MR. OTT: Good afternoon, everybody. It will be evening before we end.
We're going to start in a few minutes. I would just like to remind all of you that we do have speaker slips here for those that want to make some comments. You should fill slips out so we have the proper spelling and so forth of your name. If you don't have a speaker slip, you can raise your hand. We'll bring one to you. Also, in order for us to collect the speaker slips, you can pass them to either side of the chambers, and we'll pick them up for you.

I'll make some introductions, and we will begin with the testimony part of today's workshop. So make yourself comfortable. Also, on the pragmatic side, for those of you that are parked in the two-hour zone, which I imagine most of you are except for those that might have come in on a bus, that two-hour provision has been waived today. So don't worry about that.

So again, we're going to be starting in a couple of minutes.

(The audience entered and was seated.)

MR. OTT: Well, it's getting very quiet here. So I assume it's time to begin. My clock says 2:00.

My name is Mike Ott. And I'm the director of LAFCO. Let me introduce the staff that will be participating in today's workshop. And then I'll also make some additional introductions.

In back of me is Shirley Anderson. She's the Chief of Policy Research of LAFCO. She is the principal
Sitting next to her is John Traylor, a LAFCO consultant, as well as the Executive Director of the Task Force on Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services.

Sitting next to him is John Goss, another LAFCO consultant. And he's the author of Attachment 2, that has the Ralph Anderson title on it, regarding governance and volunteer issues. He's going to be saying a few comments about that particular report.

We have Anne, who is taking a transcription of today's meeting for all of you that are in the audience. We will be posting on our website a full transcription of the three workshops, the dialog that occurred at the three workshops. That will be posted at our website.

We're still in the process of converting it to English. I'm not sure how the transcription process works. But it will be very effective in terms of capturing everything that all of you have said previously, as well as today. That will be on our website. It will be available. It has an important packet for our commission that will be deliberating on the subject.

A couple more introductions. Attachment 1 to the Micro Report was produced by the Department of Planning and Land Use. Ivan Holler, Ken Miller, and Ralph Steinhoff are here. I'm going to be asking them...
questions about that attachment, to give a highlight of that report. We would appreciate that. It will probably be in around 10 or 15 minutes.

Also in the audience from the Assembly office of Kevin Jeffreys. Randy, where are you? Welcome. It's very good to have you here. What part of San Diego County -- I assume other counties does the Assemblyman represent?

MALE SPEAKER: Riverside County and northern San Diego County from the 8 freeway north.

MR. OTT: Okay, so two very fire prone counties. Thank you for being here.

Are there any other staff representatives from elected officials here in the State Legislature? I don't see any.

I'd like to introduce the Chairman of the San Diego LAFCO, Andy Vanderlaan. He has the distinguished position of holding the Chairmanship for Peterson Reporting, Video & Legal Services.
Andy was previously with the predecessor, District of North County, which was a by-product of consolidation. The Fallbrook Fire Protection District and one of the County Service Areas served that region. The consolidation actually resulted in the dissolution of Fallbrook FPD and creation of the new fire district, the North County Fire District.

So he's very experienced in not only fire matters, but consolidation. So I'd like to turn things over to some welcome remarks from our chairman.

MR. VANDERLAAN: Thank you, Mike.

I won't bore you with all the details of my history. Mike's covered that. I don't think I got elected the Chairperson because I was doing such a great job. I think it has to do with a fire issue. And I'm honored that the Commissioners felt that I'd be a good leader for this project.

There's also another former North County, aka Fallbrook Fire Protection District member here, Ralph Steinhoff. He was with the District for how many years?

MR. STEINOFF: Thirty-one.

MR. VANDERLAAN: Thirty-one years.

I'll just say when I came to the County in 1976, I thought I was going to have an apprenticeship as an assistant chief. That lasted two weeks. And then things were going swimmingly until Proposition 13 passed in 1978. I've gone through the wars with that.
I must say that it's much more pleasant to be on this side than it is to be a presenter over here. I'm sure many of you in this room have been a presenter or have testified on issues before the Board of Supervisors. And my heart goes out to you because it is not a pleasant or an easy thing to do.

I must commend our staff for the report, the quality of the report, and also for these meetings. This is the third one that's being held. And with the fact that we have a court reporter so everything -- you can forget my words. But the other words and comments are being recorded. I think that's important.

I think it's also very important that you're very candid with your remarks. I missed the Elfin Forest bus, so I had to drive myself. But thanks for the invitation. I appreciate that. So our staff has done a great job in the manner in which they're reporting and having these meetings to allow you to comment.

Just a bit about our commission. I am the Chairperson. I think I'm in about my, maybe, eighth or tenth year of being on the commission. I must say at this point in time, the commission is more together than they have been in my tenure there.

In thinking about potential consolidation, I also must comment that the Fire Service because, as you may well know, the Micro Report that we're going to be
hearing about today was really a result of the Fire Districts and the Fire Chiefs Associations coming together and putting together what was called a Substantially Similar Proposal. Without that we'd be on a different track. The commission had an upside-down version of what we're going to be talking about today. So my compliments to the Fire Service for that as well.

Back to the commission. It's one of those things -- once again, in my tenure here I thought that, coming from Orange County, that San Diego County was long overdue for some sort of a consolidated fire,
more information on that, you can contact Supervisor Jacob. Those things are moving forward.

We're coming off the heels of Proposition C, while not containing any funding mechanisms, certainly indicated -- at least the public indicated -- that they would like a new and hopefully improved Fire Service and EMS delivery system in the county. It may come down to the fact that we have to go back to those same people who voted yes for more money.

Just to sum it up, I think that the stage is set. If there ever was a time that consolidation was not only feasible but hopefully practical, I think it's now. The manner in which those agencies come together is really up to you and other folks in the county, particularly from the fire side.

So my encouragement to all of you. I guess the question is, what will happen? And that's really why we're here, is to discuss that. So once again, be candid. Get your comments in. The commission is completely open-minded on this issue about the -- I think they support the idea of consolidation. But the manner in which it's going to happen is completely open.

I encourage you to talk to your Supervisors as this thing moves forward. And the commission meeting is tentatively scheduled for May the 6th, 7th -- excuse me -- May the 7th. That date may move, depending upon where we are with comments and the staff bringing the
So bottom line, my encouragement is to stay involved with the process. Make your comments clear. Be strong in what you believe, how you think it should work. We heard after 1978, when the legislature had our destiny in their hands, if you don't want to have something laid on the top of you, you better be part of the solution. So I suggest you do that. Bottom line, follow the money. Without the money, we're not going to move much further than we are now.

Thank you.

MR. OTT: Thank you, Andy.

A few things before we begin: I mentioned earlier, for those of you that are parked in the two-hour zone, disregard that. You will not be ticketed today.

We have speaker slips up here for those of you that would like to speak. We apologize for the formality of the arrangement, but it will facilitate the meeting. This is the seat of the County government and the location of our office and the final workshop that we're holding. Feel free to roll up your sleeves and be candid with your remarks. We want to hear from you.

We've taken a different approach of releasing the LAFCO report. It does not yet contain specific recommendations. There are many assumptions behind the direction we are following. We are very open to receiving comments and hope to hear from all of you. We want to hear from you. What you
have to say will make a difference, in terms of how our
recommendations will be structured.

And April 6th is the deadline that Shirley will
be going over in a few minutes, as the written comment
deadline for the public and the agencies to give us your
opinions, comments on the Micro Report. And that will
be incorporated into a hearing document.

If I could see a show of hands in terms of
people that have not been at either the Pine Valley or
Ramona workshop. A number of you. Okay. I was going
to offer a suggestion that I can be a little briefer
with my remarks, rather than going over the same thing
that I went over at the other workshops. But in lieu of
about half of you not being at previous workshops, I'll
go over the same information.

For those of you that don't know about LAFCO,
it's a State-chartered agency that works as a
legislative arm of the State Legislature. It carries
out broad mandates and legislative intent, policy. It
is not like a planning commission that weighs evidence
and is often defined as a quasi-judicial agency or
quasi-legislative.

We deal with some broad legislative
declarations that originated from Sacramento. And those
are carried out and implemented at the local level here
in San Diego, implemented in varying ways, but with the
same mandate and 57 other counties in California.

Who sits on LAFCO? You heard from our
Chairman, Andy Vanderlaan. He's a public member. He's not affiliated with the City or special districts. He is a Fire Chief, and he represents the public at large. He's one-eighth of our commission.

There are seven other primary members that represent County government. We have the Board of Supervisors represented on our commission, two members from the Board, Supervisors, Jacob and Horne.

We also have three City representatives on our commission that are appointed by their respective authorities (City Councils). In one case, the City of San Diego has a permanent seat on LAFCO due to special provisions in State Law.

There are also special districts represented on LAFCO. I know, looking at the audience, that there are a number of independent districts that represented here today. Independent districts are governed by elected boards of directors. Currently, there are 63 independent districts in the county. These include fire districts, water districts, fire districts, etc. These districts are responsible for appointing 2 members to LAFCO. Again, those district members of LAFCO are selected by their respective appointed authorities.

So if you do the arithmetic, I think I've covered all commissioners. There are eight members. Those are my bosses. I'm an independent employee. I'm not a
County employee, as are the folks sitting in back of me. They are not County employees. They are employees of LAFCO. And the legislature intended us to be autonomous from all levels of government that we regulate, whether that be County, City, or Special District.

So that, I think, covers at least a little bit about LAFCO. What I'd like to do now is, before I turn things over to Shirley, is to let you know that the podium, unfortunately, is to the back of us. When we get to the public part of the workshop, that will be where you should come up.

I'll probably call you in groups of three or four so that we can do this as judiciously as possible. We'll have you seated who are waiting for those that are next up. The reason why we have the speaker slips is not for formality. It's so that our transcriber can get the name, spelling, and affiliation correctly attributed to you. And, again, the transcriptions will be posted on our website (sdlafco.org).

So, at this point in time we're going to do a PowerPoint presentation. Shirley will be beginning with that. There will also be other parts in the presentation which will start after Shirley is done.

MS. ANDERSON: The Micro Report was released several weeks ago. And if you haven't seen it, this is what the cover looks like. And this is where you can
get a copy. It's on our website with all the attachments.

There are two attachments -- a number of exhibits in the Micro Report and two attachments. The first is a proposal by the County. And the second is an addendum of research reports by Ralph Anderson and Associates on all important volunteer efforts and fire protection from other counties.

We have a brief timeline here that explains how we've gotten to this point. About two years ago in February, the commission, in a cooperative move between LAFCO and the Board of Supervisors, initiated a reorganization of virtually every unincorporated area fire protection agency.

In August of the same year according to procedures that are adopted by LAFCO, the Fire Chiefs Associations and the District Fire Chiefs Associations jointly put together a proposal that supplanted the original reorganization proposal.

What has become known as the SSP, which stands for Substantially Similar Proposal, basically took all the agencies in the original reorganization and segregated them by criteria that was developed for the SSP into two phases. What we're looking at now is Phase 1. Phase 2 would be sometime in the future, after we've resolved all the issues with Phase 1.

In December of '05 after the commission, LAFCO, accepted the SSP, a Macro Report was released by LAFCO.
staff and approved by the commission. The LAFCO report reviewed several options for providing service in the unincorporated area and opened many more questions about the details of how this would happen.

The commission adopted the Macro Report and asked that a micro-level report be prepared. The Micro Report addresses very specific services and very specific criteria and was released, as I say, in January, a few weeks ago.

We’re in the public workshop phase, as you can see right now. We’ve had three workshops, one last week in Pine Valley, one in Ramona, one here tonight.

Written comments are due by April 6th. This is very important. We want to gather comments in any form. Written is certainly substantial from all agencies and from the public. The hearing where the Micro Report will go to the commission for their review and possible approval is in May.

These are the agencies that are in Phase 1. If you don’t see your agency there, that’s because it’s in Phase 2.

There are seven Fire Protection Districts. These are independently elected districts. They have independent boards of directors.

There are six County Service Areas. A County Service area is a County-dependent district. The Board of Supervisors is the policy head of County Service Areas.
They all have advisory committees.

In the case of the CSAs, there are volunteer agencies within the CSAs who actually perform the service of fire protection and emergency medical services. They have contracts with the County to actually perform the service. In this way, they're really no different than other contractors, say CDF, who would be performing fire protection service.

There are four municipal water districts. They are what we call multipurpose districts. The principal acts that they were created under in the government code or in the State codes allow for multiple functions. Not all of them who have all multiple functions actively practice them. They're called latent powers. And those powers in the municipal water districts in San Diego County are water, fire. And Ramona also has sewer.

In addition to these public agencies, there are 7 volunteer organizations. Warner Springs, the one on the bottom is not presently providing service. There's a number of volunteer private organizations. They work under -- similar to a franchise, if you will. But they are private organizations. They do not have the ability to implement or collect property tax or special assessments. Their revenue-raising sources are strictly limited to private sources.

This is a map of what the distribution of these Phase 1 agencies look like. It's yellow on the maps, so it may be a little bit more difficult to tell. There's
two colors of yellow. The bright yellows are the
current districts. The faded yellow is about 950,000
acres of unserved territory. All of that territory in
all of the Phase 1 areas would be included in the
reorganization. The pink is the Phase 2 agencies. And
the gray, way off to the left, are cities, incorporated
areas.

So what does the Micro Report cover? Well,
there's a lot of details in there. It explains how
State law has restricted access to new or increasing
revenues. It reviews the revenues by multiple years. I'm
talking about 25- or 30-year effort to coordinate and
enhance local fire protection and emergency medical
services in the unincorporated area.

