



# CITY OF SAN PABLO

One Alvarado Square  
13831 San Pablo Avenue  
San Pablo, CA 94806  
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Phone 510.215.3000 • Fax 510.620.0204

## Office of the Mayor

August 23, 2007

Jerry R. Holcombe, Foreperson  
Contra Costa County  
2007-2008 Grand Jury  
725 Court Street  
Martinez, CA 94553-0091

Dear Mr. Holcombe:

Pursuant to your letter of August 9, 2007, we offer the following:

### Findings

**“1. That agreements to respond across agency boundaries be put into writing.”**

San Pablo agrees but has no ability to accomplish this task since fire service is provided by the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors.

**“23. Historically, the San Pablo Fire District included the incorporated City of San Pablo and some adjoining unincorporated areas. In 1975, the San Pablo Fire District was annexed with the El Sobrante Fire District into the West County Fire District. This consolidated district was dissolved in 1994 and became part of the CCCFPD. As a result of the post-Proposition 13 tax allocations, the area formerly covered by the San Pablo District contributes only about one-third of its costs of operation, equipment, and capital needs.”**

San Pablo agrees with the history but has no information as to operational expenses or revenues sources.

**“24. San Pablo’s Redevelopment Agency encourages real estate development. Yet, while fire agencies are charged with protecting new developments, the tax increases generated by the developments go to the Redevelopment Agency. Some of the new tax increases are passed through to CCCFPD by negotiation or by statute, but they are insufficient to support the city’s needs related to fire and medical protection.”**

The Agency has an agreement with the County that recognizes the needs of San Pablo for new, safe development to offset the current blighted state of the community. This is standard practice throughout the State of California, and these revenues are being used wisely to assist the community with the lowest per capita income in the Bay Area.

**“25. The CCCFPD’s single engine company located in San Pablo is the busiest in the County, and one of the busiest in California. It has three firefighters on duty at any given time, who respond to a population in excess of 35,000 people. Three firefighters are not sufficient to fight a structure fire, so in every case, the occupants, contents and structure are at risk until firefighting crews and equipment arrive from other departments in the County.”**

The County Board of Supervisors sets the budget that delivers the service level for fire protection throughout all of the CCCFPD. Only the Board can address this question.

**“26. In West County, El Cerrito and Kensington maintain a ratio of one firefighter for every 3,400 in population. Richmond’s ratio is one for 5,300. Pinole and Rodeo-Hercules maintain one for every 6,000 people. The San Pablo station would require two more engine companies to match Richmond’s ratio. Meanwhile, it falls to the agencies adjoining the San Pablo area to answer calls on a regular basis in San Pablo and environs.”**

San Pablo is part of the CCCFPD which is governed by the County Board of Supervisors who establishes funding and service levels. San Pablo is paying up to \$180,000 per year to the CCCFPD to cover expenses owed to Richmond for out-of-area service calls. Additionally, perhaps the composition of the area to be protected dictates the number of firefighters. As an example, Richmond and Rodeo must be prepared to respond to refinery fires.

**“27. The CCCFPD engine company in San Pablo is housed in temporary structure. It is inadequate to house an additional truck or engine, and another engine company.”**

We accept the Grand Jury’s finding.

**“29. In 2007, San Pablo agreed to reimburse CCCFPD up to \$180,000 annually for fire and medical emergency service costs incurred within the City, because of the formula in CCCFPD’s written agreement with Richmond. CCCFPD has agreed to augment with up to \$70,000 annually, such funds available for reimbursement to Richmond.”**

San Pablo assumes that the CCCFPD amount is to reimburse Richmond for calls into the unincorporated areas to which Richmond responds.

**“30. Consolidation of all West County Fire Departments has been studied a number of times, but never adopted. Currently there is not sufficient political support for total consolidation. Most of the perceived benefits of consolidation can be accomplished by**

**agreements among the West County Departments, as has been done so successfully for the coverage of geographic areas.”**

San Pablo has no jurisdiction in this area.

**Recommendations**

**“7. That Contra Costa County and San Pablo, within six months of this report, enter into an agreement that will provide that San Pablo pay the approximate net difference in costs of automatic aid responses into the city by other Agencies.”**

This has been accomplished pursuant to our previous letter of June 8, 2007.

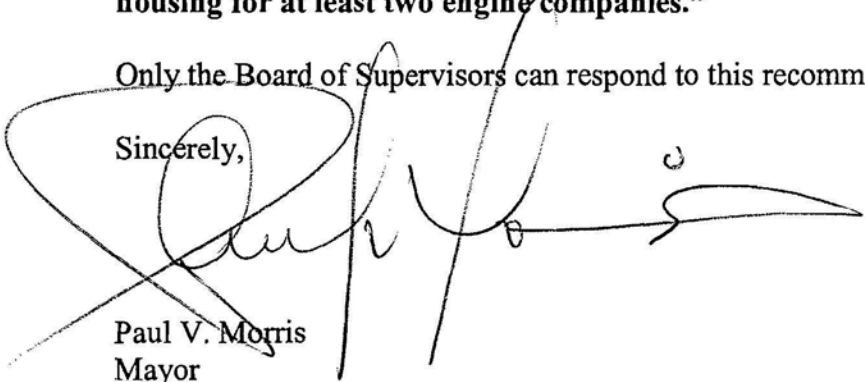
**“8. That Contra Costa County, within six months of this report, publish, and within one year adopt a plan to increase from one to two engine companies within the city or environs of San Pablo.”**

Only the Board of Supervisors can respond to this recommendation.

