



SOLANO COUNTY GRAND JURY
2012-13

SUISUN FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

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I. SUMMARY

Pursuant to a citizen's complaint, the Solano County Grand Jury reviewed the Suisun Fire Protection District (SFPD) for policies and procedures, budget, training, and promotion standards. It was determined there were no written board directives or procedures. It was further found all Board of Directors' positions had expired several years ago with two positions vacant. In addition, there were no written district policies related to personnel, promotion, discipline and training.

II. INTRODUCTION

The Solano County Grand Jury elected to investigate the SFPD in response to a citizen complaint. During the investigation, the Grand Jury discovered other issues that raised concerns, thereby expanding the scope of examination.

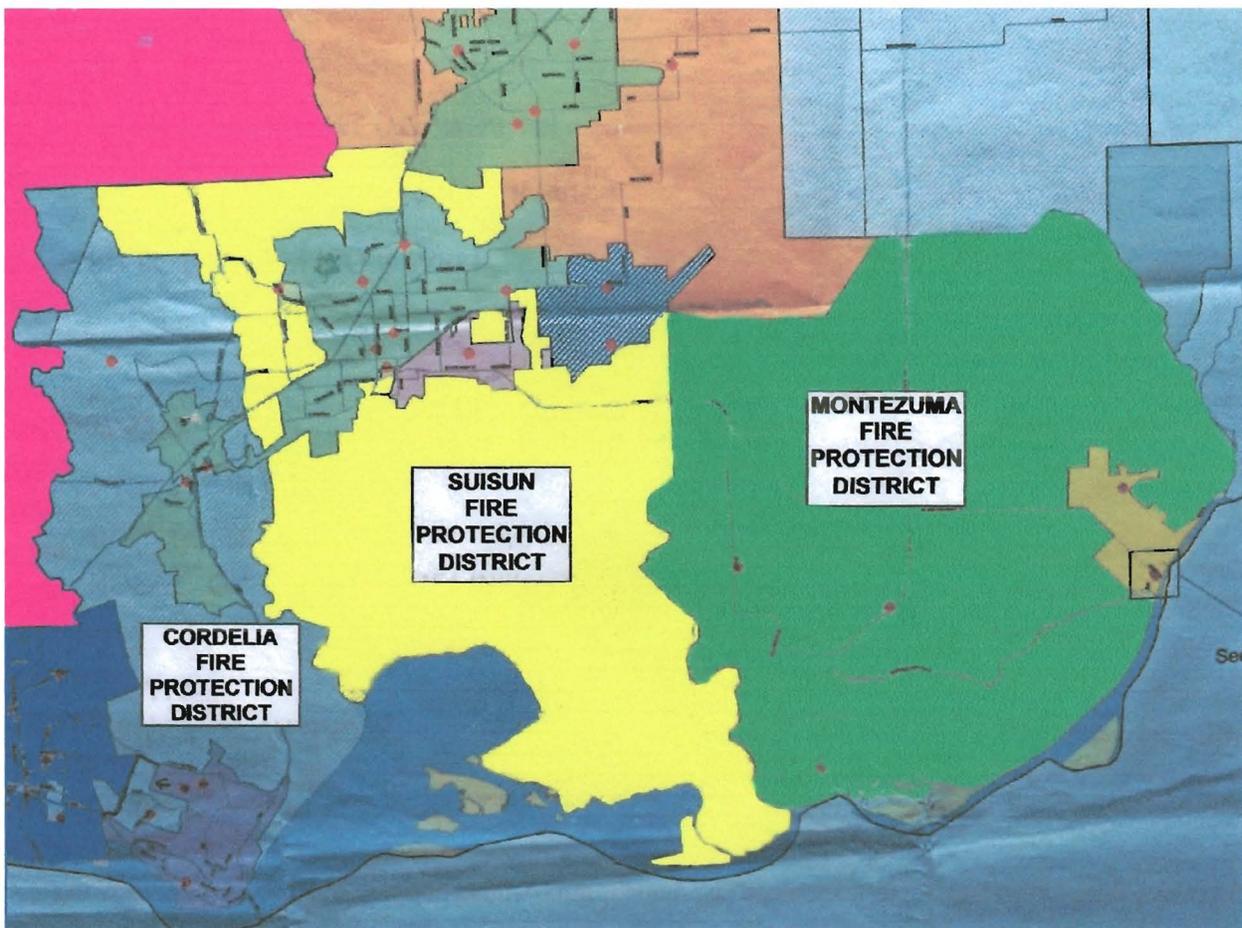
III. METHODOLOGY

The scope of the investigation focused on the governance and operation of the Suisun Fire Protection District. The Grand Jury:

- Reviewed records provided by SFPD
- Reviewed California Health and Safety Code §13843
- Reviewed California Elections Code §10507
- Reviewed the Solano County web site concerning the district
- Conducted an onsite random audit of training records and personnel records
- Reviewed the SFPD web site
- Interviewed the complainant
- Interviewed staff of the Solano County District Attorneys' Office
- Interviewed staff of Cal Fire
- Interviewed SFPD staff
- Reviewed SFPD insurance carrier's "Fire Agencies Self Insurance System Evaluation"

IV. STATEMENT OF FACTS

The Suisun Fire Protection District (SFPD) was organized in 1935. It protects approximately 3,800 residents and approximately 138 square miles of the unincorporated areas of Solano County located outside the city limits of Fairfield and the City of Suisun City. The District's response area includes Blue Ridge Oaks west of I-80, Suisun Valley (including Twin Sisters) from the Napa County line south, Tolenas, Grizzly Island, the marsh land east of Suisun Creek, and westbound I-80 as far as Suisun Valley Road. The City of Suisun City has its own fire department and is not part of SFPD. The SFPD is bounded on the east by the Montezuma Fire Protection District and on the west by the Cordelia Fire District. The SFPD is divided by the City of Fairfield and the City of Suisun City.



