

Contra Costa County



Fire Protection District

September 5, 2012

Mr. Lloyd Bell, Foreperson
Contra Costa County Civil Grand Jury
725 Court Street
Martinez, CA 94553-0091

Dear Mr. Bell,

Attached is the response from the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors and the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District regarding Grand Jury Report No. 1211 entitled "Contra Costa County Fire Protection and Emergency Response Services, Leveraging Combined Strengths to Address Individual Weaknesses."

The Board of Supervisors and the Fire District have responded to the Findings and Recommendations as directed. Please contact me if you have any questions or need additional information.

Regards,

Daryl Louder
Fire Chief

Attachment

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Grand Jury Report 1211 Response:

Findings:

1. Declining revenue and increasing personnel costs have placed many of the County's fire agencies in a challenging, and sometimes dire, financial position.

Response: Agree with the finding

2. There is a need to examine alternatives to how County fire agencies are structured and how they should most effectively deploy their equipment for the services they deliver.

Response: Partially disagree with the finding – Administratively, some efficiencies and cost savings could be realized by consolidation and regionalization of services. Operationally, the number of resources and deployment model should be based on community risk, industry standards, best practices, and services delivered to the public.

3. Under their current operating models, it is not feasible for some fire agencies to reduce expenses enough to meet projected revenue without impacting service levels.

Response: Agree with the finding

4. In the short term, to provide the service levels that the public currently expects, additional revenue must be found for some individual fire agencies.

Response: Agree with the finding

5. In the long term, approaching common problems at a County-wide regional level could offer additional solutions.

Response: Agree with the finding – Some efficiencies and economy of scale could be realized through standardization, joint purchasing, etc. The fire districts already work together on regional grant applications for some capital equipment, i.e. heart defibrillators, communications equipment, self-contained breathing apparatus, etc. There is duplication of some support functions such as multiple dispatch centers that could be consolidated.

6. Other California fire agencies have successfully implemented innovative cost reduction models and strategies, often by consolidating fire agencies, after engaging external consultants with industry expertise.

Response: Agree with the finding – It is important to note that service delivery models need to be based on a number of local factors including: community threat/risk factors, industry standards, baseline capabilities, national staffing/response time/performance studies, type and call volume, response times, availability of automatic and mutual aid, community expectations, and the community’s ability to fund services. In some cases, alternative service delivery examples are taken out of context or a “cookie cutter” approach is recommended that does not align with the relevant factors.

7. Creating and pursuing a County-wide strategy will require extraordinary leadership and cooperation at both the County and individual district levels.

Response: Agree with the finding

Recommendations:

1. Any proposed parcel tax by any fire agency seeking immediate relief for current deficit issues should include a “sunset clause” limiting duration.

Response: The recommendation has been implemented – On July 31st, the District’s Board of Directors approved placing a parcel tax measure on the November 6th ballot. The measure has a 7-year sunset clause.

2. Any proposed parcel tax by any fire agency seeking immediate relief for current deficit issues should include a commitment to promptly undertake identification and evaluation of alternative service delivery models.

Response: The recommendation has been implemented – The District is an “all-hazards” organization that provides fire suppression (structural and wildland), emergency medical care, rescue services, hazardous materials mitigation, and response to hazardous conditions. The 2004 Contra Costa County Emergency Medical Services Plan (EMSP) establishes a fully integrated response system with the fire service identified as first responders for initial patient care. Subsequent care and transport service is provided by private ambulances. The District has evaluated and will continue to evaluate, alternative service delivery models. Our on-going goal is to improve effectiveness and efficiency, reduce costs, and comply with the County’s EMSP while not compromising protection or service levels. As an example, the District has evaluated a number of direct service delivery options. These include varying response configurations based on time of day/day of the week call volume statistics, reviewing staffing levels, and considering different vehicle platforms for EMS delivery. From an administrative perspective, the District has participated in discussions with East Contra Costa Fire Protection District and the City of Pinole to provide service on a contractual

basis. Additionally, the District will continue to evaluate best practices and other options to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

3. All fire agencies and the County should conduct, on an individual agency and county-wide basis, evaluations of alternative service models utilizing independent consultants with a history of analyzing fire agency challenges.

Response: The recommendation requires further analysis – The Contra Costa County Fire Protection District is receptive to any analysis that would improve our effectiveness and efficiency from an individual and system-wide perspective. As noted earlier, the District currently utilizes industry standards and best practices when possible. We continually benchmark against other organizations and evaluate other business models from the private and public sectors that would improve our performance and cost effectiveness. The District is concerned about expending funds on a feasibility study by a consultant unless there is a strong willingness by all of the parties to accept appropriate changes. Evaluation of all of the relevant factors will require six months.

4. Fire agencies, LAFCO, and the County should find ways to cooperate with one another in the evaluation and adoption of alternative service delivery models.

Response: The recommendation requires further analysis – All of the fire agencies in the County currently cooperate and participate in regular Countywide Fire Chief meetings. The District has been a fully engaged participant in the Contra Costa LAFCO Fire Municipal Service Review, stakeholder meetings, and follow-up reports and presentations. All agencies operate with an automatic aid/mutual aid system in order to dispatch the closest resources regardless of jurisdictional boundaries. Additionally, the agencies participate in a number of joint initiatives such as standard operating procedures, training, grant applications, etc. Department consolidations have taken place both prior to and post the implementation of Proposition 13. It is possible to gain additional efficiencies from consolidation of some remaining agencies, including administrative and support function consolidation and strategic placement of fire stations. Evaluation of all of the relevant factors and financial impacts would require six months.

Crockett-Carquinez Fire Protection District

746 Loring Avenue
Crockett, Ca 94525-1236

August 31, 2012

Lloyd Bell, Foreperson
2011-2012 Contra Costa County Civil Grand Jury
725 Court Street
P.O. box 911
Martinez, Ca. 94553-0091

Dear Mr. Bell:

On June 7, 2012 the Crockett-Carquinez Fire District received Grand Jury Report No. 1211, dealing with fire protection and emergency response services. The report speaks to fiscal and service challenges facing fire and emergency service providers, and encourages collaboration on new approaches to service delivery.

The district reviewed the report and hereby submits the response below which addresses the applicable findings and recommendations contained in Grand Jury Report No. 1211 "Contra Costa County Fire Protection and Emergency Services, Leveraging Combined Strengths to Address Individual weaknesses"

FINDINGS

- 1. The respondent agrees with the finding.** *The Grand Jury needs to look beyond one service. Government in general is challenged by the longest and most severe economic down turn since the 1930's. While some jurisdictions (example: Sewer Districts) have the ability to generate additional fund through thru "use fees" other multi-discipline agencies such as cities have the ability to reallocate funds to emergency services from other areas of their agency. Fire districts have only property tax as a major funding source. In addition some districts (East Contra Costa and Rodeo Hercules) were caught by history (Prop 13) with a lower level tax rate.*
- 2. The respondent agrees with the finding.** *This is an ongoing process that has resulted in many consolidations and agreements.*
- 3. The respondent agrees with the finding.**
- 4. The respondent agrees with the finding.**

5. The respondent agrees with the finding. *Many approaches are possible however they must be workable and have the backing of the population of the area that is served. As a case in point several consolidations failed to accomplish the financial stability that was sought (San Pablo Fire District, West County Fire District). Others caused the creation of other districts to satisfy the residents of the area. One area was consolidated then "de-consolidated" when it was found it was not a fit in the consolidated district.*

6. The respondent agrees with the finding. *Many cost saving solutions have been implemented. However many other methods, particularly consolidation, have resulted in higher cost.*

At least ten (10) county wide or regional studies by government agencies with and without consultants have been conducted in the last fifty years in Contra Costa County. All of the studies have come to similar findings. None of these studies moved beyond the study phases for several reasons.

