STATE OF LOUISIANA
DEPARTMENT OF STATE CIVIL SERVICE
LOUISIANA BOARD OF ETHICS
P. O. BOX 4368
BATON ROUGE, LA 70821
(225) 219-5600
FAX: (225) 381-7271
1-800-842-6630
www.ethics.la.gov

August 14, 2019

Division of Administrative Law
1020 Florida Street
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70802
VIA SHAREPOINT

Re: In the Matter of Sunbelt Fire, Inc.
Agency Tracking No. 2018-757D

Dear LaKeisha:

Please see the attached *Charges* on behalf of the Louisiana Board of Ethics to be filed in the referenced matter.

Sincerely,

LOUISIANA BOARD OF ETHICS

Tracy M. Barker
Deputy General Counsel

Attachment

cc: Sunbelt Fire, Inc. (Certified mail #70180360000076691383)
Alesia Ardoin, Attorney of Record for Sunbelt Fire, Inc.
(Certified mail #70180360000076691390)

STATE OF LOUISIANA
DIVISION OF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW

LOUISIANA BOARD OF ETHICS	*	
	*	
	*	**DOCKET NO.**
	*	
IN THE MATTER OF	*	
	*	
SUNBELT FIRE, INC.	*	**AGENCY TRACKING NO. 2018-757D**

CHARGES

The Louisiana Board of Ethics voted on August 13, 2019 to and does hereby file the following charge:

Facts

1.

On December 4, 2007, the Council for the City of Thiboduax created the Thibodaux Volunteer Fire Department under Ordinance No. 2365.

2.

Ronnie Chaisson was appointed by the Thibodaux City Council to the position of Thibodaux Volunteer Fire Department Board Member on February 18, 2014, February 19, 2015, May 3, 2016, February 21, 2017, February 6, 2018 and February 19, 2019. Mr. Chaisson currently serves as a Board Member of the Thibodaux Volunteer Fire Department and served as a Board Member of the Thibodaux Volunteer Fire Department at all pertinent times herein.

3.

Sunbelt Fire, Inc. is a southern regionally based company that provides fire and rescue trucks as well as provides maintenance and repairs on fire and rescue trucks.

4.

Sunbelt Fire, Inc. provides regular maintenance and repairs on the fire trucks and vehicles of the Thibodaux Volunteer Fire Department.

5.

In 2016, Ronnie Chaisson became an employee of Sunbelt Fire, Inc. and has been employed with Sunbelt Fire, Inc. at all times pertinent herein.

6.

Ronnie Chaisson is a Fire Truck Technician/Emergency Vehicle Technician for Sunbelt Fire, Inc. Mr. Chaisson earned $36,050.20 in 2016, $50,613.89 in 2017, and $45,532.46 in 2018 from Sunbelt Fire, Inc. for services rendered to Sunbelt Fire, Inc.

7.

The following is a list of invoices that Sunbelt Fire, Inc. sent to Thibodaux Volunteer Fire Department for payment beginning on August 22, 2014 through July 16, 2018 for a total amount of $161,952.81.

Invoice	Invoice Date	Invoice Amount
104642	August 22, 2014	$19,220.64
105361	August 11, 2014	$295.83
105622	October 22, 2014	$5,079.47
105668	September 30, 2014	$649.31
105694	October 17, 2014	$113.25
105710	October 22, 2014	$1,967.42
105740	October 10, 2014	$213.79
105929	November 17, 2014	$225.00
105930	November 17, 2014	$225.00
105931	November 17, 2014	$225.00
105932	November 18, 2014	$225.00
105933	November 18, 2014	$225.00
105934	November 18, 2014	$225.00
105935	November 18, 2014	$225.00
105936	November 18, 2014	$225.00
105938	November 18, 2014	$225.00
105996	November 17, 2014	$225.00
105997	November 17, 2014	$225.00
106212	February 5, 2015	$10,067.45
106598	February 13, 2015	$287.90
106599	March 26, 2015	$469.66
106738	March 10, 2015	$263.88
106772	March 27, 2015	$1,520.10
106864	March 26, 2015	$273.70
106962	April 21, 2015	$116.72
107147	May 18, 2015	$927.52
107677	August 11, 2015	$5,531.55
107795	August 31, 2015	$226.50
108074	September 25, 2015	$147.92
108091	October 19, 2015	$599.76
108254	November 2, 2015	$215.00