The SFPD Board Members are required to be residents of the district and are appointed by the Solano County Board of Supervisors. The staff of the SFPD is comprised of one full time paid Fire Captain, a volunteer Fire Chief, and approximately 41 volunteer firefighters.

In addition to serving its own district, SFPD participates in automatic aid agreements and mutual aid plans with other fire agencies. SFPD operates a main station within the City of

Fairfield, and a secondary facility on Clayton Road. The annual budget is approximately \$214,000 tax dollars plus any mutual aid, strike team income, and grants they may receive during the year.

In reviewing the documentation provided, along with information gained through interviews, the Grand Jury discovered the following issues:

- The Board of Directors should have five members; however, only three are listed in county records
- The three present members of the Board of Directors' terms have expired with the most recent on April 15, 2009
- The Board of Directors of the District has no published policies and procedures for board actions or approval of SFPD policies and procedures
- There are no documented promotional policies
- There is no documented discipline policy
- There are no job descriptions for various positions
- Personnel and training records do not contain fire certifications for each employee

A review of documentation and a random review of personnel and training records did not indicate there was a master training calendar for a one or two year training cycle. Neither were there notations in training or personnel files of what training certifications, Firefighter I or II status an individual had attained.

There is a lack of timely transferring of data contained in handwritten training records, personnel records, and certifications to automated records. The District training computer printout was in conflict with the information contained in the training files. The district is not taking full advantage of available automation for training records. Subsequent to the Grand Jury investigation, it is noted the present board authorized a part time employee to perform these tasks.

In reviewing the "Fire Agencies Self Insurance System" evaluation by the districts' insurance carrier, SFPD did not complete an Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP), a Physical Ability Assessment and Job Description Program, and develop and implement a Seat Belt Use Policy.

Due to city annexations, the SFPD boundaries are shrinking, resulting in continuous declining revenues. SFPD staff stated, "SFPD will continue to be challenged in providing services to district residents". Conversations with various fire district personnel have revealed the same issue exists with other fire agencies in Solano County. The District has not held recent discussions regarding alternative funding sources.

The Solano County Board of Supervisors and the Solano County Fire Districts have previously reviewed the concept of consolidation of adjoining fire districts due to budget constraints and shrinking boundaries.

V. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding 1 – The Directors of the Suisun Fire Protection Board consists of five members. At the present time, there are only three active members whose terms have expired and two vacant positions. The most recent board members date of expiration was April 15, 2009.

Recommendation 1 – The Solano County Board of Supervisors take prompt action to appoint a full board.

Finding 2 – The Board of Directors of the Suisun Fire Protection District has no written policies or procedures including:

- Board member job descriptions and responsibilities
- Board actions and procedures
- Setting of policies

Recommendation 2 – The Board of Directors of the Suisun Fire Protection District establish and implement written policies and procedures.

Finding 3 – There are no Suisun Fire Protection District written operational policies and procedures regarding:

- Promotional Standards and Requirements
- Injury and Illness Prevention Program
- Physical Ability Assessment and Job Description Program
- A Seat Belt Use Policy
- Discipline Policy

Recommendation 3 –The Suisun Fire Protection District establish and implement written policies and procedures to include, but not limited to all personnel actions, job descriptions, discipline, and promotional standards and requirements.

Finding 4 – There is a lack of timely transferring of data contained in handwritten training records, personnel records, and certifications to automated records. The District training computer printout was in conflict with the information contained in the training files. The District is not taking full advantage of available automation for training records.

Recommendation 4 – The Suisun Fire Protection District, update and correct, both automated training records and personnel records to be accurate.

Finding 5 – The Suisun Fire Protection District will continue to lose taxpayer funding in the event their District boundaries shrink due to city annexations with no foreseeable alternative funding.

Recommendation 5 – The Board of Supervisors consider consolidating the western part of the District with the Cordelia Fire Protection District and the eastern part of the District with the Montezuma Fire Protection District.

COMMENTS

It may be time for Solano County to revisit the possibility of consolidating fire services in the unincorporated areas of the county.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

Solano County Board of Supervisors (Finding 1 and 5)
Suisun Fire Protection District Board of Directors c/o Suisun Fire Protection District Fire Chief
(Finding 2, 3, 4 and 5)
Suisun Fire Protection Fire Chief (Finding 2, 3, 4 and 5)

COURTESY COPIES

Cordelia Fire District
Montezuma Fire Protection District
Clerk, Solano County Board of Supervisors