



Yolo County Fire Protection Sustainability Board Ad Hoc Committee: Progress Update

October 15, 2020

Background

In 2019 Yolo County staff researched and prepared a report regarding the challenges facing the Yolo County Fire Protection Districts. These challenges are occurring nationwide and include a declining volunteer base coupled with increasing call volumes and the increasing cost of apparatus replacement. The report was presented in July 2019 to the Yolo County Fire Chiefs Association and to the Yolo County Board of Supervisors. As a result, the Board directed staff to work with the fire districts to develop a long-term sustainability plan and formed an ad hoc committee for this purpose, consisting of District 3 Supervisor Gary Sandy and District 5 Supervisor Duane Chamberlain. The Yolo County Fire Chiefs Association also designated a subset of fire chiefs to meet and work with the County committee on this plan.

Scope

The charge of the committee is to work collaboratively with the Yolo County Fire Chiefs Association to develop and implement a long-term sustainability plan for unincorporated fire protection services. The committee plans to develop a suite of options and implementation strategies to share with the Fire Districts and Yolo County Board of Supervisors for consideration.

Committee Members:

Duane Chamberlain, Yolo County
Supervisor

Patrick Blacklock, Yolo County

Barry Burns, Esparto FPD

Gary Fredericksen, Yolo County

Carolyn Jhagg, Yolo County

Marcus Klinkhammer, Willow Oak FPD

Becky Ramirez, Yoche Dehe FD

Gary Sandy, Yolo County Supervisor

Dave Stiles, West Plainfield FPD

Eric Zane, Woodland FD

Status

The committee began meeting in August 2019 and continued to meet up until the onset of the coronavirus pandemic and fire season. Initial meetings involved discussion regarding the scope of work, the gathering and evaluation of data using GIS, and the assessment of baseline operational standards. To assist in these discussions response data for the 2018 calendar year was gathered from each fire district. Additionally, a survey was provided at a meeting of the Yolo County Fire Chiefs Association to gather input from each fire district regarding the operational standards utilized for response times, response personnel, and apparatus replacement. The results

of the survey displayed the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1720 and 1911 standards as the baseline operational standards utilized by the vast majority of the fire districts.

Despite delays from the pandemic a number of key progress updates occurred in 2020. Yolo County hired Gary Fredericksen following his retirement from the Yocha Dehe Fire Protection District to serve as project coordinator for the ad hoc committee. Shortly after in February 2020, the committee met with representatives of Amador and Sonoma counties to learn about their experiences tackling similar challenges of low staffing and high costs of apparatus. Based on these discussions the committee decided to gather input directly from the Yolo County Fire Chiefs on long term needs for their station. These meetings occurred over the course of September 2020 and included discussions on potential methods for increasing funding and their possible interest in paid staffing to supplement existing volunteer personnel.

Next Steps

Over the coming months the committee will develop a draft implementation plan of long term sustainability recommendations based on data and the local needs of the districts. Staff anticipate sharing the plan in early 2021 with the committee and with the fire districts to gather feedback. A final plan would then be shared with the Board of Supervisors in early Spring. The committee will provide additional written and verbal updates at the Yolo County Fire Chiefs Association meetings and will also update the fire boards.