



City of Placentia Press Release

For Immediate Release

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PLACENTIA HIRES JOHN “PONO” VAN GIESON TO SERVE AS FIRE CHIEF

PLACENTIA, CA – City Administrator Damien R. Arrula has announced the appointment of John “Pono” Van Gieson to serve as Fire Chief for the City of Placentia’s new Fire and Life Safety Department.

Mr. Van Gieson comes to Placentia with an exceptional background in both fire and military service. Bringing over 33 years’ experience in public safety to the City of Placentia, Mr. Van Gieson has dedicated his career to the Montgomery County Fire Rescue Service in suburban Washington, D.C., rising through the ranks from Firefighter Paramedic, EMT Instructor, Hazardous Materials Technician, Station Commander, 911 Center Shift Supervisor, EMS Quality Assurance Officer, EMS Battalion Chief, Battalion Commander, Assistant State Fire Marshal, and Operations Shift Commander. His most recent assignment held was Executive Officer to the Operations Chief. In his previous position, he led a shift with over 350 personnel at 37 fire stations protecting a population of 1.2 million residents.

Mr. Van Gieson honorably served in numerous leadership positions throughout his 28-year career with the U.S. Army and Army Reserve and Maryland National Guard, including Infantryman, combat medic, military police officer, Drill Sergeant, Operations Sergeant, Scout, First Sergeant and retired with the rank of Sergeant Major.

In addition to an impressive work resume, Mr. Van Gieson also holds the designation of both Chief Fire Officer (CFO) and Chief Emergency Medical Services Officer (CEMSO) by the Center for Public Safety Excellence, Commission on Professional Credentialing. He is a member of the Institute of Fire Engineering (MIFireE) and will receive his Executive Fire Officer (EFO) designation from the National Fire Academy this year. Mr. Van Gieson earned his bachelor’s degree in Emergency Health Services Management and Master of Professional Studies (MPS) in Industrial Organizational Psychology from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. He also holds his Certified Public Manager designation from George Washington University.

“The nationwide search for Placentia’s Fire Chief garnered interest and applicants from around the country and we could not be more excited to find such a qualified Fire Chief,” said Mayor Ward Smith. “A panel of active and retired Fire Chiefs evaluated the large pool of applicants, and found that Mr. Van Gieson brings the necessary skills, expertise, and leadership to lead our new Fire and Life Safety Department. We are excited to bring him onboard and lead our new department in taking command in July.”

“The panel of Fire Chiefs were very impressed with the professionalism and qualifications of all the candidates,” said Senior Executive Fire Advisor to Placentia Scott Ferguson. “Chief Van Gieson stood out for his progressive approach to organizational development and leadership within a large

metropolitan Fire Department that serves approximately 1.2 million people who live and work in Maryland's most populous jurisdiction. I am confident that Mr. Van Gieson will make an excellent addition to the Placentia team and serve as a regional response partner within Orange County."

"Garnering his experience at the accredited, award-winning Montgomery County Fire & Rescue Service, Mr. Van Gieson brings a wealth of experience to the City of Placentia," said City Administrator Damien R. Arrula. "His dedication to community involvement and public service, combined with extensive years of fire and military experience, makes him the right choice to lead our new Fire Department."

"I am humbled and honored to be selected as the inaugural Fire Chief for the Placentia Fire and Life Safety Department. I've been greatly impressed by the dedication and professionalism of the City leaders throughout this selection process. I look forward to working together to build and lead a Department committed to providing the best fire service possible to the residents of Placentia and the community," said Mr. Van Gieson.

John "Pono" Van Gieson will start as the new Fire Chief on Monday, February 24, 2020.

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