

# Fire Chief



## The Community

Port Neches, Texas, known as the “Sapphire City of the Neches,” has a population of 14,000 and is conveniently situated 20 miles inland from the Gulf of Mexico and is 90 miles east of Houston. The City covers just over nine square miles and is easily accessible by major transportation thoroughfares including Interstate 10 and US Highways 287 and 69.

Part of the Beaumont-Port Arthur area in Jefferson County, this beautiful waterfront community is located in the Texas Coastal Prairie, on the bluff overlooking the Neches River, and just eight miles north of the inter-coastal waterway and Sabine Lake. Port Neches is within convenient driving distance of both major Houston airports.

Relics of an Atakapa Indian village were uncovered in 1841 in the area of Port Neches, once known as Grigsby’s Bluff. The earliest Anglo settlers in the area were Joseph Grigsby and his family, who established a plantation and boat landing on a bluff above the Neches River. Grigsby’s Bluff was an important landing for traffic on the river. The turn of the century brought major changes, refineries, and oil-related industries to the area and a town site named Port Neches was established on the new Kansas City Railroad. In 1927, the community voted to incorporate the town, which was experiencing steady growth due to industrialization.

The population continued to grow during, and after, World War II when the City played a significant role in providing rubber for war needs. The community had expanded to 13,601 residents and 327 business by the census of 2000.

The oil and petrochemical industry continues to play a major role in the area’s economy. The Huntsman Corporation recently invested in a \$150 million expansion to its ethylene oxide (EO) manufacturing facility in Port Neches, making the facility the largest EO manufacturer in the country. Another significant expansion project, Air Liquide’s new state-of-the-art \$125 million Air Separation Unit, is expected to begin commercial production of oxygen, nitrogen, and argon by the end of the year. Other nearby facilities include the TPC Group (formerly Texas Petrochemical), Lion Elastomers, Sunoco, Chevron-Phillips, BASF Total Petrochemicals, Exxon/Mobil, and Motiva.

The City’s Port Neches River Front Vision Master Plan envisions redevelopment of 50 acres and more than 3,300 feet of frontage on the river to broaden the tax base and create new sources of revenue. The City is currently under contract with a development group to create a mixed-use entertainment, commercial, and residential district that will encompass the entire acreage. This development is in conjunction with efforts to revitalize the City’s nearby downtown area.



## The Community, continued

Quality medical care is available nearby at The Medical Center of Southeast Texas, a full-service, 224-bed, all private room hospital, in Port Arthur. Neighboring Beaumont is home to two exceptional facilities including the 2013 Consumer Choice #1 Award recipient Christus Southeast Texas St. Elizabeth, a 431-acute care and trauma center, and the award-winning and innovative Baptist Beaumont Hospital.

Excellent housing, a highly-recognized school district, and a variety of recreational opportunities offer residents an exceptional quality of life in a place described as having a small town atmosphere and a big sense of community. A 50-acre park system with four public parks provides relaxing places for families to unwind and have fun. The 27-acre Port Neches RiverFront Park is home to one of the country's largest playgrounds of its type, Tugboat Island. With a castle, tugboat, slides, swings, stairways, and hidden places to explore, this unique recreational experience inspires the imaginations of young residents and visitors alike. RiverFront Park also features a spray park, tennis courts, horseshoe pits, volleyball court, two public boat ramps, a pavilion, and a breathtaking view of the Neches River. Port Neches public parks include an impressive array of amenities including a rock climbing wall, walking track, picnic tables, and tennis and volleyball courts.

Port Neches' location along the Gulf of Mexico provides premier boating and fishing opportunities. Cultural arts are as close as nearby Beaumont's Art Museum of Southeast Texas, Jefferson Theatre, Energy Museum, and the many concerts, rodeos, motor sports, and special events at the Ford Park Event Center, the venue for the annual Southeast Texas State Fair. Nearby Houston provides an array of cultural, entertainment, and sports activities.

