

**County of Sonoma**  
**Fire Services Project Ad-Hoc Committee**  
**Charter - Phase 2**  
**July 2020**

**Background**

On August 14, 2018, the Chair of the Board of Supervisors formed the Fire Implementation Ad-Hoc Committee, which later became known as the Fire Services Project. The Ad-Hoc was formed to work on the implementation of the Fire Services Deployment Plan, which was an effort to improve fire services in Sonoma County. The work of the Ad-Hoc culminated in the placement of a half-cent sales tax (Measure G) on the March 2020 ballot as the funding source for the Fire Services Deployment Plan. The sales tax was approved by 64.84% of voters, but did not meet the two-thirds passage threshold required by state law for special taxes. The Phase I Charter was scheduled to terminate on April 1, 2020.

County Service Area (CSA) 40 is a Special Dependent District of the County of Sonoma and was formed in 1993 to provide administrative and operational support of the various volunteer fire companies (VFCs) in Sonoma County. Under the Fire Services Deployment Plan, the remaining VFCs that make up CSA 40 were to be annexed by adjacent Fire Protection Districts. CSA 40 was originally administered by the Fire and Emergency Services Department. The Department was formally dissolved through a three-phase process as of March 2019. Phase two of the dissolution transferred the administration of the VFCs to North Bay Fire, a non-profit agency formed to bring together the remaining VFCs in Sonoma County. The formation of North Bay Fire and the execution of the contract was intended to be a short-term solution while the County worked on efforts to annex the remaining VFCs.

A summary of the activities approved by the Board of Supervisors in support of the original Fire Charter, including the dissolution of the County's Fire and Emergency Services Department is included as Attachment A. The original charter, to be known as the Phase 1 Charter is included as Attachment B.

**Committee Purpose and Goal**

Much work was accomplished towards the goal to implement and fund the Fire Services Deployment Plan. Due to the failure of Measure G, a source of funding to implement the Fire Services Deployment Plan is not available at this time. While the goal to improve fire services within Sonoma County remains, given the temporary administrative framework supporting CSA 40, it is an imperative for the County to focus on solutions to transition CSA 40.

Therefore, Phase 2 of the Fire Services Project Charter will focus on analyzing the available options and strategies to transition CSA 40 from the temporary structure it is currently working under.

### **Committee Scope of Work**

The Committee will analyze available options identified to transition CSA 40 from its current temporary structure and come up with a recommendation for the Board of Supervisors to consider. The options under consideration thus far include:

1. Coordinate with partner stake-holders, including North Bay Fire, adjacent districts, and Cal-Fire to evaluate the need to extend and/or revise existing contacts.
2. Explore the annexation recommendations of the Fire Services Working Group (FSWG)
3. Explore the annexation plan by the Sphere of Influence approved by Agency Formation Committee
4. Put out a Request for Proposal (RFP) seeking proposals from fire agencies who are willing to annex VFCs and IRPs.
5. Reestablish County Fire division and take back operations of remaining VFCs.
6. Analyze the dissolution of a portion or all of CSA40.

### **Timeline**

The Ad Hoc will come back by January 2021 with a recommendation.

### **Ad Hoc Committee Members**

David Rabbitt, Board of Supervisors, Second District  
Lynda Hopkins, Board of Supervisors, Fifth District

### **County Department Resources**

Sheryl Bratton, County Administrator  
Terri Wright, Administrative Analyst  
County Counsel Rep - TBD  
ACTTC Rep - TBD

### **Stakeholders**

- Fire Chief's Association Fire Services Working Group
- North Bay Fire
- Fire Protection Districts within Sonoma County
- Fire Labor
- Other interested members of the public

### **Staff Contact**

Terri Wright, Administrative Analyst  
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Exhibit A – Summary of Phase 1 Charter Actions

Exhibit B – Phase 1 Charter

**Phase 1 Fire Ad Hoc Summary of BOS Actions**

**August 14, 2018**

1. Appointed the Fire Implementation Ad Hoc Charter
2. Approved the Fire Services Deployment Plan and Implementing steps.

**December 11, 2018**

1. Authorized the relocation of the Fire Prevention and Hazardous Materials Program and Personnel into Permit Sonoma, effective January 1, 2019.

