



Legislation Text

File #: 22-522, **Version:** 1

FROM:

Jason Weber, Fire Chief

SUBJECT:

Presentation of the results from the Ross Valley Fire Department Governance and Leadership Study

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that Council consider the following two options:

- 1) Receive report and provide direction to the Town's representatives to the Ross Valley Fire Board regarding recommended future governance and leadership of the Ross Valley Fire Department.
- 2) Receive report and direct staff to place an item on a February Town Council agenda to provide the opportunity for further discussion and to provide direction to the Town's representatives to the Ross Valley Fire Board regarding recommended future governance and leadership of the of the Ross Valley Fire Department.

BACKGROUND

The Ross Valley Fire Department (RVFD) is a consolidated department protecting lives, property, and the environments of Ross, San Anselmo, Sleepy Hollow, and Fairfax. The Department's history can be traced to the early 1900s, starting with the formation of small volunteer fire departments in the newly formed towns of Ross, San Anselmo, and Fairfax. Built near the wildfire-prone slopes of Mount Tamalpais, these communities were and continue to be acutely aware of the risk of fire.

In 1982, the Fairfax Fire Department and the San Anselmo Fire Department joined forces and became the Ross Valley Fire Services. At the time, Sleepy Hollow was receiving fire protection from the Town of San Anselmo through a service contract. Sleepy Hollow chose not to become a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) member while maintaining a non-voting seat on the Board. In 2010, the JPA expanded to make Sleepy Hollow a full JPA member, ending its contract for service with the Town of San Anselmo.

In 2012, Ross Valley Fire Department's Board of Directors voted to consolidate fire services with the Town of Ross, incorporating the Town of Ross Fire Station 18 into the Ross Valley Fire Department. Therefore, the current aggregate population of the Department's service area is estimated to be 24,785, served from 4 fire stations with nine (9) suppression personnel on duty daily.

In 2015 RVFD outsourced financial services to the Town of San Anselmo to provide accounting services such as account receivables (AR), account payables (AP), payroll, and other general finance services. In August 2018, the RVFD entered into a Memorandum of Understanding

(MOU) with Marin County Fire Department (MCFD) to provide administrative and executive services. However, the MOU between RVFD and MCFD terminates on June 30, 2023.

The Ross Valley Fire Department has used the services provided by MCFD as outlined in the MOU for “Fire Chief” and other command/leadership since August of 2018 (Attachment 2). However, the MOU won’t be renewed. Instead, the department is using the opportunity to review options for a path forward for governance and leadership, ensuring the long-term sustainability of Fire and Emergency Services.

DISCUSSION

The department is seeking options for the succession of the MOU, which could include multiple scenarios that require research and, ultimately, policy options to be presented to the RVFD Fire Board. Therefore, the RVFD proposes a phased approach to gather information, compile and narrow options, and present to the RVFD Board several policy considerations.

The RVFD released a request for proposal after the May Fire Board meeting, soliciting a contractor to complete a leadership and governance study. RVFD received three proposals from well-qualified vendors to complete the study. The RVFD Management Team including a member of the Sleepy Hollow Fire District reviewed the three proposals. The Fire Board selected Local Motion Solutions (LMS) to complete the “Governance and Leadership” study. The attached draft report from LMS and accompanying presentation provides the Council the opportunity to review different options for future department leadership and governance.

The Ross Valley Fire Board received a presentation of the results of the governance and leadership study at their meeting on January 11, 2023.

Staff recommends that the Council take this opportunity to review the information presented, receive the presentation by staff and the consultant, and discuss the different options for ongoing operations of the fire department. There are similar presentations and discussions planned with the other member agencies of the Ross Valley Fire Department. It is the goal of staff to make a determination regarding the next steps for governance and leadership of the Ross Valley Fire Department at the March meeting of the Fire Board.

OPTIONS

Staff recommends that Council consider the following two options:

- 1) Receive report and provide direction to the Town’s representatives to the Ross Valley Fire Board regarding recommended future governance and leadership of the RVFD.
- 2) Receive report and direct staff to place an item on a February Town Council agenda to provide the opportunity for further discussion and to provide direction to the Town’s representatives to the Ross Valley Fire Board regarding recommended future governance and leadership of the RVFD.

FISCAL IMPACT

The receipt of this staff report and Local Motion Solutions presentation has no direct fiscal impact.

CEQA AND CLIMATE ACTION PLAN CONSISTENCY

The Council's review of the Ross Valley Fire Department's governance and leadership study and subsequent discussion is not a "project" under the California Environmental Quality Act, because it does not involve an activity which has the potential to cause a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment. (Cal. Pub. Res. Code § 21065).

Attachment 1 - Future Governance and Leadership Study - Draft Report

Attachment 2 - Marin County Fire Department MOU for Fire Chief