The Port Neches RiverFest, the only event of its kind in the area, is a fun five-day festival with tunnel boat races on the river, live entertainment, large carnival, food vendors, and a classic car and motorcycle show.

The Port Neches-Groves Independent School District (PN-GISD) serves more than 4,900 K-12 students in the community with campuses that include three elementary schools, one middle school and a 5A high school. PN-GISD met the standard for the 2014 accountability rating, and the high school's University Interscholastic League (UIL) Academic Team has earned the title of District Champions for the past 12 years. Two nearby parochial schools, Monsignor Kelly Catholic School and St. Anne Catholic School, provide additional educational choices for families in the area.

Higher education opportunities include nearby Lamar University, a comprehensive four-year school and part of the Texas University system, Lamar Institute of Technology, and Lamar State College-Port Arthur.

The median home value in Port Neches is \$129,488 and the median household income is \$60,311.

## Governance & Organization

Port Neches is a home rule City operating under the Council-Manager form of government. The City Council is comprised of the Mayor and five City Council members elected at-large to a specific place and serving three year terms.

The Mayor and City Council appoint a professional City Manager who serves as the Chief Executive Officer for the organization and who is responsible for the administration of the City, implementation of policies established by the City Council, preparation and administration of the annual budget, and the development of long-range goals and objectives. Andre' Wilmer has served as the Port Neches City Manager for seven years.

The City has 94 full-time and 15 part-time employees working together to provide a full range of municipal services. The City's FY 2014-15 budget is \$16.6 million, and the ad valorem property tax rate is \$0.6954787 per \$100 of assessed value. The City offers a 20% homestead exemption to tax payers.



## Port Neches Fire Department

The Port Neches Fire Department (PNFD) is a Texas Local Government Code Chapter 143 Civil Service department. The Fire Chief is appointed by, and reports to the City Manager with confirmation of the City Council. A three-member Civil Service Commission is appointed by the City Manager and approved by the City Council.

The Fire Department's FY 2014-15 annual budget is \$1.7 million and the Department is currently comprised of the Fire Chief, Assistant Fire Chief, three Captains, nine Fire Fighters, and one Secretary. The Fire Department also has approximately 15 volunteer firefighters to supplement the paid staff. The Department responds to approximately 1,300 calls for service annually, and is located in a newly constructed fire station that was completed in 2014.

Departmental responsibilities include Suppression, Emergency Management, Homeland Security, Fire Administration, Fire Marshal, Fire Inspections, Plan Review, and Code Violations/Complaints. The Department is also a member of the Regional Heavy Rescue Team and Regional Hazardous Materials Team.

PNFD has several Interlocal Service Agreements and Memorandums of Understanding with numerous local, regional, and State agencies. PNFD has an automatic mutual aid agreement with the cities of Groves and Nederland. The Department is also an active member of the Sabine Neches Chiefs' Association and has an excellent working relationship with the area's oil and petrochemical facilities.

## Leadership & Innovation

The vision of the Port Neches Fire Department is to become a fire service provider that strives to reach the standards recommended in the Commission on Fire Accreditation and, in turn, improve the City's Public Protection Classification of the Insurance Services Office to reach the highest level of fire service protection that is affordable to the citizens of Port Neches.

The Mission of the department is to help make Port Neches a safe place, where all want to live, work, and play. In furtherance of this mission, the department is:

- Responsive in fulfilling responsibilities associated with public safety
- Efficient in delivery of services to citizens
- Professional in daily conduct

### Department Goals:

- Review the Community Baselines of fire protection service to date
- Continually evaluate what risks are present in the City of Port Neches
- Assess standards to meet the goals and objectives set in the Strategic Plan for the Fire Department
- Review and update Strategic Plan as necessary
- Evaluate the critical task capability of the Fire Department as it relates to fire and emergency response in the City including the automatic assistance coverage with the cities of Groves and Nederland
- Establish service level objectives for the Fire Department

