

SACRAMENTO LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION

**1112 I Street, Suite #100
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February 4, 2015

TO: Sacramento Local Agency Formation Commission
FROM: Peter Brundage, Executive Officer *PB*
RE: Herald Fire Protection District Status Update (L AFC 06-14)

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and File the status report on the Herald Fire Protection District.

DISCUSSION:

Staffing

The Herald Fire Protection District is currently recruiting for additional volunteer firefighters.

Governance

The Herald Fire Protection District is governed by five (5) Board of Directors. Currently, all seats are filled based on the November 2014 election.

Financial Audit and Accounting Procedures

The District has hired Richardson and Company to conduct a financial audit of the District. The audit is in progress, however, at this time the date of completion has not been determined. District staff recognizes the need to complete the audit and implement appropriate accounting practices, policies, and procedures related to expenditure control and internal control procedures.

In addition, the District will be utilizing an independent Certified Public Accountant to research financial information needed to complete the audit. Similar to Rio Linda Elverta Community Water District, the financial records of the Herald Fire Protection District are

incomplete and lacking. Therefore, the initial audit may not be able to issue a favorable opinion as the current financial condition of the District.

Budget

The District has adopted a Final Budget for FY 2014-15 as required by State law.

Reserves and Cash Flow

The District is using excess fund balance to eliminate past debt and establish a reserve for emergencies.

While the reserves have decreased, District staff has indicated that there should be sufficient cash flow for this year's current operation and maintenance budget.

District Policies and Procedures

The current management staff has indicated that they will be addressing all of the issues identified by the Sacramento Grand Jury in order to reach compliance. They will be examining personnel policies, operational policies, and the Fire Fighter Bill of Rights. The Fire Chief has also indicated that they will be incorporating a citizen's group to review the proposed policies and recommendations to the Board of Directors prior to a Public Hearing.

Operations and Maintenance

The District is currently working on upgrading and repairing equipment as needed.

Training

The Fire Chief has indicated that they will be working on establishing appropriate training for all staff and volunteers.

PERS

The District is current with all payments to Cal PERS.

Conclusion

District staff realizes that it may take a while to make all the necessary changes and improvements. However, it appears that they have been willing to acknowledge and also identify the issues in order to evaluate the appropriate course of action to be taken.

District staff will be working with the Board of Directors to establish the priority actions to address both concerns raised by the community and the Sacramento Grand Jury.

Based on various e-mails and conflicting information, it is difficult to make an accurate assessment of the current situation. For example, a recent e-mail indicated that the HFPD did not adequately respond to a fire, however, an article in the Galt Herald indicated that HFPD was first on the scene and that fire crews from both Cosumnes and Wilton provided assistance (see attachments). Thus, it is difficult to accurately assess the situation or determine the underlying reasons and issues that are the cause of the concerns.

LAFCo staff will continue to monitor the status of District compliance with these issues and will provide any assistance that we can.

NEWS

Fire ignites Herald home twice

By Bonnie Rodriguez - Managing Editor

Published:

Wednesday, January 21, 2015 12:37 PM CST

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Crews extinguished a fire at a modular home on Herald Road early Friday morning only to have flames reignite Saturday evening.

Herald Fire Protection District (HFPD) assistant fire chief Joe Grubba said when they arrived at the first fire on Friday morning, there was heavy smoke and flames coming from the back of the home.

Grubba was among the first fire personnel on scene after a Cosumnes Fire Department (CFD) medic unit.

Crews from both Cosumnes Fire and Wilton Fire departments assisted in the initial fire. CFD supplied two engines and Wilton provided a water tender that acted as a water runner, refilling the HFPD water tender that was providing water for the fire engines.

According to Grubba, the homeowner was not home at the time of the fire that gutted the back half of the dwelling. Grubba was unsure of the cause of the initial fire and indicated that a fire wall helped crews to prevent the fire from spreading through the entire house. The main bedroom of the home was spared from fire damage, but sustained significant smoke and water damage.

After hours of dousing the home with hundreds of gallons of water, crews packed up and headed home for a rest, only to be called back Saturday evening when flames ignited once again at the same home.

Once again CFD and Wilton fire came in to assist, Wilton providing water and CFD's medic standing by.

The Saturday night fire gutted the rest of the home. Grubba believes that materials reigniting was the likely cause of the second fire.



The back half of a residence on Herald Road sits gutted after a fire ravaged the back of the house.

