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SEP 12 2011

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

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 23, 2011

TO: Honorable Richard J. Loftus, Presiding Judge, Santa Clara County Superior Court

FROM: Governing Body, City of Los Altos

SUBJECT: Responses to Findings and Recommendations in the Final Report by the 2010-2011 Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury; Fighting Fire or Fighting Change? Rethinking Fire Department Response Protocol and Consolidation Opportunities.

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.

Response 1

Respondent (City of Los Altos) disagrees wholly or partially with the Finding. The City was very proactive in the decision to consolidate its fire services with Santa Clara County Fire Department in 1996 through 2006. The consolidation of fire service was amended in 2006 and the Agreement was renewed with modifications in terms through 2016.

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.

Response 1B

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable. The City does not operate a fire department and does not have operational jurisdiction pertaining to matters under the control of the City of Los Altos governing body with said fire departments or agencies to enable the City to implement the recommendation. However, upon conclusion of the current fire service agreement, the City could determine the desired level of emergency response service with the current or with a new service provider pursuant to a new service agreement.

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.

Response 3

Respondent (City of Los Altos) agrees with the finding.

Recommendation 3A

The 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.

Response 3A

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable. The City does not operate a fire department and does not have operational jurisdiction pertaining to matters under the control of the City of Los Altos governing body with said fire departments or agencies to enable the City to implement the recommendation.

End of Response Report