



July 12, 2016

Honorable Robert C Fracchia, Presiding Judge
Hall of Justice
Department 25, Room 306
600 Union Avenue
Fairfield, CA 94533

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SOLANO SUPERIOR COURT

JUL 28 2016

JUDGE ROBERT C. FRACCHIA
DEPT. 25

The Honorable Judge Fracchia,

RE: Response to Grand Jury Report on June 22, 2016 – Cordelia Fire Protection District

Pursuant to Penal Code section 933.05, the Board of Directors of the Cordelia Fire Protection District responds to the following findings and recommendations contained in the 2015-2016 Grand Jury Report regarding the Cordelia Fire Protection District.

Finding 1

It appeared that members of the board did not have a full working knowledge of the budget, and in particular, what was contained within each line item.

Response to Finding 1

Board of Directors: The Board of Directors partially agrees with the finding but points out that two of the Directors had recently joined the board, approximately two months prior to the interviews, and were not yet fully familiar with the budget. The evidence does not support the finding of lack of knowledge by the Grand Jury. Additionally, the Grand Jury used Solano County descriptions of budget items rather than the district descriptions. Finally the largest item in the report, the Capital Facilities Fees - \$70,992 listed by the Grand Jury, as a subject of inquiry, is not one of the 85 Cordelia Fire Protection District budget line items. The correct description should have been Building Use Fees. As a result, the Grand Jury used an incorrect description to question board members, which likely resulted in their inability to answer the question.



Recommendation 1

The members of the board of directors meet with the Fire District's accountants and gain a comprehensive understanding of the budget and all of its components.

Response to Recommendation 1

Board of Directors: The recommendation has already been implemented by the Board of Directors, prior to the publishing of the Grand Jury Report. The board had already done a comprehensive review of the budget line items in the preparation of the 2016-2017 budget and received a report from an independent auditor concerning the District's financial statements. The district has also established a new Budget Policy, presented to the board, at a regular board meeting, on May 10, 2016, concerning preparation and review of the budget. This was prior to the Grand Jury Report. The district will continue to monitor the line items in the budget and make changes as necessary and is working to make the budget easier to understand.

Finding 2

The District does not have adequate income to sustain itself as a viable entity.

Response to Finding 2

Board of Directors: The Board of Directors partially agrees with the finding. It should be pointed out using the 5 years data in the Grand Jury Report; the end result is that the district is \$47,565 under budget. The district also feels that the current system of funding fire service via special districts is dysfunctional. This is not unique to this district. The district is able to continue to operate at this time, but a tipping point may be reached in the future.

Recommendation 2

2A The Fire District considers merging with another fire agency (e.g. City of Fairfield, Montezuma Fire District, or City of Suisun City) to effectively service the citizens of the Cordelia Fire District.



Response to Recommendation 2A

Board of Directors: The recommendation has already been implemented by the district to the extent it can by law. It should be noted that the 2004-2005 Grand Jury Report (Solano County Emergency Services a Patchwork of Protection), the 2012-2013 Grand Jury Report (Suisun Fire Protection District) have all recommended consolidation. Finally the 2014-15 Grand Jury Report (Fire Protection Communication Consolidation) in Finding 1 stated, "Studies done over the past thirty years have recommended consolidation of fire agency resources". The Cordelia Fire Protection District continues to agree with these findings and has supported the consolidation of fire districts in Solano County. To be successful, any plan must be beneficial to all parties and address financing challenges as well. The District has no authority to initiate a consolidation on its own. The Solano County Board of Supervisors and/or LAFCO should initiate this action.

2B The Fire District consider developing a plan seeking approval of a bond measure to address the increasing costs to operate the district, including replacement of both station (#29 and #31) and to provide for replacement equipment.

Response to Recommendation 2B

Board of Directors: The recommendation has been implemented in that the District has already started to consider the use of a bond measure, as well as other financial options for capital needs. Station #29 crew quarters are being replaced with a new portable building but other replacements or improvements are not likely until the status of the land is finalized in a sale of old Falls School site by the Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District. Replacement crew quarters are also needed at Station 31. Crews are currently housed in temporary quarters, in the fire hall, as noted in the Grand Jury report. One Type 1 engine is also in need of replacement and there are other needs in the foreseeable future. These needs are in excess of \$2 million. The district does not have the resources to service a debt of that magnitude at this time. Furthermore, merely stating the need for a bond measure does not address the likelihood of the successful passage of a bond measure nor the additional expense to the District to conduct a survey to determine whether there is community support to justify the cost of placing a measure before the voters.



Finding 3

Community outreach is minimal at present.

Response to Finding 3

Board of Directors: The Board of Directors partially agrees with the finding. While community outreach can always be expanded, the Grand Jury failed to note the present district community outreach. The district has a website and a Facebook page and it has been a longtime partner with the Green Valley Landowners Association in getting information out to the community.

Recommendation 3

The Board of Directors need to develop a robust plan to inform and involve the community regarding the current state of the Fire District, the need for additional Funding, opportunities to serve on the Board of Directors, and the options open for the Fire District to remain a viable entity.

Response to Recommendation 3

Board of Directors: The recommendation requires further analysis of other options for community outreach within the next 6 months. The Board of Directors will continue to comply with the law as it relates to openings on the board and consider publication in a local paper of future openings. The board will strive to enhance direct communications with the public and increase contact with local organizations in the district like the Green Valley Landowners Association and any other organizations that may be formed.



Respectfully,

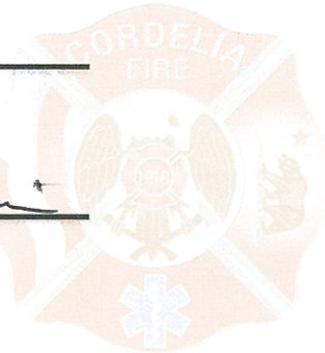
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