

CONTRA COSTA LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION
MINUTES OF SPECIAL LAFCO MEETING - FIRE WORKSHOP

May 21, 2010

July 14, 2010
Agenda Item 5b

Martinez City Hall - Martinez, CA

1. LAFCO Chair Martin McNair called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m.
2. A quorum was present of the following Commissioners:
City Members Helen Allen (arrived at 9:10) and Rob Schroder and Alternate Don Tatzin.
County Members Gayle Uilkema and Alternate Mary Piepho (arrived 8:50).
Public Member Martin McNair.
Special District Members David Piepho and Alternate George Schmidt.
Staff present were Executive Officer Lou Ann Texeira and Commission Clerk Kate Sibley.
3. Welcome and introductions
Chair McNair thanked everyone for coming, introduced Bill Chiat, workshop facilitator, and participants introduced themselves. Approximately 50 people attended, representing County, city and special district officials and staff, fire commissioners, representatives from labor, and members of the public.
4. Summary from February Workshop and CALAFCO U Workshops
Bill Chiat recapped the main points of the February workshop, and reminded attendees that every county in California is struggling with these same issues. He stated that the most pressing issue is establishing funding sustainability for all fire districts, with service equity a close second in priority, and that public education is important for achieving both of these priorities.
Commissioner Rob Schroder provided highlights of the CALAFCO U workshops that he attended (San Diego, June 2009; Santa Rosa, April 2010). He noted there are a number of collaborative options that can be effective without full consolidation; all of these efforts require buy-in from all affected parties. Chiat noted that there will be a third CALAFCO U workshop on fire services in November 2010, most likely in Modesto.
5. Reports on Progress on Solutions from Regional Groups and Agencies
Belinda Espinosa, Pinole City Manager, reported on the West County subcommittee composed of representatives from the West County Mayors Association, fire chiefs from Pinole, Rodeo-Hercules, Richmond, and ConFire. The primary concern to date has been ensuring the continued future and viability of Battalion 7, a collaboration among the Pinole Fire Department, Rodeo-Hercules FPD, and ConFire. Other issues under discussion include: Public education, a need for centralized information and statistics, an evaluation of the various departments' costs, and finance and governance. Meetings have been put on hold until budgets for the coming fiscal year are finalized.
Alan Biagi, Rodeo-Hercules FPD Chief, confirmed that his district is going forward with hiring a new chief, and the role of that chief may change in time in response to concerns and decisions of the West County collaborative efforts. An additional concern in the West County discussions is funding opportunities and challenges, especially those associated with redevelopment areas.
Other West County agency comments came from Lance Maples, Chief of El Cerrito Fire Department and Kensington FPD, Gerald Littleton, Chief of Crockett-Carquinez FPD, and Michael Banks, Chief of Richmond Fire Department commented on settlement with Chevron; all indicated ongoing willingness to work with other West County agencies in collaborative and partnership opportunities, including formal auto aid agreements.

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Rich Grace, Interim Chief of ConFire, reported that as of June 1, the new chief, Daryl Louder, will begin work, and that ConFire is working with Pinole to ensure the continued success of Battalion 7.

Randy Bradley, Chief of Moraga-Orinda FD, indicated his district is doing well and looking at alternatives submitted by residents of the district.

Frank Sperling added that while MOFD has a balanced operating budget, it is facing pension liabilities just as other agencies are, and is examining its funding infrastructure. Tom McCormick, Orinda Mayor, agreed with this and noted openness to partnerships.

Ellen Dale, Orinda resident, stated that she has not yet found one person interested in consolidation.

Hugh Henderson, Interim Chief of East Contra Costa FPD, commented on his district's continuing heavy fiscal losses. The new board is currently looking at service levels, staffing models, and the possibility of station closures.

Vince Wells, President of Local 1230, reported that the union is busy with budget discussions throughout the county, and that the union is going to focus on educating citizens, community groups, and local agencies on what fire districts do in exchange for tax dollars. Wells introduced a colleague, who gave an overview of such an educational presentation, with a focus on the variety of public and safety services provided, and the types of skills and numbers of personnel needed.

Commissioners offered observations regarding the value of the educational presentation. Chiat agreed that once people begin seeing the depth and breadth of services provided in context with their own lives, they begin to understand the value of those services.

6. Assess Progress on Key Issues

Following small group discussions, the group discussed what issues are being addressed at this time, what is being missed, and if there are recommendations for further development.

Dick Olsen, Lance Maples, Gil Guerrero, and Tom McCormick presented reports from the small groups.

Issues Being Addressed:

Education effort to be expanded

Relationships between agencies and labor groups

Auto aid - formal and informal

Issues Being Missed:

Quality data on responses by station (regional service)

Look at where stations should be; are locations outdated for current conditions?

Redevelopment impacts on ConFire in San Pablo and elsewhere

Prepare for end of redevelopment agreements far in advance of termination

Inequities of funding

Analysis of 1% property tax - TRA wheel

Should the public pay more?

10-year plan - keep our eye on long-term plans, not just short-term problems

Countywide ambulance service rather than same being provided by FPDs

Develop a common service model countywide (How does current service compare?)

More effective use and sharing of resources (engines, boats, etc.)

Spread resources over county - impact on FD for coverage

How do we address costs of service, including labor?

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7. Recommendations:

Look at station locations and their effectiveness in terms of areas of growth

Redevelopment agreements should be addressed

What is the effectiveness of a countywide ambulance service?

Mount comprehensive education program

Examine more effective use of and sharing of resources (equipment, facilities, chiefs)

Final discussion included the possibility of forming small working groups to address both the immediate and long-term challenges identified, with representatives from agencies, the public, LAFCO, and the County Board of Supervisors. It was agreed that LAFCO Commissioners would discuss this at a future LAFCO meeting in order to determine the direction of such an effort.

Chair McNair thanked Bill Chiat for his leadership in these workshops.

8. Public Comment

Al Delgrande, resident of Brentwood, spoke regarding a letter from Commissioners Allen and Schroder to the Brentwood Press regarding the upcoming vote on Brentwood's Urban Limit Line (Measure F), and requested a retraction and denunciation from LAFCO.

The meeting adjourned at 11:49 a.m.

Final Minutes Approved by the Commission on July 14, 2010.

AYES:

NOES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

By _____

Executive Officer

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