



Fire Department

**Aaron Lipski**  
Chief

**Joshua Parish**  
Assistant Chief  
**Sharon Purifoy-Smoots**  
Assistant Chief  
**De'Wayne Smoots**  
Assistant Chief

February 23, 2022

To The Honorable  
The Board of Fire and Police Commissioners  
200 East Wells Street, Room 705  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

Dear Commissioners:

I respectfully nominate Fire Captain Thomas J. Sells to the rank of Battalion Chief. My reasons for recommending him for promotion are found below.

Fire Captain Sells has 26 years of service with the department. He was appointed as a Firefighter in February 1997, was promoted to Fire Lieutenant in March 2014, and to Fire Captain in August 2020.

Fire Captain Sells earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He completed a five-year program for Emergency Manager through the State of Wisconsin Emergency Management Program. In addition, Fire Captain Sells has travelled throughout the country to enhance civil support preparedness skills in chemical, bomb, railway, and highway response management, through such organizations as FEMA and Homeland Security. His commitment to education for the betterment of himself, and the department, is notable.

Fire Captain Sells joined the United States Marine Corps out of high school in 1989, obtaining the rank of Sergeant. He was honorably discharged in 1997. During his years of service he lead marines in battle during Operation Desert Storm/Shield, and volunteered for multiple humanitarian missions leading marines to assist migrants and refugees. He also led marines, coordinated with DEA agents, to locate illegal drugs and activities in remote areas. This military service demonstrates commitment, compassion, drive, and respect, all of which are important characteristics to be successful in the position of Battalion Chief.

He has served on the MFD Hazardous Materials Team (HazMat Team) for 22 years, currently serving as the Director, and as such, it is his responsibility to oversee and manage the \$105K budget, and 80 team members, including their specialized training. He serves on the Wisconsin Association of Hazardous Materials Responses Board as an expert in the field. Captain Sells has

networked and built relationships with members of agencies such as the Milwaukee Health Department, FBI, Civil Support Team, and Milwaukee Bomb Squad. These relationships have allowed him to strengthen the HazMat Team to make the team more successful. Captain Sells has also been a member of the MFD Peer Support Team since 2015, supporting the mental health of department members.

His leadership and communication style lends him to have a strong ability to manage personnel on and off the fire ground with a positive and mentoring attitude; his personnel perform well because he leads well, by example, with integrity. He has the ability to digest and analyze other perspectives, formulating plans to accomplish a common goal. Captain Sells values education, is a self-starter, innovative thinker, problem-solver, and willing to take on added responsibility and continue learning to honor the mission of the Milwaukee Fire Department.

I recommend Fire Captain Thomas J. Sells for promotion to the position of Battalion Chief.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aaron Lipski', written over a large, stylized circular flourish.

AARON LIPSKI  
Chief

AL/cf  
F&P\Sells Support – BC 0323