7. The respondent agrees with the finding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The recommendation has not been implemented .But will be implemented when a parcel tax is considered. However none is anticipated.

2. The recommendation will not be implemented. No parcel tax is anticipated in the district for the foreseeable future.

3. The recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. The district will join with other agencies when all are in agreement. It should be noted that several studies have been conducted with similar findings. Use of outside consultants would be a waste of already scarce funds.

4. The recommendation has not been implemented but will be implemented when directed by the Board of supervisors. It should be noted that informal discussions among the agencies are ongoing.

Please contact the District office at (510) 787-1600 if you have any questions or if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Gerald C. Littleton

Fire Chief

EAST CONTRA COSTA FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Hugh Henderson
Fire Chief



SERVING THE COMMUNITIES OF:
Bethel Island Discovery Bay
Brentwood Knightsen
Byron Morgan Territory
Oakley

August 27, 2012

Lloyd Bell, Foreperson
2011-2012 Contra Costa County Civil Grand Jury
P.O. Box 431
725 Court Street
Martinez, CA 94553

Re: Grand Jury Report Number 1211 "Contra Costa County Fire Protection and Emergency Response Services, leveraging combined strengths to address individual weaknesses"

Dear Mr. Bell,

On June 7, 2012, the East Contra Costa Fire Protection District received Grand Jury Report Number 1211 which is regarding fire protection and emergency response services.

On August 6, 2012 the Board of Directors approved the attached response to Grand Jury's report. In addition to the response the Board of Directors wanted the Grand Jury to have a copy of the City Gate Master Plan for the District that was accepted into 2006.

Please feel free to contact me directly if you have questions or if the District be any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Hugh Henderson", is written over a horizontal line.

Hugh Henderson, Fire Chief

**EAST CONTRA COSTS FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS RESPONSE TO
CONTRA COSTA COUNTY GRAND JURY REPORT NO. #1211**

**“Contra Costa County Fire Protection and Emergency Response Services.
Leveraging Combined Strengths to Address Individual Weakness”**

FINDINGS

1. Declining revenue and increase personnel costs have placed many of the counties fire agencies in a challenging, and sometimes dire, financial position.

Response: **Agree:**

2. There is a need to examine alternatives to how the County fire agencies are structured and how they should most efficiently deploy their equipment for services as they deliver.

Response: **Partially Disagree:** *East Contra Costa Fire Protection District participated in a master plans study in 2004 by City Gate and Associates with the report accepted 2006. The district was also part of LAFCO's Municipal Service Review (MSR) that was adopted in 2009. Any further analysis should make use of the work that has already been done.*

3. Under their current operating models, it is not feasible for some of the fire agencies to reduce expenses enough to meet projected revenues without impacting service levels.

Response: **Agree:**

4. In the short term, to provide service levels that the public currently expect, additional revenue must be found for some individual fire agencies.

Response: **Agree:**

5. In the long term, approaching common problems at a County-wide regional level could offer additional solutions.

Response **Agree:**

6. Other California fire agencies have successfully implemented innovative cost reductions models and strategies, offered by consolidating fire agencies, after engaging external consultants with industry expertise.

Response: **Agree:**

7. Creating and pursuing a County-wide strategy will require extraordinary leadership and cooperation at both the County any individual district levels.

Response: **Agree:**

RECOMMENDATION

1. Any proposed parcel tax by any fire agency seeking immediate relief for current deficit issues should include a "sunset clause" limiting durations

The recommendation has been implemented: *The District held a public hearing on February 27, 2012 to place a parcel tax on the June 5, 2012 ballot. The proposed parcel tax had a 10 year sunset, but the measure failed at the polls.*

2. Any proposed parcel tax by any fire district seeking immediate relief for current deficit issues should include a commitment to promptly undertake identifications and evaluations of alternative service models.

The recommendation has been implemented: The Board had built a 10 year service model as part of the proposed parcel tax. The service model included maintaining the six current stations, adding paramedic services over the life the service model, and adding a seven station when the growth in call volume was necessary. The board also prepared a balanced budget service model in case of the failure of the proposed parcel tax. After the District's parcel tax failed, the Board implemented the balanced budget staffing model effective July 1, 2012.

3. All fire agencies and the County should conduct, on an individual agency and county-wide basis, evaluations of alternative service models utilizing independent consultants with a history of analyzing fire agencies challenges.

This recommendation has been implemented: The district has been part of several independent evaluations since the consolidation in November of 2002. The District prepares a master plan over a two year period with the assistance of City Gates Associates, LLC; this master plan was accepted by the board directors at the time and 2006. The District also anticipated in LAFCO's municipal service review (MSR) which started in 2007 and was accepted in 2009. The District currently does not have the funding to undertake further service model evaluations.

4. Fire agencies, LAFCO, and the County should find a way to cooperate with one another in the evaluation and adoption of alternative service delivery models.

This recommendation has been implemented: The District staff is working on an ongoing basis with Contra Costa County Fire to review mutual aid arrangements in light of changing budgets. The District would be willing to work with all the above agencies to review alternative service delivery models, but the District does not have the staff/personnel or funding to serve as lead agency in such a wide-scale task.



EL CERRITO FIRE DEPARTMENT

**10900 San Pablo Avenue • El Cerrito • CA • 94530
(510) 215-4450 • FAX (510) 232-4917 • www.el-cerrito.org**

August 9, 2012

Lloyd Bell, Foreperson
2011-2012 Contra Costa County Civil Grand Jury
725 Court Street
P.O. Box 431
Martinez, CA 94553-0091

Foreperson Bell,

As requested, attached please find the El Cerrito Fire Department's response to Grand Jury Report 1211 "Contra Costa County Fire Protection and Emergency Response Services, Leveraging Combined Strengths to Address Individual Weaknesses".

Sincerely,

EL CERRITO FIRE DEPARTMENT

Lance J. Maples
Fire Chief

LJM/bjn

El Cerrito Fire Department's Response to Contra Costa County Grand Jury Report No. #1211

FINDINGS:

1. Declining revenue and increase personnel costs have placed many of the counties fire agencies in a challenging, and sometimes dire, financial position.

Response: **Agree:** *This being said, the City of El Cerrito passed a ½ cent sales tax in 2010 to have the ability to maintain services while the economy slowly improves.*

2. There is a need to examine alternatives to how the County fire agencies are structured and how they should most efficiently deploy their equipment for services as they deliver.

Response: **Partially Disagree:** *The El Cerrito Fire Department partially disagrees due to the fact that we work collaboratively with all Fire Agencies within Contra Costa County and all Fire Agencies in surrounding counties to examine alternatives. The El Cerrito Fire Department is also always willing to participate in any type of evaluation that could improve service. The City of El Cerrito is currently embarking on a strategic plan that will cover all department and divisions within the City of El Cerrito.*

3. Under their current operating models, it is not feasible for some of the fire agencies to reduce expenses enough to meet projected revenues without impacting service levels.

