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City of Duluth - Communications Office

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SUBJECT: Mayor Larson Appoints Dennis Edwards to be new Fire Chief

BY: Pakou Ly, Communications Office

Mayor Larson Appoints Dennis Edwards to be new Fire Chief

[Duluth, MN] - Mayor Emily Larson announced today that she is appointing Dennis Edwards to be Duluth's Fire Chief, which will move forward to City Council approval on May 9.

Edwards has been in the Fire Service for 25 years, of which today is his 20-year anniversary with the Duluth Fire Department. Edwards served as a Firefighter, FEO, Fire Captain, and most recently Assistant Fire Chief. His passion stems from his late father's service as a Captain in the Superior Fire Department. Through this he has gained experience in a variety of leadership roles, has been a Fire Instructor for 24 years, is a member of the State hazmat team, and in his spare time coaches youth athletics. Edwards has a B.S. in Wellness Management and is married with two twin sons.

Duluth's Fire Chief manages a staff of over 140 fire professionals and building inspectors, and operates a budget in excess of \$14 million. Besides fighting fires, the Chief oversees key aspects of the health and safety of our community, including acting as the city's Emergency Manager and working in the schools and neighborhoods to address fire safety and prevention.

"I'm thrilled to have Dennis join my administrative team. He will bring incredible skills and solid leadership to the department. Fire services are critical public services for the health, safety and security of our community. I have confidence in our new Chief and am excited to build a collaborative Public Safety Team between Fire and Police services. This new team shares the same values and goals: safe, healthy, sustainable neighborhoods and that means a higher quality of life for everyone," said Mayor Larson.

"I am very honored to have been chosen by Mayor Larson and Chief Administrative Officer, David Montgomery, to serve as the leader of this great organization. The Duluth Fire Department is flush with experienced and talented leaders, and skilled and enthusiastic young firefighters making us among the best professional firefighters in the world.

'Like me, everyone who has ever worn the uniform of the Duluth Fire Department is filled with pride for the service to our community. Our essential mission will always be to deliver the best possible service to our citizens, businesses, and visitors. In addition, we will be looking to strengthen our relationships with all stakeholders and through collaborative efforts, find new and innovative ways to improve our service to the community.

'I would like to thank our previous leaders including, Deputy Chief Simonson, Chief Bushey and Chief Strongitharm. With their guidance, planning and vision the DFD has continually improved and we have a clear path for success.

'Finally, I want to thank my wonderful wife Merissa. Through her successful two-year battle with leukemia she has provided an inspirational example of strength, determination, grace and passion for our family, our friends and me," said Dennis Edwards.

Newly appointed Police Chief expressed excitement about Edwards. “Dennis has reached out to me and has expressed his interest in working collaboratively with the police department to improve community quality of life. In the coming weeks, we have two separate initiatives which will bring police and fire together to improve safety and blight. Duluth will enjoy greater safety and enhanced livability when Public Safety finds ways to work together to benefit the community. I am very excited to work with Dennis and truly believe his leadership will have police and fire partnering to support the greater good of the community,” said Police Chief Mike Tusken.

In January Mayor Larson outlined a hiring process that included public commentary, a community review panel and an opportunity for Fire Department staff to meet and ask questions of the finalists.

Community panelists consisted of representatives from: Lake Superior College Emergency Response Training Center, St. Luke’s Hospital, NAACP, Gold Cross Ambulance, Duluth Indigenous Commission, maurices, Duluth Landlord Association as well as representatives from the Emergency Management Planning and Human Resources fields.

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