It points out an evolving County Enhancement
Program and how that has offered resources to the
unincorporated area. It describes the difference
between Schedule A and plans for those who are not
familiar with it.

But, primarily, the Micro Report covered cost
estimates for 12 models of structural fire protection
and emergency medical services. And it reviewed
governance options for regional system. We'll look at
the first item there first: The cost estimates for 12
models of structural fire protection.

How did that come about? At the point where
the commission asked for a Micro Report, they selected
three levels of services that had come forward in theMacro Report. And we want to look at this level of services in a regional entity.

We're talking about creating a reasonable boundary around the entire Phase 1. We'd like to see what three on-duty, basic life support, advanced life support would cost within this regional agency; not within individual jurisdictions, but within the entire agency.

These services, the original request was to be provided by career volunteer. The commission then said we also would like you to look at the same three levels of service, provided by a combination of career and volunteer. Let's see if there's a cost difference between doing it strictly career or with career volunteer.

At the same time, let's look at another delivery model. So CDF is the apparent delivery model that is existing out there in the unincorporated area now and others of the state. So the same model of the same six numbers, six service levels, were applied with having CDF being the service provider.

And there's the cost. The top level is all career. The bottom part of the screen is career volunteer. Yellow is local resources. Blue are services provided by CDF.

As you can see, the numbers across the bottom of the screen are lower than those across the top.
That's because of the significant volunteer component within those numbers. And it begs the issue of what is the value of volunteers. It's something that many people have tried to put a cost component to.

We know that volunteer fire suppression is the predominant mode of service delivery across the United States. But it's very, very difficult to put an objective cost to it. Because there are so many elements of it that just do not lend themselves to this sort of analysis.

We do know that the cost difference between our service models in the Micro Report, between those levels of services provided by strictly career and provided by career or volunteer, there's a difference anywhere from $14- to $20 million. It really points to the significance of the volunteer contribution in the system.

At the same time, state law or reconsolidating the districts do not extend to private agencies. And that's what the volunteer agencies are. They're private agencies. So the model would be that volunteer agencies would continue to work in a cooperative environment, exactly as they are now, and be incorporated as an extremely important component of regional fire protection service.

If we go back and look at our total cost, we see that -- let me back up again.
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Here's your lowest cost, the career volunteer, 44.8 million. And your highest is the four on-duty delivered by CDF. So if we start looking -- excuse me. If you want to know what these costs include, I refer you to the Micro Report. Because there are several pages of assumptions that allow you to understand how these costs were developed. But they do include total personnel compensation as the whole package.

And it was developed from median salaries across this county, including all the cities also. So that elevates the median. It includes an overhead component. It does not include one-time costs. Capital start-up costs were estimated of the need to be about 37 to 47 million. And the model projects those as being available at the point of organization, not funded over time. That's the modeling technique. Most people understand that the money won't be in the bank the day that the reorganization starts.

Very important assumptions for this is that it is an integrated regional system. We're not looking at how do we increase costs within Deer Springs or how do we increase services in Deer Springs, how do we increase services within East County Fire? No. The system was taken apart and restructured according to geographic and operational relationships, not jurisdictional lines.

Another very important component of this is
that no service would be reduced. The service across the region now is quite varied. And those agencies that have increased services, either because of efficiencies or because they have increased revenues over other agencies, would not see a reduction in their service level. There would be some baseline of service across the whole region. But no service would be reduced.

Here's a map of how the jurisdictions were eliminated and a regional agency was implemented. Costs were all developed based on staffing these five battalions.

Here's another chart, which I know you can't see. But again, I'll refer you to the Micro Report. On the right is a support staff. On the left, there's -- represents 400 or 500 positions, operations positions, safety personnel. And embedded in there is a volunteer coordinator to take care of that all-important volunteer function.

So let's look at the resources that are available out there. This is a snapshot in time. It's probably changed already. This was '05/'06.

There's about 5.9 million in property tax that is related to fire protection. There is more fire protection revenue out there. There is an estimate of what is related to fire protection and emergency medical services.

Our multipurpose districts have property tax
that is related to water, to sewer. And formulas in state laws are used to calculate how much of that property tax would be attributable to fire protection and would be transferred to a new agency. So that's what you come up with.

There's 8.2 million in voter-approved assessments. This is an interesting figure. The voters out there have approved more in assessments and special assessments than there is in property tax. And there's 8.5 million in county fire enhancement. That's what was allocated in '05/'06.

The county fire enhancement fund is a program that was put forward by the County to support fire protection services in the unincorporated area. Again, 8.5 million was expended in '05/'06. The fund grants new equipment. Probably the centerpiece of the program is CDF contracts that placed Amador and assisted in Schedule A contracts in some agencies.

The Micro Report looks at the revenue from the county fire enhancement program in a very conservative manner. It is not the same as the sustainable income that we're looking at for property tax and special voter-approved benefit fees. We're looking at it very conservatively as a one-time fund for the purpose of the Micro Report.

However, no one can disagree that it has impacted the manner in which the fire services are being provided. And it presents potential for income for this
region. So we go back again, and look at what we've put together. We've got a total here of 22.6 million in '05/'06.

If we go back and pick up the least cost service level, which was 5-A, which was three on at BLS, and subtract from that the estimate of resources that we had, we still come up short 22 million.

So we looked at the cost estimates and the revenue estimates. And we'll look at now the governance options for a regional system.

The governance options basically have to follow some simple tests. It has to be a good governance option for the service that we're talking about. Does it have the statutory authority to provide the service?

Does it have -- would it provide the structure throughout the service?

Is in some way the ability of a particular governance option better than another to provide funding? And, indeed, access to funding, as we all know, is probably the principal test for which we'll be looking at governance.

The four options for governance that are reviewed in the Micro Report are the Regional Fire Protection District, the County of San Diego as a successor agency, County Service Area 135, and the status quo.
All of these four options are reviewed for implementing the service levels that we've already discussed, five, six, and seven. So a regional system at the cost of 44 million for the lowest.

The first one, the Regional Fire Protection District, is an independent special district voted in by registered voters of the regional agency. There would be 11 members at elected at large, at least initially. The board may be elected or appointed.

Eleven members is the largest amount of board members as allowed by law under a Fire Protection District. They would be voted in at large initially. That is state law, also. There are options, for a later date, having the district divided into divisions by area. The volunteers would remain autonomous, as I've explained. They would work cooperatively within a new region, within a new entity, just as if they work cooperatively for the entities out there now.

And the municipal water districts would not be included in Phase 1. There are no provisions in state law that would allow the fire function, which was the original intent, to remove the fire function from the municipal water districts. So municipal water districts would not be included in Phase 1. Apparently put into Phase 2 at this time.
The boundaries would enclose all the Phase 1 organizations, with the exclusion of the municipal water districts, and approximately 950,000 acres of unserved territory. The new board of directors, whoever would be elected to this Fire Protection District, would set policy, would set the level of service. So even though we've illustrated different cost components, it is a new elected board of directors that would set the service level.

A Fire Protection District would inherit the property tax and special assessment revenue of all the dissolved districts. Transfer of property tax is forthright in state law. It is transferred to the new agency. The special assessment revenue of the dissolved districts would be retained in zones where that special assessment was collected.

In and of itself, creating a Fire Protection District does not create access to new revenue. There's nothing in state law that says if you form a Fire Protection District, money flows from somewhere. You still have to work to find it. So under that constraint, the minimum Micro Report service level could not be implemented without additional funding.

Remember, the minimum is 44 million. And the estimate of, really, the resources available out there right now -- and we're not sure that all of that would be available to a Fire Protection District -- are about
The characteristics of a county program, this would be the model if the districts were dissolved and the County was named as successor agency to provide fire protection services in Phase 1 of the unincorporated area. The Board of Supervisors would be the policy legislative head.

Second, first, and fifth districts, basically the yellow, again, is Phase 1. And you can see the fifth, second districts overlay most of Phase 1. There's a little bit down there in phase -- overlay most of Phase 1. And there's a little bit of supervisorial district in Phase 1 that overlays.

Again, just like an elected board of directors for a Fire Protection District, the supervisors would establish a service level and delivery mode. The volunteers would remain autonomous and work cooperatively with the system, and the municipal water districts would not be included.

Property tax would be transferred to the County. Property tax is generally deposited into the general fund, just like the regional Fire Protection District. Special assessment revenue needs to be retained in zones where it's collected and used only in that area.

The County's fire enhancement program could be implemented without delay on our County's assessment. It would be implemented under a regional Fire Protection
District too, but this is just a more direct route. Because they wouldn't be working cooperatively through a regional fire district. It would be the County.

Just as an aside, part of the fire enhancement program indicates that an office of fire warden may be created. And that is not a function of LAFCO. That is a function totally of the County and would be outside of the reorganization.

Again, like a Fire Protection District, there is no direct access to revenue. No revenue is created as a function of naming the County as a successor agency. There is, however, the potential to access County discretionary funds. And that really should be evaluated.

Again, the minimum level of service could not be implemented without additional funding. No new money is created by this. There is still 44 million required to provide service level and about 22 million out there in revenue.

The third option is CSA 135, County Service Peterson Reporting, Video & Legal Services

Area 135, is the 800 megahertz communication. It covers the county and has a cooperative agreement with Imperial County. So the cities are member agencies.

LAFCO could empower CSA 135 to provide fire protection services. That would only be within a zone that replicates the boundary of the Phase 1 reorganization.
Here's a map of CSA 135, the big yellow line there, and the Phase 1.

Most of the characteristics of CSA would be identical to naming the County as successor agency. The Board of Supervisors would be the policy and legislative head. Voter-approved assessments would have to be retained in the zones where collected. There's no direct access to new revenue.

But property tax in a CSA would not be deposited in the general fund. Property tax would be retained in discrete accounts earmarked for CSA 135, specifically.

Characteristics of the status quo, continued system of multiple underfunded districts and volunteer operations. The implementation of the county fire enhancement program, as I said, it is a fact now. It can go forward.

What it does at this point is actually introduce partial de facto consolidation. Because agencies are increasingly coming under CDF contract. So they are consolidated under one service provider.

Again, the minimum Macro Report service level could not be implemented without additional funding.

So we go back to our timeline to see where we're at. Written comments, again, are due in April. The hearing is tentatively scheduled for May. And as Chairman Vanderlaan said, well, what can happen in May?

A lot of things could happen in May.
The commission can continue, of course, for a month or two. The whole issue could be put aside temporarily. If a Fire Protection District is approved, there will be an automatic election. This is mandatory. It's in state law. No option. Automatic election for a Fire Protection District. That would be within registered voters within the entire Phase 1 that was being reorganized. That was the final boundary of Phase 1 that was approved by the commission.

If other options were selected, there is the possibility of an election. And the election requires the protest of registered voters within agencies that would be dissolved.

And that's not supposed to be there. That's the end of the report. If you have any questions, if you need to see one of the slides again, we'll be happy to review anything.

MR. OTT: Thank you, Shirley.

We have a few more components to the presentation, which we will begin in a few seconds here. After the Planning Department answers a few questions we have regarding their attachment, and again John Goss, ditto for him, we'll open this up to questions regarding the presentation that was made. And then after we exhaust any questions related specifically to the presentation, we'll proceed with the speaker slips.
So at this time, I'd like to have Ivan and his team come up here.

What the question is, really, tell us about Attachment 1, which is the conceptual reorganization plan that was put together. The genesis of that plan, for those of that you were not at the previous workshops is this: LAFCO staff needed additional information, elaboration on the direction of the county's fire enhancement program.

We produced a questionnaire. That in turn resulted in a response, which is Attachment 1. And I think it would be helpful if Ivan went over it a little bit, maybe five or so minutes.

MR. HOLLER: Thanks, Mike.

Good afternoon. I am, again, Ivan Holler. I'm a Deputy Planning Director in the Department of Planning and Land Use. A couple of introductory comments, and then I'm going to turn it over to Ralph and Ken. And they'll follow up with some additional information.

With respect to the county report that's an attachment to the Micro Report, I want to clarify a couple things. Because I've heard a lot of comments that aren't quite accurate. And so I would like to take this opportunity to offer the clarification.

We were asked by LAFCO back on November 6th to submit information to LAFCO about our program, the program that's currently operating today. And we did that, which included providing them a copy of a report.
that we had assembled and also responding to a number of other questions that came out of LAFCO.

And our program is, as all of you are aware at this point in time, currently includes 8.5 million dollars per year that the board has allocated out of the general fund to enhance fire protection services in the unincorporated area.

I know that originally there were a lot of concerns over how that program -- how our program was developed. And those questions came forward and were answered by our CAO, by Mr. Walt Eckard, at a board hearing when this item, the first phase of that county program, came to the board as to how it was developed.

So a lot of the concerns over the fact that it wasn't developed with participation from a number of the affected agencies were addressed directly by Mr. Eckert. I'm not going to address them today because he's already done that.

And then subsequent to that hearing, we had a second phase that came forward with the board and a public hearing. And the board adopted and approved that. That brought the current total up to 8.5 million dollars. And before that hearing, we did sit down with the fire service and met with them. And they were supportive of the proposal at that time.

There is a -- so the County fire program is 8.5 million dollars, as you heard Shirley referencing in
the program. There's a portion of that study that's at this time not adopted. It's not on anybody's calendar.

It's a possibility. But it should remain just that at this point in time. It's our idea for how this program could be potentially expanded in the future. But it is just that, future and possibility.

