



Lou Ann Texeira
Executive Officer

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February 12, 2014 (Agenda)

February 12, 2014
 Agenda Item 11

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

Update – County Fire Service Study

Dear Members of the Commission:

In February 2013, the County embarked on two separate studies – one covering Contra Costa County Fire Protection District (CCCFPD) services, and a separate study of emergency medical services (EMS). Each study has a separate focus and scope of work supported by two distinct project teams of Fitch & Associates consultants.

The focus of the CCCFPD study is to explore fire service delivery through a review of existing service levels, staffing levels and practices, responses models, projected service demand, and strategies for effectiveness and efficiencies.

The project team completed a series of meetings with County management and officials, union representatives, and key stakeholders including other fire districts, the EMS agency, LAFCO representatives, and city managers and mayors of the cities served by CCCFPD. The Fitch team provided the Board interim reports in August and December 2013 with preliminary findings and potential options.

On January 13, 2014, the County released the *Draft Evaluation and Options Appraisal Study* (CCCFPD) with a three-week public comment period ending on January 31, 2014. An email transmitting the draft report was sent to the Commission on January 13. The Commission’s ad hoc committee (Commissioners Blubaugh and Tatzin and the LAFCO Executive Officer) reviewed the draft report and provided general and specific comments (attached).

On January 22, 2014, the LAFCO Executive Officer attended a public Town Hall meeting at which time the Fitch team presented an overview of the draft report and received public comments. The overview included observations of CCCFPD’s current operations, a fiscal analysis, and three short-term options that may sustain the District for the next 3-4 years. The draft report and presentation materials are available on the County’s website.

Included among Fitch's observations are the following:

Operations/Emergency Response

- The impact of decommissioning four fire stations in 2013 was relatively insignificant in terms of response times
- CCCFPD does not have sufficient resources to provide appropriate support services
- Crew chute time is longer than expected and should be shortened

Fiscal

- Anticipated increases in property tax revenues and lower retirement expenses partially alleviated CCCFPD's immediate fiscal crisis. However, continuing structural deficits coupled with zero budgets for pressing fleet and infrastructure needs will threaten even short-term financial sustainability.
- The fact that operational plans going forward contain no budget provisions for capital replacement is a concern. The need for capital replacement will transition from being urgent to critical.

Communications

- The Communications Center does not use best practice protocol-based dispatch for fire calls, which impacts dispatch performance negatively.

The **Options** presented in the draft report include:

1. Maintain status quo
2. Implement the Optimized Service Delivery Model Option (three/two response staffing)
3. Implement the Single Patch Alternative Responder Personnel Option

The Fitch team will look at Option 2 in more depth as part of the final report. This option involves converting two 3-person engine companies to three 2-person Quick Response Vehicle companies. The report indicates that this change would allow CCCFPD to financially sustain itself for another three years under the current revenue structure with no layoffs.

The draft report concludes that excess capacity has been removed from the system (through decommissioning), and that subsequent efforts to demonstrate value to the public will be to improve dispatch and chute times. These efforts can result in improved service and be accomplished at minimal financial cost.

The project will culminate in a final report and recommendations to the Board of Supervisors in late February 2014.

RECOMMENDATION - Receive update and provide comments as desired.

Sincerely,

LOU ANN TEXEIRA
EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Attached – LAFCO Comment Letter – Fitch's *Draft Evaluation and Options Appraisal Study*



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January 31, 2014

Tim Ewell, Senior Deputy County Administrator
County of Contra Costa
651 Pine Street, 10th Floor
Martinez, CA 94553
Attn: Fitch Study - Public Comment

Dear Tim,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the *Draft Evaluation and Options Appraisal Study of the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District (CCCFPD)*.

The LAFCO subcommittee, comprised of Commissioners Blubaugh and Tatzin, and LAFCO staff offer the following general and specific comments and questions.

General Comments/Questions

1. The draft report encourages using more basic life support rather than paramedic response, to be phased in over time. However, the report does not address a scenario whereby CCCFPD gets out of the business of basic and advanced life support and allows the private sector to handle these calls. It would be worthwhile to look at this option, potential savings to the District, and any corresponding cost increases to the emergency health care system.
2. The report did not deal with option of fire district consolidations. Why?
3. The Fitch study focuses primarily on short-term solutions. Will long-term solutions be studied?

Specific Comments/Questions

1. Response Times (p. 2) - How have response times varied in those areas where closed stations were the nearest provider? We would expect those to have been low volume stations so they might not have much effect on the 90th percentile evaluation but the closures could have significant impacts in those areas.

2. Single Patch (p. 8) - How many "EMT only" staff are being considered, and in what locations? What would be the effect on fighting fires that occur? How much is saved for the number of staff contemplated? To what extent does this constrain staff scheduling and thereby affect overtime and other costs?
3. 3/2 Staffing Impacts (p. 9) - What happens to fire response times defined in terms of when you can start fighting a fire, particularly in areas around stations that go from 3 to 2? Which stations are the candidates to go from 3 to 2 and which should be reopened with 2?
4. Cost of \$770,000 per firefighter (p. 18) – Please confirm this number, as it seems high. What other "fixed" operating costs exist? What is the average salary and what are the benefits less those counted as fixed costs?
5. Why are upper call volumes limited to two calls per month per square kilometer in the zone and surrounding eight zones? What would happen to the graphs and conclusions if you included the actual data for each area? (pp. 40-60)
6. District Governance (p. 29) - There is a description of the district formation process. We suggest that the first bullet point - "*Application*" be modified as follows: "**Depending on the type of district being formed, formation may be initiated by a petition of registered voters or landowners, or by a resolution of an existing local government agency.**"

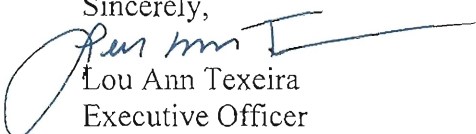
Under the second bullet point - "*Review and Approval*" LAFCO can approve **with conditions**.

Also, it is possible to form a new district **without an election**, if the formation is part of a reorganization or consolidation where two or more districts are proceeding under the adoption of substantially similar initiating resolutions. This is how East Contra Costa Fire District was formed.

7. Communications (starting on p. 35) - The LAFCO 2009 MSR encouraged the County to coordinate a 911 dispatch study in conjunction with County Sheriff and PSAP manager's group. We note that the Communications chapter discusses system deficiencies, which is consistent with the LAFCO MSR report.
8. Operations Analysis (p. 68) Figure 26 - It would be useful to include the station locations (e.g., "Antioch", "El Sobrante", etc.).

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We look forward to receiving a copy of the final report.

Sincerely,



Lou Ann Teixeira
Executive Officer

c: Each Member, Contra Costa LAFCO