Response: **Agree:** *Excluding the City of El Cerrito in its current economic state, this may be very true for some agencies within the county.*

4. In the short term, to provide service levels that the public currently expect, additional revenue must be found for some individual fire agencies.

Response: **Agree:** *The City of El Cerrito embarked on this endeavor in 2010 by passing a ½ cent sales tax.*

5. In the long term, approaching common problems at a County-wide regional level could offer additional solutions.

Response **Agree:** *Currently, many Fire agencies work collaboratively when approaching common needs. Examples would be: joint training divisions, regional dispatch centers, and regional communication centers.*

6. Other California fire agencies have successfully implemented innovative cost reductions models and strategies, offered by consolidating fire agencies, after engaging external consultants with industry expertise.

Response: **Partially Disagree:** *Some agencies have been successful in reducing costs through consolidations and some agencies have studied consolidations and determined that a cost savings would not be realized.*

7. Creating and pursuing a County-wide strategy will require extraordinary leadership and cooperation at both the County and individual district levels.

Response: **Agree**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Any proposed parcel tax by any fire agency seeking immediate relief for current deficit issues should include a "sunset clause" limiting durations

The recommendation has been implemented: *The City of El Cerrito's ½ cent sales tax that passed in 2010 has a seven- year sunset clause.*

2. Any proposed parcel tax by any fire district seeking immediate relief for current deficit issues should include a commitment to promptly undertake identifications and evaluations of alternative service models.

The recommendation has been implemented: *The City of El Cerrito Fire Department once again, continues to evaluate alternative service models. Examples would be, the City's contract for service with the community of Kensington, regional dispatch and a joint training division with the City of Richmond.*

3. All fire agencies and the County should conduct, on an individual agency and county-wide basis, evaluations of alternative service models utilizing independent consultants with a history of analyzing fire agencies challenges.

This recommendation has been considered and needs further evaluation: *Once again, the City of El Cerrito Fire Department continues to evaluate alternative service models. That being said, I believe an evaluation needs to take place reviewing the agencies that have utilized individual consultants and determine the level of success that was achieved by this process.*

4. Fire agencies, LAFCO, and the County should find a way to cooperate with one another in the evaluation and adoption of alternative service delivery models.

This recommendation has been considered and needs further evaluation: *The City of El Cerrito Fire Department, as always, is willing to cooperate in any evaluation and adoption of alternative service delivery models. The City of El Cerrito Fire Department continues to provide automatic aid and mutual aid to any agency in need.*



August 9, 2012

Lloyd Bell, Foreperson
2011-2012 Contra Costa County Civil Grand Jury
725 Court Street
P.O. Box 431
Martinez, CA 94553-0091

Foreperson Bell,

As requested, attached is the Kensington Fire Protection District's response to Grand Jury Report 1211 "Contra Costa County Fire Protection and Emergency Response Services, Leveraging Combined Strengths to Address Individual Weaknesses".

Sincerely,

KENSINGTON FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lance J. Maples".

Lance J. Maples
Fire Chief

LJM/bjn

Kensington Fire Protection District's Response to Contra Costa County Grand Jury Report No. #1211

FINDINGS:

1. Declining revenue and increase personnel costs have placed many of the counties fire agencies in a challenging, and sometimes dire, financial position.

Response: **Agree:** *This being said, in 1995, the Kensington Fire Protection District chose to contract with the City of El Cerrito for fire protection service which has allowed for the District to be in a sound financial position.*

2. There is a need to examine alternatives to how the County fire agencies are structured and how they should most efficiently deploy their equipment for services as they deliver.

Response: **Partially Disagree:** *The Kensington Fire Protection District partially disagrees due to the fact that we work collaboratively with all Fire Agencies within Contra Costa County and all Fire Agencies in surrounding counties to examine alternatives. The Kensington Fire Protection District is also always willing to participate in any type of evaluation that could improve service.*

3. Under their current operating models, it is not feasible for some of the fire agencies to reduce expenses enough to meet projected revenues without impacting service levels.

Response: **Agree:** *Excluding the Kensington Fire Protection District, this may be very true for some agencies within the county.*

4. In the short term, to provide service levels that the public currently expect, additional revenue must be found for some individual fire agencies.

Response: **Agree:**

5. In the long term, approaching common problems at a County-wide regional level could offer additional solutions.

Response **Agree:** *Currently, many Fire agencies work collaboratively when approaching common needs. Examples would be: joint training divisions, regional dispatch centers, and regional communication centers.*

6. Other California fire agencies have successfully implemented innovative cost reductions models and strategies, offered by consolidating fire agencies, after engaging external consultants with industry expertise.

Response: **Partially Disagree:** *Some agencies have been successful in reducing costs through consolidations and some agencies have studied consolidations and determined that a cost savings would not be realized.*

7. Creating and pursuing a County-wide strategy will require extraordinary leadership and cooperation at both the County any individual district levels.

Response: **Agree**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Any proposed parcel tax by any fire agency seeking immediate relief for current deficit issues should include a "sunset clause" limiting durations

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. *The Kensington Fire Protection District is not considering any new proposed parcel tax measures at this time.*

2. Any proposed parcel tax by any fire district seeking immediate relief for current deficit issues should include a commitment to promptly undertake identifications and evaluations of alternative service models.

The recommendation has been implemented. *The Kensington Fire Protection District already operates under an alternative service model by contracting for services with the City of El Cerrito.*

3. All fire agencies and the County should conduct, on an individual agency and county-wide basis, evaluations of alternative service models utilizing independent consultants with a history of analyzing fire agencies challenges.

This recommendation has been considered and needs further evaluation: *Once again, the Kensington Fire Protection District continues to evaluate and operate under an alternative service model. That being said, I believe an evaluation needs to take place reviewing the agencies that have utilized individual consultants and determine the level of success that was achieved by this process.*

4. Fire agencies, LAFCO, and the County should find a way to cooperate with one another in the evaluation and adoption of alternative service delivery models.

This recommendation has been considered and needs further evaluation: *The Kensington Fire Protection District as always is willing to cooperate in any evaluation and adoption of alternative service delivery models. The Kensington Fire Protection District continues to provide automatic aid and mutual aid to any agency in need.*



Lou Ann Teixeira
Executive Officer

MEMBERS

Donald A. Blubaugh
Public Member
Federal Glover
County Member
Michael R. McGill
Special District Member

Dwight Meadows
Special District Member
Mary N. Piepho
County Member
Rob Schroder
City Member

Don Tatzin
City Member

ALTERNATE MEMBERS

Candace Andersen
County Member
Sharon Burke
Public Member
Tom Butt
City Member
George H. Schmidt
Special District Member

August 8, 2012

Lloyd Bell, Foreperson
2011-2012 Contra Costa County Civil Grand Jury
725 Court Street
P.O. Box 911
Martinez, CA 94553-0091

Dear Mr. Bell:

On June 7, 2012, the Contra Costa Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) received Grand Jury Report No. 1211, dealing with fire protection and emergency responses services. The report speaks to fiscal and service challenges facing fire and emergency service providers, and encourages collaboration on new approaches to service delivery.

On August 8, the Commission reviewed the draft response to the Grand Jury. The Commission provided input and directed LAFCO staff to submit a response by the September 6th deadline.