108255	November 2, 2015	$215.00
108256	November 4, 2015	$215.00
108257	November 3, 2015	$215.00
108258	November 4, 2015	$215.00
108259	November 2, 2015	$215.00
108260	November 3, 2015	$215.00
108261	November 2, 2015	$215.00
108262	November 4, 2015	$215.00
108263	November 2, 2015	$215.00
108264	November 2, 2015	$215.00
108355	January 29, 2016	$1,948.25
108356	December 10, 2015	$379.78
108357	November 24, 2015	$557.59
108358	November 30, 2015	$679.55
108359	December 3, 2015	$214.75
108360	November 30, 2015	$282.73
108361	November 24, 2015	$632.36
108362	November 30, 2015	$1,111.09
108727	December 30, 2015	$235.74
108841	January 29, 2016	$1,800.23
108993	February 24, 2016	$736.23
109360	March 31, 2016	$2,689.86
109422	June 7, 2016	$20,106.86
109961	July 22, 2016	$486.10
109989	June 17, 2016	$90.14
110103	June 30, 2016	$620.16
110136	July 14, 2016	$650.00
110321	July 27, 2016	$490.14
110322	July 27, 2016	$842.40
110323	July 27, 2016	$567.00
110348	July 28, 2016	$211.68
110357	July 29, 2016	$281.32
110358	July 29, 2016	$236.22
110359	July 29, 2016	$128.23
110421	August 9, 2016	$551.55
110480	August 17, 2016	$521.97
110492	August 19, 2016	$202.23
110516	August 18, 2016	-$322.92
110820	December 29, 2016	$933.06
111048	November 17, 2016	$1,225.82
111049	November 17, 2016	$974.02

111055	November 29, 2016	$415.15
111092	October 31, 2016	$693.00
111120	November 7, 2016	$215.00
111121	November 7, 2016	$215.00
111122	November 7, 2016	$215.00
111123	November 7, 2016	$215.00
111124	November 7, 2016	$215.00
111125	November 7, 2016	$215.00
111126	November 7, 2016	$215.00
111127	November 7, 2016	$215.00
111128	November 7, 2016	$215.00
111129	November 7, 2016	$215.00
111130	November 7, 2016	$215.00
111527	December 14, 2016	$133.92
111623	December 29, 2016	$145.22
111786	February 13, 2017	$267.84
111791	January 25, 2017	$335.00
111952	March 6, 2017	$1,158.08
111988	February 17, 2017	$341.13
111989	February 17, 2017	$462.90
112064	February 24, 2017	$734.90
112336	March 27, 2017	$258.75
112491	April 13, 2017	$174.10
112492	April 13, 2017	$442.04
112535	April 20, 2017	$709.22
112540	April 26, 2017	$2,469.31
112627	May 11, 2017	$718.38
112795	May 30, 2017	$447.15
112931	June 26, 2017	$529.26
112932	June 26, 2017	$1,209.70
113158	July 7, 2017	$328.10
113167	July 18, 2017	$132.86
113269	August 15, 2017	$1,175.27
113270	July 25, 2017	$139.28
113369	August 15, 2017	$888.77
113418	August 16, 2017	$606.85
113419	August 16, 2017	$215.25
113420	August 16, 2017	$302.56
113476	August 15, 2017	$366.39
113486	August 30, 2017	$1,681.37
113672	September 25, 2017	$516.35

113720	October 13, 2017	$314.34
113721	September 27, 2017	$1,431.15
114035	October 19, 2017	$778.87
114142	November 10, 2017	$1,457.03
114162	November 3, 2017	$167.40
114163	November 10, 2017	$424.35
114378	November 29, 2017	$215.00
114379	November 29, 2017	$215.00
114380	November 29, 2017	$215.00
114381	November 29, 2017	$215.00
114382	November 29, 2017	$215.00
114383	November 29, 2017	$215.00
114384	November 29, 2017	$215.00
114385	November 29, 2017	$215.00
114387	November 29, 2017	$215.00
114389	November 29, 2017	$486.96
114390	November 29, 2017	$215.00
114391	November 29, 2017	$215.00
114428	December 7, 2017	$187.49
114456	December 7, 2017	$643.33
114457	January 18, 2018	$3,558.47
114458	December 7, 2017	$192.58
114459	December 7, 2017	$208.01
114460	December 7, 2017	$179.80
114654	December 29, 2017	$661.25
114663	January 3, 2018	$683.45
114665	January 3, 2018	$609.73
114675	January 3, 2018	$225.75
114676	January 3, 2018	$381.15
114766	January 18, 2018	$1,255.30
114827	March 20, 2018	$18,906.67
115087	February 22, 2018	$312.90
115088	February 22, 2018	$513.70
115173	March 2, 2018	$285.00
115220	March 7, 2018	$826.08
115250	March 14, 2018	$858.85
115357	March 16, 2018	$422.49
115500	March 29, 2018	$100.44
115555	April 24, 2018	$2,038.64
115556	April 12, 2018	$234.36
115706	April 19, 2018	$301.32

