



## **Coalition of Volusia First Responders**

*“Brothers and Sisters United in Solidarity”*

June 18, 2018

Volusia County Council  
123 W Indiana Ave  
DeLand, FL 32720

Dear Council Members,

It takes a catalyst to bring together separate peoples to a common cause. So then, does a common cause unite the likes of the Volusia County Deputies Association, Local 6035, the Volusia County Professional Firefighters Association, Local 3574, the International Association of EMTs and Paramedics, Local 77, and the Volusia Watermen’s Association, Local 385. Combined, we are hundreds of Volusia County employees, and we are standing up and saying “Enough!” to the era of Volusia County Manager Jim Dinneen.

County Manager Jim Dinneen’s tenure has crippled the government of Volusia County, most notably in public safety. We have watched first hand as he has cut staffing and left positions vacant, dubbing them “efficiencies.” He has allowed our infrastructure, the very buildings we work in daily, to crumble from lack of maintenance, while using it to justify other spending in county government. He has ignored the concerns of his employees, instead calling them “liar” if they dare to speak out. When numbers, facts, and statistics were brought forth, the accusation was repeated like a petulant toddler incapable of admitting fault. It is unconscionable to think that a public official so corrupt should be rewarded so handsomely for picking his successor, even after all of this has come to light.

In order to protect his control, Jim Dinneen surrounds himself with unscrupulous administrators who will not question his conniving policies but instead enact and enforce them ruthlessly. Human Resources Director Tom

Motes has been caught lying to you, the council, when presenting major changes to the Merit System Rules and Regulations as minor fixes and updates. Behind closed doors, he has been caught saying that you, the council, do not know what you are talking about. Human Resources Assistant Director Joe Pozzo has heard complaints of employees facing discrimination and harassment and failed to act, opening the door for the county's vicarious liability. Public Protection Director Terry Sanders and Deputy Director Mark Swanson have directly overseen the travesties of understaffing throughout their seven divisions, including Beach Safety, Emergency Medical Services, Fire Services, and the Medical Examiner's Office.

At the Volusia County Sheriff's Office (VCSO), there are over 60 vacancies for sworn positions. Because of Volusia's charter system, the Sheriff must rely on Jim Dinneen and Tom Motes to fill these vacancies. Many units are left with little to no staffing. The Marine Unit has only recently been restaffed, after the deputies were previously assigned to fill holes in the Court Services Division. This has dramatically increased the amount of times that Beach Safety has been called on to handle issues in the Halifax and Indian Rivers, taking them away from their core mission on the beach. Traffic laws in the county cannot be properly enforced as the county-wide traffic unit, a unit with normally nine deputies, has only two.

Even if the vacancies were filled, currently budgeted staffing levels still are not enough. The county has failed to fund additional patrol positions needed to keep up with the increasing population. VCSO districts 2, 3, and 5, covering greater DeLand, Ormond/Daytona, and Daytona/Port Orange/New Smyrna, still operate at the same staffing levels from the mid-nineties when Bob Vogel was Sheriff. Additionally, the School Resource Deputy and Crossing Guard programs saw significant cuts following the economic recession; cuts that have not been restored now that the recession is over and the money is flowing into the county's coffers.

At Fire Services, it is well-known that the national standard to operate a fire apparatus is four firefighters. They have asked for a mere three, just to meet a barebones level of personal safety in hazardous situations. Instead, the administration of Sanders and Swanson, under the tutelage of Dinneen, have given them only two firefighters per truck, with more than 50 fewer positions than they previously had. This means that when the national standard for a residential fire calls for 16 firefighters, they never break 12, and are lucky to even get that. While plenty of other municipalities have no difficulties providing just three firefighters per unit, Volusia has failed, which adds more responsibilities per employee when providing patient care at emergency medical calls as well.

At Emergency Medical Services (EVAC), the EMTs and paramedics have, for years, felt the strain of understaffing as the number of 911 calls often leaves few, if any, staffed ambulances available. Aside from an incredibly high workload, these responders know that delayed response times mean higher likelihoods for death, disability, and suffering. The EVAC ambulances covering all 1,200 square miles of Volusia County are kept so busy that it's commonplace for the EMTs and paramedics on board to have to eat their meals and write patient care reports all while responding with lights and sirens to other calls. Still, these employees are so dedicated that the number one reason for calls for additional staffing has been for the best interest of the patients—that is, the citizens—in their time of need. However, despite coordinated efforts to bring attention to this issue through meetings with management, social media campaigns, and news media stories, the response from county administration appears to be a collective shoulder shrug. The county even went so far as to release a statement to an Orlando-based television station in February 2018 that essentially read, "Response times don't matter." When asked, any public safety professional across the country would shout that this statement couldn't be further from the truth.

At Beach Safety, understaffing has reached critical levels of 20–30 percent. As we swing through the busy summer season, lives are at risk by not having enough officers and EMTs on the beach. The administration of Sanders and Swanson, under the tutelage of Dinneen, has installed a Beach Safety Director with no college degree who leads deputy chiefs with no relevant education, all of whom remain willfully deaf to the needs of the employees. When employees have brought forth claims of sexual harassment, workplace discrimination, and retaliation, the command staff, the Department of Public Protection, and the Department of Human Resources did nothing. When the issue became public and the news media confronted the county, they lied by saying that employees did not wish to file complaints; a claim that is demonstrably false by the tangible evidence of such signed complaints provided to the county and to the media.

We have all watched in disbelief as the news has unfolded of the disastrous conditions at the Medical Examiner's Office. While the office remains uniquely independent, the numerous requests for infrastructure, equipment, and personnel fall through the departments of Public Protection and Human Resources and have gone unheeded. When these issues became public, the county administration of Jim Dinneen called Dr. Zydowicz a liar, in an ever-more common trend. The so-called independent review by Dr. Thogmartin cannot be trusted when it has become clear that he was offered a lucrative job offer before he had even concluded his cursory tour of the facility.

To the members of the Volusia County Council, like you, we answer to the citizens of Volusia County. The citizens are the supreme authority from which our duties are bestowed. We have watched the outpouring of outrage from our citizens at Jim Dinneen, and know that you cannot have missed this. From letters to the press, posts on social media, to outright public protests, the message is clear from our citizens: Jim Dinneen's tenure needs to end now, not in January.

To the citizens of Volusia County, we urge you, stand with us and add your voice to the growing chorus. Sign the petition using one of the links below:

Full URL: <https://www.change.org/p/volusia-county-council-fire-county-manager-jim-dinneen>

Short URL: <http://bit.ly/firejim>

Your humble servants,

*Coalition of Volusia First Responders*

*Volusia County Deputies Association, Local 6035*

*Volusia County Professional Firefighters Association, Local 3574*

*International Association of EMTs and Paramedics, Local 77*

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