We hereby submit the response below which addresses the applicable findings and recommendations contained in Grand Jury Report No. 1211, *Contra Costa County Fire Protection and Emergency Services, Leveraging Combined Strengths to Address Individual Weaknesses.*”

FINDINGS

- 1. Declining revenue and increasing personnel costs have placed many of the County’s fire agencies in a challenging, and sometimes dire, financial position.

Response: *The respondent agrees with the finding. East and West Contra Costa County have been particularly hard-hit by significant declines in property tax revenue.*

- 5. In the long term, approaching common problems at a County-wide regional level could offer additional solutions.

Response: *The respondent agrees with the finding. In 2009, LAFCO completed a comprehensive Municipal Service Review (MSR) covering fire and emergency medical services. The MSR report highlighted resource sharing and showcased best practices relating to services; identified service, infrastructure, fiscal and other challenges; and provided a basis for future boundary changes. The MSR report also identified countywide and agency-specific options relating to government*

efficiencies, ranging from various types of consolidation, forming joint powers authorities, and expansion of service contracts, to needed long-term capital and growth planning, reconfiguration of fire station locations, and various cost-saving measures.

The LAFCO MSR served as a catalyst for future discussions relating to fire and emergency medical services. Following completion of the MSR, LAFCO formed an Ad Hoc Committee which held five meetings to continue the dialogue on fire service issues.

In 2010, LAFCO hosted two Fire Workshops, which were attended by County, city and special district officials and staff, fire commissioners, representatives from labor, and members of the Grand Jury, the public and the media.

The workshops included discussions, information sharing, and identification of key issues and potential opportunities for fire and emergency medical services. Recurring issues included:

- funding
- fiscal sustainability
- service efficiency, equity and consistency

Some **potential opportunities** to address these issues included:

- ❖ evaluating service efficiencies
- ❖ establishing baseline and/or service standards
- ❖ centralizing dispatch services
- ❖ pursuing best practices and governance/service models
- ❖ continuing public relations/education efforts and community involvement

In November 2010, LAFCO continued the dialogue with fire service providers and discussed potential short-, mid- and long-term goals for service providers.

6. Other California fire agencies have successfully implemented cost reduction models and strategies, often by consolidating fire agencies, after engaging external consultants with industry expertise.

Response: The respondent agrees with the finding. The issues facing local fire service providers are not unique to Contra Costa County. Fire service challenges and discussion of alternative service models and other cooperative solutions are being discussed throughout the State and have been at the forefront of CALAFCO's educational program for the past year. Further, consolidation of fire services is not new to Contra Costa County. In 1960, there were 25 agencies that provided fire service in Contra Costa County; today, there are 10. Since LAFCO was formed in 1963, there have been over 20 major fire agency consolidations and reorganizations in Contra Costa County.

The Grand Jury suggests that external consultants with industry expertise be engaged to aid in implementing cost reduction and other strategies. It is important that any consultants retained by the local fire service providers have expertise in fire and emergency medical services, as well as financial expertise. Challenges associated with consolidations include significant variations in service models unique to each community, as well as disparities in funding among the service providers.

7. Creating and pursuing a County-wide strategy will require extraordinary leadership and cooperation at both the County and individual district levels.

Response: *The respondent agrees with the finding. This is a critical component of implementing any significant change in the provision of fire and emergency medical services.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. All fire agencies and the County should conduct, on an individual agency and county-wide basis, evaluations of alternative service models utilizing independent consultants with a history of analyzing fire agency challenges.

Response: *The recommendation requires further analysis by the County and individual fire agencies, who would be responsible for establishing the scope, parameters, and time frame for such an evaluation.*

4. Fire agencies, LAFCO, and the County should find ways to cooperate with one another in the evaluation and adoption of alternate service delivery models.

Response: *This recommendation has been implemented. LAFCO has and will continue to cooperate with the County and fire and emergency medical service providers.*

LAFCO law requires that every five years, the Commission review and update local agency spheres of influence (SOIs), as necessary. In conjunction with SOI updates, LAFCO must conduct MSRs. As discussed above, in 2009, LAFCO completed a MSR covering fire and emergency medical services. The MSR served as a catalyst for ongoing discussions through the LAFCO Ad Hoc Fire Committee, LAFCO-hosted fire workshops, and ongoing discussions regarding fire and emergency medical services, with the most recent discussion on August 8, 2012.

While LAFCO is limited in its ability to initiate significant change in service and funding models, as these must come directly from the service providers, LAFCO continues to provide a forum for discussion and ideas.

Please contact the LAFCO office if you have any questions or if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Don Tatzin
Chair, Contra Costa LAFCO



Randall Bradley
Fire Chief

Moraga-Orinda Fire District
33 Orinda Way
Orinda, CA 94563

Phone: (925) 258-4599
Fax: (925) 258-4595

September 6, 2012

Lloyd D. Bell
Grand Jury Foreperson
2011/12 Contra Costa County Grand Jury
725 Court Street
Martinez, CA 94533

Re: Report 1211 – Contra Costa County Fire Protection and Emergency Response Services –
Leveraging Combined Strengths to Address Individual Weaknesses

Moraga-Orinda Fire District Required Responses:

FINDINGS

1. Declining revenue and increasing costs have placed many of the County's fire agencies in a challenging position.

The Respondent agrees with this finding in principle. This is based on information provided at meetings, in the media, and an understanding of the downturn in the economy's impact on local government. It should be noted that the Moraga-Orinda Fire District has not actually evaluated the impact of declining revenue and increased costs on other fire agencies.

2. There is a need to examine alternatives to how County fire agencies are structured and how they should most effectively deploy their equipment for the services they deliver.
The Respondent agrees with this finding.

The Respondent agrees with this statement. All public agencies should evaluate their structure and how they deploy resources for the services they deliver. This evaluation should be based on the fire agencies financial ability to provide the desired and valued service levels the community expects and deserves and can afford. Public agencies should always evaluate options to provide these services more efficiently.

3. Under the current operating models, it is not feasible for some fire agencies to reduce expenses enough to meet projected revenue without impacting service levels.

The Respondent agrees with this finding in principle. While we believe this to be true, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District has not actually evaluated the impact of declining revenue and increased costs on other fire agencies and their ability to maintain service levels.

4. In the short term, to provide the service levels that the public currently expects, additional revenues must be found for some individual fire agencies.

The Respondent agrees with this finding in principle. While we believe this to be true, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District has not actually evaluated the impact of declining revenue and increased costs on other fire agencies and their ability to maintain service levels.

5. In the long term, approaching common problems at a County-wide regional level could offer additional solutions.

The Respondent agrees with this finding. The Moraga-Orinda Fire District embraces the regional approach to fire protection and EMS services. We have dropped our boundaries with our neighbors and entered into "automatic aid agreements" that allows the closest appropriate resource to respond emergencies; we are a member of the regional communication center; we are very active participants in the County Fire Chiefs Associations (Executive Chiefs, Training Chiefs, Fire Prevention Officers and Training Officers); we participate in regional grant opportunities; and we consolidated two dependent fire districts into one independent fire district to improve efficiencies and overall service levels.

6. Other California fire agencies have successfully implemented innovative cost reduction models and strategies, often consolidating fire agencies, after engaging external consultants with industry expertise.