**“9. That Contra Costa County, within six months of this report, publish, and within one year adopt a plan for fire station construction in San Pablo which will provide adequate housing for at least two engine companies.”**

Only the Board of Supervisors can respond to this recommendation.

Sincerely,

  
Paul V. Morris  
Mayor

ccs: City Council  
City Manager



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## Office of the Mayor

October 1, 2007

Jerry R. Holcombe, Foreperson  
Contra Costa County  
2007-2008 Grand Jury  
725 Court Street  
Martinez, CA 94553-0091

Dear Mr. Holcombe:

Thank you for your letter of September 24, 2007. The City apologizes for its inadequate responses to the grand jury report, and thanks you for the opportunity to supplement its responses as set forth below:

### Findings

**“3. The Kensington Fire Protection District is governed by a five-member elected board. By contrast, the El Cerrito Fire Department provides emergency services to the Kensington district as well as to the City of El Cerrito; El Cerrito is governed by a five-member City Council. The five member elected Pinole City Council is the governing body of the Pinole Fire Department. The five member elected board of the Rodeo-Hercules Fire Protection District is the governing body of the Rodeo-Hercules Fire Department. The Crockett-Carquinez Fire District has a volunteer fire department.”**

The City of San Pablo agrees with the finding.

**“22. Each West County fire department is dependent on its governing body for funding, and therefore funding varies among the agencies.”**

The City of San Pablo agrees with the finding.

**“24. San Pablo’s Redevelopment Agency encourages real estate development. Yet, while fire agencies are charged with protecting new developments, the tax increases generated by the developments go to the Redevelopment Agency. Some of the new tax increases are**

**passed through to CCCFPD by negotiation or by statute, but they are insufficient to support the city's needs related to fire and medical protection."**

The City of San Pablo agrees with the finding, but wishes to clarify that there have been no "tax increases" in the normal sense of the word; rather, redevelopment activities within the City result in increased property tax revenue based on higher assessed valuations by the County Assessor's office. Further, the City agreed to supplement the redevelopment monies provided to CCCFPD by "negotiation or statute" by an additional \$180,000 for fiscal year 2006-2007.

**"25. The CCCFPD's single engine company located in San Pablo is the busiest in the County, and one of the busiest in California. It has three firefighters on duty at any given time, who respond to a population in excess of 35,000 people. Three firefighters are not sufficient to fight a structure fire, so in every case, the occupants, contents and structure are at risk until firefighting crews and equipment arrive from other departments in the County."**

The City of San Pablo partially disagrees. The portion of the finding disagreed with concludes that three firefighters are not sufficient to fight a structure fire, placing occupants, contents and structure at risk "*in every case.*" Structure fires presumably vary by size, type of construction materials, contents of the building, and whether they contain fire sprinkler systems. The City disagrees that the San Pablo engine company as presently constituted is insufficient *in every case* to fight a structure fire.

**"26. In West County, El Cerrito and Kensington maintain a ratio of one firefighter for every 3,400 in population. Richmond's ratio is one for 5,300. Pinole and Rodeo-Hercules maintain one for every 6,000 people. The San Pablo station would require two more engine companies to match Richmond's ratio. Meanwhile, it falls to the agencies adjoining the San Pablo area to answer calls on a regular basis in San Pablo and environs."**

The City of San Pablo agrees with the finding.

**"29. In 2007, San Pablo agreed to reimburse CCCFPD up to \$180,000 annually for fire and medical emergency service costs incurred within the City, because of the formula in CCCFPD's written agreement with Richmond. CCCFPD has agreed to augment with up to \$70,000 annually, such funds available for reimbursement to Richmond."**

The City of San Pablo agrees with the finding.

**"30. Consolidation of all West County Fire Departments has been studied a number of times, but never adopted. Currently there is not sufficient political support for total consolidation. Most of the perceived benefits of consolidation can be accomplished by agreements among the West County Departments, as has been done so successfully for the coverage of geographic areas."**

The City of San Pablo agrees with the finding. The City has not studied fire consolidation and has no information regarding this subject.

**Recommendations**

**“7. That Contra Costa County and San Pablo, within six months of this report, enter into an agreement that will provide that San Pablo pay the approximate net difference in costs of automatic aid responses into the city by other Agencies.”**

The recommendation will not be implemented as far as a formal written agreement within such time period. The City did not enter into a written agreement earlier this year based on the lack of contractually definite terms and provisions specifying the exact obligations of each party; and further out of a fiscally responsible desire to review services provided under the automatic aid relationship. Due to the uncertainties and lack of specific information involved, and the lack of time before the deadline expressed in the Grand Jury’s recommendation, the City believes that a written agreement cannot be finalized in such a short period. The City Council has, however, demonstrated its commitment to ensure that San Pablo pays its fair share of fire protection costs. It adopted Resolution 2007-21, which provides that San Pablo will pay its pro-rata share of automatic aid responses from the City of Richmond Fire Department into the City of San Pablo for fiscal year 2006-2007. Again, the San Pablo City Council has publicly expressed its willingness, and demonstrated its commitment to support the CCFPD to the extent fair and necessary, as witnessed by Resolution 2007-21. The City unilaterally continued this obligation by appropriating \$180,000 in its budget for fiscal year 2007-2008. As further information becomes available, the city is not averse to memorializing this commitment into a fair written agreement.

Sincerely,



Paul V. Morris  
Mayor

ccs: City Council  
City Manager  
Presiding Judge, Superior Court