

**COUNTY OF SONOMA
AGENDA ITEM
SUMMARY REPORT**

Clerk of the Board Use Only
Meeting Date **Held Until**
 / / / /
Agenda Item No: **Agenda Item No:**
 _____ _____

Department: County Administrator / Department of
Emergency Services

() **4/5 Vote Required**

Contact:
Peter Rumble
Mark Aston

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Board Date:
8/11/09

Deadline for Board Action:

AGENDA SHORT TITLE: Review of County Fire Services, CSA #40

REQUESTED BOARD ACTION:

Accept the report on County Fire Services, CSA #40, and provide direction to Department of Emergency Services to develop an implementation plan for the report's recommendations

CURRENT FISCAL YEAR FINANCIAL IMPACT

EXPENDITURES

Estimated Cost \$

Amount Budgeted \$

Other Avail Approp. \$
(Explain below)

Additional Requested: \$

Explanation (if required):

ADD'L FUNDS REQUIRING BOARD

Contingencies \$
(Fund Name:)

Unanticipated Revenue \$
(Source:)

Other Transfer(s) \$
(Source:)

Add'l Funds Requested: \$

Prior Board Action(s):

5/15/08: Informational study session to present project status and solicit Board of Supervisor input on the ongoing CSA #40 Fire Services study.

2/26/08: Board authorized the Department to enter into a contract for consulting services to provide a strategic analytical study of CSA #40.

11/27/07: Board accepted CSA #40 Project Charter and authorized the Department to release and RFP for consultant services.

Alternatives - Results of Non-Approval:

Background:

County Service Area #40 (CSA #40) is a special district that covers roughly 43 percent of the County's unincorporated area. The County provides fire and emergency medical services to this area via contract with 14 non-profit volunteer fire companies (VFCs) covering 15 service areas. While these VFCs are responsible for covering a significant amount of land, Sonoma County is a patchwork of numerous other fire districts that work collaboratively with CSA #40 when possible.

In 2006, the Department of Emergency Services (DES) began a strategic planning process with the 14 VFCs, including representatives from each company as well as their non-profit Board members. Through this process, DES identified challenges to delivering fire and emergency services in CSA #40, which include an increased demand for service, reduced numbers of available volunteers, training, and aging equipment and facilities. In late 2007, DES completed a project charter, and with Board of Supervisors approval engaged a consultant (ESCi) to help facilitate and finalize this strategic planning effort. In May 2008, the consultant held a workshop with the Board of Supervisors to solicit input and direction for the study.

ESCi has concluded its work, and has prepared a report that presents the first ever comprehensive review of CSA #40. The report is focused on identifying how the CSA #40 system currently operates, identifies areas of success, and presents recommendations for identified areas of improvement. ESCi has paid particular attention to facilitating a collaborative effort between the VFCs and the County. Numerous public meetings were held with VFC membership in the community, and the Consultant engaged a team of advisors comprised of County staff and VFC leadership.

Central to the report's findings and recommendations is that CSA #40 is on par with rural, volunteer fire services in the nation, and that the most significant investments the County can make are low-cost measures in the areas of volunteer recruitment, training, maintenance, recognition, cost reimbursement, and communications. Long-term recommendations focus on the need for the development capital investment plan for facilities and equipment replacement. While these items present a more significant cost, the report recommends they be developed over several years and that a variety of funding sources be identified to sustain the service delivery system. Finally, the report cites the need for greater collaboration between VFCs and other Fire Agencies to achieve greater economies of scale and more efficient services.

Attachments:

On File With Clerk: County Services Area 40: Analytic Review

CLERK OF THE BOARD USE ONLY

Board Action (If other than "Requested")

Vote:

Background Cont.

The Department of Emergency Services has already begun to implement improvements, by helping the VFCs revive the Sonoma County Volunteer Fire Companies Association, and increasing collaborative work with the VFCs on policy and procedures, training, safety equipment, and vehicle maintenance. With your Board's input and direction, Chief Aston will begin to develop an implementation plan for the report's recommendations in collaboration with the County Administrator's Office, the CSA #40 VFCs, and other stakeholders. A critical component of this implementation plan is the Fire Service Master Plan that will be forward looking and likely span the course of several years. Once drafted, anticipated to be early in the new year, the Department of Emergency Services will bring the plan back to your Board for additional input and direction.

Requested Action:

The Department of Emergency Services is requesting that the Board of Supervisors accept ESCi's report, and provide direction to Chief Aston, County Fire Chief and Department Head of Emergency Services, to prepare an implementation plan of the report's recommendations in collaboration with the County Administrator's Office, the CSA #40 VFCs, and other stakeholders.