



January 12, 2011
Agenda Item 9

January 12, 2011 (Agenda)

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 MSR report provided a comprehensive overview of fire/emergency medical services; identified resource sharing and showcased best practices relating to services; identified service, infrastructure, fiscal and other challenges; provided a basis for sphere of influence (SOI) updates and future boundary changes; and served as a catalyst for ongoing dialogue.

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. LAFCO also hosted two fire workshops, the outcomes of which resulted in a list of pressing issues and potential opportunities.

Local agencies, labor and the general public have provided LAFCO with valuable input regarding fire service issues. For the past few months, discussions have focused on funding and fiscal sustainability. The decline in revenue, namely properties taxes, 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 18 months.

In November, the Commission discussed their thoughts and ideas about short, mid- and long-term goals and next steps. In addition, the Commission directed staff to contact Stewart Gary of Citygate Associates regarding future assistance with assessment of fire service issues in Contra Costa County. We have invited Mr. Gary to attend the LAFCO meeting on January 12 to discuss his ideas with the Commission.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

Sincerely,

LOU ANN TEXEIRA
EXECUTIVE OFFICER