So right now we have an 8.5-million-dollar program where we're allocating resources and also working with CDF, in terms of writing additional contracts to include fire protection services.

That's the overview that I wanted to provide, because I want to make sure that you all had a clear understanding of how that came about. It's been in place now for a couple years. So I'm going to turn it over to Ralph and Ken, make some closing comments, and then I'll give it back to Mike.

MR. MILLER: Thank you.

I'm Ken Miller, one of the fire services coordinators for the County.

To give you some information about our existing program, our existing program basically is targeting the rural areas to help improve fire service in a number of ways.

One of the areas we're looking at is our particular program, as it exists today, is to develop enhancement, based on what exists out there at this point in time. One of the highlights that we looked at was some CDF facilities that we've heard discussed over
the past couple of stakeholder meetings.

What happened is, back in ’98 LAFCO recommended that some of those resources might be considered to improve the fire service. Because they actually exist in the field today. They’re operated. And maybe they could be something that could be built upon.

We took that direction at that point in time. And what we’ve done is instituted ten Amador agreements out there. An Amador agreement is basically an opportunity to keep a CDF facility open that does respond to all types of emergencies, it’s just not wild fires, during the winter period. So we have actually funded that for a five-month period with basically coverage behind that in the event they go into an emergency. So that’s the partnership we did out there.

Those ten stations are De Luz; Rincon; Miller, in the Deer Springs area; Valley Center; Warner Springs, where incidentally a volunteer fire station has folded; Witch Creek, out in the Santa Ysabel, Ramona area; Campo; Dulzura; the Boulevard area; and Potrero.

The other step that we did was to try to build upon existing agreements that were in place and increase staffing at some stations. What we did is offered some increased staffing enhancements for the districts of Deer Springs. We put an additional person on each engine in their district seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Likewise, we did the same in Valley Center.
We also were able to get some full-service agreements for the first time in the communities of rural Fire Protection District. We went from one station covered full time with career people to two stations out in that area. We also have a signed agreement with Pine Valley Fire District that we hope will come to implementation sometime in June, where the people are on the ground.

We also provided funding for the volunteer fire companies out there in two ways. We offered operational dollars to them, which basically doubled their budgets. That's what we did out there.

We met with them as groups for three meetings, then we met individually. We were able to fund money their way so they could pay for such things as liability insurance, workers' compensation, fuel, utility costs, did those types of things for them.

The other benefit that we did for the volunteer groups out there is, we looked at an aging fleet. The fire service fleet and those volunteer fire communities and some districts are aging. We had meetings. We meet quarterly with those partners at this point in time. We identified priorities with their input. And at this point in time we've ordered 16 pieces of apparatus, which is engines and water tenders. The first water tender arrived today.

We also are planning to order three more engines, probably this week. We've got the clearance to
do that. So we're actually putting equipment on the ground that needs to be replaced today.

The one thing that we'd really like to let everybody know is, we support the volunteer programs. We have been supporting them in our program as is today. We intend to support them in the future. They are an integral part of our particular program. Without them, we cannot make things function.

With this, I'll let Ralph identify some specific establishments.

MR. STEINHOFF: I'm Ralph Steinhoff, Fire Service Coordinator for the County of San Diego.

Currently, through cooperative agreements with 18 agencies, there are 42 fire stations under contracts. We have agreements with all the CSAs and volunteers except one. They are currently allocated through partnerships in excess of 15 million dollars over the last 18 months.

Of that $15 million, $9 million has gone through contracts to enhance staffing and an excess of $9 million has gone to enhance fire apparatus replacement and equipment.

We strive to bring forward sort of a Southwest Airlines approach to this apparatus and equipment so that it is simple yet functional. We've
tried to watch the pocketbook pretty close. And yet, certainly, there are a lot of problems out there, but the hope is that it's very functional.

We worked very closely with the partner agencies to come to a determination to those regional needs. And those regional needs and assets were determined through those groups. And so that's how we brought forward those listings of apparatus.

We also worked with the agencies. We found that the run books back at these stations were severely lacking. So, working with the agencies, we tried to work through RGIS section. And we have brought forward in excess of over 200 run books back to the engines so that they actually have that in the engines so they can actually find the parcels, addresses, and streets, which is so vital to be able to do this job.

Through the partnership we've also brought together some contract training officers through CDF and working with other partners in the tribal nations where they've brought forward and made available facilities. And as we bring out there and work together collaboratively to improve the overall training aspects.

We also have our staff individuals to assist with grant writing, to assist the volunteers in striving for grant funds.
County was to look at the blue ribbon commissions report, the task force on fire service recommendations and to deal with some of those.

We have been looking at communications. We have initiated much of the command and controls areas. We have constituted improvements in training through the collaborative effort of all, looking at mutual aid and automatic aid agreements so that the closest units, not just agency, could respond to an incident. Fleet replacement, which is actively ongoing, to the improvement of the resources, to enhance budgets, and to reduce duplications of services.

The County has already addressed issues with our fire codes. We've gone to the consolidated codes and brought fire codes into the building codes. And we've also instituted an enhancement of the overall reorganization within the region.

With that, I'll hand it back to Ken.

MR. MILLER: The last item we wanted to brief you on is the proposal. It's just a proposal. It's a staff recommendation to LAFCO.

We are proposing for supplemental staffing in specific districts. Borrego and East County are areas that we're looking at doing some supplemental staffing.
at the possibility of an Amador agreement in the Mount Woodson area. What that will do is help pick up some unserved islands out there. So that year-round coverage is our goal. We're also looking at providing some minimal supervisory chief officer coverage to help in the rural east and northeast portions of the county.

We're moving into developing a stipend program to retain and train volunteers. That's a one-million-dollar proposal. We're looking at trying to provide an increase in operational and maintenance elements for the volunteer program.

We're looking at a dispatch situation. I skipped over one item. We're looking at moving into an emergency medical dispatch. We have an item in there for that service to improve dispatching in that area.

We are proposing that the CSAs be merged into one large CSA. That's an option. We are looking at basically letting the volunteer fire companies today that do not get mitigation fees having an avenue to get those fees.

We're looking to basically say that fire districts don't have to be dissolved. It's an option.

That's what our items identified in the summary of the proposal, the recommendation.

And, again, this is just a proposal that comes to 4.5 million dollars. It's not funded at this point in time, as Ivan said.

The one thing that has come to our attention in
The previous meetings is about Elfin Forest. Elfin Forest is in the program as a County Service Area, because LAFCO has it in the Micro Report. So we have a placeholder in our organizational structure. It's in there for that purpose so they can be part of that system. If that changes, that's not a problem. That's up to the LAFCO to deal with that.

Lastly, again, I'd like to conclude with we are supporting volunteers today. We intend to support the volunteer program with partnerships and full-time departments. We think the program is going well, and we hope it will continue.

Thank you.

Ms. Anderson: We're going to ask our consultant, John Goss, to give us a really brief presentation on Attachment 2 that was in the Micro Report. And it covers our emphasis on the volunteers and also some review on governance issues.

Mr. Goss: Thanks, Shirley.
county -- San Bernardino has a county fire department that's made up of 32 distinct entities. And there's a lot of lessons on what we did learn there.

Just so you know, John Traylor, former fire chief in Coronado, and myself went to each one of the 24 Phase 1 agencies as a team to listen to what your ideas were, let you know what we were thinking. This was followed up by a couple stakeholder meetings, one in Elfin Forest, one in Alpine in November, in which we shared an update. And there's been these public hearings, this one and the two from last week in Pine Valley and Ramona. Part of the idea here is to get the word out and also to get the input in regarding this particular study that we've done.

The attachment that I did of 30 pages dealt with governance, volunteers and lessons learned from other counties. In terms of the governance, I think that's been pretty well covered in the basic report, which is that the maximum allowed by the State law for an elected board for regional Fire Protection District is 11. And because of the size of the area being covered, we're recommending that it be an 11-member board, rather than, say, 7 or 9.

It was also suggested -- this is only a suggestion, because of some things in our report that are really like setting forth a road map for a Fire Protection District, a regional Fire Protection District, things that LAFCO cannot mandate. But we
certainly can suggest as part of our report. And that is that there be an election subsequently to be able to elect those board members by district or by division.

Also, the report suggests -- and I think this is actually suggested as a condition, although there's no real recommendations at this point in the report -- that there be advisory committees established.

As you noticed in the operational portion of the report, five areas would be served. And one way to approach that would be to have an advisory committee serve each area. And each one of those operational areas, if you think about it, if you head up a district with 11 elected members and you have elected members of the Fire Protection Districts and their CSAs and you have the volunteer policy makers and 501 C-3s that run the volunteer companies, you really have over a hundred people that are involved.

And as policy makers, there are some who have thoughts how services should be provided in their part of the county. This would provide an opportunity for those people who are not elected to the board who still have an interest in the subject to have some input and coordinate with a battalion chief who would be heading up that area.

So anyway, that is the recommendation. There's some advantages listed in the report, more details and advantages of that. Also, in the governance area, we
looked at other options in a very general sense, to a regional Fire Protection District, like a county fire department or county CSA department or even contracting with a larger agency like the City of San Diego. Those were all mentioned generally in that report.

In terms of a comparable county analysis, we took a look at four of them, some nearby like Riverside, Orange, San Bernardino and then Sacramento. Because they actually have an overall county or regional department, a regional Fire Protection District.

So you have sort of a different examples of how county services or how countywide services will be provided. You have a Fire Protection District, JPA. You have one that would be CDF. There's actually a fire chief in the County of Riverside. And then you have San Bernardino, which is a county fire department that's made up of a number of CSAs.

Some of the lessons learned, obviously in the report that we just saw, one of the major lessons -- the major lesson learned is that those counties have revenues. This county does not. That makes all the difference in the world.

One of the counties in their area has 11 cents on the tax dollar. Another one has 13 cents. There's really relatively speaking very little that is provided by way of property tax revenue in the area that we studied.

But there are also other lessons learned. And
that is that the other counties have a much longer history of dealing with this kind of fire service. They sort of build up where they are now. And in that respect, this county is kind of just getting started.

There’s been a lot of stumbling along the way. And, you know, now the issues that probably should have been addressed years and years ago are now finally being addressed. Not that they weren’t addressed back then. But now there may be some prospect of something happening.

Second lesson learned is that there’s no magic organization arrangement for a successful fire service. JPA, Fire Protection District, CDF, Local Resources, they’ve all worked.

The other lesson learned is that the other counties we’ve looked at use the same operational model that we’re proposing, which is basically creating battalion or operational areas, in this case five. We’ll have anywhere from six to ten stations per area under a battalion chief.

As far as the volunteers are concerned, you know, really stress this, as Shirley has. And it’s important to support and nurture a volunteer program. Because it’s going to be much, much more difficult on a Fire Protection District without the volunteer program. The main plan itself has a full-time volunteer coordinator suggested there. But there are also other
benefits, I think, to a regional Fire Protection District or some kind of countywide system, which is centralized recruitment, training, and administration.

And, you know, in terms of things that we can't include, most likely as a LAFCO recommendation, but certainly suggested rules of the road with the issues such as volunteer stations having a full-time career firefighter, just one that would be there to provide some continuity, but also provide training. Because one of the things that we heard, John and I, was that a lot of times the volunteer resource has to leave the community in order to get training. This would provide an opportunity for training and to retain the volunteer resource in the community.

Also providing uniform training standards and methods. Suggest that, instead of reinventing the wheel, that a policy guide be developed for volunteers involved in fire suppression and those that volunteer administratively or in the policy area.

And one in Riverside County has been developed over the years and certainly would provide something that would be a good resource if a regional Fire Protection District is indeed created.

And then, finally, we recommend, or at least my report recommended, that incentives should be explored such as stipends that would cover some of the costs and expense to volunteers that are involved in providing service. Training, liability insurance, other kinds of
insurance are other incentives. All these should be looked at.

In any case, those are some of the ideas. If you didn't get a chance to read the attachments -- I know the main report is long enough. And, once again, what we'd like here is your input.

Thank you.

MR. OTT: Thank you very much, John, as well as Ivan, Ken, Ralph, Shirley, John. Everybody in the audience too. Thank you, all of you.

We're going to be beginning with the speaker-slip part of the presentation. Unless there are any questions specifically related to what we've covered. Why don't the two of you -- are there just two hands? I see three -- two. Why don't the three of you come around over here.

State your name for the record. And if it's a difficult name to spell, spell it so that we get that correctly. Take a few minutes. We do want to devote enough time for the official part of the testimony.

But, again, state your name for the record. Go to the podium there and take a few minutes.

DOUG WILSMAN: I just have a quick question. My name is Doug Wilsman. I'm on the water board in Ramona. And at that the presentation in Ramona, Shirley, you told us that you were going to meet with Dianne Jacob and discuss the legislation that was proposed. And I wondered if that meeting has occurred.
MR. OTT: Well, I think in this case my name is Shirley. I was the one that made that comment in Ramona.

We did have an official meeting of LAFCO just this past Monday that I was referring to both in Pine Valley and Ramona, where our commission was scheduled to deliberate, take the position on Senate Bill 806. That's the Hollingsworth Bill that reallocates property taxes for life safety and services.

And that presentation by Supervisor Jacob was made. And to just cut to the chase, our commission unanimously, after quite a bit of discussion, supported that bill. That support allows me to put in motion our legislative advocacy program to assist with that bill.

Supervisor Jacob provided extensive testimony. She had a written statement that she read into the record, which will be located on our minutes portion of our website in about two to four weeks. But, essentially, she went over the disparity in this county in terms of how property taxes are allocated in comparison to other counties, primarily all counties north of us.

