
Resolution 2014-0002

of the

Calaveras Local Agency Formation Commission

Approving a Municipal Service Review of Fire Services Provided by the Mokelumne Hill Fire Protection District and Adopting Written Determinations Thereon

WHEREAS, California Government Code Section 56425 requires that the Local Agency Formation Commission (“LAFCO”) adopt and periodically review Sphere of Influence Plans for all agencies in its jurisdiction; and,

WHEREAS, California Government Code Section 56430 requires that LAFCO conduct a review of the municipal services provided by and within an agency prior to updating or adopting its Sphere of Influence Plan; and,

WHEREAS, the Sphere of Influence Plan is the primary planning tool for LAFCO and defines the probable physical boundaries and service area of a local agency as determined by LAFCO; and,

WHEREAS, the Commission adopted guidelines for conducting Municipal Service Reviews (MSRs) included in its Policies, Standards and Procedures adopted on August 17, 2009, which applies to this MSR for fire and EMS services; and,

WHEREAS, at the time and in the manner provided by law, the Executive Officer gave notice of the date, time, and place of a public hearing by the Commission for the MSR, including approval of the report and adoption of the written determinations contained therein; and,

WHEREAS, the Commission hereby determines that the hearing draft of the Municipal Service Review for fire services provided by the Mokelumne Hill Fire Protection District and written determinations contained therein will provide information for updating its Sphere of Influence, and is otherwise consistent with the purposes and responsibility of the Commission for planning the logical and orderly development and coordination of local governmental agencies so as to advantageously provide for the present and future needs of the county and its communities; and,

WHEREAS, the Commission has heard all interested parties desiring to be heard and has considered the report by the Executive Officer and all other relevant evidence and information presented at said hearing;

NOW, THEREFORE, the Calaveras Local Agency Formation Commission hereby resolves, orders and determines the following:

Growth and Population Projections

- ❖ In 2010, Mokelumne Hill Fire Protection District (MHFPD) had an approximate population of 1,323. In 2013, according to the district, the population served is 1,368.
- ❖ The District observed an increase in service demand in the last few years. MHFPD has two major highways passing through it, which may have experienced

an increase in the transient population. The increase in demand may also be attributable to improved reporting of service calls.

- ❖ MHFPD anticipates moderate growth in population and similarly in service demand within the District in the next few years. An increase in demand is anticipated, due to several potential developments and an influx of tourists.

The Location and Characteristics of Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities Within or Contiguous to the Agency's SOI

- ❖ Based on 2010 Census income information for Census Designated Places in Calaveras County, there are no communities that meet the definition of a disadvantaged unincorporated community within or adjacent to MHFPD's bounds and sphere of influence.

Present and Planned Capacity of Public Facilities and Adequacy of Public Services, Including Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies

- ❖ Although the District's response times are within identified standards for rural areas, currently, the District is improving its service capacity to provide adequate services within its service area and future growth areas which are due in part to many factors such as narrow mountain roads resulting in slow responses. Although, the District's station is in excellent working condition, MHFPD needs and is planning an additional fire station to improve its response times, particularly in the community of Paloma and potentially in Golden Hills. A challenge also lies in outdated equipment and a lack of personnel.
- ❖ Capital improvement projects are planned in MHFPD's strategic plan; however, the plan is outdated. It is recommended that the District conduct long-term capital planning in order to adequately plan for future funding needs and sources.
- ❖ Infrastructure needs include a new fire station in Paloma, and potentially Golden Hills, minor upgrades at the District's existing station, and replacing outdated equipment. The district is continuously replacing and purchasing new equipment such as a new electrical generator installed in 2013.
- ❖ While services provided by the District appear to be adequate based on a comparison of response times, station coverage, staffing resources and ISO ratings with other districts, (ISO of 5 in Mokelumne Hill and 9 in rural areas). The district was evaluated in 2013. However, updated ratings have not been released. Overall, service adequacy is consistent with neighboring districts. As with most fire districts this district is continuously working on improvements to District's operations and enhancements to accountability and transparency.

