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County Fire Reorganization
Or
How can County Fire Thrive in These Challenging Times?

1) Concept

- a) Combine all five areas of County Fire into JPAs with neighboring fire agencies.
 - i) County fire needs to find a way to thrive within the bounds prescribed by our ability to raise funds
 - ii) Maintaining the contract with CAL FIRE, with all its' pluses, is just too expensive for our ability to fund
 - iii) A single JPA with a single current fire agency within the county may be an alternative**

2) Process

- a) All five distinct areas of County Fire will form JPAs (A Joint Powers Agency, 2009 California Government Code - Section 6500-6536: Article 1) with any current fire agency. Joint Powers Agreements would be created between each fire agency and County Government to administer the new arrangements.
 - i) The logic of this move is that all surrounding agencies are organized and performing at an acceptable level of service and budgeting
 - ii) Adding service area to an established area should be much less burdensome then creating any new agencies
- b) LAFCO would not need to approve such a move as there are no actual jurisdictional lines being moved. LAFCO does not appear to have the authority to approve or deny a JPA. All of County Fire remains County Fire and all of the adjoining district's boundaries remain.
 - i) Adding service area within a JPA is not covered by LAFCO review**

3) Administration

- a) The current contractor for County Fire, CAL FIRE, would have every right as any other agency to attempt to form a JPA but CAL FIRE would no longer be the single contractor for County Fire once all JPAs are organized and operating.
- b) The upside of this arrangement is that local control is asserted in the providing of fire and emergency services to all of Santa Cruz County. There would be a maximizing of efficiencies in using the current overhead administration of each of the current agencies instead of creating new overhead.
 - i) "CA Gov Code Section 6506. The agency or entity provided by the agreement to administer or execute the agreement may be one or more of the parties to the agreement or a commission or board constituted pursuant to the agreement or a person, firm or corporation, including a nonprofit corporation, designated in the agreement. One or more of the parties may agree to provide all or a portion of the services to the other parties in the manner provided in the agreement. The parties

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- may provide for the mutual exchange of services without payment of any consideration other than such services.”
- c) This eliminates the need for CAL FIRE as the single administrator to County Fire.
 - i) This also removes the overhead expense, now about 10%, that the State takes from our budget just to have the Amador Plan available
 - ii) **That ~10% money would then be available for the new JPA(s)**
 - 4) The Board of Supervisors needs to give its approval for each of these JPAs and would sit as the Board of Directors, as it does now, of the County Fire areas that are a part of each JPA.
 - i) CA Gov Code Section 6502.5. ... “Prior to undertaking a project authorized by this section outside the jurisdiction of the agency, the agency shall obtain approval of the board of supervisors of the county in which the project is to be located.”
 - ii) The selling point to the Supervisors can be each JPA, roughly in each Supervisorial District, will have the ability to set service goals matching the needs of their residents and geography
 - iii) Each JPA could decide, based on their needs, to pursue CSA48 tax increases benefiting their own area as allowed by current law different than other areas
 - iv) **Again, a single JPA may be proposed by any current fire agency for all of County Fire**
 - 5) **No new fire districts could be formed under this proposal.** If one were desired an application would have to be submitted to LAFCO for permission to proceed. And then, if a new district were allowed and voter approved, the ~\$500,000 would not be available as CSA48 would not exist in that area any longer and thus a JPA with CSA48 would not be possible.
 - 6) It may be prudent to have a separate Board of Directors of each of the JPAs, although not required per 6506 but allowed under 6507.
 - i) CA Gov Code Section 6507. For the purposes of this article, the agency is a public entity separate from the parties to the agreement.
 - b) This would bring representation of the county areas into the policy setting of the JPA.
 - c) Local control is essential to ensuring the most effective and efficient fire and life safety response capability in each area and throughout County Fire.
 - 7) The Devil IS in the details.
 - a) **Decide to proceed with concept**
 - b) **Form a committee to explore**
 - c) **Gather formal information on the process for formation of JPA’s**
 - d) **Review in relation to County Fire’s needs**
 - e) **Produce a draft process that is legally vetted**
 - f) **Gather public/fire service feedback**
 - g) **Revise process**
 - h) **Proceed**

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8) Finance

- a) Take all the money that CSA48 receives, including the portion of the property tax allotted to fire, and distribute it with a new process.
- b) Each of the five subdivisions would receive a percentage of the total ~ \$2,717,816**
- c) Devise an equitable formula to distribute all of the available money within the County fire budget to the new JPA organizations **within the framework of an agreement potentially based on the NETCOM funding model.**
- d) If two current agencies each would like to form a JPA with one, or more, of the five County Fire areas there would be a negotiation, or possibly a bidding process, to ensure the citizens of both entities receive the highest level of service with the new JPA.
- e) There are no new taxes for property owners in CSA48 but what they pay now is leveraged in a more locally oriented and efficient manner.**

- 9) All of the money within the county area would be collected, as it is now, by the County and distributed to the JPA as efficiently as possible to preserve maximum dollars for the emergency service.