

## County Fire Reorganization

- 1) Concept
  - a) Combine all five areas of County Fire into JPAs with neighboring fire agencies.
- 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 Fire to administer the new arrangement.
  - b) LAFCO would not need to approve such a move as there are no actual jurisdictional lines being moved. LAFCO does not appear, in my limited research, 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.
- 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 contractor for County Fire once all JPAs are organized and operating. 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 may provide for the mutual exchange of services without payment of any consideration other than such services.**
  - b) This eliminates the need for CAL FIRE as administrator to County Fire.
- 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.**
- 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.
- 7) The Devil IS in the details.
- 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 ~ \$500,000 as a 20% portion of the total ~ \$2,500,000 total.
  - c) 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 ones.
  - d) 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) The north coast is the only one of the five areas that is not directly adjacent to any other fire agency except Santa Cruz City. Combining the north coast and Bonny Doon would mean there would be ~\$1,000,000 available to the successful agency forming the JPA.
- 10) 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.
- 11) A struggle for each of the JPAs will be if the County sees this as a way to charge it (them) for every service rendered and thus siphoning funds from the JPA.