

From: jonathan@
To: Holbrook, Marcia
Subject: District Staffing Level
Date: Monday, November 14, 2022 8:45:44 AM

Good Morning, Ms. Holbrook.

Please forward this memo to the District's current directors, to incoming directors and to senior staff.

*Thanks very much.
~Jonathan Goodwin,
Canyon, Calif.*

MEMORANDUM

To: The MOFD Board & Senior Staff
From: Jonathan Goodwin, Canyon, Calif.
Re: Comments on Possible Modification of MOFD Staffing

I have more to say than 3 minutes could contain, therefore I send you this, my response to the staff report for the Special Meeting scheduled for November 16th, 2022. While the report covers its intended scope of information, it fails to offer the full underlying knowledge directors need to make a good decision on this matter because it lacks an alternatives analysis along with a relevant analysis of call data. And it might be fair to note that such a comprehensive document could be considered beyond what can reasonably be expected from a report concerning a single Board meeting agenda item. This is all to say, adjustment of the staffing level should be based upon a deeper understanding of the standards of coverage, and this a specialized matter, not benefited by partial analysis.

For example, two repeated arguments for staffing a dedicated ambulance at Station 45 provide emotional impetus, but no clarity as to specific action. Engine Company 45 could have just as easily been committed to a vehicle accident or have been away for training instead of transporting a patient in Medic 45, and their engine would have been equally unavailable to go to that fire call in Sleepy Hollow. In such a case, would the argument today be that we need two engine companies at Station 45 along with the reserve ambulance? There is no clarity here about whether more medics are needed or more firefighters plus a second engine, etc. Likewise, the argument that more safety personnel means that the community is safer offers no guidance for how many personnel should be hired. Again, if Engine 45 is committed to a call, even if there were a dedicated ambulance at the station, that engine would be equally unavailable in that circumstance as it was for the aforementioned incident.

And then there are various financial questions. Is it appropriate to increase the District's annual financial obligations by ~%5 without increasing revenues to balance that out simply because you can and because it makes you feel safer? History shows that the District can afford higher staffing when the economy is up, but not when it is down. What is the consequence of the this yo-yo effect? And parenthetically, when the economy goes down, and the chief is responsible for submitting a balanced budget to the Board in the face of fallen revenues, typically hiring is frozen and the staffing is reduced by attrition because this is an expedient way to save money. However, if a new class of paramedic-only staff is introduced, this will make the chief's balancing act more cumbersome and reduce the cost savings as paramedic-only staff are slowly replaced by firefighter/paramedics working

overtime. In sum, matters such as these should be mapped out for the Board's consideration prior to making a decision to increase staffing.

Stepping back for a moment, it struck me, in the chief's report, that the northern end of District is vulnerable to fire or medical emergency if Engine Companies 45 & 43 are both engaged with other matters. (And this parallels the medical transport vulnerabilities in the southern end if Medic 41 and M42 or Engine 42 are both out on calls.) A very simple thing other agencies would do is move resources around to cover vacated stations in order to even out response capabilities. In other words, rather than encumbering the District with the cost of increased staffing, if the northern end was needing more fire or medical coverage, then another station could move their apparatus to a vacated station for the needed period of time. But MOFD has tied her shoestrings together and hobbled herself in this regard.

In years past, Station 44--being located in the center of the District--was the logical place where a Type 1 Engine or a reserve ambulance could come from to cover other stations as needed. But nowadays, Station 44 has neither a Type 1 Engine nor a reserve ambulance, owing, I'm guessing, to it being where the District domiciles her too-big-for-this-district ladder truck. If that truck were sent to cover North Orinda, it would be constrained by narrow, twisted streets because its size is incompatible with some portion of the roadway infrastructure there. In fact, my supposition is that if the District could view this situation in a politically unbiased manner, people may recognize that it would be cheaper, more practical and safer to dump the ladder truck and put a quint at both ends of the District so that a quint at Station 41 could cover Ascot Drive, SMC and the new--possibly four story--buildings the Town of Moraga is contemplating approving, and a quint at Station 45 could cover the freeway, San Pablo Dam Road, etc. *(NB: These sorts of operational considerations are absent from Stephen Healy's 2016 Standards of Cover[age] report.)*

My point, as perhaps has been made clear, is this. The business of deciding how to distribute District resources among our five stations in order to avoid sacrificing either financial efficiency or safety is a complex matter. I believe the MOFD Board would benefit, first, by reading Berkeley Fire's and Valley Fire's upcoming reports on their own similar matters when these reports become available and, second, by discussing whether or not to seek professional advice in this regard. Needless to say, such decisions are best made with all deliberate care, not haste.

Lastly, if you're wondering, I have no opinion as to whether or not Medic 45 should be fully staffed because I have seen no call data analysis to suggest that this is or is not needed. Have you seen any such data?