Primarily, Los Angeles and San Francisco have a much different relationship in how the agencies within those counties receive a portion of the one percent property tax allocation. Supervisor Jacobs indicated a
Supervisor Jacob has proposed, through the Hollingsworth bill, that one percent of the one percent property tax, which is one one-hundredth, would be reallocated for fire protection services in the unincorporated area. That we equate to about 40 million dollars, just that fractional amount.

The road ahead is a steep one, in terms of SB-806. But, both philosophically as well as fiscally, it seems to be the direction that many people are interested in to reallocate the funds.

DOUG WILSMAN: One quick follow-up. Ramona is only left in the discussion in that bill. There's 22 agencies in Phase 1 that she's selected to put in the bill.

I just wondered what the significance of that is. Because we've sort of fallen out of the rest of the things.

MR. OTT: Well, like all legislation, this is literally the second or third week that this bill has
been alive. It was introduced on the 23rd and assigned
to the committee on the 26th. It's got a long road
ahead of it.

There will be amendments to the bill. The
number of agencies that are still out of the bill that
must be consolidated, agencies or entities, is 20.
That's what you're referring to.

Ramona Water District, as well as the other
three water districts, are identified as being Phase 1
agencies. That's something that we'll be working out
with the author of the bill, as we will with other
conditions.

Sir, why don't you come up to the podium and
state your name for the record?

WEAVER SIMONSEN: For the record my name is
Weaver Simonson, and I'm from Valley Center.

And I have a question for you, Shirley. And
it's regarding the new accounting rules that are
impacting all local governments across the nation
regarding medical costs of retirees now being required
to carry on the books.

And do the numbers that we're looking at in the
LAFCO report take into account these new requirements
and the cost associated with them?

MS. ANDERSON: No. Simple enough answer?

WEAVER SIMONSEN: Thank you.

MS. ANDERSON: Excuse me. Just a little bit --
I was a little curt.

There really is no requirement to supply the medical component of it. So in that most agencies would on the base level conservative model, that was not factored in.

JOHN FITCH: Hello. How are you?

MS. ANDERSON: How are you?

JOHN FITCH: I'm pretty good.

I had a question. I was surprised to see in your presentation that there wasn't the joint powers agreement governance model in there. And I looked in the report, and I saw some reason that had something to do with not having enough money to justify that type of governance.

So my question is, is a joint powers agreement being considered? It's a three-part question.

What are the benefits and drawbacks to such an arrangement, regardless of whether or not it's being considered?

And is the recommendation to this effect within the jurisdiction of LAFCO?

MS. ANDERSON: Start with the third one first, then I'll also give it to John to elaborate a little further.

No, it's not within the jurisdictional authority of LAFCO, and it's primarily the reason why it's not actively being considered at this point.
doesn't have authority. It has always, though, been in
the discussion.

And if you go back to review with the Fire
Chiefs Association and the District Fire Chiefs
Association, various commissions and various reports
have reviewed joint powers authorities. It's always in
the mix. It's something to look forward to in the
future. But there's no authority under what LAFCO is
chartered to do, to do a joint powers authority.

MR. GOSS: Further, if you go back and look
at my attachment, there's a brief discussion of JPAs and
the possibility that -- if you back up and take a look
at Orange County, there they have a JPA that is based on
a number of very traditional financially solid entities,
cities and the county.

It may be over time if the regional Fire
Protection District is created and becomes financially
stable; it may be a member of a JPA, along with other
agencies, like Phase 2 agencies or some smaller cities.
So that's also outlined as a possible option in the
future.

MR. TRAYLOR: I'll also weigh in on this. The
Fire Service Committee, under the leadership of the Fire
District Association, Fire Chiefs Association,
entertained that thought of a JPA.

The main goal of the Phase 1/Phase 2 was to
separate the Phase 1, which are the unfunded and
underfunded areas of this region, the unincorporated
area of the county. Once Phase 1 is up to a more
equitable level of funding, then it's very conducive to
a JPA.

JOHN FITCH: I'd like to just go a little bit
further.

We all know that there's a shortfall of
funding. And no matter which form of governance that we
have, we still have a shortfall of funding. So why
couldn't -- I don't understand why a JPA is being thrown
out, not being actively considered.

MS. ANDERSON: I don't know that it's been
thrown out. It's in the vision of what will happen
eventually. Once existing agencies are funded enough to
the point where they would be operational within a JPA.

And again --

JOHN FITCH: Is there some requirement for an
operational level to form a JPA?

MS. ANDERSON: It's being viewed as a phased
concept. We need to look at funding, existing services
now. And then a JPA within really a larger vision, all
the cities. It's something similar to what they have in
Orange County. It's certainly on the table for the
future.

Mike, did you have a --

MR. OTT: Well, let me just emphasize that we
did look at JPAs as well as other hybrid elements of
working cooperatively within the fire protection sector.
We did that as part of a more global review of fire protection. I'm sure we referred to a Macro Report. Not Micro, but Macro. It's also available on our website. Where we discussed the advantages, disadvantages.

The biggest disadvantage for LAFCO is, we have absolutely no control over the establishment of JPAs. They're cooperative arrangements in which the entities that participate in the JPA can come and go as they please. And that was something that we looked at, in terms of not having enough teeth at this point in time, with respect to structurally rearranging how fire protection and emergency medical services are provided. Notwithstanding that comment, we encourage agencies to coordinate better, to centralize services, to share training and facilities and so forth and to be an adjunct to whatever we wind up doing here in the LAFCO process.

We certainly don't want to exclude it. But, again, we don't have the control over the formation. Have you stated your name for the record?

JOHN FITCH: John Fitch, F-I-T-C-H.

MR. OTT: Do you have any other questions before we proceed?

JOHN FITCH: Yeah, I had one other. The reason I bring up this first question is because, when I was at the meeting in Pine Valley on Tuesday, it appeared to me that everybody that was part...
of a local agency wanted to broaden -- be responsible
for their local agency, you know, their initial I.A.
And to me it seems like a Joint Powers of Agreement
might fit that. That's why I brought that question up
to you.

Second question is -- forgive me -- what steps
could the County take, short-term and long-term, by
incorporating fire protection into its charter? I
understand that the County doesn't have that in its
charter right now. Is that correct?

What steps could they take if they did
incorporate fire protection into their charter?

MS. ANDERSON: They have the authority to
You'll have to spell your name when you're up here. So we'll start with Byron and Pauline.

And, again, try to be as concise with your remarks as possible. We have a number of speaker slips. We won't have any time allotted for minimums or maximums. But use your judgment. Be to the point. And remember you're going to be transcribed here. So if you can state your name for the record, please, at the podium.

BYRON MacFARLANE: My name is Byron MacFarlane. The citizens of Elfin Forest have voted either

the largest tax benefit allowance to fire support or among the top ones in the -- in the county. They desire to have local control of those funds and benefit fees under the guidance of the County as they guide our fire advisory board and provide tax funds back to us.

I think it's important that we have that local control. Our fire advisory board can meet probably in a period of 24 hours with proper notification to all the citizens so we can attend to matters that need quick response for our fire department.

Our fire volunteers are drawn from around the area. And we have a ten-minute limit that they have to be at the fire station. So they're at the fire station for most of the calls that we have.

We probably have, on average, eight -- seven to eight volunteer firemen on every call. And if the call is very serious and needs more than that, people leave
their jobs, and they leave what they’re doing to come provide support to the fire department. We had a structure fire about two years ago in which I think the majority of the members of the fire department were there at that structure fire soon after it occurred. Those citizens desire that they can hold the fire board accountable. They elect the seven members of the fire board on a rotating basis. So the fire board does not have everyone change on a one-time basis. We are an island, as you can see on the chart there. If you remember what it showed, it shows Elfin Forest as an island in surrounding cities.

We would like to be considered and moved out of Phase 1 and moved into Phase 2. And I think that was mentioned previously by DPLU, possibly. He mentioned it in his talk, that there is an opportunity move us out of that Phase 1.

I think this may be going over it again. But the distance from the county is much more than 24 hours. To get to the county and get a reading on what we need to do to serve the citizens of CSA 107 takes probably a month, if it is a serious matter.

We train with the North County. We train under their tenets. We fight fires with North County’s -- with the North County zone support. And we support their training methods and use them.

And the statement was made that DPLU has
cooperative agreements with all agencies but one. And I think that one agency may be CSA 107. And CSA 107 desires to conduct our business the way we need to conduct our business and obtain the fire support from the fire professionals in the north zone.

We did not want to take the County's offer of support, because we do not want additional controls placed on our fire department that we were not able to say yes or no to. Whether those controls were good or bad did not make a great deal of difference to us. We can accept what we need and we can decline what we need without having that -- the County funding.

I think it's much like the federal government and the schools. If the federal government provides support to the schools, then they tell the schools what they can teach. Since the County does not provide the support to CSA 107 through the enhancement program -- and I think the enhancement program is a good one for many agencies in San Diego, the ones that have accepted it and the briefing today was -- thank you very much for that.

We hadn't heard all the tenets of the proposal. And reading it sometimes leaves you in the dark. So the presentation was very helpful today.

CSA 107 wanted to go the road along with the north zone and the fire professionals and not be accountable to -- "accountable" is probably the wrong word -- and not be governed by an agency outside of our
Our next speaker is -- you're not Pauline.

PAULINE HADLEY: I wanted to give my time to Madelyn to speak on my behalf.

MR. OTT: We will get to Madelyn in the order that her speaker slip is here.

PAULINE HADLEY: But could she speak for me?

MR. OTT: We'll deal with that when Madelyn comes up.

Jeff if you can spell your last name for us.

JEFF SWENERTON: School principals and doctors are not known for their handwriting. S-W-E-N-E-R-T-O-N.

My name is Jeff Swenerton. I'm a member of the board of the Elfin Forest Town Council.

MR. OTT: Are you a doctor or a lawyer?

JEFF SWENERTON: I am not a doctor.

My primary concern is that -- is the statement of services not changing. I was pleased today to hear some comments -- actually, the first time I attended the Pine Valley presentation and I've attended this one.

For the first time, I've heard real statements of concern about volunteers. You have a 14- to 20-million-dollar program or whatever it's worth. I would venture to say it's worth much more than that.

As I mentioned, I have been a school principal.
I'm also very active in non-profits. And I was on the volunteer fire department for a number of years.

Volunteers are a very, very critical component. They're an odd duck. They are difficult to motivate.

You've got excellent data out there. I mean, just one piece that came out of Pine Valley is the Pine Valley Fire Department has five volunteers. That's not very many. There are probably reasons for that.

I would suggest that there must be incredible research across this nation on what are the effective components of a volunteer program. I look at the comment of one volunteer coordinator. And it makes me shudder to think that when -- I was listening in Pine Valley, and I think you've heard a lot of this.

When a volunteer talks to you -- I think Byron just before me was really talking about a relationship. A volunteer volunteers because they're valued. You can't quantify it. You have to experience and value it. You have to get on a truck and be involved. It's that kind of level that you've got to deliver on your coordination.

I was pleased with what you said, John. What you were saying about trying to deliver it at a little bit more local basis. I think you're dead wrong in putting that volunteer coordinator at the top. I think you really need to divide it up and look to your advisory.
council to support the program.

   Remember what you're giving up, what you're
giving up in Elfin Forest. You're giving up a very
talented chief. You're giving up a very talented group
of captains that care for those volunteers and
appreciate the fact that they're there.

   If your -- if your people that are coming in,
these permanent people, if they're just constantly
rotating people that have no investment in the
volunteers, your program will fail. And your statement
and your promise to keep services at the same level will
fail.

   And so I would encourage you to invest as much
as you can in looking -- I'm not talking about a manual.
I'm talking about, what are effective practices for
volunteers in a volunteer fire department? And I'm sure
the research is out there.

   I have two other concerns. The first one
relates to the funding. And for us who are taxed
heavily, we have a great deal of pride in the
Elfin Forest Fire Department. We obviously have a lot
of ownership in this fire department.

   We are concerned about the funding. The
statement is made that the funding -- our tax dollars
will stay within our community. My concern is that
there -- and I don't mean to be negative -- but the term "shell game" is the best description of it.

Shirley, I think I heard in Pine Valley the statement -- and I appreciate your candor that there really is no guarantee that there won't be a shell game.

And when you're looking at Elfin Forest, we have wonderful equipment. We have great volunteers. We've got tremendous assets there. How do we have a guarantee that we're going to be delivered the funds that we are promised -- that we should have, not from the CSA money, but from the other money?

And what local accountability -- Byron described the advisory committee. They report to the community. We look and see how every dollar is spent. How do we have that accountability and assurance that that will happen?

Shirley, I appreciate your candor. But I also would like to have LAFCO address that, that you have to ensure that that money stays there. And Elfin Forest may have better services than another area. But that's because we're paying for it.

The last question that I have -- and it has a very great concern to Elfin Forest. We are -- a portion of our district is in the Rancho Santa Fe School District. The Rancho Santa Fe School District is a basic aid school district. It is exempt from the -- the proposed legislation would reapportion the share of the San Diego County School District money. Basic aid
districts are exempt. A large portion of the Elfin Forest is within the Rancho Santa Fe School District, which is a basic aid district.

If legislation fails that requires revenue neutrality for revenue-limited school districts be varied, an equitable situation exists. So if that legislation goes away, my question and the concern that I have is that if we still do take that money, that means that we are taking money from the school children of East County and bringing it in for Elfin Forest fire services.

