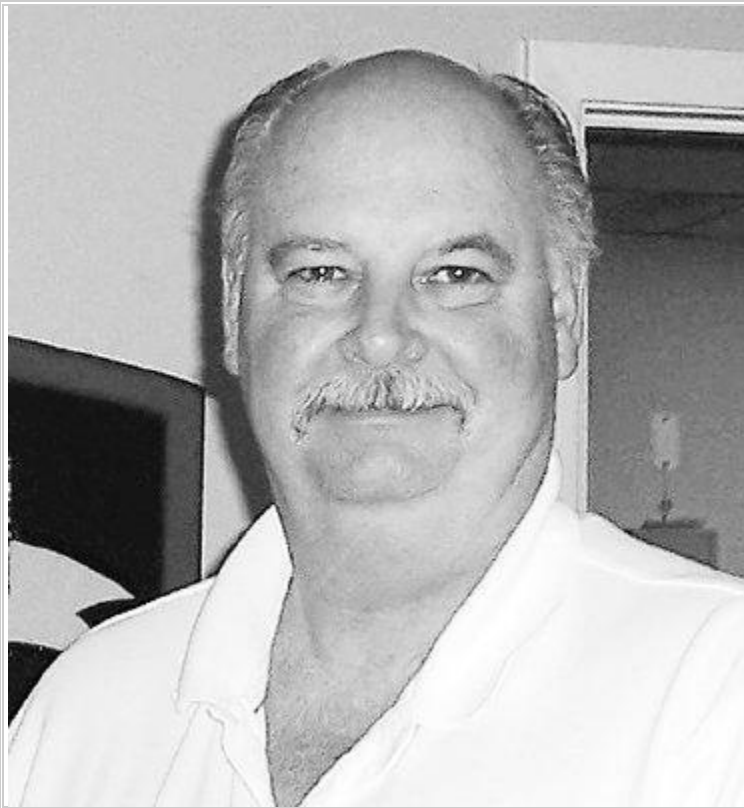




Magnolia Potpourri - Opinion

New fire engines an asset for community, homeowners



Vincent

By GARY VINCENT

Published: 10.13.10

One of the most cherished symbols of the fire service is the fire engine.

The term engine dates back to the days of horse drawn steam fire engines. These mechanical marvels were quite a sight to behold as the team of racing horses pulled the smoke-belching steam engine down the streets at speeds that were sure to cause mass injury and chaos to anyone who stepped out into their path.

When combined with the clanking bell, the running fire fighters and the crowds that were sure to follow, you can see what an unforgettable site this must have been in the 1800s.

The steam engine powered the water pump which moved the water into the fire hoses. The fire hose came from the "hose wagon."

Prior to the invention of steam engines, fire pumps were powered by side mounted up and down push-pull bars and human muscle power.

If you wanted water to flow from the fire hoses, large quantities of manpower were required to pump the water. On a good day, the amount of water in the hoses was minimal.

This very labor intensive operation usually resulted in the building burning to the ground. A successful fire fight was holding the fire to one building!

The steam engine resulted in a much more reliable source of power, capable of producing large quantities of water for long periods of time without a break. A terrific example of an old horse drawn steam fire engine is on display in downtown Brenham.

Take a moment to look at it if you are in the area.

I am proud to announce that the Magnolia Volunteer Fire Department has ordered three new fire engines for our community.

Today's Fire Engines are no less a work of art than their predecessors were one hundred and fifty years ago.

Each is custom made by dedicated craftsman to exacting national fire service standards and must pass numerous performance tests in order to be accepted by the fire department.

They are built to designs developed within the fire department to serve our specific community and the methodologies used by our local fire department to fight fires we are most likely to encounter here.

A fire truck in California is set up very different from one in Alaska.

Some of the significant features our new fire engines will have include a large built in water tank capable of holding 1,000 gallons of water, a fire pump capable of discharging 2000 gallons of water per minute, special fire fighting foam production, electrical lights to illuminate the fire ground, hydraulic rescue tools, and seating capacity for 6 fire fighters.

Today's fire engines cost about \$550,000 each, including all the fire hose and equipment they carry.

It also takes roughly 325 days from the time the purchase order is signed before the new fire engines are delivered from the factory.

As you can see, they represent a considerable investment by our department, but they are also an absolute necessity and should serve our community well for the next 15 years.

The new fire engines will replace three of our oldest fire engines, which are already almost 11 years old.

The capability of the fire department's fire engines are a major component in the determination of the fire insurance premiums each and every home and business owner in our service delivery area must pay.

The Magnolia Volunteer Fire Department currently operates from six fire stations and covers approximately 300 square miles of Montgomery County, so as you can see, the quality of the local fire engines have a major financial impact on many homeowners and employers in the area.

When the new fire apparatus arrive, the Magnolia Volunteer Fire Department will hold a dedication ceremony to showcase our communities latest generation of fire engines.

I am sure they will be viewed with the same awe and pride that communities felt when the first steam fire engines arrived in Texas in the 1800s.

Vincent is the chief of the Magnolia Volunteer Fire Department. For more information about the department visit <http://www.magnoliafire.org>.