

****UPDATE NEW INFORMATION****

County Counsel has made the following recommendations to the Board of Supervisors in regards to LAHCFD as a part of items 16 and 18

Item #16

Adopt Resolution of the Governing Board of the Santa Clara County Central Fire Protection District Initiating Application by the Santa Clara County Central Fire Protection District for the Dissolution of the South Santa Clara County Fire District and the Los Altos Hills County Fire District and Annexation of their Territories into the Santa Clara County Central Fire Protection District.

Item #18

Adopt Resolution of the Governing Board of the Los Altos Hills County Fire District rescinding its delegation of authority to the Los Altos Hills County Fire District Board of Commissioners and initiating application by the Los Altos Hills County Fire District requesting the Santa Clara County Local Agency Formation Commission pursue proceedings for the dissolution of the South Santa Clara County Fire District and the Los Altos Hills County Fire District and annexation of their territories into the Santa Clara County Central Fire Protection District.

Thank you for volunteering to speak/comment at the Board of Supervisor's Meeting next Tuesday, October 6, 2020 at 1:00 p.m. We provide the following talking points (see below). Note: There a number of points to review and choose from. Please select talking points that seem important to you and express your thoughts to the Board.

Public Comment Talking Points

Local control to residents and benefits of local Fire Commissioners

- Since 1939, the Fire District has focused on fire safety and emergency response and has repeatedly shown the value of local management and control and has established good communication with residents and public.
- Consolidation/Dissolution will have no benefit to our residents, as our operations are already well-integrated with the larger region. We contract with County Fire for fire and emergency services, the County Fire chief (or his delegate) attends every one of our Board meetings, we already participate in Mutual Aid, and we have strong links with our neighbors (e.g. Town of Los Altos Hills, Mid-Pen Open Space). To disrupt this process provides little in return and stakes are too high to jeopardize fire safety and disaster preparedness.
- The recent management audit of the LAHCFD raised some points that deserve follow-up, but it contained nothing to justify consolidation/dissolution or rescinding of the delegation of authority to the Fire Commission. District has implemented the recommendations and seeks to preserve the delegation of authority. Nothing remains

to justify consolidation/dissolution or to rescind the delegation of authority to the District.

- County Fire's core business is rescue and suppression of fires. It contracts out emergency medical services. The core business of LAHCFD is protection and prevention through many programs to reduce fire loading and vegetation management, train and utilize resident volunteers, manage the District's 540 fire hydrants and equipment, provide support to neighborhoods to develop FireWise communities. This is not the core business of County Fire.
- Loss of program oversight could result in loss of momentum to establish FireWise communities and neighborhood networks that build resilient communities.
- Residents need more protection against fire, not less. LAHCFD is a high-fire risk community and needs to maintain a Fire Commission and budget for local programs to meet these fire and emergency risks.
- Spreading the LAHCFD's budget around to other fire districts would increase the fire risk in the LAHCFD and in the bordering communities.
- Rescinding the LAHCFD's Fire Commission's authority would disrupt its ongoing operations in the middle of a series of catastrophic fire seasons. That could only worsen public safety and place the community at risk.
- Consolidation/ Dissolution could result in transfer of local tax dollars to areas outside LAHCFD. What is the plan to continue protection and prevention programs to our community once funding ends?
- Fire and emergency mitigation efforts need local knowledge and support, which is best achieved through local involvement. How will the County provide this support once the Commission and programs are removed?
- Rescinding authority to the Fire Commission, which consists of local residents from both the incorporated and unincorporated areas and elected representatives of the LAH Town Council, would reduce local involvement and leave the community with no voice in emergency, disaster, wildfire, earthquake protection and prevention as we have now. How will this vacuum of representation be filled?
- Active Community Emergency Response Team, CERTs, that meets weekly with the LAH Emergency Communications Committee and supports the District's emergency supply containers and ARK hub would lose its training, motivation to serve the community and emergency management support system.
- I am concerned there would be loss of current programs and training for residents' emergency preparedness.
- The services to the community that the District provides through its fire resiliency programs and for emergency and disaster preparedness cannot be performed with the same quality, expedience, and cost efficiency, while maintaining positive community relationships, without local control.

Fire Risks and mitigation programs in LAHCFD

- LAHCFD borders extreme-risk areas owned by the Mid-pen Regional Open Space District and Palo Alto foothills. District collaboration with Open Space District and City of Palo Alto on wildfire protection efforts are important to continue and to strengthen.

- The Coffey Park neighborhood in Santa Rosa, destroyed by the 2017 Tubbs fire, was separated from the nearest high-risk area by more than a mile of low-risk terrain and a six-lane freeway. We have neither.
- LAHCFD's programs have been ones that served to reduce fire risk and disaster and emergency preparedness. The programs that the audit criticized had been widely publicized and reviewed including use of District funds, without objections being raised.
- Important LAHCFD Programs include construction of shaded fuel breaks for evacuation and staging of firefighting crews. Training for and providing evacuation drills for residents in coordination with Fire Department, LAH Town and County sheriff. Program for Home Ignition Zones surveys with residents to assess fire fuels on property, building structures and provide recommendations for fire-safety.
- The District manages an Integrated Hazardous Fuel Reduction Program that is based on the Community Wildfire Prevention Plan and fire science principles.
- The District offers HIZ (Home Ignition Zone) surveys to assist residents to know how to mitigate fire risks, remove hazardous fire fuels and harden their property and home for greater survival from fire events

Merits of a Regional approach to fire protection and collaboration between agencies

- All of the issues can be worked out cooperatively within a proper process without immediately resorting to consolidation/dissolution or rescinding of the delegation of authority
- The Audit is being used outside of the intended purpose to bolster the move for consolidation/dissolution, when not a word in the audit mentioned consolidation/dissolution.
- Consolidation/dissolution of the Fire District and annex to Central Fire leaves many questions, no plans for continuation of prevention and protection programs, and no understanding of the use of District tax revenues because the consolidation, dissolution or annex has not been studied, discussed, or provided in writing in reports or in the management audit. The negative outcomes that deal with property and life safety are profoundly affected.
- Board of Supervisors is requested to consider many options available for regional fire protection services throughout the County. These include exploring options for regional fire protection, Joint Powers Authority, review of service areas and service zones, review of the use of Prop 172 funds for public safety that are not being dedicated to fire protection, and other options that may be available. There are many factors that need to be explored.
- LAHCFD funds a 24/7 Battalion Chief, extra type 3 engine, and extra mode staffing during high fire warning days. These resources are provided to bolster mutual aid capabilities and add fire staffing that benefits the region.

Personal observation topics for comments:

- Comment on your experiences, concern about a neighboring fire or emergency.

- Have you made an evacuation kit or plan, participated in emergency preparedness classes or training or events and applied what you learned?
- Ever attended or viewed online a Commission Board meeting and seen it in action?
- Have you volunteered in the community in any capacity?
- Why is local control in government important to you and the community?
- What services does LAHCFD provide that are important to the safety of your property, family, and community?