



Los Altos Hills County Fire District

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DAVID H. YAMASAKI
Chief Executive Officer/Chief
Superior Court of CA County of Santa Clara
BY D. ALDYCKI

Tuesday, September 20, 2011

Richard J Loftus, Jr.
Presiding Judge
Santa Clara County Superior Court
191 North First Street
San Jose, CA 95113

Dear Judge Loftus:

In response to the letter dated August 11, 2011, requesting that we respond to the Grand Jury report entitled "Fighting Fire or Fighting Change? Rethinking Fire Department Response Protocol and Consolidation Opportunities," we have been asked to respond to Findings 1 and 3 and Recommendations 1B and 3A. Thank you for the additional time allowed to respond.

Finding 1

It is extremely costly to equip a fire department for only the occasional fire response; the County and fifteen towns/cities have not been proactive in challenging fire departments to adopt changes that are more cost effective and that better serve their communities. Further, unions are more interested in job preservation than in providing the right mix of capabilities at a reasonable cost, using scare tactics to influence the public and fostering firefighter unwillingness to collaborate with EMS.

We disagree with Finding 1. We, as a board believe that we have been responsive to change, as has the agency we contract with – Santa Clara County Fire. In 1996 we dissolved our small agency and began contracting with a much larger agency (Santa Clara County Fire) for emergency services. This change improved resources available to our district residents and gave us a more regional approach to our emergency services. As we did in 1996, 2006, and will in 2016 (upon contract renewal), we review the services and response criteria and develop it to meet our specialized and diverse needs from standard emergency medical response to wild lands firefighting.

We do not interact with the Union – we contract at a fixed fee for services and therefore do not have sufficient information to respond to the Union part of the question. In our limited exposure to the County fire system (we have one station) we see that the firefighters collaborate and work well with the EMS personnel.

Recommendation 1B

All fifteen towns/cities—Campbell, Cupertino, Gilroy, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Los Gatos, Monte Sereno, Morgan Hill, Milpitas, Mountain View, Palo Alto, San Jose, Santa Clara, Saratoga, Sunnyvale—and the County (for CCFD and SCFD) should determine the emergency response service they want to achieve, particularly as to the result, then determine how best to achieve that.

In response to recommendation 1B we agree and believe we do that now.

Finding 3

Whether the emergency responder is a firefighter-paramedic or an EMS paramedic matters little to the person with the medical emergency; using firefighter-paramedics in firefighting equipment as first responders to all non-police emergencies is unnecessarily costly when less expensive paramedics on ambulances possess the skills needed to address the 96% of calls that are not fire related.

As to Finding 3, we disagree. Our district is unique and very diverse; we respond to many types of calls from freeway accidents to remote wild land fires and rescues. Our district is diverse and has remote areas. We believe emergency responders should be well-equipped with the proper tools in order to respond appropriately.. Upon completion of a call they may be dispatched to another type of call and need the proper equipment to respond accordingly,. Arriving to one of these remote areas without the necessary equipment and personnel will cause delays to emergency services and endanger our district residents' safety and welfare.

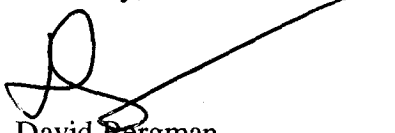
Recommendation 3A

All fifteen towns/cities—Campbell, Cupertino, Gilroy, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Los Gatos, Monte Sereno, Morgan Hill, Milpitas, Mountain View, Palo Alto, San Jose, Santa Clara, Saratoga, Sunnyvale—and the County (for CCFD and SCFD) should adopt an emergency services department mentality and staff or contract accordingly to meet demand.

To recommendation 3A we agree, and we do this now.

If you have any questions for need any clarification please contact me.

Sincerely,



David Bergman
President