**January 29, 2019**

1. Directed staff to coordinate with the Strategic Leadership Group to develop recommendations to consider the placement of a ½ cent Sales Tax Measure on the November ballot
2. Approved a Revenue Agreement of \$1.5 million in ongoing payments with Windsor, Rincon Valley, and Bennet Valley upon the formal consolidation of these agencies and the Mountain Volunteer Fire Company (VFC) by the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO).

**March 19, 2019**

1. Approved the formation of the Fire Services Work Group, which expanded the Strategic Leadership Group to include labor and district association representatives.
2. Entered into a 2-year agreement with North Bay Fire to provide Volunteer Fire Company support for \$2.4 million.
3. Authorized 30 month (4/1/19 – 6/30/21) Service Level Enhancement contracts with the following agencies:
  - a. Bodega Bay Fire Protection District (FPD) for \$500,000
  - b. Cloverdale FPD for \$275,000 each year.
  - c. Geyserville FPD for \$275,000 each year.
  - d. Gold Ridge FPD for \$600,000 each year.
  - e. North Bay Fire for \$550,000 each year.

**May 14, 2019**

1. Authorized the official closure of the Fire and Emergency Services Department effective January 1, 2019.

**July 23, 2019**

1. Authorized an Agreement for up to \$435,000 with Muelrath Public Affairs to provide Public Outreach Assistance for a possible fire tax measure.

**November 5, 2019**

1. Adopted a resolution introducing an Ordinance that placed the Sonoma County Wildfire Prevention, Emergency Alert, and Response Sales Tax on the March 2020 Ballot.

**November 19, 2019**

1. Adopted a resolution authorizing an Agreement with Cal-Fire to provide Amador Plan Services at the Cazadero Cal-Fire for \$323,000.

**February 11, 2020**

1. Approved a Revenue Agreement with the Glen Ellen Fire Protection District for \$158,000 in ongoing payments for the Annexation of the Mayacamas VFC approved by LAFCO.

**May 19, 2020**

1. Approved a Budget Resolution for \$1.6 million to enable the procurement of three fire apparatus vehicles to be used by the North Bay Fire Volunteer Fire Agency.

**County of Sonoma  
Fire Implementation Ad-Hoc Committee  
Charter/Scope of Work  
August 2018**

**Background**

The Chair of the Board of Supervisors has formed a Fire Implementation Ad-Hoc Committee to address the implementation of the Sonoma County Fire Service Deployment Plan (CFSPD). The intended outcome is a more effective and efficient fire system in Sonoma County. The Ad Hoc Committee will address some immediate challenges, as well as establish a longer-term process to commence the implementation of the CFSPD.

This effort will keep three principles in mind to guide decisions:

1. Any decisions should result in a quality of service that equals or exceeds the level that would exist without changes.
2. Any decisions should improve the cost effectiveness of fire services.
3. Any decisions will be made with a County-wide view.

**Committee Members**

Lynda Hopkins, Board of Supervisors, Fifth District  
David Rabbitt, Board of Supervisors, Second District

**County Department Resources**

Sheryl Bratton	County Administrator
Peter Bruland	Principal Administrative Analyst
Terri Wright	Administrative Analyst
Jim Colangelo	Interim Director, Fire and Emergency Services

Subject matter experts from Fire and Emergency Services, Auditor-Controller-Treasurer-Tax Collector Office, County Counsel, and other departments such as Health Services as needed.

In addition, the Ad Hoc will work closely with a select group of Fire Chiefs on the implementation of the Plan

**Work Efforts**

- 1. Financial Stability:** Respond to financial pressures on the most severely impacted areas of the County. Require that any County financial assistance be tied to agreements that promote long-term improvements in fire services County-wide and are consistent with the principles above.
- 2. Explore Funding Options:** Identify and analyze various funding options, including a potential ½ cent sales tax increase in 2019, to fund the CFSDP.

3. Priority Steps: The CFSPD includes three Priority Steps to commence the implementation of the Plan. Determining the allocation of existing resources among the Priority Steps, will ensure service levels are maintained while the longer term vision is developed.

4. County-wide Fire Services Municipal Services Review Report: Review proposed LAFCO actions to determine consistency with the CFSPD and the principles listed above

**Stakeholders**

- Fire Chiefs/Fire Boards/Fire Labor (VFC's, FPD's, cities)
- Ambulance providers/Ambulance provider Boards/Ambulance Labor
- CSA 40/Coastal Valleys EMS

**Staff Contact**

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