LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION

Transcript
LAFCO Meeting – Agenda Item 9
End-of-Year Update
Reorganization of Fire Agencies – Phase I

December 3, 2007

San Diego Local Agency Formation Commission
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# INDEX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening Remarks</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Report: Shirley Anderson</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Costs: John Traylor</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission Comments</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Comment Speakers re Title Topic:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Burk</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August Ghio</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott Walker</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin Dubler</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Schoepfer</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara Collis</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dennis Sherman</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom Gardner</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darrell Jobes</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack Griffiths</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission Comments Continued</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motion Placed on the Floor</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roll Call Vote</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motion Carried</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA - MONDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2007

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CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: We now move on to Item Number 9. I know we have a staff report on this item. Once again, thank you firefighters and the other related fire people who are here today to hear this discussion and presentation. I must say that this is a rather weighty project that our staff has taken on. The staff report that we’ve received is excellent. Everything we’ve asked our staff to do, they’ve done, including going back and revisiting issues that we’ve brought forward; so what you’ll be saying and hearing today is a culmination of all that work that our staff has provided for us; so with that, Mr. Ott.

EXECUTIVE OFFICER OTT: Thank you Mr. Chairman and Commissioners. I’d like to make just a few opening remarks before I turn things over to Shirley Anderson and John Traylor; they will be providing the staff report on this item. You have a picture that is on each of the monitors as well as the screen in back of us here at the dais, and I think that photograph dramatically places what we will be talking about this morning in the proper perspective, and that is that rural fires are an urban threat, and they not only spread to the urbanized communities that we can readily think of, such as: Escondido, Rancho Bernardo, Scripps
Ranch, even to Del Mar and Solana Beach. This was unheard of years ago. And that is producing havoc in a lot of areas in terms of automatic aid agreements, in terms of reciprocity between agencies that are better funded in this county, not necessarily well funded, but better funded in terms on how they are helping calm this firestorm. And that probably will become a bigger and bigger issue. There is also a critical emergency medical services issue in this county. In the back-country, well over 75% of the calls – day-in and day-out – are for emergency medical services, not necessarily structural fire protection. So there’s a combination of issues, and we’ve been trying to solve this problem over the past several years. And the Commission in May 2007, initiated and approved the consolidation and reorganization of fire agencies that would name the County as the successor to about 1.5 million acres of underserved and unserved territory. That’s about two-thirds of unincorporated San Diego County, which either has no structural fire protection by a local fire agency, or is provided fire protection by an under-funded agency. Four hundred thousand acres of that total that I mentioned is within local fire districts, but we have classified them as being under-funded. So the task before your commission today, is to consider the recommendations of the LAFCO subcommittee. The subcommittee consists of Supervisors Horn
& Jacob, you Mr. Chairman, as well as Commissioner Menshek. That subcommittee was tasked with the responsibility of helping implement this reorganization project. So we are presenting today to you, the subcommittee’s work, which the subcommittee has reviewed and approved. It also includes terms and conditions of reorganization. They have also been looking at the funding equation, which is the big issue here, and rather going into that with any detail, I would defer to Shirley and John to give you the specifics. We have a number of speaker slips that we need to take and then your Commission should deliberate on whether or not this package that the LAFCO subcommittee has been reviewing, should be conveyed and delivered to the Board of Supervisors. So with that I’d like to turn things over to Shirley and she will give you the staff presentation.

MS. ANDERSON: Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Commission. Reorganization of Structural Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services was conditionally approved in May by this body. Once all the conditions that the Commission placed on approval are satisfied, it will return to the Commission for final ratification. The reorganization has undergone a series of modifications since it was first introduced to LAFCO by the Board of Supervisors, who proposed the formation of a regional fire protection district over the entire
unincorporated area. From there it was modified by an alternative proposal that was put together by the fire community, by the Fire Chiefs’ and District Fire Chiefs’ Associations that bifurcated the reorganization into two phases. We’ve been working on Phase I since the Commission approved that. Modification of Phase I was modified to take some of the agencies in Phase I and place them in Phase II. Other conditions, the conditions that the Commission placed on the approval in May concerned finalizing the boundaries after establishing the list of agencies that would be dissolved and merged into the new agency. It also included some ministerial items that your staff has been taking care of. It included developing terms and conditions for the reorganization, things such as transfer of the property tax increments, transfer of a career personnel from the dissolved agencies, transfer their personnel rights, transfer of obligation and resources to the new fire protection district, and it also was conditioned upon finding a secure on-going funding source for the new agency. The majority of the conditions have been satisfied and staff will be today recommending that the Commission approve those draft terms and conditions which have been included with your report and have been reviewed by the subcommittee. The boundaries of the new agency have been finalized and reviewed by the subcommittee. There are seven agencies that
would be included: the East County Fire Protection District, the Pine Valley Fire Protection District, the San Diego Rural Fire Protection District, and four county service areas - the County Service Areas (CSAs) are special districts that are dependent to the County; the Board of Supervisors are their board of directors. The CSAs are Boulevard, Campo, Mount Laguna, and San Pasqual. Altogether, these agencies plus an additional nine-hundred, about 944,000 acres would be consolidated together to form a regional fire agency. Governance of this regional agency, as approved by the Commission in May, would be under County Service Area 135. CSA 135 already exists; it doesn’t have to be created, it’s not a new bureaucracy. A zone within 135 would be empowered with the authority to provide structural fire protection and emergency medical services. The zone would duplicate the boundary of Phase I. The one outstanding condition that has not been satisfied is the funding source. Once the boundary was established and we knew exactly what agencies would be dissolved, we will be able to determine what the property tax transfer and special assessment benefit transfer would be, and we could develop the cost of providing services within the boundary that was finally established. We have one slide, which I’ll show you, which give us the numbers...here we go. Developing the cost was not an abstract exercise. The cost themselves give
us a profile of characteristics of what this district would
do, what it would deliver. The subcommittee reviewed and
approved - the majority approved - that the minimum service
level of this new regional agency would be 3 on-duty
delivered by career personnel plus volunteers. Volunteers
are a very important component of the reorganization;
without the volunteer contributions, the cost for the entire
service delivery accelerates substantially. There are two
service levels, basic life support and advance life support.
Again, these are at 3 on-duty career, combination career and
volunteer. The operational cost for such an agency, at
basic life support are about $25.6 million, and advance life
support are about $26.4 million. The off-setting revenues
that would support these costs are property tax ($1.6
million) that would be the property tax that would flow from
the seven agencies that would be dissolved. The 944,000
acres that would also be developed in this regional agency
would bring no tax source to the new agency. There is no
public funding being spent there now, so nothing would
automatically transfer to the new agency. There’s also a
special assessment revenue in the amount of $2.5 - $2.6
million. About half of that special assessment revenue can
be contributed to East County Fire Protection District,
which just recently the voters in East County approved a new
assessment of about $1.3 million. Altogether, when you take
the revenues of about $4.2 million away from the cost, we still have $21 - $22 million dollars of costs that has to be funded for the new agency. One of the stipulations sets the exception of the reorganization is that any funding for the new district be on-going stable funding. We’ve never looked at grants, and the Commission has never looked at one-time funding. A basic principle of reorganization was that fire protection services in the unincorporated area should be supported by on-going funding. So anything that we looked at to build this gap must be of a permanent nature. The county in recent years has funded fire protection in the unincorporated area through a fire enhancement program of about $8.5 million dollars. This is for equipment and funds Cal-Fire contracts to have Cal-Fire presence in certain areas of the unincorporated area. There has been discussion if amount of county property tax increments could be transferred to the new agency in this amount that would form part of this gap funding. With the $8.5 million, there’s still about $13.7 at the Advance Life Support Level that would have to be funded. The Commission’s approval in May, gave the Executive Officer directions to transfer this request to the Board of Supervisors to consider the transfer of the fire enhancement fund amount permanently to the new agency, and also to consider funding for the rest of the gap. There are other funding considerations and
possibilities under discussion; the Hollingsworth bill, which is now a 2 year bill is out there. That probably can’t be looked at for immediate relief. There’s also the discussion of parcel tax or sales tax, perhaps, in conjunction with areas outside of Phase I. At this point however, this condition for funding is the only outstanding condition. I’m going to let John give you some more information on how the service costs were developed. They were reviewed by the subcommittee, and the majority of the subcommittee concurred with the way the costs were developed and what service levels would be established. And John will let you know that, and then I’ll return with the final recommendations. John?