And I just want clarification that that would not occur. And I appreciate your challenge. You've got a real challenge ahead of you. And I appreciate your work. Thank you.

MR. OTT: Thank you.

Let me respond to his last question, Shirley, if you want to deal with his other question.

Regarding the reallocation of monies from schools, the most important provision in SB-806 is that no school district that has money shifted from it will receive any net loss. In other words, the State would be required to backfill any school district that is named in this bill.

And there are several districts, as you mentioned, Jeff, that would be excluded, the basic aid districts. I think there are some districts in Del Mar,
Solana Beach, that falls into that category.

But the important thing is that the county has sponsored a bill. In particular, Supervisor Jacob supports the bill. Supervisor Jacob, was formerly a president of a school board and the last thing she wants is for any school district to be impacted by this proposal. So that's a very important requirement and also clarification that people need to have regarding the bill.

Shirley, if you can respond on how we could ensure that monies generated within communities will be spent back in those communities, as well as the other question relating to that regarding spending priorities of regional fire district with discretionary funds.

MS. ANDERSON: Well, as the Micro Report says, there are two components to what is sustainable right now. Everyone knows it's the property tax, and it's voter-approved special assessments.

Special assessments, by law, can only be expended in the areas where they're collected. It's a contract, again, between the voters who approve them and the agency that is the administrator of those funds. So even though jurisdictional boundaries would go away -- Elfin Forest could go away -- the zones inside those jurisdictions where special districts are collected will remain intact. We're not going to put another boundary around them. But they would in essence be the same thing.

The model would say that there's strict
fiduciary oversight. We're talking about making recommendations that there would be, perhaps, elected fiduciary advisory committees for each one of those zones.

This is a big model. I think right now there's 23 of these zones. Many of our agencies have multiple special district areas. So types of details, you know, the devil is in the details.

The other issue is a little larger. And it has to do with the nature of taxes. Property tax is a discretionary fund. It is in every agency. The County takes your discretionary property tax, and the Board of Supervisors allocates it to whatever need they see most important.

Property tax from Elfin Forest doesn't go back to Elfin Forest. Property tax from Borrego Springs doesn't go back to Borrego Springs. It all goes to the County general fund and is allocated according to decisions made by the Board of Supervisors.

The same issue would be in effect if there was a regional fire protection agency. All the current boundaries would cease to exist. Property tax would be -- policy decisions, funding decisions, service decisions, would be made by a new elected body. And property tax would be allocated according to the need for the regional good. This is the nature of the distribution of tax.
MR. OTT: Thank you, Shirley.

If the following three speakers can come forward: Joan Van Ingen, Bruce Tebbs, and Madelyn Buchalter.

JOAN VAN INGEN: Two words, V-A-N, capital I-N-G-E-N.

MR. OTT: Thank you.

JOAN VAN INGEN: I thank you for having this. We tried to go to one of the other ones, but the weather was not good.

I am on the Deer Springs District Fire Board. And as such, possibly, my concerns with this whole process, they're a little different. They're a little different, because we have been facing something up there which is new to the whole area. And that is putting a large city development within a mountainous area that's been -- it's been designated by CDF as having two of the three possible worst fire problems. And this is what we were concerned about. I made a couple of notes. I don't usually, but I thought I'd better.

First of all, the County of -- the County told the Stonegate people they had to remove shelter-in-place from the Stonegate project, that it was not appropriate for that project. Therefore, it could not be used. We were very happy. Very, very happy.

Then the County bypassed our board totally, did
not come back with a new fire protection plan that they
had from the developer. They not only bypassed our
board, they passed it. And they passed it over the
Christmas holiday when supposedly it was closed in the
county.

Now, we were really unhappy with that.

Because, although they have said you cannot have
shelter-in-place, now they say, "Leave your homes. Go
down to a park area within the project." And I call
that "shelter-in-park." Same SIP, worse even than
shelter-in-place, totally.

The County is trying to put through a new

policy. The policy would be, basically, if a
development cannot be evacuated, one of the options
would be shelter-in-place. Now, that's scary. That is
so scary. And I personally am pretty upset.

I feel the County is not trustworthy. The DPLU
is certainly not working to support the people of the
district. And I took an oath when I joined this fire
board to support this district and the people of that
district.

These people are paying a tax surcharge for the
Deer Springs Fire District. And I feel if this happens
to us that I would label it a modern day taxation
without representation.

Thank you.

MR. OTT: Thank you, Joan.
Madelyn, I believe you're up next. And we'll give you 27.5 seconds for Pauline.

(Laughter.)

MADELYN BUCHALTER: I have requested some time. I represent a community group called LLC Fire. And there have been hundreds of letters and e-mails coming in. So I wanted to follow up on Joan's comments and just give further background.

There's a proposed development in North County called Stonegate Mountains that serves as an example of what is taking place with regard to fire safety in San Diego County at large. It sheds light on the County's plan to disband the independent local fire districts and what the disastrous consequences of such an action would be.

Stonegate is a 2,700-unit development proposed in a severe, high fire-hazard, mountainous area of North County. In planning scenarios, the CDF has described it as a likely site for a future major fire catastrophe. CDF has predicted a fire on Marion Mountain as highly destructive and virtually impossible to control, taking 10 to 15 minutes to go from the base of the mountain to the crest.

The Stonegate project sits atop an enormous fuel load of dense wildland vegetation that has been building up for 100 years. 1200 project acres are preserved wildlands that adjoin thousands of acres with a similar fuel load.
The entire project is served by only two internal roads both emptying into the same rural road, Deer Springs, which is rated at failing and will remain failing if widened to four lanes or even to six lanes. Given the project's extremely limited egress, if a fire occurs during Santa Ana wind conditions, 10- to 13,000 residents will be trapped. The developer has acknowledged that evacuation will be impossible. Over the Christmas 2006 holidays, the County approved the fire protection plan for the Stonegate project, completely bypassing the local agency having jurisdiction, the Deer Springs Fire Protection District. That was an unprecedented action. Never before had the responsible agency been bypassed. In fact, prior to the turnover, the entire Deer Springs board, as the result of the November 2006 elections, the County had repeatedly stated that Deer Springs' approval of Stonegate's fire plan was required before the project could move forward. When Stonegate's County-approved fire plan was examined by the Deer Springs Fire Board, it was found to be grossly deficient. Stonegate's plan incredibly predicts that the majority of wildfires on Marion Mountain would be easily controlled. Defying all logic, all logic, and all principles of wildfire science, it predicts that any wildfire would bump up against fuel clearances and, quote, "run out of fuel."
The plan retains the concept of shelter-in-place. It introduces yet another objectionable policy called temporary relocation within the project. The plan actually instructs residents to seek safety outdoors in the park during a wildfire, in effect advising people to go from the frying pan into the fire. There is no evacuation plan. The plan does not address what happens to residents during a wildland fire, except to say that they would be given brochures at the time of sale on how to avoid panic.

There is no mention on how to mitigate smoke inhalation, which accounts for up to 80 percent of all fire fatalities. The plan ignores the plight of infants, children, asthmatics, the elderly, and the medically compromised.

On January 19th, 2007 Stonegate’s fire protection plan was unanimously rejected by the Deer Springs Fire Protection Board. Three days later, on January 22nd, the County Department of Planning director, Gary Pryor, called a special meeting to educate an outspoken member of the Deer Springs Fire Board about quote, “the process,” unquote.

Mr. Pryor stated that the clients of his agency, the DPLU, were developers and that his agency’s job was quote, “to assist them and level the playing field for them,” unquote. He said that he would not allow the quote, “silver bullet,” unquote of fire safety stop the building of a development. He also stated that
The Fire District board member expressed his objections to the conduct of the DPLU and was asked by Mr. Pryor to leave. At about the same time, the County issued a draft document proposing to revise County policy on wildland fire protection. It proposed the adoption of shelter-in-place as acceptable fire protection strategy when quote, "secondary access is unattainable due to topographical or geographical constraints," unquote.

Shelter-in-place, for those who are unfamiliar, instructs people to remain inside their homes in the event of a wildland fire and not to evacuate. It is a myth and a hoax insofar as fire protection is concerned. It is not accepted policy anywhere in the United States. It has never been tested in the planned community during an actual wildland fire.

In August 2006 the American Lung Association wrote a position paper on the subject, addressed to the County DPLU, imploring that this policy not be accepted because it would result in the deaths of thousands. Incredibly, the County has ignored the overwhelming mass of medical evidence and has forged ahead with this plan that will enable dense development in highly fire-hazardous wildland areas of the county.

With the Deer Springs Fire Protection District
refusing to grant fire district approval to the Stonegate project, the County became instantly motivated to protect their development agenda by eliminating the local fire districts altogether, a proposal that has been considered over decades without action taken.

To claim, as the County has, that the 2003 fires spurred this current move toward consolidation is disingenuous. The 2003 fires occurred nearly four years ago. But this current impetus toward a merger is now taking place against the telltale backdrop of recent events regarding the Stonegate project.

In the County's January 22nd consolidation proposal, the County writes, quote, "All new development should be coordinated and evaluated within the DPLU for fire protection purposes," end quote. This would give the County absolute power to approve developments in the wildland urban interface areas and to ignore fire safety issues such as evacuation or the impact of new development on existing communities.

Many such unsafe developments have already been approved in San Diego County, and many more are being planned. What has occurred in the Deer Springs Fire District and the Stonegate development is a microcosm of what to expect if a merger is allowed to take place that concentrates all decision-making authority with the
LAFCO's board is urged to consider the County's action of deliberately bypassing the Deer Springs Fire District and approving a deficient and dangerous fire protection plan over the Christmas holidays without even first making it public as required by law or releasing it to the Deer Springs Fire Board and personnel.

The California Public Records Act was repeatedly violated by the County in its attempt to shield Stonegate's fire protection plan from public scrutiny. When the next major fire occurs in San Diego County -- a question not of if, but when -- the results will be far more catastrophic than the Cedar and Paradise Fires.

There will be massive loss of life because of the numerous unevacuable developments being approved in the wildland fire areas by the County Planning Department and the Board of Supervisors. There is now strong emphasis on the federal government level to limit and curtail such development because of the dangers of located population density in high fire-prone areas.

On January 30th, 2007, top officials from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Department of Interior, and Government Accountability Office testified at a U.S. Senate hearing on costs of wildfire suppression.
governments to reduce development in the wildland areas because it has sent fire suppression costs soaring, hampering fire-fighting efforts and recklessly endangering lives.

San Diego County government has failed to heed this advice and is moving 180 degrees in the opposite direction by working to further the economic interests of developers in the wildland areas at the expense of public safety.

For all of the above reasons, we urge LAFCO to preserve the current structure of local independent fire districts and to reject the proposal to disband these districts. These districts serve the critical function of preventing concentration of power and, ultimately, abuse of power resulting from the influence of special interests.

The special districts are the watchdogs of public safety, as demonstrated in the Deer Springs District. Given the County’s conduct regarding the Stonegate Marion Mountain project, together with its proposal to officially adopt the disastrous shelter-in-place policy as acceptable fire protection strategy, the dangers of centralizing fire safety decisions become evident.

Thank you.

MR. OTT: Would it be possible to have your written comments to be handed to Anne on the very end of the podium, if you could. Just hand them to her now.
MADELYN BUCHALTER: And I can e-mail them to her.

MR. OTT: You can e-mail them to LAFCO staff or contact Shirley. I bumped into Anne during your presentation, and her machine may pick up a bunch of stuttering rather than some of the words.

We have Bruce Tebbs, then we'll be calling up three more speakers.

BRUCE TEBBS: Bruce Tebbs, T-E-B-B-S. I'm from the Deer Springs Fire Board. And I couldn't agree more with Joan's remarks or Madelyn's remarks.

I would like to say, in summary, that this is really all about money. Everybody is chasing money. And, first of all, I have nothing against that. I'm a proud American capitalist. And I think that's a good thing to do. But I do think that there's a line that you can't cross, and that is crossing the line of saving human life while you're chasing money.

What do I mean by chasing money? The DPLU director informed me directly, person-to-person, that developers are clients. And they are. They bring in a great amount of revenue to the County. That's how he feels about them.

LAFCO is chasing money. You're trying to get a piece of that tax dollar so that you can fund what you think is the right thing to do. And I know people have
put in a lot of hard work.

But, you know, CDF is chasing money. They want better pensions, better salaries. That's just the way it is. You can't cross this line of giving up human life. And I believe that CDF, people from the top down and others with responsibility as supervisors, county supervisors and DPLU officials have totally given it up and do not care. No matter what they say being more about human life, money is more important.

And Joan ran through that list with regard to Marion Mountain and what they're doing. There is no evacuation plan. The developer has stated there's no way to get people off the mountain. There are 13,000 people on top of a fuel-infested mountain, unbelievable amounts of fuel. You can't walk through it. It's 15 to 25 feet tall. And it's not just the acreage, which is about 2,000 acres on the site. It's surrounded by thousands and thousands more acres.

Why is our community so upset? Well, we saw the fires firsthand in 2003. People that used to think like I did, "Oh, the firemen will get to it. They'll put out before it gets anywhere near here." Now we know that's not true. They won't. We had people, friends, that lost their homes. And there was loss of life. And if you can't evacuate, you have to preserve evacuation.

If you can't evacuate and you think for one second that in any modern fire-resistant, fire-retardant home that it won't catch on fire in a wildland fire,
you're crazy. And there are plenty of examples to prove
that it will catch on fire and burn to the ground.