115909	May 15, 2018	$473.24
115910	May 15, 2018	$354.89
116051	June 4, 2018	$758.49
116260	June 8, 2018	$431.25
116261	June 8, 2018	$236.25
116324	July 6, 2018	$737.41
116398	July 5, 2018	$2,884.74
116462	July 16, 2018	$302.22
116469	July 5, 2018	$502.80
116568	July 16, 2018	$442.75
116569	July 16, 2018	$210.45
116570	July 16, 2018	$366.85

The following is a list of payments the Thibodaux Volunteer Fire Department sent Sunbelt Fire, Inc. for inspections, repairs, and replacement of parts and items relating to fire equipment from September 17, 2014 through August 15, 2018 for a total amount of $148,834.75:

Check #	Transaction Date	Check Amount
4081	September 17, 2014	$19,220.64
4090	October 13, 2014	$649.31
4100	November 19, 2014	$7,373.93
4114	December 17, 2014	$2,750.00
4127	February 18, 2015	$10,067.45
4136	March 18, 2015	$287.90
4148	April 16, 2015	$2,527.34
4157	May 19, 2015	$235.72
4170	June 17, 2015	$927.52
4191	September 16, 2015	$5,758.05
4200	October 13, 2015	$147.92
4209	November 9, 2015	$2,964.76
4222	December 16, 2015	$3,478.07
4230	January 19, 2016	$615.42
4238	February 16, 2016	$3,748.48
4246	March 16, 2016	$736.23
4253	April 18, 2016	$2,689.86
4273	July 19, 2016	$710.30
4282	August 16, 2016	$3,893.09
4285	August 22, 2016	$3,570.17
4289	September 14, 2016	$1,275.75
4299	October 18, 2016	$594.00
4305	November 15, 2016	$693.00
4312	December 13, 2016	$4,979.99
4322	January 18, 2017	$1,212.20
4332	February 15, 2017	$335.00
1007	March 15, 2017	$1,806.77
1017	April 8, 2017	$1,416.83
1023	May 17, 2017	$3,794.67
1030	June 13, 2017	$1,165.53
1039	July 17, 2017	$1,738.96
1047	August 17, 2017	$908.44
1055	September 19, 2017	$5,236.46
1063	October 13, 2017	$1,947.50
1069	November 13, 2017	$3,051.44
1074	December 20, 2017	$4,900.74
1081	January 16, 2018	$2,209.67
1088	February 9, 2018	$6,713.85
1094	March 13, 2018	$826.60
1100	March 20, 2014	$21,399.53
1107	May 16, 2018	$2,574.32
1113	June 19, 2018	$828.13
1121	July 23, 2018	$1,425.99
1129	August 15, 2018	$5,447.22

9.

Ronnie Chaisson, on behalf of Sunbelt Fire, Inc. as a Fire Truck Technician/Emergency Vehicle Technician, provides maintenance and repairs on Thibodaux Volunteer Fire Department's fire trucks and vehicles.

10.

On September 21, 2017, at the Thibodaux Volunteer Fire Department Board Meeting, bids for a new Engine 19 were opened. Sunbelt Fire, Inc. had the second lowest bid.

11.

On October 19, 2017, at the Thibodaux Volunteer Fire Department Board Meeting, the Engine 19 Fire Truck Committee reported that the lowest bidder was not responsive to the minimum specifications. Ronnie Chaisson voted against accepting the lowest bidder for the new Engine 19 Fire Truck. Ronnie Chaisson abstained from the vote to accept the bid from Sunbelt Fire, Inc.

12.

On November 16, 2017, the Thibodaux Volunteer Fire Department Board passed a Resolution to give the President and Vice President of the Board authority to contract with Sunbelt Fire, Inc. for the purchase of a new Fire Truck/Engine 19. Ronnie Chaisson abstained from the vote.