The Respondent agrees with this finding. It should also be noted that Contra Costa County has been a leader in the consolidation of fire departments and has been used as a model for other county fire agency consolidation efforts. Richmond is the only fire agency in the county that has not been involved in the consolidation of fire agencies. Fire agencies in Contra Costa County have participated in over 20 consolidations that have improved service levels and reduced overhead costs. While Alameda County (one of the examples in the report) has worked diligently to implement a regional fire protection model, Contra Costa County has been very innovative and has completed over twice the number of consolidations that have occurred in Alameda County and Sacramento County.

7. Creating and pursuing a County-wide strategy will require extraordinary leadership and cooperation at both the County and individual district level.

The Respondent agrees with this finding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Any proposed parcel tax by any fire agency seeking immediate relief for current deficit issues should include a "sunset clause" limiting duration.

The Respondent agrees with this finding in principle. Due to the current economic climate it would probably be in the best interest of any fire agency to place a “sunset clause” on any tax measure. From a governance standpoint it should be left to the elected officials to determine the conditions on any tax measure.

2. Any proposed parcel tax by any fire agency seeking immediate relief for current issues should include a commitment to promptly undertake identification and evaluation of alternative service delivery models.

The Respondent agrees with this finding in principle. As noted under the findings, all public agencies should review and evaluate how they provide their required services.

3. All fire agencies and the County should conduct, on an individual agency and county-wide basis, evaluations of alternative service models utilizing independent consultants with a history of analyzing fire agency challenges.

The respondent agrees with this recommendation in principle. The hiring of consultants should be done at the discretion of the Board of Directors based on the specific circumstances and needs of each jurisdiction. The Moraga-Orinda Fire District hired an independent consultant with a history of analyzing fire agency challenges. The consultant evaluated our service delivery model and made recommendations that would address growth while maintaining and improving overall service levels. The consultant developed a standards-of-cover document that the District utilizes to evaluate our current model and to make adjustments and improvements when necessary.

The District’s current service level model was also recently comprehensively evaluated by the Insurance Services Organization and is in the process of establishing a district grade which will determine residential and commercial fire insurance rates within the District.

4. Fire agencies, LAFCO, and the County should find ways to cooperate with one another in the evaluation and adoption of alternative service delivery models.

The respondent does not agree with this recommendation. The recommendation makes an assumption that adoption of alternative service delivery models is necessary throughout the county. Again, while evaluating alternative service models is something that all public agencies should evaluate and consider, adopting those models should only occur when the elected officials determine that it would be in the best interest of the citizens they serve.



CITY OF PINOLE

City Manager's Office

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August 5, 2012

The Honorable John Laettner
Presiding Judge of the Contra Costa County Superior Court
A.F. Bray Court House, Department 25
Martinez, CA 94553

Re: Contra Costa County Grand Jury Report 1211 entitled "Contra Costa County Fire Protection and Emergency Response Services, Leveraging Combined Strengths To Address Individual Weaknesses".

Dear Judge Laettner:

We are in receipt of your Contra Costa County Grand Jury Report 1211 entitled "Contra Costa County Fire Protection and Emergency Response Services, Leveraging Combined Strengths To Address Individual Weaknesses" and this letter outlines our response to the findings and recommendations that are outlined in the report in accordance with California Penal Code Section 933.05.

The City of Pinole appreciates the work that the Grand Jury undertook, and we agree with most of the statements in the Report.

GRAND JURY FINDINGS SPECIFIC TO THE CITY OF PINOLE

- **Finding Number 1**

"Declining revenue and increasing personnel costs have placed many of the County's fire agencies in a challenging and sometimes dire financial position".

Response: The City of Pinole agrees with this finding.

- **Finding Number 2**

"There is a need to examine alternative to how County fire agencies are structured and how they should most effectively deploy their equipment for the services they deliver".

Response: The City of Pinole agrees with this finding.

We have participated in all of the LAFCO hosted discussions and actually started our own discussion in West Contra Costa County prior to the issue being raised officially by LAFCO. These discussions go back at least three years now with Pinole taking the lead with all of the west county Fire Chiefs, Union Presidents and some of the City Managers. To date, we are still

talking about the same issue, looking at alternative service models that will work within the financial constraints that we are all facing.

- **Finding Number 3**

"Under their current operating models, it is not feasible for some fire agencies to reduce expenses enough to meet projected revenue without impacting service levels".

Response: The City of Pinole agrees with this finding.

- **Finding Number 4**

"In the short term, to provide the service levels that the public currently expects, additional revenue must be found for some individual fire agencies".

Response: The City of Pinole agrees with this finding.

This is very true in that most of the agencies in our county are trying to get tax measures passed by the voters to sustain current operations even with reductions already in place. Perhaps we should be taking a look at a Fire Station Locator stud to determine where the optimum service coverage areas should be and then look at a capital improvement plan for implementation. This should be done in conjunction with development of a complete paradigm shift in how we deliver fire service response.

- **Finding Number 5**

"In the long term, approaching common problems at a County-wide regional level could offer additional solutions".

Response: The City of Pinole agrees with this finding.

The City of Pinole has participated on the regional level and within West Contra Costa County. Until a new service model is developed and approved by all concerned, it will be difficult to come to a consensus.

- **Finding Number 6**

"Other California fire agencies have successfully implemented innovative cost reduction models and strategies, often by consolidating fire agencies, after engaging external consultants with industry expertise".

Response: The City of Pinole agrees with this finding.

The City of Pinole has already engaged the use of a prominent consultant for our study of our fire service delivery issues. We have also been in discussions with the Rodeo-Hercules Fire Protections District as well as Contra Costa County Fire Protection Districts for consolidation and contracting for service. Both agencies have expressed no interested in consolidation through annexation but are more than willing to discuss contracted services. We have been in those discussions for quite some time and already have two proposals that are under advisement.

- **Finding Number 7**

"Creating and pursuing a County-wide strategy will require extraordinary leadership and cooperation at both the County and individual district levels".

Response: The City of Pinole agrees with this finding.

This will be an effort worth undertaking.

GRAND JURY RECOMMENDATIONS SPECIFIC TO THE CITY OF PINOLE

- **Recommendation Number 1**

"Any proposed parcel tax by any fire agency seeking immediate relief for current deficit issues should include a "sunset clause" limiting duration".

Response: The City of Pinole agrees with this recommendation.

- **Recommendation Number 2**

"Any proposed parcel tax by any fire agency seeking immediate relief for current deficit issues should include a commitment to promptly undertake identification and evaluation of alternative service delivery models".

Response: The City of Pinole agrees with this recommendation.

- **Recommendation Number 3**

"All fire agencies and the County should conduct, on an individual agency and county wide basis, evaluations of alternative service models utilizing independent consultants with a history of analyzing fire agency challenges".

Response: The City of Pinole agrees with this recommendation.

- **Recommendation Number 4**

"Fire agencies, LAFCO, and the County should find ways to cooperate with one another in the evaluation and adoption of alternative service delivery models."

Response: The City of Pinole agrees with this recommendation.