And if you have people in those homes, as
suggested by DPLU at the highest levels, they won't die
in the evacuation. They'll die in their homes. And
they'll be in much greater numbers. And as you load
those projects up, more and more people will be trapped
that previously could have evacuated. But now the roads
are jammed, and they'll be stuck. And that's just the
way it is.

This is the line in the sand that just can't be
crossed. We have to stand up. And that's what we're
doing at the Deer Springs Fire Board. That's why the
total community erased the old board and put a new
board in. That's what it's all about.

Someone has to stand up, be an adult and say,

you know, we chased the money as far as we could go.
And now we have to put human life ahead of all that. So
that's what we're going to do. And we'll fight LAFCO
taking over our board, not taking away our
representation to the Nth degree. We'll do everything
that we can possibly do.

I do appreciate all of the hard work that's
been done. I'm not against people working hard or
making money. But that's the line that can't be
crossed.

Thanks.
MR. OTT: Thank you.

If the following speakers will come up:

Weaver Simonsen, Michael Thometz, and James Higbee. And we do have a couple of chairs out here for those that would like to sit while the talks are going on. So if those three speakers will please come forward.

I take it that you're Mr. Simonsen?

WEAVER SIMONSEN: My name is Weaver Simonsen. And I'm a director on the Valley Center Fire Protection District Board. And I'd like to make a few comments.

First of all, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity and giving the workshop so that we can voice our opinions and concerns in reference to this. We appreciate it, to have that opportunity to come down and speak before you.

Having said that, I noted -- one of the comments I noted in reference to North County in the status quo that we have, quote, a de facto centralization because Deer Springs and ourselves, we are all using CDF. And from my observation, that de facto command and control worked very well.

I live on Paradise Mountain in Valley Center. And I got up on October 2003, Sunday morning, and I watched the fire. And I watched the fire burn all the way around the mountain. And I watched CDF deploy assets, not only CDF's assets because they used command and control. But we had assets from numerous areas in our area.
And we lost a few homes. But those homes were almost indefensible in reference to saving them. You couldn't get into them or they had wood siding. So they weren't designed to -- in reference to DPLU issues, they weren't clear. It would have been very difficult.

But the point was, we had command and control.

There was command and control in the North County. And on Paradise Mountain, when I got back into my house on Wednesday -- I finally left on Sunday evening when I watched the wind get behind the fire -- when I got back in, the fire had completely burned around the mountain.

CDF and its forces had shoved the fire away from the homes. And we're scattered, so they're not clustered. So it did work. And it was working. Now, I don't know what happened in the East County. But I can tell you in reference to Paradise and the structure that was in place from my view, it worked. So my first comment is in reference to the centralization or consolidation, because it does exist and works very well.

My next comment I'd like to make is in reference to the County's proposed plan. Two things you should know: No. 1, in 1975 I was a volunteer fireman in Valley Center when the County decided that because of funding issues and a three-to-two vote, it could no longer and would no longer fund fire protection. And they moved forward, providing us with fire engines and
said, "Go figure out how you're going to do it yourself, because it isn't our job to provide fire protection to you." And since -- and we did.

And as you can see, it's part of the reason why we have this huge bifurcated system. Because if we would have used the money then as we are doing now, the County was in fact finding CDF to provide fire protection in the rural area. That's my first comment.

The second comment you should be aware of, in

16 days I'm retiring after 26 years with the County. I've seen a lot of different issues in the County. I've seen this county go from bankruptcy to one of the best funded local governments in the State of California, and maybe in the nation. It is -- if you talk to anyone and you look at our balance sheet, the County's balance sheet, it is well funded.

And one of the reasons that we've been able to provide -- or the County has been able to do the enhancement program is, it is well funded. But one of the core concepts that was introduced to create that was, you used one-time funding for one-time requirements. And that concept to me is being violated right now.

Because I'm looking at -- I took advantage of the County. I've got an extra firefighter on my engine in Valley Center. But it's not a one-time requirement. It's an ongoing requirement. So I'm now putting the citizens at a higher level of service, but it's at a
risk. Because there's no guarantee that that money will stay there.

A three-two vote, that money goes away. A recession, property taxes drop, other requirements mentioned that the funding is a general fund -- or property tax revenue, it's going to go away. So then what do I do?

I'm going to go back, try to restructure and figure out how I'm going to maintain that level of service that the community has come to expect. So I have concerns about that. I have concerns about that any time we come up with funding issues. I know those of you are getting mitigation fees. We haven't. With mitigation fees, one-time funding, I can build a fire station. But I can't man it. And so I'm into that struggle.

So I've got money. Great. I can build a building. I can't man it, because I can't afford it. So, again, funding becomes the issue. And I think that was central when we listened to all the presentations and the issues with where's the money going to come from?

So I'm going to make this short, and I'm going to conclude. I'm going to be meeting with my board. And I've recommended -- I'm recommending to them the three principles that we see in Valley Center. Or I'm going to recommend them.
One is that their service levels remain the same or increase.

Two, that we have sustainable funding that will accommodate growth. We have found out benefit fees do not accommodate growth. We're in Valley Center looking at potentially going out and increasing benefit fees again. And there's a limit that you can increase benefit fees, because there's a limit what people will take or stand.

And if you talk to any of the professionals, they'll tell you that you can probably add 50 or $100 on a taxpayer. But after that, they're not going to go for it any further. And so we get growth, but yet the benefit fees, when you look at them, they're not high enough to accommodate the growth. So that formula of benefit fees, and even when it comes back into a fire district and it's there, it's not going to be -- it won't sustain the growth. And we're going to have growth.

I know people, our neighbors in Deer Springs are upset with Stonegate out there. But the fact is that growth is occurring. It's going to continue to occur in the backcountry. And the growth is what's driving the demand for increased service and better services. It's also what's created the higher losses we've had.

And then the last item that I see that is essential is not just our funding. Because we've been
told that the funding that we've got, that will remain
with us. It is not an issue. Our benefit fees will
remain with us. Our concern is, what about our assets
I've purchased with those funds? I own trucks, fire
equipment. And if it goes through the regionalization
and I'm suddenly going to be stripped down because
there's another 930,000 acres that's got to be covered
in this situation. So are they going to start moving my
trucks out and moving older trucks in?

So one of my guiding principles I'm going to
recommend is that basically that our assets remain the
same or are replaced with newer or more capable
equipment. To me those are the things that we're
looking at.

What I'm going to be recommending to my board
is supporting any type of consolidation. With those, I
think we're doing a benefit to the citizens, to our
community. And it's one of our responsibilities as
board members, is what can I do to benefit my community?
Not simply saying no to consolidation. I think it's a
wrong approach from that standpoint.

On the other thing, though, I think I have to
make sure that what I'm doing will benefit the citizens
of the community. And if we can hit those marks, then
the big issue is what kind of governance structure. And
I'll leave that to my board to come up with. That's all
I have.

Thank you.

MR. OTT: Our next speaker is Mike Thometz.

That's a wonderful name.

MICHAEL THOMETZ: I agree. My name is Mike Thometz. I live in Campo.

I have been quite involved with our local fire department, getting the new roof of their building and raising lots of money for them. I also represent a group called Merit. And we're a local land use advocacy group trying to, among other things, get some sensible growth policies for the backcountry.

And I do want to comment on -- I guess you're the basic author. I thought the report was extremely well done and very lucid, very understandable. That's not always something you see in reports like this.

You know, there's a problem with a report like this, because it's not addressing a single issue. There's about five big issues here. And you're trying to juggle all five, six of them, trying to figure out what's best. And they all go flying off.

I want to address governance as the most important thing. Because I think there's a lot there. But let me just address a couple things beforehand.

Everybody knows that 80 percent or more of all
of the calls in backcountry are medical. They are not fire. Now, everybody knows that the East County Hospital, which was the closest hospital, has closed down. Alvarado's got problems. Everybody's got problems.

So one of the things that I haven't heard people talk much about is that, whatever you do, it must be an ALS system. Basic life support is not adequate. It must be advanced life support. Because our health depends on these people.

As you get more people out there and particularly people who haven't lived in the backcountry, they are fools in paradise. So you need -- and so the cost of going from basic to ALS is fairly small. So I think that is something you really have to do.

Secondly, about volunteers. You know, there are all kinds of volunteers. Campo is considered one of the best volunteer fire departments. You know how many volunteers we have that live in the community? Out of the 30 volunteers, we have about three or four.

Why are the volunteers out there? They're guys that got out of the training camp that can't get a job because they don't have the experience. So they come out there and work for free, or a volunteer. And after a year and a half, they leave.

The volunteers that I hear at these various
meetings, these are people that love their community that have been volunteers for 15 or 20 years. And we've got volunteers on the fire board who don't even fight fires anymore. So I think we need a better understanding before you make a decision about who volunteers are and what they are and get the romance out of this. And let's get down to, you know, what really are the volunteers.

It is my feeling, based on what I've seen and heard, except it's reserved. You're going to lose your volunteers. If somebody said Warner Springs already lost it, yet they're out there talking about getting a new -- the County is saying we're going to get a new station there. And other stations, we've heard different things about. But I think you need to study that.

The third thing is that we know it's all about money. And we know that it's a hard sell. And I'll leave that for another issue. But this is going to require everybody, whatever we decide to do, to pitch in and get this approved. Because without getting Supervisor Jacob's Hollingsworth bill through, or unless the Board of Supervisors finally does something after 30 years of not doing anything, this whole thing is smoke. Because nothing is going to happen. The money is not going to be there. So we're going to have to get people involved.

I think when I read this report, I get the...
feelings toward the end of the executive summary that, well, the County could do something immediately. I think timing is not so critical here as, you know, it's years after the fire. And this process is going to take a long time.

So I don't think -- I think we want to be careful not to rush into something because we've got a report out there, and we've got to make a decision. We need to make the right decision. Now, I strongly recommend -- in my opinion, the regional fire district is the only way to go. You need something independent.

Now, I'm a little familiar with Stonegate. But, you know, there are so many issues. I do not trust the County to do the right thing. I have been in there. We have a general plan that says what the standards are to meet if you've an urban development in the rural area. The County has historically, repeatedly approved -- developments that have never been approved by the General Plan.

We had Cliff Hunter, when he was in Mr. Miller's position, I believe, approved a project out there and just shined on the local people. You had the possibility of fire safe councils throughout the entire county. Has the County ever done anything about that? No.

Recently, there's been some stuff done, but that part of the County has been a mess. Fire safe
councils are, again, something -- had we had the local
inspection for brush and things like that out there,
there should have been -- making certain that the area around
houses is clear. No, we haven't had that.

You go down the list of the things that the
County could have done in the past, they have not done.
And as the lady said, we know the developers are the
only clients of the DPLU. And I find it sort of
incestuous. It's bad enough -- we go to the County. We
say, "We're the public. We want to know what's going
on." They say, "We're not going to tell you."

We've got the Industry Advisory Council. The
public can't go to that. There's all sorts of things
you can't find out. And slowly but surely what little
access we do have is being taken away. I do not want to
see the County with fire as their person who does
whatever they say. That is the wrong thing.

This department, whatever it is, needs to be an
independent, separately elected board. Not the
Supervisors. It has to be the regional fire department.
That is the only way to go. All these other things,
CSA 135, sort of the same kind of thing as the County.
So from a timing -- or from a governance point
of view, I think that there is only one way to go. It
is the safest, securest way for the County. And let me
give you one other thing about the County.
I always thought -- because I go to a lot of
Planning commission things -- there was a secondary
egress requirement for a development. Turns out there's no such thing. There wasn't. And I brought this up before the Planning commission. And Bill Taylor says "Oh, no. We don't have to do that. This was for Hidden Meadows who are up on the top -- up off the 15, where there was no way to get out." And the landowners who had a private easement were complaining."

After the fires, guess what? They changed the rules. They could have changed the rules on the County building codes to eliminate a lot of things that are proven to be a problem. They didn't do that.

So I have a real problem with so many things about the County being in control. There's only one way to do it. Now, I could go on. And I hope that I've made my point.

There's one other thing that I see that bothered me. Where's this $50 million for start-up going to come from? That's like the first hurdle in the race. Now, maybe we sell bonds. We have a good bond rate. Maybe we sell bonds to fund that 50-million-dollar jolt that we need right up front. I'd like to see some discussion about that.

But the regional fire department is the only way to go. And I really hope you'll consider that very seriously. And I will submit the written comments also.

Thank you.

MR. OTT: Thank you, Michael.
We still have a number of speaker slips remaining here. So why don't I call three more people up.

And, again, if you can be as concise as possible. We'd like to get through all of these today. It's 4:20. So let's try to pick up the pace.

James Higbee, are you here? I think James is no longer here. I called him earlier.

Eric Anderson, Ira Buchalter, and Doug Wilsman, if the three of you can come up. We will start with Eric. And there's a couple chairs on the sidelines there.

State your name for the record.

ERIC ANDERSON: Eric Anderson, I am the Chair of the Elfin Forest (inaudible) Town Council. I know that through these hearings our community has clearly passionately communicated our desire for the future of our fire department. This fire department is our community. The CSA boundaries define us. And it is the only local agency that provides services to the Elfin Forest area.

This solution of CSA 107 would drastically impact one of the real communities in San Diego. And I know you've met many of them the last few days. Tonight our town council meeting will be devoted to the discussion of this proposal.

A long, long time ago, back in '86 and '87, I served as a volunteer. And I did survive the '96 fire.
on my farm. This department has done a fantastic job training and responding to fires, car crashes, and medical emergencies over the last 20 years. We hope that LAFCO can also help us defend the funding of negotiated development agreements. Many of these were negotiated some time ago and are cornerstone for the fire department, providing for its future. We appreciate very much your hosting the hearings and forming the report. It was excellent. And I hope our input is effective.