Financial Ability of Agencies to Provide Services

- ❖ The District reported that its current financing levels were not adequate to deliver services, as there are capital and equipment needs that are underfunded. The

district is continuously improving staffing levels, which is a challenge due to current financing levels.

- ❖ Grants were identified as possible additional sources of financing to remedy the fiscal constraints that the District is experiencing. The district's general operations are funded by a special tax, which amounts to \$75 per improved parcel with a maximum payment of \$150 per landowner for contiguous parcels. The tax does not have an expiration date.
- ❖ The District's general operations are funded primarily by property taxes and a special tax.
- ❖ MHFPD has one outstanding loan through an agreement with the USDA used to purchase a wildland interface fire engine.
- ❖ Although not a formal policy, the District has a management practice to hold financial reserves for emergencies and engine replacements. As of the end of FY 10-11, the District maintained reserves comparable to 15 months of operating expenditures.

Status of, and Opportunities for, Shared Facilities

- ❖ The District has mutual and automatic aid agreements with all fire providers in Calaveras County. MHFPD responds to wildland fires through agreements with OES and CalFire.
- ❖ MHFPD is a member of the Fire Chief's Association. It also regularly collaborates with other fire providers in applying for various grants.
- ❖ MHFPD has a fuel reduction plan in conjunction with CalFire.
- ❖ MHFPD, WPPFD, and CCFRPD are interested in collaborating through shared resources and joint training.

Accountability for Community Service Needs, Including Governmental Structure and Operational Efficiencies

- ❖ The District attempts to reach its constituents by posting agendas and other information at Station 1, at the Mokelumne Hill post office, and on other message boards in the community.
- ❖ If a resident is dissatisfied with the District's services, complaints may be submitted to the Fire Chief or to the Board directly. Complaints are addressed first by the Chief and, if not resolved may be addressed by the Board of Directors.
- ❖ Complaints against the District were filed with the State of California Labor Commission and with OSHA in 2012. These complaints have been resolved. The district recently updated its Standard Operating Policies and Training Policies.
- ❖ The District reported that a highly critical report about the District was issued by the 2012 Calaveras County Grand Jury. The Grand Jury report alleges Brown Act violations by the Board of Directors and other illegal or improper actions by the District similar to the complaints filed with the Labor Commission and OSHA.

The District was unaware of the nature of the complaints until after the report was made public, and was unable to provide information or defend itself prior to the issuance of the Grand Jury Report. The District and Fire Chief have responded to the Grand Jury Report.

- ❖ The MHFPD demonstrated accountability in providing information as requested and has cooperated with Calaveras LAFCO.
- ❖ The District conducts Brown Act training to ensure Board members are aware of legal requirements and sends board members to AB-1234 training, as required. The district has hired legal counsel to assist with legal requirements regarding operations, accountability, and board actions.
- ❖ The District does not have a formal capital improvement plan. MHFPD plans for its capital improvement projects in its strategic plan. Funds for planned large purchases such as a new station or engine are put in reserve accounts until sufficient funds to go forward are available.
- ❖ In regards to governance structure options, consolidation with other fire and EMS service providers may be an option. MHFPD as well as other agencies are reportedly looking into a shared services agreement. Areas of cooperation with other agencies include active participation in the Fire Chief's association, Mutual and Automatic Aid Agreements and "closest unit" response with Central Calaveras and San Andreas Fire Protection Districts.

The foregoing resolution was duly passed by the Calaveras Local Agency Formation Commission at a regular meeting held on January 27, 2014 by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Sobon, Lavaroni, Tyrrell, Pague, Callaway and Lynch

Noes:

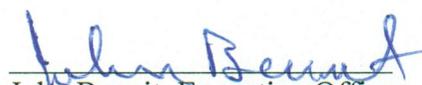
Abstentions: Spellman

Absent:

Signed and approved by me after its passage this 27th day of January 2014.


Jack Lynch, Chair
Calaveras LAFCO

Attest:


John Benoit, Executive Officer
CALAVERAS LAFCO