In closing, I would like to thank the Grand Jury again for their effort at these municipal service reviews and annual reports. I hope that this response meets the expectations of the Grand Jury and that transparency in local government continues to be a focal point. In an effort to maintain transparency, the Pinole City Council received and reviewed this report in the public arena at our August 21, 2012 City Council meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,


Pete J Murray, Mayor

C Linda Chew, Contra Costa County Grand Jury Foreperson
Pinole City Councilmembers
Belinda B. Espinosa, City Manager
Ben Reyes, City Attorney



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Richard D. Pio Roda
Attorney at Law
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August 30, 2012

Mr. Lloyd Bell
Foreperson
2011-2012 Contra Costa County
Civil Grand Jury
725 Court Street
P.O. Box 431
Martinez, CA 94553-0091

Re: Response of City of Pinole Fire Department to Grand Jury Report No. 1211

Dear Mr. Bell:

This firm represents, and I serve as General Counsel for, the Rodeo-Hercules Fire Protection District (RHFPD). The City of Pinole contracts with RHFPD to administer the City of Pinole Fire Department. The RHFPD Executive Director and Fire Chief, Charles Hanley, has requested that I respond to Grand Jury Report No. 1211 on behalf of the City of Pinole Fire Department. This is the City of Pinole Fire Department's ("Respondent") response to Contra Costa County Civil Grand Jury Report No. 1211. Respondent would like to point out a discrepancy in the second and third paragraphs of your June 6, 2012 letter. You correctly identify California Penal Code section 933.05 as the relevant statute in the second paragraph, but incorrectly identify California Government Code section 933.5(a) as the relevant statute governing the Respondent's response. Therefore, Respondent will respond to the findings in accordance with subsection (a) of section 933.05 of the California Penal Code, and to the recommendations in accordance with subsection (b) of section 933.05 of the California Penal Code.

Findings

As to Finding No. 1, the Respondent agrees with the finding.

As to Finding No. 2, the Respondent partially disagrees with the finding. Respondent disagrees with the need to examine alternatives to how County fire agencies are structured, because Respondent, at this time, believes this portion of the finding is overbroad, and conflicts with Respondent's desire that any examination of alternative structures account for and ensure Respondent continue as an independent, autonomous fire department of the City

of Pinole. Respondent agrees with the portion of the finding that there is a need to examine how County fire agencies should most effectively deploy their equipment for the services they deliver.

As to Finding No. 3, the Respondent agrees with the finding.

As to Finding No. 4, the Respondent agrees with the finding.

As to Finding No. 5, the Respondent agrees with the finding.

As to Finding No. 6, the Respondent agrees with the finding.

As to Finding No. 7, the Respondent agrees with the finding.

Recommendations

As to Recommendation No. 1, if the Respondent takes action to place a parcel tax on a future ballot, it will seriously consider including a sunset clause in the parcel tax limiting its duration. Because the City of Pinole does not have on the next election, or for any immediately subsequent election a ballot measure to establish a parcel tax for fire services, the City would like to examine all consequences related to including a sunset clause on such a parcel tax. As such, the recommendation has not yet been implemented, but the City would seriously consider implementing a sunset clause in the future co-extensive with an action to place a parcel tax on a ballot.

As to Recommendation No. 2, the recommendation has not yet been implemented, but would be implemented by Respondent in the future, co-extensively with any action taken to place a parcel tax on a ballot.

As to Recommendation No. 3, Respondent believes that the recommendation requires further analysis. The scope and parameters of the analysis should include critical evaluations of all alternative service models, from consolidation of fire agencies to maintaining the status quo. Respondent also recommends that the County's fire agencies enter into a separate memorandum of understanding (MOU) as to how such an analysis would be paid for and implemented by the fire agencies and the County. Respondent would also build in time to obtain the analysis, including time to prepare and issue a competitive request for proposals from independent consultants with a history of analyzing fire agency challenges. Respondent proposes that a MOU between the fire agencies to work out how such an analysis would be prepared, contracted, and paid for should occur within the next six months.

As to Recommendation No. 4, the recommendation has not yet been implemented, but would be implemented in the future. As stated above, a time frame for the fire agencies, LAFCO, and the County to agree on a structure to cooperate with one another in the

Lloyd Bell
August 30, 2012
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evaluation of alternative service delivery models should occur within the next six months, culminating in a MOU or other type of agreement.

Very truly yours,



Richard D. Pio Roda
General Counsel
Rodeo-Hercules Fire Protection District

RDP:RDP

c: Charles Hanley, Fire Chief, Rodeo-Hercules Fire Protection District and Acting Fire Chief, City of Pinole
City Attorney, City of Pinole

1949260.1

RICHMOND FIRE DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE FIRE CHIEF



September 7, 2012

2011-2012 Contra Costa County Grand Jury
Attn.: Mr. Lloyd Bell, Foreperson
725 Court Street
P. O. Box 431
Martinez, CA 94553-0091

Dear Mr. Bell and Members of the Grand Jury:

Below are the Richmond Fire Department responses to the findings and recommendations on Grand Jury Report No. 1211, **“Contra Costa County Fire Protection and Emergency Response Services, Leveraging Combined Strengths to Address Individual Weaknesses”**:

FINDINGS

1. “Declining revenue and increasing personnel costs have placed many of the County’s fire agencies in a challenging, and sometimes dire, financial position.”

Answer: The respondent agrees with the finding.

2. “There is a need to examine alternatives to how County Fire Agencies are structured and how they should most effectively deploy their equipment for the services they deliver.”

Answer: The respondent partially disagrees with the finding. For some Fire Agencies in our County this may be necessary. However, we are satisfied with the current deployment model used in our City. That being said, we are still open to looking at ways to continually improve fire service in our County.

3. “Under their current operating models, it is not feasible for some fire agencies to reduce expenses enough to meet projected revenue without impacting service levels.”

Answer: The respondent agrees with the finding.

4. "In the short term, to provide the service levels that the public currently expects, additional revenue must be found for some individual fire agencies."

Answer: The respondent agrees with the finding.

5. "In the long term, approaching common problems at a County-wide regional level could offer additional solutions."

Answer: The respondent agrees with the finding.

6. "Other California Fire Agencies have successfully implemented innovative cost reduction models and strategies, often by consolidating fire agencies, after engaging external consultants with industry expertise."

Answer: The respondent agrees with the finding.

7. "Creating and pursuing a County-wide strategy will require extraordinary leadership and cooperation at both the County and individual district levels."

Answer: The respondent partially agrees with the finding. Yes, leadership is necessary, but the political will from a number of entities is also required in order to pursue this course of action.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. "Any proposed parcel tax by any fire agency seeking immediate relief for current deficit issues should include a "sunset clause" limiting duration."

Answer: The recommendation requires further analysis. Currently, the City of Richmond does not have any plans to pursue a parcel tax initiative. If we did, I would agree that it should have a "sunset clause."

2. "Any proposed parcel tax by any fire agency seeking immediate relief for current deficit issues should include a commitment to promptly undertake identification and evaluation of alternative service models."

Answer: The recommendation requires further analysis. This situation does not apply to the City of Richmond.

3. "All fire agencies and the County should conduct, on an individual agency and county-wide basis, evaluations of alternative models utilizing independent consultants with a history of analyzing fire agency challenges."

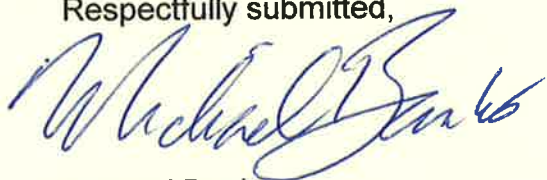
Answer: The recommendation requires further analysis. The City of Richmond has no desire or funding to engage the services of a consultant that would tell us what we already know.

