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August 23, 2017

FILED

AUG 25 2017

Superior Court of California
County of Tuolumne
By: *VBS* Clerk

Judge of Superior Court
Honorable Kate Powell Segerstrom
Tuolumne County Superior Court
60 North Washington Street
Sonora, CA 95370

Re: Response to Grand Jury Report – **Tuolumne County Fire Department and Dispatch**

Dear Judge Powell-Segerstrom:

The following is offered in response to the 2016-2017 Grand Jury Report as it pertains to the Tuolumne County Fire Department and Dispatch.

Grand Jury Findings

F1. Having the same person fill the role of both Tuolumne County Fire Chief and CAL FIRE Chief does not provide equal representation for either agency and may represent a conflict of interest.

Response: Disagree. County Counsel has opined that there is no legal conflict. County administrative staff cannot recall a time where a clear conflict has surfaced and potentially disadvantaged Tuolumne County Fire. To the contrary, the relationship has resulted in many advantages to the County. It is notable that similar successful relationships have existed for decades between CalFire and hundreds of local government agencies throughout the State.

F2. The CHP should not continue to be the primary contact for Tuolumne County cellular 911 calls as time and data can be lost in the transferring of calls. Merced CHP Dispatch does not know the geographic layout of Tuolumne County.

Response: Agree.

F3. Taxes, which pay for 911 services, are being charged for voice transmission via landline or cellular calls; however written text is becoming more of the standard mode of communication.

Response: Agree

F4. Fire and EMS resources are not adequately distributed in the county. The nearest ambulance to Pinecrest is stationed at Mono Vista which is 23 miles (or 29 minutes) away. The majority of 911 calls are medical, but there are only four EMS stations in Tuolumne County.

Response: Agree while noting that Fire and EMS resources have been generally distributed in proportion to population and call volume. One exception is the Groveland Ambulance Station which is supported by a local tax assessment.

F6. Fire resources unnecessarily responding to emergency medical aid calls that are not life threatening can result in excessive wear and tear to expensive fire trucks and expose civilians to the danger of responding fire engines.

Response: Agree

F7. The current mechanism for funding the County fire system is unsustainable.

Response: Agree

F9. There is loss of time and possible loss of data when calls are transferred to multiple dispatch centers.

Response: Agree while noting that any time loss is negligible.

Grand Jury Recommendations

R1. Explain to the Grand Jury how having the same person fill the role of Tuolumne County Fire Chief and the TCU's CAL FIRE Chief, while being paid by both the county and the state, is not a conflict of interest. (F1)

Response: It should be noted that this recommendation is presented in the form of an information request. In addition to the information provided in the response to F1 above, this relationship is guided by: 1) the written agreement between the County and CalFire. CalFire is paid to provide specific services. The compensation paid by CalFire to its staff assigned to deliver these contracted services are likewise spelled out in the agreement; and 2) general administration of the contract and department operations occurs directly between the CalFire Unit Chief and CAO and their respective staff. This is not dissimilar to the contractual arrangement the County has also enjoyed for Farm Advisor services with the University of California Cooperative Extension. Ultimately, if the Board of Supervisors was not satisfied with the quality or cost of services provided through this agreement, it could choose to modify or cancel the agreement.

R2. Continue implementing and developing RED Project to route GPS data to the appropriate dispatch center. (F2)

Response: The recommendation has already been implemented through the original RED Project aimed at directing cell calls to the closest, most appropriate dispatch center and

most recently by State mandated annual reviews. In fact, the first mandated annual review of such cell call routing was completed earlier this month. The routing of cell traffic has much improved as a result of the above actions and will continue to improve under the mandated annual reviews.

R3. Support and lobby for a way to capture a percentage of fees from cellular phone providers for the Tuolumne County cellular device 911 calls or texts routed to Tuolumne County. (F3)

Response: The recommendation has not yet been implemented. The Board of Supervisors will attempt to exercise its influence in this area by adding a related item to its 2018 Legislative Platform in December 2017 as well as seeking support from CSAC and RCRC. Some action is needed in order to ensure continuation of adequate State funding used by safety dispatch centers to maintain and upgrade their equipment.

R4. Relocate some existing fire equipment and personnel. Add EMS stations to areas where they are capable of responding more quickly to emergencies. (F4, F6)

Response: This recommendation requires further analysis which is already occurring through the Tuolumne County Fire/First Responder and Emergency Medical Services Study now underway led by the Matrix Consulting Group. This Study should be completed before the end of this calendar year. Once completed and after appropriate review and input from community stakeholders, the Board will consider this and other concepts outlined in the report.

R6. Establish an Emergency Medical Dispatch and train PSAP call takers to become EMD dispatchers. (F6)

Response: This recommendation requires further analysis which is already occurring through the Tuolumne County Fire/First Responder and Emergency Medical Services Study now underway led by the Matrix Consulting Group. This Study should be completed before the end of this calendar year. Once completed and after appropriate review and input from community stakeholders, the Board will consider this and other concepts outlined in the report.

R7. Institute a fair mitigation/building fee program that would help fund fire equipment replacement. (F7)

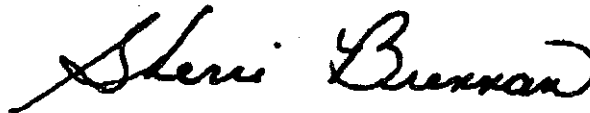
Response: This recommendation has already been implemented. The County established a growth impact mitigation (GIGER) fee program several years ago aimed at helping to fund capital needs associated with new development. One component of this fee is dedicated to County Fire Department capital needs. These fees are reviewed and updated every few years. Unfortunately, due to the low rate of new construction in recent years, revenues have been modest (approximately \$12,000 for Fire capital in FY 2016-17).

R9. Relocate the existing independent dispatch centers to a multi-agency dispatch center in the County. Having a multi-agency dispatch center would prevent response delay and loss of information. In addition, there would be cost benefits for facilities and utilities by combining these agencies. (F9)

Response: This recommendation will not be implemented as it would be unreasonable to expect that such a study could be performed within the 6 month time frame usually allowed by the Grand Jury's instructions. However, the Board will consider adding this to its next 5-Year Plan and 2018 Goals (February/March 2018). It should be noted that both the Sheriff and CalFire Unit Chief support conducting such a study while noting that much research will be required with the support and participation of multiple stakeholders.


Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above findings and recommendations. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions regarding same.

Sincerely,



SHERRI BRENNAN, Chair
Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors

I hereby certify that according to the provisions of Government Code Section 25103, delivery of this document has been made.

By:  _____
ACACIA L. JAMAR
Clerk of the Board