MR. TRAYLOR: Thank you Shirley. The approach for assessing costs for the operation of the fire department, whether it be dependent or independent, the methodology was a change from a previous method used by Karl Bauer in which an assessment for cost was developed on the highest personnel cost – highest method cost. It relates back to the concept of the $154 million dollar annual cost for providing service. That was the total unincorporated area. The methodology we used this time was to take the median cost, that is take the highest cost of personnel and the lowest cost of personnel and find the median and use that as a cost assessment for all of the functions or providing fire
and EMS service. Working with the subcommittee of the division here, we narrowed the service level to 3-BLS first responder and 3-ALS first responder. I can’t over emphasize, the value of the volunteer programs, and these costs projections takes full value of the viable volunteer programs that are in place, provides support for them ongoing service needs, materials, supplies. In cases where you don’t have the BLS or ALS level of service provider, it does provide embedding if you will, that service level to work with the volunteers and embrace those volunteer programs. The cost were developed based on those two service level scenarios, including the personnel cost, identifying all the functions of structural fire protection and EMS service. The budget was developed that reflects the $25.6 million or $26.5 million service level cost. I’d be glad to answer any questions that you may have on the cost, but it is a reasonable approach and is in the median if you will, of all those cost figures within the San Diego region.

Thank you.

MS. ANDERSON: As John has explained to you how these cost were developed and exactly what they stand for. What they don’t tell us is how this service will be delivered. We know that it would be 3 on-duty career/volunteer combinations at the Advance Life Support or Basic Life Support level, but we don’t know how the delivery
would be organized. That would be an issue that the new agency would decide. They could decide to retain all local fire agencies, they could decide to retain Cal-Fire on a contract basis, they could decide to contract with other agencies. For instance, and example would be in the northwest corner of the county, in the Deluz area, it’s reasonable to expect that both Cal-Fire and North County Fire Protection District would respond to a request for proposal to provide services in that area. But again, all of the service delivery issues that the level that the Commission establishes will be decided by the new agency. So, with the funding as the only outstanding condition that needs to be satisfied, the recommendations of your staff today, that are contained on page six of your report are to approve the terms and conditions that were reviewed by the subcommittee; accept the reorganization subcommittee’s recommendation that service be 3 on-duty at the ALS level; accept the estimated costs that were developed that were developed for delivering services at that level; and direct the Executive Officer to forward the Commission’s reorganization to the Board of Supervisors for activation of structural fire protection and emergency medical services within CSA 135 – this is an action that is required – and to secure appropriate funding for regional fire protection services in unincorporated San Diego county. That concludes
COMMISSIONER VANDERLAAN: Thank you. Are there any questions for staff?

COMMISSIONER REXFORD: Yeah. Well first off I wanted to know how many people were on the subcommittee.

COMMISSIONER VANDERLAAN: There were four of us.

COMMISSIONER REXFORD: Ok. One of the comments I heard was, and I don’t know if I misheard that, pertained to sales tax. Will there be a sales tax on cities or is that something you’re looking at and is that all the cities in San Diego County?

MS. ANDERSON: Among the options that are out there, that could be pursued, would be sales tax increase.

COMMISSIONER REXFORD: On what cities? All the 18 cities or just...

MS. ANDERSON: Yes. It’s an option that needs to be discussed. It’s just laying out what possibilities. There could also be a transfer perhaps from the County general funds. There could be - as an alternative - could be a sales tax that would have to be voted by the voters of San Diego County, and a sales tax I believe Counsel would have to be a county-wide sales tax increase?

LEGAL COUNSEL SMITH: I believe that you’re talking about setting up an authority to provide a sales tax under that particular section, it would be county-wide, yes.
MS. ANDERSON: There are no details that have been worked out on this. We’re just presenting what options could be pursued.

COMMISSIONER REXFORD: And right now we don’t know where the funding is coming from. So we’re just looking at consolidating before the money comes?

MS. ANDERSON: The Commission conditioned final ratification of this fire agency on finding on-going secure funding. So, it will not be ratified until funding is in place.

COMMISSIONER REXFORD: Ok, so we’re just going to, right now, go through the motions until we receive the money. We’re approving it, but if we don’t get the money, then can we do it? Can it consolidate?

MS. ANDERSON: That’s a condition that the Commission placed on this.

COMMISSIONER HORN: Betty, I’d like to let you know, I was on the committee. We were not unanimous in this. I brought up objections. You’ll hear some of those later. Funding is a big issue. So if you’ll notice on the map, every north county department opted out of this. So this is basically an east county district.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Mr. Ott, did you have anything to add on the question?

COMMISSIONER REXFORD: My other question, if I
could follow-up Mr. Chairman, then this is not unanimous from all the north county, east county, all the counties that we’re dealing with. Today we got letters not everybody wanting to be in this, and we’ll hear from them today? Correct?

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Yes. Ms. Rexford, we have several people speaking.

COMMISSIONER REXFORD: Ok. Well I just wanted to kind of get that out, because when I hear cities being taxed and they pay taxes already for fire service, that kind of concerns me.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Even though there’s only one piece that’s missing, it’s a rather big one. And that’s “follow the money.” So it’s a matter of how we get there and that’s a big reason that our commission needs to move this forward, is so that those issues could be discussed at a different forum. Basically, the Board of Supervisors.