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of experience and will easily say that young infants who
have small airways, asthmatics, the elderly, the
infirmed will all die of smoke inhalation if they are
left in their houses during a wildland fire or out in
the park during a wildland fire.

In spite of this, the fire personnel of the
DPLU passed and approved a fire protection plan without
any reference to the medical consequences or to the
letter written by the American Lung Association telling
them not to do it. There is no trust, no trust
whatsoever in the Department of Planning and Land Use or
their fire personnel to make competent decisions when
they are against development decisions which also have
to be made through that department.

I'm very disappointed in our government for
what they did. The fire protection plan of Stonegate
Marion Mountain, which has been approved by the DPLU,
should be requested by all members of LAFCO. They
should look at this fire protection plan and see what it
encompasses.

At the same time they should look at the fire
protection plan that was rejected and the letter that
was written to the project manager of Stonegate
suggesting what was required to have a legitimate fire
protection plan. They actually ignored those
recommendations. They actually approved the fire
protection plan, which could kill 10- to 13,000 people.
It's absolutely incredible.
Unfortunately, consolidation of the fire districts will take the rights of the people who live in the area and those people who may live in the development and put them under the jurisdiction of those same people who ignore the medical consequences of what we had told them would be.

Thank you.

DOUG WILSMAN: I'm Doug Wilsman of the water board in Ramona.

I made up a little spreadsheet here. You can pass this to your folks. It shows that, based on the numbers that are in the Micro Report, that Ramona, if its fire department is swallowed up, will take more money away from the community than is needed. In fact, it will take a million dollars more away from the community than we now spend on the fire department, and we all have to raise our water rates 13 percent to cover the loss.

Secondly, I would just like to point out to you that we are in Phase 1 because we have two people on our fire trucks instead of three. So the solution in the Micro Report shows that while we have 30 people of CDF manning our equipment today, we'll only get 31. And if the plan is that you won't lose anything, then we start out with a guarantee of the 30 and somehow one other person, a full-time CDF person can cover three fire trucks 30 days a month. And I think that takes eight or
nine. So that's just a couple things.

And I'm going to send you a list of some more like that. And I don't need any response today.

MR. OTT: Dave, if you could state your full name.

DAVE STROHTE: Dave Strohte, S-T-R-O-H-T-E.

Well, I'm with Mount Laguna Volunteer Fire Department, been there for almost 20 years. I'm the assistant chief. Also, I have a real job. And that's right across the street here. So it was real easy for me to come on over.

You know what our goals are here. And I'm in favor of consolidating the fire departments. And we've had some real good things happen lately. But it's not all fun and games. There's this statement about what's happening right now. And I'll talk a little bit about that.

As far as the good news, the department's been blessed with many grants. We've come a long way. Where we are right now is the furthest thing from being consolidated. Many years ago, all volunteer departments were dispatched by one dispatch center. And it was the insurance department. Right now, we're facing -- there's a rule -- well, we know the situation we're in.

Currently we're working good with all our surrounding agencies. However, at the same time, we're looking at maybe losing one of the agencies that we work excellently with just to the south of us, Pine Valley.
They are one of the ones that have elected to take the CDF staffing. And that might be good for the board to make that decision.

Lately, with our department we're one of the agencies that joined into this agreement with the County. And it's turned out to be kind of a good thing. We've got some money. $20,000 came from the County. We've got -- last time we just sent a whole bunch of people down to a paid academy down at Heartland Fire, an excellent academy. Staffing, paid people, volunteers, all going through the same academy. We're getting a rescue, and we're -- and I understand we're getting a lot of water tenders, aren't we? Things like that.

Where we are right now, though, I've heard some words used by the chief of DPLU. I've heard another word from another chief as it's time to fight. Last week, I was down there at the Firehouse Museum and firehouse -- doing training. And we get a lot of training. And I ran across Ralph and Ken Miller.

We were talking about using four-wheel drive on a unit. And I was talking to Ralph and Ken. "Think about that." Ralph says, "I don't know. If Dennis pisses me off again, you'll get nothing." So now we have -- and I do have faith in the people. It's probably one of my shortfalls.
The problem is we have damage control that needs to be done right now. And management -- a lot of times when I look at it, I look at my own management. I look at myself. I have made errors. I think it's time for a hope that LAFCO looks at this and doesn't give up hope on consolidating fire departments. I hope it does come through. But there is some damage control that needs to be done.

And maybe one of those is like an OES, Office of Emergency Services -- isn't that what they stand for -- to come and take a look at what's going on, see if they can assist with some of the damage control.

I know down in Pine Valley -- I don't know too many firefighters that are happy with CDF coming in. I know the board is. The fire department, tonight we're going to be discussing opting out of Phase 1.

Thank you.

MR. OTT: Thank you, Dave.

TIM COSTANZO: Tim Costanzo, C-O-S-T-A-N-Z-O. And we do appreciate LAFCO. You've been very open and forward in all the meetings we've been to with you.

I'm just going to make a few points. If DPLU's plan is to be considered, we would like the date for the end of comments to move back to reflect the date of the
One other thing is, let the volunteer departments join the program as a volunteer situation. They'll feel like they're not being pushed into these programs. Last week at one of the LAFCO meetings, it was mentioned that Valley Center and Ramona did have volunteers. I'm not sure about Ramona. I don't know the details.

Valley Center doesn't have volunteers. Their firefighters, the young ones, are still being paid. The volunteer firefighters are all gone from Valley Center. I think that's the same in Ramona. That would have to be confirmed.

As far as the value of volunteers, I want to give one small example. During the Cedar/Paradise Fires, some members of Elfin Forest got together the information of all the hours put in and all the equipment used by the volunteers, just volunteers, for the Cedar/Paradise Fire.

And at the lower rates that volunteers would be considered valued and their equipment, that would still approach a million dollars for two weeks worth of work. And the stations in most cases were still being staffed by volunteers in probably 90 percent of the cases.

The DPLU program, as they admitted tonight, is a temporary measure. And the long-range plan has not been put in effect. But why has DPLU attached the funds that Elfin Forest has already negotiated for within
CSA 107? That doesn't make sense to me. They don't have a program, but they've already attached their funds that we've negotiated with developers on.

Thank you.

MR. OTT: Please state your name for the record.

DALE AMATO: Dale Amato, one of the Board of Directors of the San Diego Rural Fire Protection District.

My purpose here is to provide you with a brief synopsis of our experience in the County's fire enhancement program. Our district currently maintains 24 reservists and 90 volunteers. Of our 14 stations, only two are paid station systems, which is Jamul, and has two firefighters, two reserves or volunteers. And Descanso currently now has two paid staff.

We're in the first year of our three-year program with the County Fire Enhancement Program. And a tangible benefit of that program so far has been to upgrade our Descanso station from a one-person 9-to-5 firefighter to now full-time paid staff with additional reservists and volunteers. So we think that, tangibly, we've obviously enhanced our ability to provide service.

Our district management has still maintained the same level, despite our entry into the program and our partnership with CDF. Our board makes all the control decisions on how to run the district. I heard there were some issues about that here today.
We think that the partnership with CDF and the fire enhancement program is going to benefit the volunteers in a lot of different ways. We think that they're getting now better opportunities for hands-on training through partnership with CDF. Because CDF, full-time paid professional employees are within the district. They're getting a better idea of management and running calls with experienced personnel.

Partnership with CDF has benefited our district in a number of different ways. We obviously have increased staffing or the opportunity for increased staffing. The district now has been able to utilize untapped resources such as (inaudible). We've also had CDF take an integral role in our fire management program as well, which we obviously didn't have the staffing to do prior to that.

For a number of reasons that I mentioned and, obviously, the standardized training and command-and-control functions, we think that our partnership with CDF has enhanced our district greatly.

Thank you.

MR. OTT: Dale, before you sit down, in terms of your comments about the volunteer, do you have any knowledge as far as the number of volunteers that your district used prior to the fire enhancement program with the County and then post?

DALE AMATO: What I can tell you from my
understanding is that we have not had a drop-off of
volunteers because of the use of CDF. Our district,
like probably a lot of other districts, go through the
program, get their -- cut their teeth and move on to
somewhere else.

We're a very large district, as you know. So
volunteers do come and go a lot. But in my experience
we haven't lost any volunteers because of the use of the
CDF. But I couldn't tell you whether or not we've
gained any volunteers.

MR. OTT: Thank you.

We're trying to gather some information on that
particular subject. So anybody -- not necessarily
today -- but in the future, before our April 6 deadline,
has any hard information on the impact on volunteers, we
would like that information. John Traylor is trying to
gather that. He's made that request at our previous
workshops for hard information on that subject, since it
is a thing that has come up during the workshops with
respect to some contentions that there are negative
impacts on the number of volunteers and so forth.

If the following speakers can come forward:
Gail Twohy, David Young, and Randy Lyle. We just have
about a total of five speakers left.

GAIL TWOHY: Gail Twohy.

It's apparent us that sustainable funding is
insufficient for both the regional Fire Protection
District and for the County plan. For this reason, it
is unrealistic for LAFCO to approve either option. So I urge LAFCO to recommend the status quo until such time as funding can be secured. And I urge the County to use their 8.5 million in a different fashion. I already see too many problems with the County plan as it stands.

When one department turns down a million dollars, there's a problem. When another community is circulating a petition to have their fire department cancel their contract with CDF, there's a problem. When volunteer firefighters are leaving as CDF stands in, there's a big problem.

I would like to see the County spend its money on a unified communications system. My understanding is that this was a big source of difficulty during the Cedar Fire. A unified communications system would be a huge step toward consolidating operations. I would like to see the County approach individual fire departments and ask how they could help without strings attached.

Each department is unique and has unique needs. Filling in the gaps would have to be more cost-effective than trying to force a one-size-fits-all plan. In this way the County would be building on what's working, rather than tearing things apart.

The power of Judo is not in resisting. Is not in resisting, but rather in taking advantage of the flow of energy. I urge the County not to try to change the
direction. This is resistance. Rather, I urge the County to lend a helping hand to build on the many strengths of the volunteer fire departments. The momentum's already there. Take advantage of it. Support the spirit of volunteerism and the resulting building of the community.

These people are willing to protect their communities at no cost. They do not help in terms of equipment, facilities, et cetera. But they ask for nothing in terms of labor. Their is a labor of love. How can the County possibly think of destroying that? It can only result in gain.

And as an aside, this commission has said that they support volunteer firefighters, I believe so. DPLU has said the same thing. I'm sorry, but the majority of these three meetings have been people squawking about DPLU. I don't see how we can believe that they truly support volunteer firefighters. It's really overshadowed the Micro Report, which is a shame.

MR. OTT: Thank you.

DAVID YOUNG: Thank you very much.

My name is David Young. And I'm a registered voter and a taxpayer in San Diego County. I'm also a firefighter on a combination department, a paid and volunteer fire department.

I've heard some comments with reference to both the difference between a volunteer and a reservist. But the department where I work, we're all paid. We all...
receive a paycheck, whether it's a stipend or a paid per
shift or a coverage fee.
The department is Pine Valley Fire Protection
District. I'd also like to mention before I proceed
with my comments that, as of last night, we presented
our fire board with a binding referendum, taking it to
the voters, informing them that the items should be
taken to the voters of Pine Valley, whether -- either to
rescind the signing of the contract and bringing it
before the voters or to dissolve the Fire Protection
District entirely.

I'm here to offer my comments on the findings
by LAFCO in the Micro Report that the "region's system
for providing fire protection and emergency medical
services is dysfunctional," as well as findings and
statements in the background and conceptual
reorganization studies.

I'm a State-certified Firefighter 1. I'm an
engineer. I'm a driver/operator. I'm also an EMT who's
certified defibrillator and combi tube.

I've worked at this department for the past
eight years as a paid member and as a volunteer member.
And I've experienced the ups and downs of everything
that comes along with both sides of the coin. I'm very
involved in our Firefighter's Association and have a
strong commitment to the community I serve and protect
but don't live in.
I'm here to voice my opposition to LAFCO's recommended model or one of the models recommended where services are provided through contractual agreements with the California Department of Forestry.

My father always said that it's not enough to recognize a problem. You must look for the best solution -- the best resolution, and the best answer.

And our opinion in Pine Valley, this is not the best answer. And again, I apologize for the redundancies.

In your own background study it states that "CDF is a state agency oriented more toward command and control rather than structural fire protection." In your Micro Report, you state that cost estimates -- that projects would be funded and not financed over time.

But in actuality, there is already a projected 22.3- to 47.6-million-dollar shortfall between estimated costs and the actual service level chosen, depending on the service level you choose. It's the same funding and resources which would be lowering property taxes or special assessments passed by voters in the district.

Keeping in mind Proposition 13 or the subsequent Senate bill, SB-154 regarding property taxes and the limits that are imposed therein, where is the sustained source of revenue coming from? It is all with every agency that's in this room represented or not, funding has always been an issue.

Our issues are not how the volunteer is categorized, but goes much deeper than that. In your
Micro Report on page 8 you state that CDF costs have significantly escalated in recent years. Cost to retain and enhance the local resources should be examined before committing to a state contractor.

Additionally, the Micro Report states if volunteer operations were not aggressively supported by a successor agency, regional resources would definitely decline, and overall costs would increase. In light of the projected shortfall, how can these resources that are existing be supported?

