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August 18, 2008

Honorable Ramona Garrett
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
Solano Superior Court
600 Union Avenue
Fairfield, CA 94533

Re: 2007/2008 Solano County Grand Jury Report Entitled: **Solano County Fire Protection Districts**, Report Date: **June 12, 2008**

Dear Judge Garrett;

The City of Dixon acknowledges the findings of the Grand Jury and will respond to those findings that have recommendations as outlined below.

Finding #1: Funding for Fire Districts is limited. One of the most critical needs is for fire fighting vehicles.

Recommendation #1a: Fire Protection Districts and the Board of Supervisors should work together to identify funding sources for regular replacement of older vehicles. Provisions in the Government Code authorize funding sources.

Recommendation #1b: Fire Protection Districts and the Board of Supervisors should continue to explore cooperative opportunities to obtain additional funds through creative efforts such as grants.

Response:

Finding #1: The City of Dixon agrees with the finding of the Grand Jury. The District Fire Chiefs and representatives of the Board of Supervisors have been meeting to improve funding for the fire protection districts in Solano County. The Dixon Fire Protection District has applied for a matching grant for a Type III Fire Engine. A decision whether the grant is approved will be reached by October 2008. Because the Dixon Fire Protection District contracts with the City of Dixon, additional fire fighting vehicles are available for use in the District, but belong to the City of Dixon. The District owns two water tenders that are housed at the Dixon Fire Station. Those water tenders are staffed by off-duty Dixon fire fighters as needed on an overtime basis.

City of Dixon

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Finding #2: Communication is often difficult because equipment and frequencies used by different fire fighting agencies are not compatible.

Recommendation #2: Fire Protection Districts, Cities and the County should standardize and consolidate communications as soon as possible.

Response:

Finding #2: The City of Dixon agrees with the finding of the Grand Jury's recommendation that communications should be standardized and consolidated as soon as possible. Given the limited funding available to fire districts, this will be almost impossible to accomplish. Solano County Dispatch is providing some consolidation as dispatchers bridge the gap by relaying information to responders operating on different radio frequencies and band widths.

The following was a finding and subsequent response regarding the 2004/2005 Solano County Grand Jury Report – *Solano County Emergency Services, a Patchwork of Protection*:

Fire Protection Districts and the Board of Supervisors should work together to identify funding sources for Emergency radio communications in Solano County are seriously deficient. Of three corrective options offered by a consultant, this County selected the least expensive. Note that the 2002-2003 Grand Jury recommended the formation of a joint power authority to oversee, coordinate, and implement the emergency communication needs of the County.

A request for proposal went out in April and the county expects to select a vendor by August 2005. Once a vendor is selected and the work completed, Solano County will have a very sophisticated communications system that will meet the needs of all emergency responders. In July 2004, the cities of Benicia, Dixon, Fairfield, Rio Vista, Suisun City, Vacaville, Vallejo and Solano Emergency Medical Services Cooperative approved a Memorandum of Understanding for Joint Solano Emergencies Communications Activities (SECA), where the entities within Solano County agreed to work on implementing the recommendations of the needs assessment submitted by RCC Consultants. Some of the immediate first step objectives of the Memorandum of Understanding include deployment of an interoperable data sharing system for police agencies and the sheriff's office, deployment of a fourth level interoperable radio system for public safety through the use of "gateway" technology, and conform to the requirements of existing and emerging Federal requirements with regards to radio spectrum and frequency allocations. Furthermore, the Memorandum of Understanding establishes a defined structure for respective responsibilities and roles in exploring the feasibility of interoperable public safety communication systems, the management and operation of equipment and systems, which may be purchased, establishment of a cost-sharing plan with the consensus of public safety executives and their respective city managers/county administrators, and the establishment of a steering committee for oversight and administration.

In addition, a formal Memorandum of Understanding will assist the county and working group in their efforts in obtaining Homeland Defense funds or other grant opportunities that may become available through pending legislation, as all parties agree that a majority of the funding needs to be solicited through grants, advances, and other contributions available through the public and private sector.

Also per the MOU, SECA will begin the implementation of a Level Six interoperable radio system for police, fire and emergency service agencies in the County by January 2006, with the goal of completing said system by January 2010. The approximate cost of a Level Six interoperable radio system will be \$40,000,000.

The City of Dixon provides full-service emergency-related services to the Dixon Fire Protection District through a contract. When this issue is resolved for the City of Dixon, it will be resolved for the Dixon Fire Protection District. As of July 18, 2008, SECA representatives have met with the Chief of Police and Fire Chief from the City of Dixon, and will be meeting with the City Manager in the near future to conduct a needs assessment.

Finding #3: Dispatching is challenging because dispatchers also serve law enforcement agencies.

Recommendation #3: The Fire Districts, Cities and the County should explore options to develop a centralized Fire Dispatch.

Response:

Finding #3: The City of Dixon agrees with the findings of the Grand Jury. A centralized Fire Dispatch would be more desirable, however, may prove to be less cost effective. There are many other considerations that would have to be addressed before implementing this recommendation, such as which agency would be in charge or responsible for Fire Dispatch operations.

The Solano County Sheriff's Office Dispatch Center currently provides full-time contract police and fire dispatch services to the City of Dixon and the Dixon Fire Protection District at an affordable price. The Sheriff's Dispatch Center also furnishes the following agencies with dispatch service: Solano Irrigation District, Solano County Animal Control, Solano Community College Police Department, Solano County Coroner's Office, Solano County Parks Department, Solano County Public Works, and the Solano County District Attorney's Office. The Sheriff's Dispatch Center currently functions as the facilitator for all mutual aid within Solano County. It is Solano Dispatch's responsibility to ensure that mutual aid requests, whether they originate from within Solano County or from an agency outside of Solano County, are addressed in a timely and efficient manner. Solano Dispatch is also the coordinator for requests for land and air ambulances within Solano County, as well as all controlled burning in the unincorporated areas of Solano and the Sacramento County Delta region.

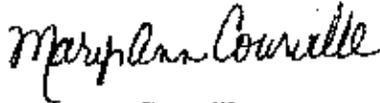
Background Clarification

Additionally, there are two items regarding the Dixon Fire Protection District as listed in the background information that I wish to clarify.

1. The Dixon Fire Protection District does not have a fire department nor employees, but rather contracts with the City of Dixon for Fire protection and EMS first response. The number of employees listed in the report actually belong to the City of Dixon Fire Department and not the District. The City of Dixon has 21 paid firefighters, 7 of those fire fighters are paramedics.
2. The number of residents in the District is about 5,500 as opposed to 2,500 as listed in the report.

If you should have any questions regarding our responses, please contact me at (707) 678-7000.

Respectfully,



Mary Ann Courville
Mayor