COMMISSIONER REXFORD: I’d like to listen to the speakers, if we have them.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Commissioner Jacob?

COMMISSIONER JACOB: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Just a couple of questions. First of all on the funding, do those number include the capital cost?

MR. TRAYLOR: They do not.

COMMISSIONER JACOB: And what are the capital
1. cost?

   MS. ANDERSON: I think it’s $37 million.

   COMMISSIONER JACOB: And that includes, just basically?

   MS. ANDERSON: Station upgrades, on all stations that are currently out there including the newest one that was just added in Otay Mesa. Most of them will all have crew area improvements. In some cases there will be entirely new stations in place. Warner Springs will have new stations that replace the ones that are currently closed. That comes to $37.3 million.

   COMMISSIONER JACOB: And Mr. Ott, in my understanding of this proposal that we have before us is that no area loses anything. In other words, any special assessments, any stations, manpower, whatever exist, any particular area stays in that area. No one loses anything. So there’s no personnel, no taxes, nothing that’s transferred from area to area. Is that correct?

   EXECUTIVE OFFICER OTT: That is correct. The terms and conditions provide a legal mechanism for enforcing such a policy matter; but beyond the terms and conditions, beyond the policy, an important footnote that your Commission made to its action in May, was that no area would experience a degradation of services. That’s really the part of the issue here, is that what we’ve put together is a
plan to improve services in the county and not at the expense of better funded agencies. So there are agencies that have voted in special taxes and so forth. For special purposes, those special assessments and taxes would be retained. And on top of that, areas that do not have the benefit of taxes would also experience no degradation of services. Volunteers are another issue too. We have put together a legal document that would be embodied in the terms and conditions that would bolster and nurture the volunteer base that exists in this county so that if anything, volunteers would become more important for fire operations. There’s a whole host of conditions that we’ve made that would guarantee, at minimum, that services not be degraded. On the other side of the equation services will be improved. One comment about the finances, we’ve made no recommendation on which form of financing should be considered by the Board of Supervisors. We think that that is a matter for the Board to consider and we have not expressed a preference for any one method of financing.

COMMISSIONER JACOB: Thank you, that was a little more than I asked for, but just one more question...it’s on process then. This went to the subcommittee from LAFCO, and this subcommittee, 3 out of 4 of the subcommittee members are recommending this today to move forward. And as I understand, page 6, those are the recommendations. So this
is not the end, but this is basically the end of LAFCO’s work at this particular point and time? Is that safe to say? And then the idea here is to move it onto the Board of Supervisors to basically finish the work?

EXECUTIVE OFFICER OTT: That would be correct. This is the final step in the process for LAFCO, with the exception of ratification after the Board of Supervisors takes whatever action it would take. We’re anticipating that that ratification could occur as early as Mid-2008.

COMMISSIONER JACOB: So this could come back to LAFCO then.

EXECUTIVE OFFICER OTT: This would come back for ratification. What we are trying to do here today is to move this out of LAFCO to set in motion a sequence of events that need to occur under the law for the board to accept the responsibility of activating its fire and EMS responsibilities for County Service Area 135.

COMMISSIONER JACOB: So this is not our final time in looking at this. It will come back to us, and I think that that’s important for everybody to understand.

EXECUTIVE OFFICER OTT: Correct.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Commissioner Rexford.

COMMISSIONER REXFORD: I have a follow-up question about manpower and staffing. There would be nothing as we go through this, but what happens in the future when we get
the money? Right now we’re not going to touch the
volunteers, the staffing, and manpower and the things that
are happening now, correct?

COMMISSIONER HORN: No we’re going to boil thisrog at a slow simmer so that it doesn’t know it’s coming.

COMMISSIONER REXFORD: Burn what?

COMMISSIONER HORN: We’re going to boil this frog
at a slow simmer so that it doesn’t know it’s coming.

COMMISSIONER REXFORD: So are you the frog? I’m
asking questions to follow-up to make sure that there will
be no loss of manpower and staffing as we go along with
this. We don’t know what the future details are though,
right?

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: That’s correct. Are there
any other comments? Commissioner Pocklington.

COMMISSIONER POCKLINGTON: Thank you Mr. Chairman.
I think the thing that we have to remember why we are here.
We’re here to find ways to save lives and save property.
And we’re working through, and we look at the two fires that
we’ve had, and we did a much better job on this last fire,
but we still lost lives and we lost over sixteen hundred
homes. And one of the things, Item 6 Mr. Chairman on the
recommendation is that we have to go in front of the Board
of Supervisors to lay out our plan. I think the one thing
we need to know, and I don’t know these figures, is what was
the total loss of these two fires? How many people were lost, how many buildings, what was the total value of those buildings and property? And the other things, my understanding is that when you lose a house that has been burned to the ground, you no longer pay taxes on that improvement. Isn’t that correct? And we should know the value of taxes that we have lost over these years, because my understanding is that from the previous fires there are people having rebuilt their homes. We need to know all those figures, we make the presentation, and I think it would be dramatic knowing the figures of that and help move this to the Supervisors and move this through a successful course. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Yes, Mr. Menshek.

COMMISSIONER MENSHEK: I’ll just reserve my comments until after the public forum.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Any other comments from the commissioners? Now before we, we do have several speakers, I think Mr. Ott made this comment and his remark is that we’re focused on the wild-land fires that just occurred. Obviously a great loss, great disruption for our community with all the people who were evacuated. I know in our community, there are letters to the editor that are continuing about why people were evacuated, why they couldn’t come back. So there are a lot of problems related
to these fires, but I think we have to stay focused on the fact that seventy-five percent or more of the activities are related to emergency medical services. That is a big component of this proposal and that’s why our subcommittee looked at raising the bar, if you will, to advance life support. So as we’re going through this, certainly focusing on the fire, let’s also consider the day-to-day activities that our firefighters and emergency medical personnel do. With that we’ll move to speakers. When you come up, if you’ll identify yourself with name and address and also let us know whether you’re speaking as an individual or as part of an organized presentation so that we can give the correct timing. There’s 3 minutes per individual comment, and 7 minutes for an organized presentation. So with that our first speaker would be David Burk, followed by August Ghio.