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Brundage. Peter

From: Don Claunch <DClaunch@teichert.com>
Sent: Friday, January 16, 2015 8:54 AM
To: Brundage. Peter
Cc: Jim Aschwanden
Subject: HFPD

Good morning Mr. Brundage.

It was brought to my attention from my colleagues at Wilton Fire last night, as they watched in disbelief as it took 27 minutes for any units from Herald to respond for a structure fire on the morning of the 16th @ approximately 3:30 A.M. CSD units from Galt, (E46 & M46) were on scene for the fire attack and on the channel 13 news with no Herald units to be found. Absolutely incredible, considering the fire was not even ¼ of a mile from the station 87 Herald facility. Wilton was dispatched to supply a water tender in support for Galt also. Is this not enough for someone to take notice or are we waiting for a fatality? Gentlemen if this is not the wakeup call we need nothing will be until it is a tragedy! The information is documented at the Sac. County dispatch center but is not available to the public such as myself. PLEASE LOOK IN TO THIS.

The community of Herald needs your help desperately!!!

Don Claunch

Dear Board members and the community of Herald,

We, the majority of Herald Volunteer Firefighters, have finally reached the conclusion that we are now locked into a hopeless situation with our current Herald Fire Department staff, and in particular, the new assistant chief-training officer.

Although we were commended by the Grand Jury last spring in their report for our professionalism, integrity and outstanding commitment to our community in the face of a public fire storm, the changes in management staff and the ongoing antics of the majority of the Board has led to a diminished and demoralized volunteer force. We, as a group, no longer feel safe to respond to calls due to the unprofessional leadership and lack of judgment displayed by our on-scene untrained, unqualified and totally disrespectful administration – provided they even feel compelled to respond to calls.

The documentation is available to the public - we have few, if any, responders and as a result, the public safety of the Herald Community is in jeopardy!

The Herald Volunteer Firefighters in the past had pride, values, integrity and a true sense of what morality stood for. It was normal operations for any call to see from 2-8 responders on scene with anywhere from 2-6 waiting on standby at the stations in case further assistance was needed or ready to respond to another call if necessary. This is no longer the case. There have been instances of Sacramento County dispatch actually having to tone out our Department multiple times, and to then resort to calling to see if we would have ANY responders available.

Our training sessions at this time are attended by few if any volunteers as they do not pertain to any training we can actually use, (ex. tow truck operations?). The atmosphere at the trainings is reflective of the attitude of our current management – unprofessional, negative, and confrontational. This conduct has now placed the volunteer fire fighters and the public safety in jeopardy.

Our morale is at an all-time low driven by the acts of the administration. For example, work schedules have been developed that now place family members and close personal friends of management on de-facto full-time status, which – if left unchecked – will require the district to pay full benefits and retirement for those select individuals. This “back door” conversion threatens the fiscal integrity of our district, since these positions are not fiscally sustainable.

There are also numerous documented cases of established procedures not being followed or adhered to by department management, and the resultant lack of professionalism by management has left our ranks confused, demoralized, and increasingly resentful. There are no standards of conduct, either personal or professional, being consistently exhibited by the management of this district. Rules and procedures are bent and adjusted to fit the personal pique of newly-hired management, with preferential treatment reserved for a select few family and friends.

If the intent of the majority of the Board and top management has been to reduce the effectiveness and professionalism of this department by hiring a previously terminated employee for the same

position for which she was previously found incompetent, then your strategy and actions have been a resounding success! Your consent and approval of current management placing friends and family in key positions while verbally assaulting, berating, misleading, and making dangerous and unprofessional decisions that affect the safety of our public and volunteers is inconsistent with the oath you took to protect this community. This community deserves better.

We, as a majority group of the remaining volunteer force, have reached the point where we cannot, and will not, tolerate the current situation for much longer. How far does this lunacy have to go? Will it take a major incident and the resultant public display of district management incompetence to effect change? That's an unacceptable price for this community to pay for the personal and political shenanigans of the majority of the Board of Directors and the management staff that have been put in place over the past few months.

We want to make this perfectly clear - If substantive change is not made in the management structure, personnel, and practices of this district in the very near future, we will have no choice but to terminate our involvement with this district. Our personal safety and well-being can no longer be jeopardized by the continued unprofessional conduct and management of this district. The Board needs to take action now to alleviate this untenable situation.

Sincerely,

Herald Volunteer Firefighters

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3 ~~Cherlin~~

4 ~~Brittany Claunch~~

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11 ~~David Gomez~~
