



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 21, 2019

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Hailey Announces Fire Chief Selection

(Hailey, Idaho) – Mayor Haemmerle is pleased to announce that he concluded the selection process for a new fire chief last week. Mike Baledge, currently serving the City of Hailey as Deputy Fire Chief and Fire Marshall was selected from among 20 highly qualified candidates solicited from a nationwide search.

Baledge comes with 24 years of fire experience, holding the important perspective of fully understanding a combination fire department which relies significantly on volunteers, or paid per call firefighters. As Baledge stated in an interview, “our best emergency response is with paid per call firefighters, because they bring with them all the expertise of their trades, as well as their emergency response training.” Baledge began his fire services career as a volunteer and moved through the ranks from a paid-per-call volunteer to Deputy Chief, holding various leadership ranks and positions along the way, including serving as an officer for 17 years. In 2002 Baledge was hired by Hailey Fire Department as full-time staff, adding to his training and emergency response duties and taking on the role of Fire Marshall, under which he performs commercial building plan reviews and inspections. These fire prevention services contribute significantly to an increase in public safety and a decrease in loss of life when there is a fire.

Baledge is a State of Idaho EMT/Instructor, and trains the community in CPR through various venues. He teaches fire fighter essentials through the local firefighting academy, which trains new prospective firefighter every January. He holds a national wildland Type 5 Incident Command certification, and functions as engine boss and squad boss when deployed on wildland fires. Baledge is known widely for his leadership in Fire Prevention Week, a program conducted within the schools each October that teaches basic life-safety matters to elementary school students. This year 785 young students were exposed to the importance of fire prevention methods, practices and tools within their homes.

The City of Hailey advertised for the fire chief position locally, statewide, and through the International Fire Chiefs Association. The recruitment information was exposed to over 8,500 prospective applicants, from which 20 applications were received. Exiting Hailey Fire Chief Craig Aberbach worked with a staff team to review the applications and identify the top five candidates. Mayor Haemmerle and mayor-elect Martha Burke interviewed three Idaho candidates.

Command transfer between resigning Chief Craig Aberbach and incoming Chief Mike Baledge occurred at the beginning of October, as it is the duty of the Deputy Chief to take on the role of acting chief in the absence of an appointed chief. During the past three weeks, as interviews and decisions were made, Baledge led Hailey Fire Department through a structure fire and wildland fire response. Mayor Haemmerle said, “We look forward to what you will accomplish now that you have the assigned role as Hailey Fire Chief.”

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