CHIEF DAVID BURK: Mr. Chairman, Commission. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you as President of the County Fire Chiefs’ Association. My name is David Burk, address is 8054 Allison Avenue, City of La Mesa, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff for all the work they’ve done. If you notice a four-year project that’s come forward and right now the last hurdle in this is the financing, which was expressed at the very beginning of this project, was sustainable on-going funding. And we knew that was going to be the big piece, and here we
are. A lot of work has gone into this to get us to this point. We appreciate all the work and the support of LAFCO staff. And the subcommittee, we would like to – as a county chief – support the Substantially Similar Proposal (SSP) and say that sustainable ongoing-funding needs to be in place. We need this to move forward so that we could find that funding for those agencies that are in Phase I that want to move forward. It’s time to move forward and we need to get it onto the next piece. I would like to say that part of this is about reciprocity and currently in the unincorporated area of the county there is reciprocity in service. Cities, the other well-funded districts, send resources into the county and get nothing back as fire service or EMS in this. And cities and districts are looking at this funding and contemplating whether or not to bill the county for services provided; because it isn’t reciprocal as it is with our automatic and mutual aid. So with that, I’d just like to again say let’s move this forward and thank you for all your work.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Thank you Chief Burk. Were there any questions?

COMMISSIONER JACOB: Just a quick question Mr. Chairman. Thank you Chief Burk for coming down. The Fire Chiefs’ Association, does the Fire Chiefs’ Association represent fire districts throughout the county including
north county?

CHIEF DAVID BURK: That’s correct.

COMMISSIONER JACOB: And you’re representing all of those chiefs and those agencies?

CHIEF DAVID BURK: I am representing the San Diego County Fire Chiefs’ Association, though there will be a speaker for the Districts’ Association as well.

COMMISSIONER JACOB: Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Thank you. Commissioner Rexford.

COMMISSIONER REXFORD: I think that my question was answered, that he represents all the county in San Diego. Was the vote unanimous?

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: The vote from your Chiefs’ Association on this issue?

CHIEF DAVID BURK: As you know with most large groups, there is a great difficulty in getting a unanimous approval.

COMMISSIONER REXFORD: What was the vote?

CHIEF DAVID BURK: We rarely have everybody at a meeting, so we go with the consensus. It was an overwhelming consensus, but it wasn’t unanimous. I would give you a six to four or five vote or anything like that.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Thank you chief. August Ghio.
CHIEF AUGUST GHIO: My name is August Ghio, I’m a fire chief with the San Miguel Consolidated Fire Protection District. I live at 311 Juan Calle Duro, Jamul, and my office is at 2850 Via Orange Way in Spring Valley. I also am the Vice President of the San Diego County Fire Chiefs’ Association, and Vice President of the Fire Districts’ Association. I can tell you that when we voted on this, it was at least a two-thirds majority vote in favor of supporting the LAFCO proposal. And that is because we are working towards the same end. The San Diego County Fire Chiefs’ and the Fire Districts’ Association were working since 2004 on the substantially similar proposal to get to this point. We believe in consolidation. Also, as you’ve heard in the past, the most pressing concern is really the on-going sustained funding; and that’s why it’s so important to vote this forward to the County Board of Supervisors so we can get that piece in place. That’s what’s going to make this machine work. What we also like about the LAFCO proposal is that it does open up the local competition, the ability to compete for local control against the Schedule A contract that CDF now holds. That’s a prime piece. We’ve also been up for that. We believe that we can do it well, and that if local areas can fight for that, it’s important. We also like that the local agencies who are seeking to consolidate with neighboring jurisdictions, outside of this
process, still have the ability to do that. And that’s important for local jurisdictions. And as I said earlier, there is no harm in this plan to any existing jurisdictions. We are concerned recently, with what we’ve read in the newspaper and seen on the television, that there’s a new plan that’s coming forward. It’s a good plan, I will say that. From what I know of it, it’s a good plan; but any new plan should be looked, and how well can it work with the LAFCO Phase I plan. Because they’re not usually exclusive. Also, since both plans are good, we have to consider what the original intent was of this LAFCO enhancement of fire protection and emergency medical services. And that was to improve what we do ninety-nine percent of the time. Eighty-three percent of our responses are medical aid, virtually county-wide; probably across the United States. Most of us do about five percent of firefighting and a small percentage of that is wildland firefighting. What this plan does is improve the daily operations for fire, rescue, and emergency medical services. That’s critical to know, and critical to support. That’s why the Fire Districts’ and the County Chiefs’ support it. Combining any new plan with the LAFCO plan can only enhance and improve the LAFCO plan. So let’s not go forward with a new plan without maintaining the LAFCO plan. Again, we do support it. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Thank you Chief Ghio. Any
questions for Chief Ghio? Thank you. Next speaker will be
Scott Walker followed by Kevin Dubler.

CHIEF SCOTT WALKER: Good morning Mr. Chair and
honorable LAFCO Commission. My name is Scott Walker and my
address is 4900 Bonita Road, Bonita California. However, I
am speaking as an individual and I’d like to think that I am
speaking as an individual that represents thirty years of
experience of fire service. My points have been reiterated
by you Mr. Chairman and also by Michael Ott, as far as the
importance of our day-to-day service. These fires do seem
to bring back the importance and the focus on the wildland
side of this; but this issue really has a lot to do with
structure protection and EMS protection out in the
underserved areas. And one thing that I wanted to, the
point that I wanted to bring up was the fact that in my
reading and following back to these fires - going back to
also the Cedar Fire - it’s very clear in both federal and
state law that the responsibility for structural protection
fires falls within the realm of local government. Thank you
very much.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Thank you Chief Walker.

Kevin Dubler.

CHIEF KEVIN DUBLER: I am Kevin Dubler, and I
represent Julian-Cuyamaca Fire Protection District. I live
at 2020 (in audible), up in Julian. We’ve been going about
this for about the last four years since we’ve first started working with the staff of LAFCO. The immediate problem four years ago was funding. We’re still at that crossroads. So any project, any proposal we come up with, I kind of consider it half-baked until we get some funding. And it has to be sustainable, it has to be permanent. So Zone 8 chiefs were looking at this and decided, you know, we need to do something to help in our communities, to raise the level of service from our fire agencies. And we do have about, in our district, we’re about eighty-five percent medical also. We run a ALS ambulance that covers three of the districts in the back country. In viewing this, we realized that it may be real tough to get medics to work. We’re proposing a stipend, and there will be somebody, Dennis Sherman will talk about our proposal in a minute. But our proposal is half-baked also. And the reason it’s half-baked is that we don’t have the funding. What we’re proposing is to minimize and include the volunteers with the county fire enhancement money that’s already out there; by reassessing and reapplying the money in another direction, we would have the money right now to go forward with our proposal. That proposal can merge right into Phase I when the funding finally comes available. Cause I believe it will over a period of years, and we’re all for the consolidation. The reason Julian-Cuyamaca asked to be out
of it is the funding. We don’t have the funding and you’re wanting people to join an organization or a fire agency that does not have a fully baked plan. When you get to that point, we would be glad to be into that consolidation and we would gladly turn over our funding to that consolidation. So when Dennis comes up, pay close attention to what he’s saying because it does come from already available funds, and we don’t have to get new funding. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Thank you Chief Dubler. Next speaker will be Mary Schoepfer followed by Barbara Collis.