4. "Fire agencies, LAFCO, and the County should find ways to cooperate with one another in the evaluation and adoption of alternative service delivery models."

Answer: The recommendation has been implemented. For the past three years, Contra Costa County Fire Agencies and LAFCO have been involved in an ongoing dialogue regarding fire services throughout the county. While the discussions have been meaningful, all involved stakeholders need to be willing to implement change in their respective departments.

Please contact me if you have any questions about the responses I have provided.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael Banks".

Michael Banks
Fire Chief
City of Richmond

MB:dc



A Commitment to Public Law

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August 30, 2012

Mr. Lloyd Bell
Foreperson
2011-2012 Contra Costa County
Civil Grand Jury
725 Court Street
P.O. Box 431
Martinez, CA 94553-0091

**Re: Response of Rodeo-Hercules Fire Protection District to Grand Jury Report
No. 1211**

Dear Mr. Bell:

This firm represents, and I serve as the General Counsel for, the Rodeo-Hercules Fire Protection District. This is Rodeo-Hercules Fire Protection District's ("Respondent") response to Contra Costa County Civil Grand Jury Report No. 1211. Respondent would like to point out a discrepancy in the second and third paragraphs of your June 6, 2012 letter. You correctly identify California Penal Code section 933.05 as the relevant statute in the second paragraph, but incorrectly identify California Government Code section 933.5(a) as the relevant statute governing the Respondent's response. Therefore, Respondent will respond to the findings in accordance with subsection (a) of section 933.05 of the California Penal Code, and to the recommendations in accordance with subsection (b) of section 933.05 of the California Penal Code.

Findings

As to Finding No. 1, the Respondent agrees with the finding.

As to Finding No. 2, the Respondent partially disagrees with the finding. Respondent disagrees with the need to examine alternatives to how County fire agencies are structured, because Respondent, at this time, believes this portion of the finding is overbroad, and conflicts with Respondent's desire that any examination of alternative structures account for and ensure Respondent continue as an independent, autonomous special district. Respondent agrees with the portion of the finding that there is a need to examine how

County fire agencies should most effectively deploy their equipment for the services they deliver.

As to Finding No. 3, the Respondent agrees with the finding.

As to Finding No. 4, the Respondent agrees with the finding.

As to Finding No. 5, the Respondent agrees with the finding.

As to Finding No. 6, the Respondent agrees with the finding.

As to Finding No. 7, the Respondent agrees with the finding.

Recommendations

As to Recommendation No. 1, if the Respondent takes action to place a parcel tax on a future ballot, it will seriously consider including a sunset clause in the parcel tax limiting its duration. Respondent is not opposed to including a sunset clause in a future parcel tax; at this time, with no such parcel tax on a current, or even upcoming ballot Respondent would like to consider all of the ramifications, effects, and consequences of whether or not to include a sunset clause on a parcel tax, should it find it in Respondent's best interest to place a parcel tax on a ballot. As such, the recommendation has not yet been implemented, but Respondent would seriously consider its implementation in the future co-extensive with an action to place a parcel tax on a ballot.

As to Recommendation No. 2, the recommendation has not yet been implemented, but would be implemented by Respondent in the future, co-extensive with any action taken to place a parcel tax on a ballot.

As to Recommendation No. 3, Respondent believes that the recommendation requires further analysis. The scope and parameters of the analysis should include critical evaluations of all alternative service models, from consolidation to the status quo. Respondent also recommends that the County's fire agencies enter into a separate memorandum of understanding as to how such an analysis would be paid for and implemented. Respondent would also build in time to obtain the analysis, including the preparation and issuance of a competitive request for proposals from independent consultants with a history of analyzing fire agency challenges. Respondent proposes that a MOU between the fire agencies to work out how such an analysis would be prepared, contracted, and paid for should occur within the next six months.

As to Recommendation No. 4, the recommendation has not yet been implemented, but would be implemented in the future. As stated above, a time frame for the fire agencies, LAFCO, and the County to agree on a structure to cooperate with one another in the evaluation of alternative service delivery models should occur within the next six months, culminating in a MOU or other type of agreement amongst themselves.

Lloyd Bell
August 30, 2012
Page 3

Very truly yours,



Richard D. Pio Roda
General Counsel
Rodeo-Hercules Fire Protection District

RDP:RDP

c: Charles Hanley, Fire Chief, Rodeo-Hercules Fire Protection District
Rodeo-Hercules Fire Protection District Board of Directors

1949256.1

SAN RAMON VALLEY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

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San Ramon, California 94583

Fire Prevention
Inspections: 925-838-6680
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Fax: 925-838-6696

August 30, 2012

VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY
clope2@contracosta.courts.ca.gov

The Honorable Lloyd Bell, Foreperson
And Members of the 2011-2012
Contra Costa County Civil Grand Jury
725 Court Street, P.O. Box 431
Martinez, CA 94553-0091

Re: Response of San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District to Grand Jury
Report No. 1211, "Contra Costa County Fire Protection and
Emergency Response Services, Leveraging Combined Strengths to
Address Individual Weaknesses"

Dear Foreperson Bell and Members of the Grand Jury:

The San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District ("District") consistent with the Foreperson's June 6, 2012 communication responds to the Findings and Recommendations in the order they are presented in the Grand Jury Report No. 1211, entitled "Contra Costa County Fire Protection and Emergency Response Services, Leveraging Combined Strengths to Address Individual Weaknesses" (the "Report") consistent with the provisions of Penal Code section 933.5(a).¹

The Report, page 5 directs the "San Ramon Fire District" to respond to Findings 1 through 5, 7 and recommendations 1 through 4. The District, in addition to the format required by Penal Code section 933.5(a) and section 933.05(b), sets forth a factual clarification section after the required responses are set forth.

FINDINGS

1. Declining revenue and increasing personnel costs have placed many of the County's fire agencies in a challenging, and sometimes dire, financial position.

¹ The District respectfully notes that the Report transmittal erroneously referred to provisions of the Government Code as setting forth the format for response.

RESPONSE: The Respondent partially disagrees with the Finding. Noting that the specific condition of various county fire agencies which include fire protection districts and city fire departments varies from fire agency to fire agency and to the method and manner in which the assets and liabilities of the involved fire agency are reported. Generally, conclusory statements do no more than broadly identify an issue. With respect to the District, it is observed that its principal source of revenue, property taxes has been subject to decreases due to what has been referred to as the "Global Recession of 2008."

* The Respondent does not have sufficient information regarding other agencies to develop conclusions regarding their specific financial conditions.

2. There is a need to examine alternatives to how County fire agencies are structured and how they should most effectively deploy their equipment for services they deliver.

RESPONSE: The Respondent partially disagrees with the Finding. The District, like other fire agencies, pursues on-going efforts to examine alternatives for the delivery of fire services, both within the District, within the County regionally, with LAFCO, and Statewide.

Effective fire prevention, suppression and first response for emergency medical services involves the utilization of existing facilities, equipment and staffing *not just* the deployment of equipment.

3. Under their current operating models, it is not feasible for some fire agencies to reduce expenses enough to meet projected revenue without impacting service levels.

