

A Few Minutes with the Boss

By: Joe Andalina

Privatization: The future

Interesting news in late June coming out of North Riverside.

Apparently because the administration completely FUBAR'd their pension obligation in their infinite official wisdom, they voted to privatize the entire fire department. Amazing, isn't it?

They say it is their only option because they can't make any more cuts or raise taxes. Of course, they say only that they are struggling with increasing pension costs. Always the pension costs.

But they came up with this privatize idea and conveyed it to state regulators after the administration was brought into a hearing for "repeatedly shirking payments into its firefighter and police retirement funds..." (as reported in the press).

The mayor, a true candidate for MAP's *Chief's Follies* if this was a law enforcement agency, says the village will save \$700,000 annually by making the fire department a private enterprise. Yes, the village has come up with ways to save face but they all involve years of no village contributions to the fund. However, they chose to go the privatation route instead.

The Illinois Department of Insurance is meeting with some of the worst offending municipalities regarding their failure to fund pensions, hoping to create a new funding plan that the village and others can start. They cannot approve privatizing any organization so I don't know what North Riverside hopes to accomplish. I would bet to stall for time.

If I was a fireman, I would like to see all the numbers and how they reached them as regards saving \$700,000 by going private.

Are there private fire departments out there? Who will be manning fire trucks and running into burning buildings?

Yeah, I guess there is one that does this with paramedic/ambulance services, but a fireman in the private sector? As they say in the texting world, IDK!

Now I don't think we'll have the same problems in policing. It's already here in the correctional world and the telecom world. But policing might be hard to privatize. What is the value of a traffic citation, a burglary investigation, and a homicide or two? Might be hard to get Pinkerton's in this day and age to do this work.

But if there is one thing I have learned about local politicians is that if they can save some money to supersize their pork barrel projects, they will do it at the expense of their employees.

Vita é Bella.