MARY SCHOEPFER: I’m Mary Schoepfer. I live at 40749 Old Hwy 80 in Boulevard. I’m representing myself as resident. I was the chairperson of the Boulevard Fire. I can tell you right now, just from looking at the station, the emergency medical services are not being delivered because there’s no one there. There’s simply no one there. No one’s running calls. You can look at the information department and they’ll tell you how many times of calls they’ve gotten. If it weren’t for CDF and the Fire Enhancement money, we wouldn’t have anybody. They’d have to come in from Campo or Pine Valley. There’s no one in Jacumba. This is bad, this is really bad. Getting away from fire, I’ve helped with this program that Dennis and Kevin put together. It’s feasible. It’ll work. I held the
money, I know how the money flows. That could work, but we need to get to the next step. We need to erase the lines. Not Campo, not Boulevard, not Jacumba; we need to get those lines away and say we’re going to deliver this service to these people. And that’ll work. Give them the opportunity. These guys work on a shoe string. They’ve been working on a shoe string for years. And they know how to stretch a dollar. Please give them the opportunity. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Thank you Mary. Thank you for your dedication to this issue. Barbara Collis followed by Dennis Sherman.

BARBARA COLLIS: My name is Barbara Collis. I live at 3689-190 Avocado Village Court in La Mesa, the unincorporated area. I have been following the whole process of LAFCO’s fire protection plan for four years now. I’m actually representing the East County League of Women Voters as an observer. Our league does have a fire policy, which is very minimal. We are in the process right now of updating so that we can present it to the county people and then voters to get support. I think that one of the important things you have, is and I see missing, is many people don’t even really know that all the work that you have done. The people that are in the firefighting groups and all have done a marvelous job, your Commission has done marvelous job, and LAFCO has done an outstanding job in
preparing this material. The Thursday before the fire, this last fire, Diane Jacob and Chief Ghio spoke to our league group, which was attended by people from all areas, and the support was extremely strong, good questions, and just a few days later we got another fire. We are going to have fires, and I just want to get back to the funding because we all know that is what’s keeping us from getting anywhere. I have asked a lot of people, would you pay a tax for fire; and everybody I talked to says, “Yes, I would pay a tax for fire.” So I think we need not to be afraid to ask for a fire sales tax or property tax or what it is, I’m not wise enough to know; but it’s there and I think the people will support it whatever we do because they are tired of losing their houses to fire. So I just encourage you to get on with it and we may have to come and speak to the Board of Supervisors. Let’s get it together. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Thank you Barbara. Thank you for your support for our staff and the appreciation for their hard work. If speakers could hold the microphone a little closer, that would be great. Dennis Sherman followed by Tom Gardner.

CHIEF DENNIS SHERMAN: Good morning. I’m Dennis Sherman and Chief of a volunteer fire department, probably one of the smallest departments in the whole county. We have been working on a project that actually was developed
for the County Enhancement Program. We looked at it very carefully. And what it deals with, we’re dealing with a whole bunch of departments. We start way out there by Borrego Springs. We work through Ocotillo, Shelter Valley, Sunshine Summit, Montezuma Valley, and Julian area. Then we go north to San Pasqual, Palomar Mountain, and Inner Mountain, and then we work south down through Cuyamaca and Mount Laguna down to the I-8 Corridor. Then we pick up Campo and Boulevard. There’s a lot of departments out there that are unfunded or under funded and we would like to provide better service to our citizens. So we’ve come up with a program of, actually it was four of the enhancement program; but what we would like to do is ask LAFCO that LAFCO add this to their recommendations to the county. This Fire Enhancement Program is for unfunded agencies in Zone 8 and their surrounding departments. There are some of the departments who have picked up Schedule A contracts and stuff like that and they’re not in this need; but all those departments, if you think about it, all of that area that are on the map are serviced by volunteer departments without the funding and without staffing. And this program is designed to provide staffing for all of those departments; all of them. What this program will provide is three new staffing, seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day, to thirteen different departments. One of the beauties of this
department of this whole program is that because we don’t have permanent employees, it can be expanded or it can be reduced, it can be made to be what we need it to be. And right now, what we need it to be is to provide staffing for all of those departments. To do this, if you look up there, it says limited station improvements; yep, there’s going to be some limited station improvements because we have to be sure going into this that the guys have a place to take a shower, that the guys have a place to cook their meals, and a place to sleep. We have to be able to provide this. So yeah, what we’ve budgeted is $125,000 to start the program and then we’re going to get going from there on an on-going basis. Now, employee cost will be substantially less than what’s in this SSP or the LAFCO plan. I know this because little Mount Laguna, who lives on a budget of approximately $40,000 a year - the whole department - that whole department lives on a budget of about $40,000 a year, were able to provide for our community staffing seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day; and I think that’s pretty commendable. This program has been adopted and picked up by a number of departments in the Zone 8 area, and it’s working. And so how do we know that this program can work? We know it can work because we’re doing it now, and what we need is help to expand the program. Now what we’re going to offer is training and stipends to attract personnel. You
say, “Well, that won’t attract many personnel.” But in reality, it does because there are many young men and women that want to be in fire service. Fire service is a great, great job. There’s no better job out there. And so we offer them to train, the experience, and with this program we can offer them a stipend. The stipend will help them to defray the cost of...they don’t have to go flip hamburgers; they can come and come and be part of this fire service. We need them and they need us. There’s a homerun there with the county too because if we could put this program together, and we’re going to have roughly a hundred and fifty of these reserves and volunteers into a pool, and this pool would be used to staff all the stations, the county - when it moves to Phase I - will be able to go through that and when they need trained good personnel, when they need that, they’ve got a pool to look at. We will be in a position to select the cream of the crop, the best of the best, to serve our county. And that’s what we need to be able to do. The firefighters, it’s a good thing for them, it’s a good thing for the county; but because this plan was designed through the enhancement program, and we’re not sure when Phase I would really happen, we’re looking also into the possibility of a JPA or CSA to pull all these departments together as a unit so that we’re one. Very quickly, if you look down at Level 4, the volunteer
firefighter group and qualified first responder, their 24 hour shift could receive only $75 a day. Look up to Level 3, you add EMT or firefighter one or Class B drivers license, that goes up to $90. Level 2, any two things, may be the guys from EMT that has a Class B license, that would go up to $105. And Level 1 is somebody who can do all of that; somebody who’s a firefighter one, EMT, and also has a Class B license. Moving now, this is probably the part that you’re most interested in, if you look up at the top it says employee stipend; it says $1.5 million dollars, but because of the sliding stipend scale that could be as low as $1.1 or as high as $1.7. Employee overhead, right below it, $450,000 dollars and we paid them about thirty percent for social security and workers comp and all those other things, and that also would be a variable. To have the duty chief to have to oversee the program during the day, and a training officer to put together the academies that will be necessary – the duty chief would get a stipend of only $150 cause it’s just to make sure everything is going smooth, that would be sufficient; and a training officer to organize the academies and such, probably would pay them $1,000 a month as a stipend. Station upgrades, we looked at $125,000 and we already discussed that, and right above that we have PPEs (Personnel Protective Equipment) at $375,000 that would equip about 150 people – that would be first year expense;
after that it would probably be in the $50,000 range. County contracts, right now we have a contract with the county and we receive about $23,000 on an average and what we’d like to do is increase that from $23,000 up to $35,000. And the reason is because if you have the station sitting empty and nothings happening, that’s okay; but as soon as you put three people there, seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day, utilities, propane, telephone, all those expenses go up. So we need help in that department. And then the academy expenses, again, is $13,000; but that’s first year expenses, and after that $6,500 a year. So basically we’ve put it all into a pile, and what we’ve done for $3 million dollars, all of those stations that we’ve talked about – all of them – could have staffing, seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day for the benefit for the people who are out there whether they be visitors or residents. So I ask you to really consider that this plan be added to LAFCO’s recommendation to Phase I. I think that we should do this because it’s good for the county, it’s good for the departments who have been serving for a long, long time out there; but most importantly, it’s good for the citizens of this county.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Thank you Chief Sherman. Thank you for all of your hard work. We have some commissioners who have questions for you, starting with
COMMISSIONER JACOB: Thank you Mr. Chairman, and thank you Chief for coming down and the work that you’ve put into this proposal. I just wanted to clarify, so what you’re asking us today is to move the LAFCO recommendation forward to the Board of Supervisors, but to move the Zone 8 proposal forward with it? Is that correct?

