



CITY OF SARATOGA

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Incorporated October 22, 1956

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

August 18, 2011

Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury
Office of the Civil Grand Jury
c/o Honorable Richard J. Loftus, Jr.
Presiding Judge
Santa Clara County Superior Court
191 North First Street
San Jose, CA 95113

Re: 2010-2011 SANTA CLARA COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY REPORT REGARDING
"FIGHTING FIRE OR FIGHTING CHANGE? RETHINKING FIRE DEPARTMENT
RESPONSE PROTOCOL AND CONSOLIDATION OPPORTUNITIES"

Honorable Members of the Civil Grand Jury:

The City Council for the City of Saratoga has reviewed your June 15, 2011 report regarding Fighting Fire or Fighting Change? Rethinking Fire Department Response Protocol And Consolidation Opportunities ("Report") and authorized me to provide this response. The City Council appreciates the thorough and deliberate work of the Civil Grand Jury and its attention to identifying opportunities for public sector cost control.

With respect to the specific applicable findings and recommendations in the Report, the City's response is set forth below:

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.

The City disagrees based on lack of information to make a determination on this finding for fire service in the City. The City was established as a minimum services city with a deliberate decision on the part of the City's founders to leave fire service in the hands of the two independent fire districts serving residents of the City. Accordingly, the City lacks the institutional expertise to evaluate the specific circumstances of staffing and equipment levels in Saratoga. As a general matter, residents of the City appear satisfied with the quality of service, particularly since the two districts entered a boundary drop agreement in 2001 and the Saratoga Fire Protection District ("SFPD") contracted with Santa Clara County Central Fire District to provide services on SFPD's behalf beginning in 2008. Given limited funding available in the

current fiscal climate, the City lacks the resources to perform an independent evaluation of services not within its jurisdiction.

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.

The City will implement this recommendation on an ongoing basis by regularly consulting with the independent fire districts serving residents of Saratoga.

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.

The City agrees that whether the emergency responder is a firefighter-paramedic or an EMS paramedic matters little to the person with the medical emergency. The City disagrees with the remainder of the finding based on lack of information regarding the necessity of costs involved given the specific circumstances in Saratoga. As noted above, the City was established as a minimum services City with a deliberate decision on the part of the City's founders to leave fire service in the hands of the two independent fire districts serving residents of the City. Accordingly, the City lacks the institutional expertise to evaluate the specific circumstances of management and resource allocation decisions with respect to fire protection in Saratoga.

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.

The recommendation has been implemented. The City has jurisdiction over police services (via contract with the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Department) and disaster preparedness. The City promotes close cooperation between these two departments and encourages coordination with other emergency service providers such as the independent fire districts serving the City.

Thank you for your consideration of this response.

Sincerely,



Howard A. Miller
Mayor, City of Saratoga

Cc: Members of the Saratoga City Council
City Manager
City Attorney