Laws

13.

La. R.S. 42:1117 provides with respect to illegal payments:

> No public servant or other person shall give, pay, loan, transfer, or deliver or offer to give, pay, loan, transfer, or deliver, directly or indirectly, to any public servant or other person any thing of economic value which such

public servant or other person would be prohibited from receiving by any provision of this Part.

La. R.S. 42:1113B provides with respect to prohibited transactions:

B. No appointed member of any board or commission, member of his immediate family, or a legal entity in which he has a substantial economic interest, shall bid on or enter into or be in any way interested in any contract, subcontract, or other transaction which is under the supervision or jurisdiction of the agency of such appointed member.

La. R.S. 42:1111C(2)(d) provides with respect to payments from nonpublic sources:

C.(2) No public servant and no legal entity in which the public servant exercises control or owns an interest in excess of twenty-five percent, shall receive any thing of economic value for or in consideration of services rendered, or to be rendered, to or for any person during his public service unless such services are:

(d) Neither performed for nor compensated by any person from whom such public servant would be prohibited by R.S. 42:1115(A)(1) or (B) from receiving a gift.

La. R.S. 42:1115 provides with respect to gifts:

A. No public servant shall solicit or accept, directly or indirectly, any thing of economic value as a gift or gratuity from any person or from any officer, director, agent, or employee of such person, if such public servant knows or reasonably should know that such person:

(1) Has or is seeking to obtain contractual or other business or financial relationships with the public servant's agency."

* * * *

B. No public employee shall solicit or accept, directly or indirectly, any thing of economic value as a gift or gratuity from any person or from any officer, director, agent, or employee of such person, if such public servant knows or reasonably should know that such person:

(1) Conducts operations or activities which are regulated by the public employee's agency.

(2) Has substantial economic interests which may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of the public employee's official duty.

La. R.S. 42:1153 provides with respect to penalties:

B. Upon finding that any public employee or other person has violated any provision of any law within the jurisdiction of the Board of Ethics..., the Ethics Adjudicatory Board may remove, suspend, or order a reduction in pay, or demotion of the public employee or other person, or impose a fine of not more than ten thousand dollars, or both.

La. R.S. 42:1155 provides with respect to penalties:

A. If an investigation conducted pursuant to this Part reveals that any public servant or other person has violated any law within the jurisdiction of the Board of Ethics to his economic advantage, and after an adjudicatory hearing on the matter, the Ethics Adjudicatory Board may order the payment of penalties. Recovery may include, in addition to an amount equal to such economic advantage, penalties not to exceed one half of the amount of the economic advantage.

Conclusion

14.

Based on the foregoing facts, Sunbelt Fire, Inc. violated La. R.S. 42:1117 by paying Ronnie Chaisson any thing of economic value for services rendered to Sunbelt Fire, Inc. at a time when Ronnie Chaisson was prohibited from receiving such economic value pursuant to La. R.S. 42:1113B and La. R.S. 42:1111C(2)(d).

15.

In accordance with La. R.S. 42:1141C(3)(b)(iv), the Board designates Tracy M. Barker, LaToya Jordan and David Bordelon as the Board's trial attorneys in this matter.

WHEREFORE, the Louisiana Board of Ethics requests that the Ethics Adjudicatory Board (a) conduct a hearing on the foregoing charges; (b) determine that Ronnie Chaisson has violated La. R.S. 42:1113B, La. R.S. 42:1111C(2)(d), and La. R.S.

42:1112B(3) with respect to the forgoing counts; and, (c) assess appropriate penalties in accordance with the recommendation of the Louisiana Board of Ethics to be submitted at the hearing.

Dr. Louis W. Leggio
Vice-Chair, Louisiana Board of Ethics
P.O. Box 4368
Baton Rouge, LA 70821
Telephone: (225) 219-5600
Facsimile: (225) 381-7271

CERTIFICATE:

I hereby certify that a copy of this document has been forwarded to the Respondent, Sunbelt Fire, Inc., by registered/certified mail in accordance with La. R.S. 42:1141E(1)(a), on this 14th day of August, 2019.

Sunbelt Fire, Inc.
Through its Attorney of Record:
Alesia M. Ardoin
R. Gray Sexton
Law Offices of R. Gray Sexton
8680 Bluebonnet Blvd.
Suite D
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70810
alesiaardoin@sextonlaw.net
graysexton@sextonlaw.net

Tracy M. Barker
Trial Attorney