CHIEF DENNIS SHERMAN: That’s correct. Also, if we could encourage the present enhancement program monies to be involved in this program, then we could get ready for the operation.

COMMISSIONER JACOB: Let’s take it one at a time...so the answer is yes.

CHIEF DENNIS SHERMAN: Yes.

COMMISSIONER JACOB: And was the decision by all of the Zone 8 departments or the people who were involved with this proposal unanimous, that you listed earlier?

CHIEF DENNIS SHERMAN: Yes, and everybody is in favor of going forward with this program. Again, we have to have the funding. Without the funding it’s not going to work.

COMMISSIONER JACOB: Understood, thank you.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Commissioner Rexford.

COMMISSIONER REXFORD: How many are in your Zone?

CHIEF DENNIS SHERMAN: Actually, all of these
departments aren’t in Zone 8. Some of them are in Zone 7. I know that Palomar Mountain isn’t officially in Zone 8. I know that Boulevard and Campo aren’t officially in Zone 8, nor is De Luz. But all of these departments, are departments that don’t have funding, that needs staffing who are sitting empty right now – the stations empty – we need to have somebody on board at all times.

COMMISSIONER JACOB: So you’re asking us about the enhancement program and the county money. I don’t know if we looked at this, what the gentleman came up with today. We might want to do that. My other question is to staff, is did you look at that enhancement program when we were looking at the programs?

EXECUTIVE OFFICER OTT: We were looking at the fire enhancement program, not in terms of how monies are allocated; but the dollar value of that program for the region. I think Mr. Sherman’s comments really pertain to how decisions could be made by the board, Board of Supervisors, on allocation of those fire enhancement monies. That is something that we have not gotten into, and it certainly is something that we could transmit to the board if the Commission moves this proposal from LAFCO to the board. It wouldn’t be our position to actually dictate how those funds should be allocated, though.

COMMISSIONER REXFORD: My other question follow-
up, it seems that they need money now because they don’t have a lot of the monies that they’re bringing in. Is enhancement money or the money from the county that they’re looking for?

COMMISSIONER HORN: This shouldn’t be part of this debate, but the county currently spends $8 million dollars with the Amador contracts and giving monies to the volunteer departments, those who are involved with us in the outlying areas. So that’s all part of that $8 million bucks that we currently do. Ralph Steinhoff and county staff work with them. It’s not part of this debate, but they have considered this amount of money in the LAFCO proposal. I know how they would shift the money around, but that $8 million dollars is included in here and what we’re currently providing them. We have given the volunteers equipment, type 2 engines and water tankers to volunteers.

COMMISSIONER REXFORD: Okay. Well it seems like he’s got a point here.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: An answer to your questions is that I don’t think that staff has had time to analyze this; but most likely, it’s the first time we’ve seen it. It certainly has validity and I think that including it is an enhancement to what we’re currently looking at. I think the key for us is to deal with our proposal that’s before us today and move it forward. Commissioner Pocklington.
COMMISSIONER POCKLINGTON: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Many of my questions have already been answered. I guess basically, we haven’t really analyzed it. This is the first time we’ve seen this, and the $3 or $2.5 million dollars that you’ve included, is that already included in the $8 million dollars?

CHIEF DENNIS SHERMAN: That $3 million dollars, a lot of that money is already being paid.

COMMISSIONER POCKLINGTON: So many of the things you’ve talked about they’re already getting paid?

CHIEF DENNIS SHERMAN: Yes. And so, actually there wouldn’t be an additional $3 million dollars out of pocket, it would be for instance on...

COMMISSIONER POCKLINGTON: You don’t have to go into detail. Chief, my other question is that we’ve been working on this thing for two years that I know of. Why at the last minute is this coming up all of a sudden?

CHIEF DENNIS SHERMAN: Because a while back actually we did propose this at this same place, same method; and I don’t know what happened to it. We never heard anything back on that.

COMMISSIONER POCKLINGTON: Okay thank you.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Are there any other questions? Commissioner Menshek.

COMMISSIONER MENSHEK: Just for a quick comment. I
agree with the chair, this is not the issue at hand today. The SSPs were due in two years ago, although it seems like a good plan. And also, I don’t think LAFCO has any purview over this plans; arguing over the money that the county provides us. I suggest that the zoning chiefs deal directly with the Board of Supervisors.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Any other questions for Chief Sherman? Chief, thank you very much. Tom Gardner followed by Darrell Jobes.

