



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Veteran Beaufort firefighter Reece Bertholf named new Beaufort-Port Royal Fire Chief

Longtime Beaufort firefighter Capt. Reece Bertholf is the new Beaufort-Port Royal Fire Chief effective Jan. 15, 2016.

Beaufort City Manager Bill Prokop announced the promotion this week after a lengthy review of highly-qualified internal candidates, he said. Bertholf will assume his new duties upon the retirement of current Fire Chief Sammy Negron but will be working closely with Chief Negron to ensure an orderly transfer.

“Captain Bertholf brings so much to the Beaufort-Port Royal Fire Department and to the City of Beaufort. We look forward to his leadership as our new Fire Chief,” Prokop said.

A Minnesota native, Bertholf joined the Beaufort-Port Royal Fire Department in 2001 after serving in the Marine Corps. Since then, he has steadily increased his firefighting responsibilities while also earning a Bachelor’s degree and Master’s degree.

“He has a very strong drive, a very strong work ethic, and he is determined to continually improve this fire department,” Chief Negron said. “I am thrilled at his selection as the next chief.”

Bertholf enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps when he graduated high school. His military service included time with Combat Assault Battalion in Okinawa Japan and with MWSS 273 in Beaufort. Bertholf also was a member of the 1999 Marine Corps Summer Pistol Team.

While still in the Marines, Bertholf began volunteering with the City of Beaufort Fire Department in May of 2000 until his honorable discharge from the Marine Corps in August of 2001. He started his firefighting career with Beaufort in 2001 and was assigned to Shift 1.

“What a great honor, what a privilege,” Bertholf said of his promotion to Fire Chief. “I am thankful for the opportunity to help the Beaufort-Port Royal Fire Department continue to move forward, and I am grateful for everything that Chief Negron and everyone else have taught me.

“We have some of the best firefighters in the Southeastern United States working here in Beaufort and Port Royal, and I am proud to work alongside them. They have a deep commitment to the community and they work hard every day to protect lives and property,” Bertholf said. “I’m excited to follow in Chief Negron’s footsteps.”

Bertholf earned his Master’s in Business Administration from The Citadel in 2013, and also holds a Bachelor’s degree in business from USC-Beaufort and Associates degrees in business and Fire Service Administration from the Technical College of the Lowcountry.

Some of his key achievements with the Beaufort-Port Royal Fire Department include:

- Helping the department earn an \$84,000 federal grant to improve air quality inside fire stations
- As part of team, helped create a new fire department vehicle plan that reduced overall fleet size by 21 percent while purchasing \$750,000 in new and more efficient vehicles
- Participated in successful efforts to improve the fire insurance ratings for Beaufort and Port Royal
- Served as senior financial advisor to the Fire Chief and Battalion Supervisor for firefighters serving both the City of Beaufort and Town of Port Royal
- Bertholf was awarded the City of Beaufort life-saving award three times
- He is accredited as a fire officer by the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress and Pro Board
- Since his appointment as Battalion Supervisor in 2011, he has managed all emergency services delivery at the operations level for the City of Beaufort and Town of Port Royal for his given duty day.

Captain Bertholf’s awards and recognitions include Academic Honor Graduate from USMC Combat Engineer School, Volunteer Firefighter of the Year for the year 2000, 2008 Business Division Honor Graduate TCL, Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society, Class of 2008 TCL Student Commencement Speaker, and Deans List 2009 USCB.

Negron is retiring effective Jan. 15, 2016, because of health issues. He is battling multiple sclerosis and wants to dedicate his full attention to his family and his health. Negron became Fire Chief in 2010. He joined the department two years before Bertholf, and they have served together since 2001.

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