



JOSEPH P. RILEY, JR.  
MAYOR

RUSSELL B. THOMAS, JR.  
CHIEF

# *City of Charleston*

South Carolina

## *Fire Department*

May 13, 2008

The Honorable Joseph P. Riley, Jr.  
Mayor, City of Charleston  
80 Broad Street  
Charleston, SC 29401

Dear Mayor Riley:

Some of the earliest memories in my life were of the Charleston Fire Department. I can remember being with my father at Station #1 on Meeting Street as he worked to keep the fire trucks of the Charleston fire Department running. My grandfather was a Charleston firefighter, and my father, my uncle and my brother still serves. All I ever wanted to be was a City of Charleston firefighter.

I love this department and have given it my entire professional life.

The loss of my nine friends last June 18 changed me and this department forever. I committed that night to dedicating the rest of my career to honoring their memory. I think about them every day.

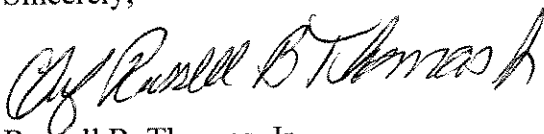
Over the last 11 months, our department has responded to that tragedy with an intense self-examination, and we are in the midst of an ongoing effort to bring our department in line with the highest standards of firefighter safety. We have put in place a model counseling program to make sure that our firefighters have the support they need to deal with the emotional scars of June 18. We are moving forward on many important initiatives.

I feel as though the best thing I can do right now to help this department that I love so much heal from the tragedy of June 18 is to step aside as Chief. Therefore, I have decided to retire from my service with the Charleston Fire Department, effective Friday, June 27, 2008.

I thank you for your steadfast and unwavering support of me over my last 16 years as Chief. I also thank the members of City Council with whom I have worked, and of course the many City of Charleston firefighters who I have had the opportunity to serve with in my 32 year career.

The opportunity to serve as a City of Charleston firefighter is the greatest honor I have had in my life, and I will never forget the citizens of this community who gave me that chance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Russell B. Thomas, Jr." in a cursive style.

Russell B. Thomas, Jr.  
Chief