CHIEF TOM GARDNER: Good morning, my name is Tom Gardner...12065-213 Calle de Montana in Rancho San Diego. I am here in opposition to Phase I. I sit on the Task Force for Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services committee. For several years, I have been involved in Sacramento and in this county for a long time on fire protection. I am standing here representing CDF firefighters, and our concern is that members who sit on this task force, we had a meeting scheduled this Friday and it was cancelled; then in the following week, Item 9 came out and mailed. There’s a lot of issues on this item that should have been discussed at the task force, mostly labor issues. Speaking for my association and my members I represent, there’s a lot in the draft terms and conditions, there’s a lot of assumptions about MOUs and the right to transfer contracts. Speaking for any employee, they’re not going to transfer contracts until
they know who that agency is going to be. And again, what
that long term funding is going to be. It’s an agency that
should have been considered before this report, was put in
or leave that part out of the report. It has a hole in it
and it’s going to be a major concern. The employees have a
right to know where their funding is going to be. And
before your employees would find out this organization is
CSA 135, ask before you can effectively go out and recruit
employees, you’re going to have to have a funding source in
place. And without that funding source, you’re not going to
be able to attract the quality employees. Again on the
volunteer’s proposal, on Zone 8 proposal and also on the
Fire Chiefs’ proposal, I’ll tell you an experience from the
state level if you bring recruits in and you use them as
three CFs, you become a training ground from the
departments. That’s very good that you get that firefighter
for a year or two and you train them and spend thousands of
dollars on giving him all the classes and skills and
certificates he needs. He then leaves you and goes to work
for the City of San Diego, the County of Orange, the County
of Riverside, the County of San Bernardino, or La Mesa City
or El Cajon City. You do have a concern that you become a
training ground and you get very little return on all your
dollars. You also use volunteers over a thousand hours, and
if you’re using that employee as a regular employee
scheduled for 24 hours so many days a week, you’re going to actually become an employee and he’s going to have the right for benefits. So a lot of these questions are unanswered in this proposal that are in your recommendation in the report, and although I agree with the fact that it needs to go to the Board of Supervisors, the part about the labor issue is unanswered and should have possibly been left out. Last, the concern about the $8.5 million and the county’s funding - and it is contracts that they do have with Cal-Fire and CDF firefighters - this money would take the $8.5 million and use that in this new proposed 135; however, some of that money is funding our people in Valley Center, Deer Springs, it’s funding paid staff in Pine Valley, it’s funding paid staff in the San Diego Rural District. What happens to them? What happens to the funding if you take that money away? Where do those employees go to? Is the county going to come up with another $2 million dollars to continue the contracts in the north county, and in Pine Valley, and in the San Diego Rural, with those employees and that district chooses to stay with the state. And you take the other 8.5 million you have now got another budget funding problem. I just believe that this… all though I agree it does have to move forward I think that the recommendations are a little broad and cover a little bit more then they possible should be. Questions?
CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Thank you. Are there any questions for Mr. Gardner? No. Thank you very much.

Darrell Jobes.

CHIEF DARRELL JOBES: Thank you Mr. Chair, members of the Commission, and staff. I had a chance to work with LAFCO, both from special districts advisory on this project, and the quality of work again I cannot emphasize how dedicated and thorough the process has been. I’ve been with the fire service thirty-two years, and twenty-three of those years we’ve talked about consolidation, regionalization, ways to improve services to the citizens. This is the closest we’ve come. As we developed the SSP, the Substantial Similar Plan, that included all of the stakeholders in this county. It included cities, districts, volunteer agencies, DPLU, LAFCO, CDF; everyone had a voice in that discussion. As you know and it’s been said before, discussions are never unanimous; but we went with what the majority felt was doable. Right now the cities and districts are the ones to respond to the unserved, underserved areas. We know the fire started in the east end of this county, or the northeast end, and they move westward. We need to have some type of a regionalized fire approach not only for those every three or four year fires now, and dozens of fires smaller that occur each year, but more importantly to the EMS and the medical aids, the
traffic accidents that take place. This county is a tourist Mecca. We have people coming and availing themselves of tourist attractions throughout the county in the incorporated municipal cities, but also in the rural counties. That has a significant financial impact. You look at your TOT taxes, the revenues from tourism, there’s a big source of revenue from this county, both cities and the county itself. As we move through this, we ask – Darrell Jobes, 1364 Tavern Road, Alpine CA, and I am President of the San Diego County Fire Districts’ Association, so I’ll back up a second – we ask that you send this resolution/recommendation to the Board of Supervisors for action. The Board of Supervisors has continually over the years said that public safety is their number one concern. Then let’s give them some opportunity to address that with the proposal. We want to keep a 30,000 foot look at this. We don’t want to get into the details here at LAFCO, about how it could be done and so on. Once we identify the funding, then we could determine the Board of Supervisors – as the governing behind the CSA – will have the ability to determine the service levels. We have to remember it needs to be a regional approach. We’re not just talking about one portion of this county. We’re in this all together. If you look at San Diego county, we’re isolated. We have Camp Pendleton to the north, the deserts to the east, Mexico to
the south, and the Pacific Ocean. We are a small island of our own. We talked about assistance. Cal-Fire turns to local government for assistance on major incidents. They don’t have the staffing to handle all of the large scale incidents because there’s multiple. If we look at this last October, how many fires? I believe there was 21 different incidents were taking place in southern California. The resources for those incidents come from local government. We need to better prepare for local level to be able to take care of ourselves on the day-to-day business, but also through those larger scale incidents that occur — now what we thought was thirty-year or a hundred-year cycle — and are becoming more common on four-year cycles. We have an excellent system through mutual and automatic aid in this county; but it is one way. Between the districts and cities, it’s reciprocal; but when we start going past those eastern boundaries, past my district, past the others, it is one way. In closing, I just want to ask that this Commission to forward to the Board of Supervisors, the recommendation of the SSP and it must have sustainable ongoing adequate funding. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Thank you Chief Jobes. Are there any questions for Chief Jobes?

COMMISSIONER JACOB: Just a quick one. Chief Jobes, thanks for coming down and I know you’ve been
involved in this for a long time and some of us have also. Since you’re here today representing the Fire Districts’ Association, those fire districts are they in north county, east county, south county, all over the county?

CHIEF DARRELL JOBES: There are sixteen well organized fire protection districts, and there are numerous volunteers. It’s throughout the county. And our decision and recommendations were not unanimous by far, but they were an overwhelming of a majority of decisions to support the SSP.

COMMISSIONER JACOB: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Thank you Chief Jobes. Commissioner Rexford.

COMMISSIONER REXFORD: So you’re the county? You don’t represent the cities, just the county districts.

CHIEF DARRELL JOBES: Correct. We represent the fire districts in the unincorporated county and those volunteer agencies that wished to participate in our organization.

COMMISSIONER REXFORD: Ok. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: I believe we have one other speaker. Is there any one else, before we take this speaker, that wants to address this issue?

JACK GRIFFITHS: (Addressed the Commission with fire insurance issues).
COMMISSIONER HORN: Unfortunately, of all these folks who live in Zone 7 and Zone 8 are not insurable. Insurance companies will not insure their homes, just because of the threat that’s there. And what we have tried to do is lower, on an insurance scale, by putting in equipment and departments where they have...to lower that down so their premiums go down. But many of the people we’re talking here about here can’t get insurance.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Any comments or questions by the commissioners? Commissioner Horn.

