



Administrator Brad Larson  
City Administrator  
6000 McColl Dr.  
Savage, MN, 55378  
August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019

To the Savage Fire Department members, Administrator Larson, Mayor and Council members,

It is with a sad and heavy heart that I Andrain “Scooby” Roach tender my resignation as the Fire Chief with the Savage Fire Department and the City of Savage effective Monday August 19, 2019 end of day. Please accept this written letter as advanced notice of my intent.

I have been with the Savage Fire Department for nearly 11 years, and over that time frame I have had the privilege of meeting and work alongside some of the most dedicated, courageous, service driven and community focused service members, going above and beyond the call of duty, sacrificing mind, body, and, even at times, their families to serve this community, those who visit here, or call Savage their home, and for those reasons, this decision to leave does not come easy for me but it is one I have to make for my family and myself.

When I accepted the position of Fire Chief, I had a passion, a vision and a desire to see the Savage Fire Department grow and develop into a more modern, effective and efficient department proving the best fire and life safety service for the city, our community members, and visitors alike. Unfortunately, since day one, I do not feel as though I have been provided the necessary tools and/or support to accomplish this.

Success is based on competence, character, communication, job knowledge, support, resources, a solid foundation, teamwork, collaboration, a vision, and the ability to change, and unfortunately, I don’t believe that those leading the City of Savage are ready to accept and provide those changes to achieve community success.



Due to lack of support, the around the clock demands, and unrealistic expectations of a Fire Chief for the City of Savage, this role has taken a mental, physical, and emotional toll on myself and my family. It is unrealistic to think that a Fire Chief can effectively and efficiently plan and strategically move an organization forward when they are stuck performing three major day to day roles (Fire Chief, Fire Marshal, and Emergency Management Director) all while responding to fire calls and performing the daily tasks of managing all aspects of a department with over 40 employees. It is difficult and unrealistic to expect the current Paid-On-Call Volunteers who have full-time jobs, to dedicate additional time away from their families to pick up the slack of day to day job functions. The issue of doing a lot with less is not unique to the Fire Department and something that the City should seriously look into addressing City wide. Staffing levels are not adequate. The fact that the city has one HR representative responsible for job postings, hiring, HR related issues including payroll for all city employees is not a best practice and something that is not sustainable.

In addition, I felt singled out due to my ethnicity when an article was left on my desk without context or any notion of who had left it there. I interpreted this article was left with a racially driven motive. This made me feel uncomfortable and singled out from the rest of the City Hall employees. After discussing this with the HR department the matter was investigated, and it was identified who left the article on my desk and their explained reasons. It was communicated that I had felt singled out and that it deeply offended me, the way in which was done was not acceptable in any work environment, however no effort was made to reconcile the misunderstanding with me after several weeks of being notified of how this had made me feel. This was very troublesome, and it left me with a feeling of being in an unwelcoming work environment.



My recommendations for the City moving forward:

- 1) Provide more support staff for your HR and other departments with some cross-training capabilities and functionality.
- 2) Establish/develop a formal onboarding process for new employees and management with weekly check-ins to ensure they are receiving the necessary tools and resources to succeed.
- 3) Take a closer look at the staffing structure and find more effective ways to support employees. Invest in technology and training to better serve the community.
- 4) Look at a “three deep” model for department heads that allows them the ability to delegate and train others to function and perform duties and responsibilities in their absence. No job should be left to just “one” person knowing how to do it all. This creates some needed short- and longer-term succession planning within those departments.
- 5) Support for department heads should come from the top down. Your department heads are your area experts and should be treated as such. Their decisions and suggestions should be made based on the functionality of their roles and the impact to the community which they serve, not by personal agendas and political reach of other influential factors.
- 6) Start thinking outside the box and resist looking at the city as a rural, small town city as it was back 30 years ago. Savage is a Suburban/Urban community, rapidly developing, and the services and resources the city provides its community should reflect that.
- 7) Create a more welcoming and inviting atmosphere for “All” whom are entering the City’s enterprise.



My recommendations for the Savage Fire Department to achieve continued success:

- 1) Hire staff to alleviate, support and create a more functional, efficient and effective fire operation (full-time Administrative Assistant, Operations/Training Asst. Chief).
- 2) Reorganize the current paid-on-call leadership model (add another Deputy Chief and reorganize POC leadership duties). Creating the “three deep model that helps to create buffers and layers to ensure a more overall effective operation.
- 3) Move fire operations to Fire Station 1 to help with community visibility.
- 4) Establish a process to move the current paid on-call model to a full-time duty crew, supplementing the current paid-on-call firefighters to provide a more reliable and timely response for the community with future goals of moving to 24/7/365 fulltime coverage. The Paid-On-Call/Volunteer Service model has proven to be not as effective and reliable as it once was due to current work and family demands, and our citizens and our visitors deserve better.
- 5) Improve upon our current fire prevention and inspection programs to ensure the safety of our residence in all occupancies and businesses within the city (additional staffing is needed to accomplish this). It is time to being focusing on a more proactive, not reactive approach to fire prevention.

These are just a few of my observations and experiences that I believe would significantly assist with day to day operations and functionally of the fire department, allowing its leader to focus of the strategic planning and development of the overall operations of the fire department with support from the City Administrator, Mayor and Council.

I will also be leaving a preliminary roadmap for the fire department to help develop a more reliable response model for the community, while providing flexibility for our current paid-on-call firefighters to improve morale and build retention due to their limited availability and family needs.



Again, it is with deep sadness that I say goodbye to my Savage Fire Family and its members. You all are great ambassadors for this organizations and have given and continue to give a lot to this city and your community. For that I say “Thank You” and stay safe.

Sincerely,

Andrain “Scooby” Roach

Fire Chief

