

**DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION**

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October 2, 2020

President Chavez and Members of the Board of Supervisors
County of Santa Clara
70 West Hedding Street
East Wing, 10th Floor
San Jose, Ca 95110

RE: Dissolution of Fire Districts in Santa Clara County

As the South Santa Clara County Fire Protection District Fire Chief, I am writing this letter regarding agenda items 13 through 18, coming before you for consideration at the October 6, 2020 regularly scheduled meeting as they directly impact the fire services in the South Santa Clara County Fire Protection District, City of Morgan Hill as well as impacts to CAL FIRE Local 2881, SEUI and CSLEA employee labor groups.

CAL FIRE supports the concept of reviewing fire service efficiencies and opportunities for improvement. This should be done regularly as there are many layers to review and consider.

I and the CAL FIRE Executive Leadership have significant concerns with the timing and speed of the current consolidation process associated with fire districts in Santa Clara County. This process is literally unfolding during the largest fire siege in our State's history. Virtually all CAL FIRE employees are actively engaged in fighting fire locally, regionally and state wide.

It is CAL FIRE's stance that any discussions related to fire service consolidation be handled in a thoughtful and deliberate manner. Consolidation discussions directly related to a current CAL FIRE Cooperative Agreement should be conducted in the spirit of cooperation. These discussions should begin with commissioning a contemporary consolidation study in which all stakeholders and the public alike are made aware of the situation, available to discuss concepts and afforded a seat at the table. This would also include the industry standard of a detailed review by the Local Agency Formation Commission. This process ensures a holistic view of fire services is understood by all parties in a transparent and intentional way.

CAL FIRE is currently in a Cooperative Fire Protection Services Agreement with the South Santa Clara County Fire Protection District through June 30th, 2023.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jake Hess".

Jake Hess
CAL FIRE Unit Chief
South Santa Clara County Fire Protection District Fire Chief
Morgan Hill Fire Department Fire Chief