



CONTRA COSTA COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Adjunct Staff Report to Annexation Feasibility Study

Submitted by: Lewis Broschard, Fire Chief

Date: July 13, 2021

BACKGROUND

The concept for annexation or consolidation of the Rodeo-Hercules Fire Protection District and the East Contra Costa Fire Protection District into the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District has been explored and discussed for several years. However, a full analysis of the concept was never undertaken until now. With the completion of the annexation feasibility study, we have a model and a basis for understanding the fiscal impacts and operational efficiencies of such an endeavor.

In general terms, the merging of the three districts by means of annexation will provide the opportunity for additional resources to be deployed in the Brentwood and Oakley areas. These resources have been needed for several years, and their addition will have direct impacts to the safety of the public within Brentwood, Oakley, and the surrounding communities, as well as increase firefighter safety and operational efficiency. The City of Antioch will receive a significant indirect benefit from these additional resources given the reduced reliance on Contra Costa Fire resources to respond into Brentwood and Oakley due to the historic deficit in fire and rescue resources serving those cities. Other communities, including Pittsburg and Bay Point, will also see positive indirect benefit from the addition of resources in east county. Those communities will have fewer of their assigned resources responding into Brentwood and Oakley or moving into Antioch to cover stations traditionally left vacant due to incidents in east county areas. Overall, response capacity will be increased throughout Pittsburg, Antioch, Brentwood, and Oakley.

The combining of administration, training, apparatus maintenance, and fire prevention will create consistency in the delivery of public facing services while also doing the same for internal support services. Training and safety programs will be joined under one leadership structure for consistency across the battalions that will serve our residents from Hercules to Discovery Bay. Consistency in training and operational policies will improve safety during emergency operations while also improving efficiency, productivity expectations, and incident communications.

FISCAL ANALYSIS AND NEEDED RESOURCES

The fiscal analysis of the proposed annexations demonstrates feasibility to provide up to two additional staffed fire stations in the eastern portions of the county. The analysis, like many, is

based on a snapshot in time and the available information and relevant assumptions at that point in time. The fiscal analysis includes the costs associated with the planned reopening of Fire Station 4 in Walnut Creek, as well as the additional staffing of Fire Station 55 in the Oakley/Bethel Island area, and a second fire company in Brentwood to be co-located at Fire Station 52 until a new fire station is constructed (Fire Station 51).

In addition to those new resources identified in the study, the following known issues need to be addressed to fully support the annexation and provide appropriate emergency response capacity:

- Restoration of the 30th, and final, Con Fire engine company that was closed as a result of the great recession.
 - \$3.5M annually to fund equipment, apparatus, and ongoing operational costs
 - Relocated to FS 81 downtown Antioch
 - Address call volume and high unit hour utilization as identified in the annexation study.
 - Funding included in the regional Measure X request by County Fire Chiefs
- Fire Station 54
 - The “sixth station” necessary to serve Brentwood/Oakley areas
 - \$3.5M annually
 - Years 1-4 to fund construction costs, apparatus, and equipment
 - Years 5+ to fund operational costs
 - Funding included in the regional Measure X request by County Fire Chiefs
- Reduced Dispatch Fee Revenues
 - Identified in the annexation study
 - Ongoing replacement funding of \$700,000 included in the regional Measure X request by County Fire Chiefs
- Three District Chiefs
 - Referenced on page 43 of the report.
 - Necessary due to increased span of control within the Emergency Operations Division.
 - This was already being considered internal to Con Fire due to the size and increasing complexity of the existing organization prior to annexation discussions.
 - An internal review of the existing organizational structure and opportunities for using existing resources to fill this need, use of new resources available as a result of the annexation, or the addition of positions will need to be evaluated.

Without these additional funds to support the necessary resources and programs to fully support the fire, rescue, and emergency medical services needs of the areas served, it is likely that the newly reorganized district will fall short in its ability to provide the necessary emergency service levels in those communities identified with current service level deficiencies.

Long-term growth in the annexed areas, particularly in east county, will be supported by impact fee and community facility district programs established by the East Contra Costa Fire Protection District and those in place or in the process of being formed by the Contra Costa

County Fire Protection District. While the long-term funding strategies appear to be appropriate for future growth, the short- and medium-term needs identified above require the ongoing support of Measure X funds to make annexation successful in providing improved service levels to the public and providing sustainable fire, rescue, and emergency medical services to the region.

In addition, it will be necessary to ensure other funding sources, such as countywide Measure H funds already being received by the fire districts are continued at a level at least consistent with current funding levels across the combined agencies.

PLANNING STEPS TAKEN TO DATE

District staff have engaged in early planning discussions between agency representatives relative to training, emergency operations, and support services. In addition, a lengthy list of questions related to health benefits, seniority-based issues, retiree benefits, determination of the appropriate Con Fire salary step for transferred employees, treatment of vacation and sick leave accruals, and similar issues has been developed. Meetings with County benefits and labor relations staff are being scheduled to develop answers and implementation strategies should the annexation move forward.

Weekly planning meetings continue to occur to assist in identifying issues relative to the potential annexations.

Joint facility inspections have occurred to determine functionality of apparatus and equipment, as well as overall needs and assessment of the facilities and fleet of the districts proposed to be annexed.

We have held virtual meetings with the Contra Costa County LAFCO to gain understanding of the potential timelines associated with these annexations, the necessary steps to initiate the annexations, as well as the steps involved over the many months leading up to the actual effective date of annexation. The resolution of application process has been researched, and exemplar templates have been obtained.

Meetings have also been held with CCCERA staff to discuss the process and implications of the proposed merging of personnel and their associated pension cost groups. An actuarial evaluation was requested for the combined safety retirement group. This was completed and received in early July.

CONCLUSION

Based on the information contained in the annexation feasibility study, it is my recommendation the annexation process should be initiated. Funding from Measure X is essential to provide the additional resources identified in this staff report that are necessary to make the annexation successful given the current known service deficiencies.