

CITY OF BALLINGER REFUTES INACCURATE POSTINGS BY THE BVFD

The Ballinger volunteer fire department (BVFD) has operated as an arm of the City of Ballinger for several years. The BVFD receives the vast majority of its funding from city taxes and grants, despite responding to fire and rescue calls throughout Runnels County. The City typically covered required grant matches, as well as additional costs necessary to place equipment into service and maintain it.

Over the past four to five years, concerns arose that the BVFD sought to spend City funds with limited oversight, while the City was subsidizing most county firefighting services. During these same periods, Runnels County contributed minimal funding despite repeated City requests to balance costs. The last amount requested by the City was \$153,000 with the County responding with only \$16,000.

Unable to continue subsidizing county firefighting with City tax dollars, Ballinger discussed alternatives with the BVFD. During those discussions, the BVFD recommended dissolving the Ballinger Fire Department and its employees and transferring all trucks and equipment to the BVFD. This separation, they indicated, would allow the BVFD to pursue additional grant opportunities, expand fundraising efforts, and potentially secure more funding from Runnels County.

Following lengthy negotiations, Ballinger and BVFD executed an agreement effective **January 1, 2026**. Provisions included that Ballinger transferred title, insurance, maintenance and upkeep of the following vehicles to the BVFD for its sole use.

- Brush 7
- T11
- B4
- 1995 Ford Mini-Bus
- Brush5

This equipment could remain housed at the City fire station or at a site selected by the BVFD.

The agreement also permitted the BVFD to use City-owned Rescue 8 and Attack 2 when those apparatuses were not in use by the City Fire Department, provided that the BVFD paid for any repairs or damage incurred to the vehicles while they were used on county calls.

Additionally, the City agreed to continue paying pension costs, contingent upon BVFD members agreeing to provide limited firefighting services within the city limits on an annual basis. The BVFD remained responsible for its members' workers' compensation costs. The City Council approved the agreement on **January 5, 2026**, and the BVFD membership approved it, with officers signing the agreement, on January 8, 2026.

However, on **February 4, 2026**, after the BVFD had taken title to the agreed upon vehicles, the City received a letter from the BVFD attorney terminating the agreement and requesting additional property. Rather than returning the vehicle titles while renegotiations were underway, the BVFD retained the titles and continued using City apparatuses—Rescue 8 and Attack 2—for county calls, while failing to pay for repairs on Attack 2.

The BVFD asserted claims to approximately \$25,000 in additional items it alleged belonged to the department, while not addressing that the City had provided more than \$100,000 in additional equipment that should be returned to the City. Discussions regarding these matters are ongoing.

The City did direct the BVFD to cease removing items from the City fire station. The BVFD had been removing items while city staff was not present and while they were still attempting to resolve issues the City believed had already been settled. The City could no longer support unrestricted use of its equipment—needed to serve Ballinger residents—when the BVFD was not honoring its repair obligations but continued to expect use of City-owned apparatus.

The City of Ballinger Fire Department remains committed to supporting the citizens of Runnels County and will continue to assist neighboring fire departments when requested. Assistance to BVFD will resume once a new agreement is reached and honored by the BVFD.

For additional information supporting these statements, ***including an accurate description of the City's fire department budget***, please see the City's website under Press Release and supporting information.