### Department Initiatives:

- Evaluate the feasibility and/or necessity of the Fire Department as a registered First Responder Organization
- Ensure that the Department is staged for an evaluation of fire accreditation standards
- Review options to assist the Department's pursuit of the PPC evaluation with ISO
- Improve levels of database management with FIREHOUSE software
- Continue improving Central Dispatch communications

## The Ideal Candidate

The ideal candidate will be a strong and innovative professional who demonstrates effective leadership skills in the core areas of supervising personnel, managing activities, and coordinating communications. In order to execute the management of these areas, the chosen candidate will analyze and evaluate widely varied and complex situations and issues that require advanced reading, math, and writing skills.

The successful candidate will be an excellent and articulate communicator who is able to work well with the City Manager, City Council, PNFD personnel, and other agencies and industry. The new Fire Chief will demonstrate independent decision-making that balances organizational concerns and political sensitivity.



## Resources

### City of Port Neches

<http://www.ci.port-neches.tx.us>

### Port Neches Fire Department

[http://www.ci.port-neches.tx.us/?page\\_id=395](http://www.ci.port-neches.tx.us/?page_id=395)

### Port Neches Chamber of Commerce

<http://portnecheschamber.org>

### Sabine-Neches Chiefs' Association

<http://www.snchiefs.com>

### Port Neches-Groves Independent School District

<http://www.pngisd.org>

## The Ideal Candidate, continued

The City of Port Neches seeks a disciplined and principled leader with the ability to establish and enforce clear rules evenly and fairly, and who will support team efforts with participative management skills. Planning, coordinating, directing, and evaluating the activities of the department require a consummate leader who is experienced in all aspects of employee supervision.

The new Fire Chief will enforce fire prevention and suppression ordinances and regulations, direct activities at emergency scenes, conduct fire investigations, enforce code compliance, and participate in plan reviews. The Fire Chief also responds to emergency calls, hazardous materials incidents, and fire suppression activities.

As the Emergency Management Coordinator for Port Neches, the successful candidate must be knowledgeable of emergency management operations and able to effectively serve as liaison between the City, other governmental agencies, and the community. The ideal candidate will be competent in the administration of area wide communications systems, and coordination of the radio system with federal, state, county, and local governments, and industry.

## Education & Experience

A Bachelor's Degree in Fire Science, Public Administration, or a related field is required. A Master's Degree is preferred. The new Fire Chief must be a Certified Fire Investigator and have, or be able to qualify for, Intermediate Structure Fire Protection Personnel Certification from the Texas Commission on Fire Protection, and must also meet minimum standards for head of a suppression fire department as required by the Texas Commission on Fire Protection.

As described in Texas Local Government Code 143, the new Fire Chief must have served as a fire fighter for five or more years.

Preferred certifications include Fire Inspection Certification from the Texas Commission on Fire Protection, and Hazmat Technician Training.

## Compensation & Benefits

The City of Port Neches offers a competitive starting salary, depending on qualifications and experience. The City participates with the Texas Municipal Retirement System (TMRS) at a 7% employee contribution and municipal matching ratio of 2:1. Vesting occurs at 10 years, and retirement eligibility is consistent with TMRS service eligibility requirements. ICMA-RC deferred compensation is available with established limits. A full range of leave and insurance benefits is also provided.

## Application Process

Please apply online at <http://bit.ly/SGRCurrentSearches>

For more information on this position, contact:

Bill Peterson, Senior Vice President  
Strategic Government Resources  
[Bill@GovernmentResource.com](mailto:Bill@GovernmentResource.com)  
469-450-4442

This position is open until Friday, October 9, 2015 at 5:00 PM.  
Current Fire Chief is retiring January 31, 2016.  
Anticipated start date of successful candidate is early January, 2016.

To view the status of this position, please visit:  
<http://bit.ly/SGRCurrentSearches>

The City of Port Neches is an Equal Opportunity Employer and values diversity at all levels of its workforce. Applicants selected as finalists for this position will be subjected to a comprehensive background check.