RESPONSE: The Respondent partially disagrees with this Finding, as upon review of the entire Report it is not clear that the Grand Jury was informed of the complete picture of the impact of State regulation and oversight, the *lack* of State reimbursement for mandated costs, the less than timely reimbursement for the administration and rendering of fire services under the State Master Mutual Aid Agreement in its evaluation of projected revenue for fire agencies generally and the District specifically.

*The Respondent does not have sufficient information regarding other agencies to develop conclusions regarding their specific financial conditions.

With respect to the District, the District continually is evaluating both existing and projected revenue in a manner so as not to impact current service levels.

4. In the short term, to provide the service levels that the public currently expects, additional revenue must be found for some individual fire agencies.

RESPONSE: The Respondent partially disagrees with the Finding in that it cannot speak with respect to other fire agencies, but does observe that the District continually evaluates available and projected revenue with respect to service levels and the maintenance of those service levels in the short and long term. Under current Constitutional (Article XIII A; "Proposition 13") and Statutory ("AB 8" the now, thirty-three year old legislative method of implementing Proposition 13 – which is unlikely to change) constraints the matter of individual agency revenue is a matter within the discretion of the voters or property owners of those respective fire agencies. Also, it should be noted that some "service levels" are established by law – such as station placement in association with new development to assure response times or required fire flows. These, and other, "service levels" are not expectations but required by law. Finally, any analysis should be integrated evaluating with available revenue with respect to service level expenditures.

5. In the long term, approaching common problems at a County-wide regional level could offer additional solutions.

RESPONSE: The Respondent partially disagrees with the Finding in that confining the ability to provide fire service to a County-wide regional level is too limiting. The concept of regional, that is, trans-county or multi-county district provision for fire services integrated with the existing capability for a Statewide Mutual Aid should be pursued and continued to be evaluated through LAFCO, the governmental agency legally authorized to perform that function.

The use of the phrase of "County" is unclear as the County has no control over general or charter city fire departments, nor independently governmental fire protection districts.

6. Other California fire agencies have successfully implemented innovative costs reduction models and strategies, often by consolidating fire agencies, after engaging external consultants with industry expertise.

RESPONSE: The Respondent recognizes it is not required to respond to Finding No. 6, however, the Respondent does so and partially disagrees with the Finding. It is generally observed that many fire protection districts in the State, and in

the County, are the result of consolidations, therefore the conclusion that consolidations are to be looked on as a *panacea* is misleading and would only be a solution if resulting from the appropriate LAFCO analysis and action. The references to other actions Statewide is incomplete and of those of which the District is aware are confined to very specific organizational issues, such as, the proposed consolidation of administrative services for various Charter Cities in Orange County or internal reorganization within the Charter City of Los Angeles, both of which are incomplete and inconclusive

7. Creating and pursuing a County-wide strategy will require extraordinary leadership and cooperation at both the County and individual district levels.

RESPONSE: The Respondent partially disagrees with this finding in that the County-wide strategy is to be achieved through the leadership and cooperation of fire protection districts and city fire departments, as noted previously, it is unclear throughout the Report *how* specifically the “County” would be involved. Certainly, the efforts accomplished to date by LAFCO and required to be accomplished with the continued review and updating of Municipal Service Reviews (“MSRs”) and individuals fire agencies Sphere of Influences (“SOI”) are existing governmental tools with which the Grand Jury should be familiar and which will continue to be utilized by the Fire District and it is assumed other governmental agencies.

An example may be appropriate. Fire agencies are authorized to be created by LAFCO but subject to conditions. Therefore, if new fire agencies are created with the specific LAFCO finding that they must implement additional revenue measures, then those conditions of LAFCO approval should be pursued prior to the implementation of any unauthorized use of the assets of another fire agency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Any proposed parcel tax by any fire agency seeking immediate relief for current deficit issues should include a “sunset clause” limiting duration.

RESPONSE: The District believes that the recommendation requires further analysis as it only is an issue if in fact a parcel tax would be pursued by the District. Whether a parcel tax measure or an assessment measure is pursued it would be subject to the exercise of discretion of the District’s governing Board as to its term duration and implementation. The District has not analyzed or planned for any parcel tax.

2. Any proposed parcel tax by any fire agency seeking immediate relief for current deficit issues should include a commitment to properly undertake identification and evaluation of alternative service delivery models.

RESPONSE: The recommendation requires further analysis by the District and unless a parcel tax is pursued by the District within the next six (6) months further evaluation of this recommendation would be an idle act. See also response to Recommendation No. 1. The District also again observes that cost-saving actions are continually being pursued.

3. All fire agencies and the County should conduct, on an individual agency and county-wide basis, evaluations of alternative service models utilizing independent consultants with a history of analyzing fire agency challenges.

RESPONSE: The District believes this recommendation requires further analysis because of the extensive actions and on-going analysis by LAFCO of the very provisions addressed by the recommendation – that is – the economical provision for efficient governmental services as analyzed under required MSRs for all fire agencies and the implementation of MSRs through the formulation (periodically) of SOIs by LAFCO for the efficient delivery of fire services. The District will continue to evaluate its financial situation (it is a regularly agenda item on the District Board’s monthly meeting) to address the continued efficient administration and delivery of District fire services.

4. Fire agencies, LAFCO and the County should find ways to cooperate with one another in the evaluation and adoption of alternative service delivery models.

RESPONSE: Again, the District believes that LAFCO is the most efficient entity to continue to pursue the type of analysis and contemplated implementation associated with this recommendation.

FACTUAL CLARIFICATION

With respect to Fire Protection Districts it is not clear from the plain language of the Report that the Grand Jury is aware of the on-going situation with respect to the administration of Emergency Medical Services (“EMS”) and the continued efforts of the State through the State Emergency Medical Services Agency to directly control the administration of EMS emergency transport, especially with respect to the “grandfathered” provisions (Health and Safety Code section 1797.201) to provide

The Honorable Lloyd Bell, Foreperson
And Members of the 2011-2012
Contra Costa County Civil Grand Jury
August 30, 2012
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EMS emergency transport. The administration of emergency medical services transport, an area in which the District has been an innovating public agency state and nationally, is not referred to in the Report although constituting on a fee for services basis approximately 5% of the District's revenue.

Given the increase in responses by the District in the medical area and the overall increase of the number of responses, the Report's observations generally about fire services should be clarified or supplemented, if appropriate in future reports to thoroughly evaluate this intragal component of the administration of fire and emergency medical services including medical transport.

The District presently utilizes current technology innovations to more efficiently provide fire and emergency medical services through, among other things, the utilization of computerized response taking into consideration available District and adjoining agency resources (through Mutual and Automatic Aid Agreements) as well as through involvement of interested members of the public which include members of the District's Community Emergency Response Team ("CERT") individuals. The utilization of modern technology has facilitated increased efficiencies in providing life and property saving services through District personnel, the CERT and members of the public.

The Report does not evidence or analyze how the impact of the dissolution of Redevelopment Agencies (see, December 29, 2011 California Supreme Court decision, *Redevelopmen Association v. Matasantos*) and the distribution of their assets (real property) and reallocation of their portions of the property tax may impact fire facilities, equipment staffing and service.

Very truly yours,



Thomas J. Linari
Board President

TJL

cc: Jennifer G. Price, Director
Roxanne W. Lindsay, Director
Matthew J. Stamey, Director
Glenn W. Umont, Director
Richard Price, District Chief