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November 10, 2010 (Agenda)

November 10, 2010
Agenda Item 7

Contra Costa Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO)
651 Pine Street, Sixth Floor
Martinez, CA 94553

Fire Service Report

Dear Commissioners:

In 2009, LAFCO completed a countywide Municipal Services Review (MSR) covering fire and emergency medical services provided by three cities and eight special districts. The major outcomes of the MSR report included the following:

- ❖ Provided a comprehensive overview of fire/emergency medical services
- ❖ Identified resource sharing and showcased best practices relating to municipal services
- ❖ Identified service, infrastructure, fiscal and other challenges
- ❖ Provided a basis for sphere of influence updates and future boundary changes
- ❖ Served as a catalyst for further discussions and activities

In conjunction with the MSR, LAFCO formed an ad hoc fire committee. The committee held five meetings to facilitate discussion and receive additional public input regarding the governance and SOI options identified in the MSR report.

The MSR report has served as a vehicle for ongoing dialogue. Local agencies, labor and the general public have been engaged and have provided LAFCO with valuable updates regarding agency activities. Since the MSR report was released, a number of significant actions have occurred, including the following:

- In October 2009, the East Contra Costa Fire Protection District (ECCFPD) reconstituted its Board. The governing Board was previously the Board of Supervisors. The new Board comprises representatives from the City of Brentwood, City of Oakley, and unincorporated County at large. The District is also considering going to its voters with proposals to have a directly elected Board and to impose a parcel tax.
- A West County Fire Task Force was formed. The focus of the group is to address short term (staffing and cost issues) and long term goals (consolidation and global vision).

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

The workshops included small and large group discussions, information sharing, problem identification, discussion of key issues and potential opportunities. The discussions resulted in a list of **pressing issues** facing fire and emergency medical services in the County. Recurring issues identified included:

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

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

- ❖ 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

For the past few months, the Commission's discussions have focused on funding and fiscal sustainability; and in particular, the effects of property tax decline and redevelopment funding on fire and emergency medical service revenues. The decline in revenue has forced fire service providers to take severe measures, including closing/browning out fire stations, eliminating positions, modifying service delivery, reallocating staff, deferring expenses (e.g., capital outlay), increasing fees and depleting reserves.

These issues 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. CALAFCO will host its third workshop on fire service challenges on November 5, 2010.

In an effort to move forward, the Commissioners agreed to bring to the November 10 LAFCO meeting their thoughts and ideas about short, mid- and long-term goals and next steps.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Receive report; discuss goals and next steps; and provide direction as desired.

Sincerely,

LOU ANN TEXEIRA
EXECUTIVE OFFICER