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Leaders right to create Queen Creek Fire Dept.

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The Queen Creek town leaders certainly have their eye on the ball when it comes to protecting their citizens.

Last week, the Town Council took a bold step toward dissolving their relationship with Rural/Metro and to move forward with developing a town fire department. While the plan is still under development, the town's management has been in communications with Gilbert management to enter into a temporary agreement to borrow Gilbert resources to assist with response, training and development of the Queen Creek Fire Department.

This is truly a visionary move because if anyone knows how to successfully build a municipal fire department, it is Gilbert. Another reason this is such a smart move is that by partnering with Gilbert, Queen Creek residents will immediately expand their available emergency response capabilities because they will become a part of the Phoenix-Mesa regional automatic aid system. In this system, resources from all over the Valley will be at Queen Creek's disposal should a significant tragedy occur.

Although the timeline for the change is short, there is a deep well of experienced fire service leaders around the Valley who are willing and dedicated to ensuring Queen Creek's success. Furthermore, Queen Creek's recent addition of a stable and dedicated revenue source, specifically for public safety, positions Queen Creek very well to achieve this ambitious endeavor.

Steve Springborn and I provided input during the public comment portion of the Tuesday Town Council meeting. We urged the Town Council to be open to consideration of an initial staffing model, which would allow the firefighters who have nobly served Queen Creek to have an opportunity to continue to serve once Rural/Metro has gone.

There is a tremendous advantage to the town to maintain the institutional knowledge of the firefighters who know the streets and the buildings and the community so well. Other communities such as Scottsdale and Paradise Valley have recently transitioned to municipal fire department service models and have also transitioned many of the firefighters. This has proved to be a critical component to a smooth transition. The Fire Fighters Association wholeheartedly supports Queen Creek's endeavors to build a municipal emergency service model. We know from experience that this will be the best way to protect and enhance the safety of Queen Creek's citizens in the future.

Bryan Jeffries is the president of the United Mesa Fire Fighters Association and the executive vice president of the Professional Fire Fighters of Arizona.

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