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**BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS**

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***Fire District No. 1, Township of Moorestown***

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***261 W. Main St., Moorestown, NJ 08057***

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**PRESS RELEASE: September 17, 2008**

The Board of Fire Commissioners for Moorestown Fire District No. 1 are pleased that the State Commission of Investigation has adopted suggestions made by the District's Business Administrator concerning improvements to be made in the bidding and procurement of fire apparatus and vehicles. The Commissioners agree that it would be extremely helpful if the State would provide technical assistance to local departments involved in the exacting and complicated process of buying high quality fire equipment and vehicles.

The Commissioners, however, take issue with the SCI's conclusion that Moorestown's 2001 and 2003 purchases were not truly competitive. The report fails to mention the extensive pre bid investigation and comparisons done by the District, the extensive alteration of specification done to reduce costs and the fact that the final specifications were sufficiently open to permit all of the manufacturers to submit responsive bids. It is important to understand that none of the other manufacturers protested that the specifications were unfair or overly favored any manufacturer.

Although the Board of Fire Commissioners has always sought information and bids from a variety of manufacturers, there are important practical considerations that often favor using a single manufacturer for the fleet. For example, it is much easier to maintain inventories of parts and supplies when there is one manufacturer and the repair and maintenance of the vehicles becomes much simpler. Of course, a manufacturer still must provide a product that is financially competitive and mechanically trustworthy.

It is also important that the public understands that there are real differences in the quality features and longevity of fire trucks and apparatus. The District has always had a philosophy of purchasing apparatus from manufacturers known for reliability and dependability. The availability of more generic specifications, technical assistance and group purchasing power may be helpful tools in the District's ability to provide quality equipment to its volunteer members and the public.

For further comment, please contact Christopher M. Chesner, Fire District Administrator at (856) 234-4193.