From your own Micro Report on page 30, it addresses the dispatching system:

"EMD is the standard for dispatching within the entire region, with the exception of CDF. If additional Phase 1 agencies were to contract with CDF for Schedule A or Amador Plans and, as a result, move from Heartland to CDF or Monte Vista dispatching, the human cost from eliminating the EMD from the dispatch service should be evaluated."

That would be excellent if it would be evaluated on a fair and level playing field.

For CDF to raise the level of dispatch to the standard within San Diego County that they currently enjoy, unspecified additional one-time costs -- unspecified additional one-time costs for upgrading communications equipment for adding staffing would be passed on to those contracts agencies.
In addition, 9.5 percent of that would be an overhead charge applied by CDF to administer this. It says in your Micro Report on page 9, "The conceptual plan itself would induce a de facto consolidation of services under CDF contracts."

And this is the part that I believe disturbs us, as well as a number of other agencies that have stood before you:

"Left in place, individual jurisdictions would have few resources, if any, and little ability to exercise discretion over fire protection issues in their district. And actual loss of operational fire control."

I heard some comments regarding lack of mechanisms to bring in money, lack of programs that exist. Pine Valley has its own fire mitigation program. We do our own work. We have a number of other resources. We have a State-approved firefighter I academy.

I've been on a number of campaign fires. By far, I don't claim to have the wisdom or the expertise that a lot of these gentlemen in the room with the badges that you see wearing have. And I respect that.

But I've been on a number of campaign fires: The Pines Fire, the Paradise Fire. I've been on the Cedar Fire and a number of others. And the problems that are facing us now are the problems that faced us long before this came about.
The answer in Pine Valley in my opinion -- I'll speak for myself. We've met as a whole. The answer is not a crew change or agency replacement or agency outright dissolution. With a local loss of control, we couldn't even imagine that.

The answer is not, again, adding another man to our engine. The answer is not adding one other person to a different station. The answer is more engines, more aircraft, more resources. But until we stop throwing little buckets of water at big fires, we'll still experience a loss of lives as well as the property losses.

I'll close with this: I've always felt if you're the same person you were yesterday, you're going backwards. And we're doing the same things we've been doing yesterday for a long time. It isn't just the Cedar Fire or the Pines Fire. It's long before that.

And, again, I still defer to the wisdom and the experience of the gentlemen who have been there long before I have. But the training that I've received to date and the training that we continue to receive is above State-certified levels.

We have a department that has 30 active members, over 20 reserves, and we have a fire board that we have absolutely no faith in; hence, our referendum.
asking for the rescinding of the signing of the contract and bringing it before the voters of Pine Valley. I thank you very much for the opportunity.

MR. OTT: Thank you.

Just a point of clarification, several other speakers have made a similar comment that LAFCO -- or LAFCO staff are advocating or proposing a particular governance model or the contract with the Department of Forestry is completely false. We're not advocating, proposing, recommending anything. We've evaluated the effectiveness of all of the different options.

DAVID YOUNG: And we understand that. And we hope that it will be evaluated on a level playing field.

MR. OTT: Thank you.

Larry, you're going to be forwarding comments as well.

What about Tim McCrowy, John Fitch. You've already spoke without a speaker slip. And -- but you're coming forward.

JOHN FITCH: I'll be very brief.

Hi. John Fitch again. I'm a Pine Valley resident. I'm a firefighter on the fire department. Sometimes I get paid, sometimes I don't. I get up in the middle of the night and go help my neighbors.

I think that the reason we're here today, we all know, is Prop C, the fires that happened in 2003. What I've seen -- and I was hoping that some of the kind
members of your commission would have been here today --
but some of the things that -- positive changes I've
seen since 2003 are the reserve 911 system, Sheriff's
Department certification for Helitack by CDF. I see new
County and City copters in Pine Valley. Specifically,
I've seen the Department of Planning and Land Use come
in and take out dead oak trees from residential
properties.

And also I've seen the Forest Service do a
very -- looks like a very well planned-out prescribed
burn on the northeast side of town. There's a saddle on
the ridge. And they burned both sides of that out last
year.

As a driver and operator of firefighting
equipment, I would like to ask the County to provide
vehicle maintenance to the rural fire company. Anything
possible for them to provide dependable service without
adding new overhead or labor costs or labor resources.

As David said, the voters of Pine Valley have
submitted a petition to the fire board regarding
contracts expended to go into a three-year contract with
CDF. At the first meeting that you had, I articulated
my positions on that based on your report. And I'm not

Like I said, many strides have been taken since
2003. And I'd like to suggest another one to be evaluated in the future, possibly as part of your recommendation or your action: A strategic reserve from existing resources in the county.

Obviously, this will require regional authority. We get these wildfires. The only thing that's going to work against them is air power. And it comes and goes depending on funding or who's putting money in at what time. It will be what it will be.

We've got the 911. So in the middle of the night, you get a call, you can get out. That's so important. I'll tell you, on the Horse Fire when we saw OES come in, we were at our station and phones were ringing off the hook. And the reserve 911 had been called, and we seen 15 engines come in from OES. We know those guys meant business. It was good.

I think, you know, this is a long road. I looked at the report in Sacramento. It's taken them 30, 40 years to evolve to where they have. It will be the same way here.

So in conclusion, I'd like to just say that many improvements have been made since 2003. And it's my hope that the actions of LAFCO will continue on a sustained, continuous path of improvement toward the best fire and EMS services possible throughout the County. Thank you for your time.

MR. OTT: Thank you.

And we do have two final speakers, which will
conclude the afternoon or evening, depending upon what
time it is here.

Jeremy Frasca and Randy Scales, our two
gentlemen here.

JEREMY FRASCA:  Good afternoon, ladies and
gentlemen. My name is Jeremy Frasca, F-R-A-S-C-A.
I am currently a reserve firefighter for the
San Diego Rural Fire Protection District. I’ve been a
reserve firefighter for two and a half years now.
I grew up in the community of Jamul. I’ve
witnessed and grown up around the volunteers. I know
the meat and potatoes of the whole volunteer.

To just kind of break down some barriers,
volunteer -- reserve, paid, not paid -- we’re all
firefighters. We all have the same goal in mind. And
what I’m trying to get at is -- I can’t articulate my
thoughts here. Just the integration of CDF into our
program was a little intimidating at first to us, the
Peterson Reporting, Video & Legal Services

reserve firefighters. But as it came into effect, it
was nothing but open arms from CDF.

It’s opened a lot of doors for people like
myself, trying to move on and become a career
firefighter one day and get paid and make this my dream
job. Volunteers, it’s all heart. They respond from
home. My father was a 22-year veteran, volunteer
firefighter. This is long before San Diego Rural even
existed.
What I get out of it and the rest of the reservists get out of it is the training. For instance, take a fire control class, which to have live fire training, most places you go to it's going to cost per person roughly $350. We have a class coming up, and just because the CDF, who has offered to put the volunteers, it's going to cost, maybe, $5 a person.

It's an opportunity -- it's a very attractive offer to prospective reserve firefighters. Reserves come and go by one or two years. You're going to always have that continuous flow. The volunteers, they're offered the same training. It's just -- it's a great opportunity for them. They come out and -- it's -- I'm sorry. It's kind of off-the-cuff today. I haven't really prepared.

I'm thinking back to a story. Since they have integrated the CDF to Descanso, we were able to man a new station 24 hours, seven days a week. We responded to a call at 2:00 a.m. And this was a chest pain call. It was pretty much a cut-and-dry chest pain.

And when it was all said and done, we had our patient in the ambulance and talked to the residents that lived at the same place. And they were really taken back by the response time and how quick we responded. They said, "The volunteer station up here usually takes a lot longer. And we were really concerned about that."

We had to educate them. This is right after
the integration. We had to tell them that it's now CDF.

We've got volunteer and paid staff up here. Because of
CDF, we're able to do this. They were really blown away
by that. I think that's huge right there, response
times and, basically, just the opportunities that it has
to offer for everybody.

I think it's a growing opportunity with more
people moving out to the backcountry. It's the right
ting to do. It's great for everybody. And I think
there's been a lot of gain from it.

So thank you.

MR. OTT: Thank you.

Randy, you're our final speaker.

MALE SPEAKER: Randy Sales. I'm the CDF
Firefighters chapter director here in San Diego. Couple
things for clarification.

One comment was made that people rotating in
and out -- if this were to happen under the CDF contract
or in future contracts with the County, that generally a
two-year commitment for that employee to transfer into a
station, you're going to be there for two years. That's
been the standard. And it's not a rotation where every
week you see a different captain and you don't know who
you're working with.

The two-year commitment is there for a reason,
for continuity between the staff that's there and to get
to know the community and the volunteers and reserves
that work in the community.

Secondly, one of the other gentlemen made a comment -- that gentlemen from Mount Laguna -- that they're going to be losing their neighbors to the west there in Pine Valley.

My question is, where are they going? CDF comes in. They're going to work hand-in-hand with them. That relationship will still been honored with open arms, and the personnel from Pine Valley will still be there to work with the Mount Laguna folks.

Talked about volunteers being run out or reserves not being able to have a position or have a purpose there in their communities anymore. We open wide open arms with the volunteers and the reserve programs. We cannot function as well as we should be able to without their help.

We are currently operating two -- staffing two career people and a minimum one volunteer or reserve every day in the two stations in San Diego Rural. We also do that in some of the other areas that we have contracts with. This is the big area that people want to focus on, Pine Valley, San Diego Rural, as well as some of the other volunteer agencies.

We open the door right open and hold it open for those people to come in and engage in the program, just like they did before. There is no, "You're just a volunteer. Follow us up on the engine behind. If I've got an empty seat, go on board, go with us."
If you're standing there and we're doing training and a call comes in and I've got an empty seat, climb on. Let's go. I depend on that volunteer to follow up that engine or staff the station behind us when we're out on other calls. That is part of the program that we value completely and this thing that makes it work.

Somebody brought up the point that Valley Center doesn't have volunteers. Those guys get a stipend, and that was the term. They get paid. But they're not career people. So they're there on their own gaining the experience. And they do get some funding for being there. But there's no benefits behind it. There's no huge salary involved with it. They are there to get the experience and training, just like a volunteer reserve would. But they are getting paid a minimal, nominal fee to be there.

One of the things that's came up with the whole system is about -- is what is in the best interest of the community. Pine Valley, last month, by their own call logs and records, had 11 days when their fire station was uncovered. Nobody was there to respond. Without doing a call back, which takes time. 11 days.

What is in the best interest of your community? To have a career staff there 24/7, seven days a week, or to have your fire station unstaffed for 11 days during the month when nobody might be available to respond?
Thank you.

MR. OTT: Thank you, Randy.

That concludes the workshop, I think. If there are any questions before we adjourn, now would be the time to raise them, as you're thinking about them.

The dates that have been thrown out are

April 6th for the comment deadline. We've obviously received a number of verbal comments, which will be incorporated into our process here.

The next date is May 7th. That's the LAFCO hearing date. It's considered tentative at this stage. But there's more than 50 percent possibility that that date will materialize. So put those dates in your calendar book.

We've been at this project, I believe, for almost ten years. It's not been overnight. Shirley and I have been working on this issue since 1998, first of all dealing with the funding inequities that plague fire protection in this county. And that evolved into what you have heard today, as far as the different reorganization options we're looking at.

We value your comments. We appreciate your interest. And if there aren't any questions, I don't see any hands.

PAULINE HADLEY: I have one. Pauline Hadley. I was reading something in the paper where the federal government brings in a lot of planes when we have had these big fires, and that 2006 was just -- and they're
king of getting after us for building in the wildfire urban interface. Because they said from now on they're expecting 2006 to be indicative of what we have in the way of fires. And so the government comes in, too, and they fight all these fires with us? Is that it?

MR. OTT: John, do you want to talk about the federal relationship?

MR. TRAYLOR: Well, there are U.S. Forest Service lands and there are State-responsibility lands. And both those levels of government certainly provide response to these types of fires. I don't know if that directly answers your question. I was trying to understand --

PAULINE HADLEY: We had that Marion Mountain Fire. Does the government come?

MR. TRAYLOR: That's SRA land. So from a wildland fire protection standpoint, you'll have a CDF wildland response.

PAULINE HADLEY: And is that it? No government?

MR. TRAYLOR: CDF represents the State government team.

MALE SPEAKER: She's asking federal. And the answer is, yes, they do.

PAULINE HADLEY: Okay. I'm asking the wrong person.

MR. TRAYLOR: Simple question, simple answer. That was it, I think, that answered her question.
it doesn't have to be significantly large in San Diego County. All levels of government -- state, federal, local, municipal -- fall from agreements from the federal level all the way down help each other out. So there's very rarely that there's a significant fire that does not have multiple agencies from multiple levels of government there.

PAULINE HADLEY: Last year we had a lot of those.

MALE SPEAKER: Some.

MR. TRAYLOR: I misunderstood your question. The gentleman was right. There are tremendous resources that can be deployed through any area of the federal level, state level, and local area.

PAULINE HADLEY: And we don't really have an evacuation plan yet for us in San Diego, a template?

MR. TRAYLOR: I'd have to defer to DPLU. I'm not sure about that in the unincorporated area. I know the Sheriff's Department now has an evacuation plan. Evacuation is generally a responsibility of local law enforcement. I know the Sheriffs have worked long and hard on evacuation plans, which place them to the reserve 911 system for early notification. Whether there's a policy or not from the Department of Land Use, I'd have to defer that to Office of Emergency Services.
completed through OES.

MR. OTT: Thank you everybody. It is after 5:00. Drive safely.

(Whereupon the meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.)