

City of Charleston

Joseph P. Riley, Jr.
Mayor

May 13, 2008

Chief Rusty Thomas
Charleston Fire Department
Charleston, South Carolina 29401

Dear Chief Thomas:

I have received your letter of intention to retire as Chief of the City of Charleston Fire Department with very mixed emotions.

For you and your family, I am happy you can now move to the next phase of your life and enjoy health and happy retirement years for which you and your family have worked hard and most justly deserve. And, I know that the citizens of Charleston who love and admire you will also be happy for you and your family. To say that you are beloved by this community is an understatement. It simply reflects the admiration and respect that you most richly deserve. I have never known anyone in Charleston who has gained such a high and sustained level of affection. The reason, of course, is because the citizens whom you serve have gotten to know the real you and realize their great fortune to have you as their Fire Chief.

For me, the knowledge that I will no longer have you at my side leading a great fire department is a cause of sadness. It is a reminder that in life special experiences and opportunities do not last forever.

You took our fire department to a new level of achievement. You were never just doing your duty. You were always doing more – whether it was responding to a fire call, leading your great firefighters, preparing for hurricanes or responding positively to a wide range of community causes, you were always there, ready to serve.

Your energy and can do spirit is the stuff of legends. In 32 years of working for and leading the Charleston Fire Department you took one day of sick leave.



P.O. Box 652, Charleston, South Carolina 29402

843-577-6970 Fax 843-720-3827

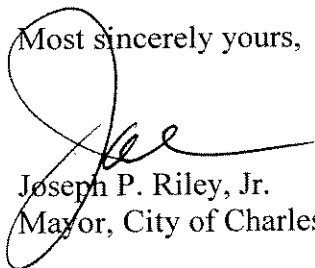
I know that on the night of June 18, 2007 you did everything in your power to fight that terrible fire and protect our firefighters. Without your efforts, more lives could have been lost. Since then, you helped us mourn, care for the families of our heroes and at the same time worked to lead our fire department in new initiatives to position us as a national leader in fire departments and to leave as a lasting legacy of this tragic fire that the City of Charleston is a model of national best practices in firefighting.

I will work hard to find a successor that can emulate your excellent leadership and sterling character.

Charleston had the first fire department in America. We are very proud of the history of our department just as we are proud of you, your leadership and, I know, just as proud as we will be of our future that you have helped shape.

With warmest regards, I remain your devoted friend.

Most sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joe Riley', written over the printed name.

Joseph P. Riley, Jr.
Mayor, City of Charleston

JPR,jr/cb