

DRAFT For Discussion at Jan 17th FDAC Meeting

Important note - this is a draft. The comments in this document represent the inputs of a sub-committee and are subject to discussion, change and adoption of the entire Commission - such to occur at the Jan 17th Commission meeting.

Process to be used at the meeting:

1. Cal Fire provides a short report answering the questions that were posited in advance
2. Each commissioner is invited to do a 2-3 minute comment on their assessment of the report. (open mic session, limited to 3 minutes each). Commissioners should bring the report with them to the meeting.
3. We then look at this document and use it to lead the conversation. Basically, we spend the meeting as a working session to fine tune this / fill in the blanks. On the recommendations, we will go through them one at a time, take a vote and fill in comments. At the end, we will take a vote to submit this to BoS.

Fire Department Advisory Commission (FDAC) Feedback to Board of Supervisors on the 2023 County Fire Master Plan

In December 2023, a final County Fire Master Plan report was received by the FDAC. The report, which was prepared by AP Triton for the CAO's office, was 272 pages long and included the following sections:

- Section I-A Evaluation of Current Conditions
- Section I-B Support Programs
- Section II: Community Risk Assessment
- Section III: Findings and Recommendations
- Section IV: Appendices

The report was submitted to the Fire Department Advisory Commission in late December, 2023 and was reviewed and discussed by the commission at the Jan 17, 2024 meeting. The Commission finds the following:

Overall:

- The Commission finds that the report is essentially an assessment of the County Fire operations and lacks certain elements to be considered a Master Plan.
- The report is detailed and contains information that the commission is pleased to see.
- The Commission finds that some of the data presented is inaccurate. The Commission acknowledges this finding by AP Triton: There were significant challenges with the data for statistical and performance analysis.

- The Commission would like to highlight that the recommendations in the document were made by AP Triton, with no input from Cal Fire or the FDAC. Overall, FDAC input on the report was minimal.

Findings:

The Commission agrees with most of the findings laid out in the assessment. The Commission would like to point out that these findings, when taken together, tell a story:

- The Santa Cruz County Fire Department (SCCFD) does not have a strategic plan.
- Management goals and objectives have not been documented and are not clearly expressed.
- With its close relationship to CAL FIRE, SCCFD does not appear to have an independent identity.
- The role of the Fire Department Advisory Commission needs to be reviewed, updated, and clarified.
- The reporting relationship between the Santa Cruz County Fire Department to the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors is through the County's General Services Department.

It is the Commission's view that the findings are directionally correct and highlight the need for additional work to be done in the areas of fire safety and prevention.

Recommendations:

AP Triton made 12 Short-term, 3 Mid-Term and 3 Long-Term recommendations. The Commission finds:

1. All recommendations are not equal. Some are relatively simple to implement, others will take effort.
2. Almost all of the recommendations will require investment from County Fire and others. This could be in the form of effort or money or both. The Commission is concerned that due to the time and effort involved, these recommendations will not be acted upon. The Commission urges the Board of Supervisors to allocate appropriate resources to ensure that this report results in actions.
3. Some of these recommendations will have a significant financial impact on the viability of Fire Service in the County Fire service Area.

At the January Commission meeting, the Commissioners considered and voted on each recommendation. Below are the recommendations and the votes for each:

Short Term Recommendations:

A-1: Emphasize Quality Assurance for Time Data Inputs

Commission Vote To Support:

Commentary: The Commission agrees that good data is essential and we would like to see this issue of data collection prioritized by Cal Fire and the County CAO's office.

A-2: Contract with CAL FIRE for one (1) Schedule A Deputy Chief

Commission Vote To Support:

Commentary: The Commission is not sure that this is the right answer, given the current state of the contract and would like to see more discussion on this.

A-3: Contract with CAL FIRE for one (1) Schedule A Division Chief

Commission Vote To Support:

Commentary: The Commission is not sure that this is the right answer, given the current state of the contract and would like to see more discussion on this.

A-4: Review Incident Data Annually

Commission Vote To Support:

Commentary: The Commission agrees that an annual review of incident data would be highly desirable.

A-5: Complete a 3–5-Year Strategic Plan

Commission Vote To Support:

Commentary: The Commission is unclear on who owns this action item. The Commission agrees that this needs to be done. The Commission would like to see clear ownership, and a timeline, for this action to be completed.

A-6: Improve Volunteer Company Activity Data Collection

Commission Vote To Support:

Commentary: The Commission agrees that good data is essential and would like to see this issue of data collection prioritized by Cal Fire and the County CAO's office.

A-7: Improve Service Delivery by Staffing Three Stations 24/7/365

Commission Vote To Support:

Commentary:

A-8: Set and Adopt Performance Goals

Commission Vote To Support:

Commentary: The Commission agrees that good data is essential and would like to see this issue of data collection prioritized by Cal Fire and the County CAO's office.

A-9: Consider Proposing a Special Assessment to Generate Revenue from CSA 4

Commission Vote To Support:

Commentary:

A-10: Conduct a Volunteer Satisfaction Survey

Commission Vote To Support:

Commentary:

A-11: Develop a Public Information Campaign

Commission Vote To Support:

Commentary:

A-12: Review and Revise Santa Cruz County Code, Chapter 2.120, Fire Department Advisory Commission

Commission Vote To Support:

Commentary: The Commission agrees that the FDAC in its current form is not serving the County appropriately. Advising is much different than oversight and fairly toothless - this has caused frustration amongst FDAC commissioners over the years. The Commission proposes that the FDAC be re-constituted as the Fire Department Oversight Commission, with powers to oversee County Fire, establish goals and set direction on behalf of the County Board of Supervisors.

Medium Term Recommendations:

B-1: Establish a Program for Staffing Stations During Peak Demand Hours

Commission Vote To Support:

Commentary:

B-2: Develop Risk-Based Public Education Programs for Department-Wide Delivery

Commission Vote To Support:

Commentary:

B-3: Apply for a SAFER Grant to Hire a Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Coordinator

Commission Vote To Support:

Commentary:

Long-Term Recommendations:

C-1: Re-Evaluate Station Locations and Effectiveness Following Staffing Improvements and New Response Data

Commission Vote To Support:

Commentary:

C-2: Create a Comprehensive Capital Improvement Plan
Commission Vote To Support:
Commentary:

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS:

The following are the recommendations that the Commission proposes should be prioritized by the Board of Supervisors and the County. Commentary is provided above on our thinking.

A-12: Review and Revise Santa Cruz County Code, Chapter 2.120, Fire Department Advisory Commission