COMMISSIONER HORN: I want to cover a number of issues because I’m probably going to be the odd man out here. I sat on this Commission and I agreed in the beginning to look into this idea and see what it cost. The conclusions at the end, I didn’t think were worth it for Phase I. It doesn’t cover enough of the area. I think the things that the county has done in the last couple of years, to implement Amador contracts, have really supplanted a lot of these. I would point out to those who have criticized a lot of the outlying area, fire departments on the area, our helicopters fly everywhere in the county of San Diego. We don’t delineate whether it’s one city or not a city. Our equipment is available, and if you need it, it will be called out. So, as far as that goes, I think that’s important. The Amador contracts for us in north county and
provide us with EMS; I know because I was in a head-on car collision and the first people to show up were the Cal-Fire guys that just got through signing a contract about two weeks earlier; and their EMS group came with them. One of the reasons that Warner Springs Fire Station was closed, is because we have an Amador Cal-Fire Station right there that’s open twelve months out of the year; and Sunshine Summit Volunteer Department is right down the road. I would say this to all the fire folks, you do a tremendous job. I have been Supervisor for thirteen years, I have probably seen twelve major fire in my district. I know that the Cedar Fire gets a lot of publicity, but at the same time I had the Paradise Fire, which burned as just as many homes for us and we lost lives there. So any time you respond, you’re to be applauded; you are real heroes in my mind. I think over the last few years, I would say the last ten, I have tried to donate either to my departments, whether they happen to be their own independent boards or whether they’re volunteer departments, I have provided equipment about $1 million dollars a year. So from our office, we have basically put about $10 million bucks into this system in the last ten years. As you know, the county has provided a number of Type-2 engines and water tankers to help augment the service. I have a newspaper article written in 1852, out of San Francisco, that warned travelers not to go to
southern California because everything from the central valley south was on fire. And that’s a hundred and some odd years ago, and it’s always going to be that way. When I was a young kid, going to Mission Bay High School, we had the Laguna Fire. It burned all the way to the sand and the ocean. You might remember that. Fire is just a way of life for us. Unfortunately, the reason it comes every three or four years is because we’re stuck with some clearing ordinances from the state and federal government that doesn’t allow us to take some of these watersheds and make them non-burnable. And so in the three or four years when it grows back, we have another Santa Ana and the fire sweeps through. No matter how much equipment you put in front of these fires, you’re not going to stop them; not when they’re moving forty to sixty miles an hour. You think you may channel the fire and get on the sides of it, but until that wind stops you’re not going to put any equipment in front of it; if you do, it’s going to burn. Unfortunately, no matter how much of that we put in there, there’s always going to be danger to structures; and they’re going to sweep into the cities. I noticed in this phase here that the cities had an opportunity, as did the other departments that were in the cities, to opt out. They all opted out except mostly east county fire departments. I realize they have a deficiency in EMS service, but that issue is what’s being addressed
here. I don’t think the overall fire effectiveness of fighting these fires is going to be augmented. In fact, I think the north county is going to be diminished; because I’m afraid I’m going to see the Amador stations closed in a number of areas, which is you’re going to put me one station in Warner Springs and three others are going to go down. So I would prefer to have the augmented fire departments. I don’t believe that my colleagues, and I can’t speak for the board, is going to go along with this. I think what we have provided already, and we do need to spend more money…but if I’m going to spend more money on fire, I would like some more equipment. I would like and air tanker that belong to us, maybe a couple more helicopters that belong to us. In the 2003 fires we had a problem we had a problem with command and control, we had a problem with communications. The county spent $25 million dollars since then to augment the communication system. We didn’t have a problem this time, that I’m aware of. Our Office of Emergency Services have been totally upgraded. Unfortunately, the fires were in such a high-wind situation, smoked stayed on the ground and our satellite imaging didn’t work; but our helicopters had infrared so it could tell us where the fire was going. I think there’s a lot of stuff we need to be more effective, but we’re always going to have fires. If we could solve the problem, we would; but we’re always going to have fires. I
just don’t think this is the solution. I think it’s too expensive, and I think the amount of money needed to really do this right is close to $100 million, maybe more, a year to make that happen. So to spend $25 million a year on a hope, and we don’t really know where the monies are coming from. And that two-year Bill that Mr. Hollingsworth has, that’s not going to get out of the closet; I mean that’s just my opinion. So I’m going to vote against this, and I just want to make that up front. I think what we have works well. I would like more equipment. If I had more helicopters, I would maybe allow some of them to go out of the county on mutual aid; but at the moment they’re restrictive to stay in county cause we don’t have that much. But I want to thank you for your service, and I want to thank especially the volunteer departments and all of the independent departments out there. You did a hell of a job with very little, and we need to augment more of that; but at the same time I don’t think creating a huge bureaucracy is a way to go.

CHIARMAN VANDERLAAN: Thank you. Any other commissioners? Commissioner Rexford.

COMMISSIONER REXFORD: Yes. We’ve been working on this for a long time. A lot of the people in this community are involved with the fires. You and some of the other people are involved. We’re the city appointees to this
committee here. And I have talked to my fire chief...I was just out there trying to follow-up and see where the City of Poway is on this. But this is basically for the county. One thing I know that I am not going to support this time, or if it comes to be investigated later, is that when they said property tax on all San Diego county and cities; the cities pay for their fire service right now, and they have fire services. And it looks like something that is coming up, but what I’m looking at today is to move this - if I’m correct - to the Board of Supervisors to vote on this for the money, and then to try to find the money which we don’t have the money right now. So that’s all we’re doing today, am I correct Mr. Ott?

EXECUTIVE OFFICER OTT: Correct.

COMMISSIONER REXFORD: Okay. We’re not improving any taxes on all the cities and all the counties. That would have to go to a vote of all the people. I would like to thank the firefighters. Poway was really in a fire storm up there, we lost 90 homes and I appreciate all the people being there and what was happening to Poway but unfortunately the winds were clocked at 80 mile an hour. We know we have Santa Anas, the winds are going to blow, and I don’t think you could stop that right in these winds that were blowing. It’s like Bill Horn said, it’s a fact of life. It comes here and you don’t want personnel in the way
of 80-mile an hour winds. We couldn’t get up the high
valley because it was bad, so we all did the best we could,
and the counties and the cities and CAL-Fire and everything;
and I would like to applaud them. This isn’t over because
it’s going to happen again. We live in the desert here, and
it’s very dry. What we’re trying to resolve here today is
to try and find some money. This is the way I look at it,
and I don’t think Hollingsworth’s thing is going to get out
of communities either. We’re trying to find, maybe…well
since we had this big fire…but we’re trying to find a way to
start negotiations to see if the county, and if this can get
through to get money to them. I kind of resent a little bit
that everybody all of a sudden (in audible)...and say, “Oh,
well look what happened, we had these big fires.” We had
them in 2003, we had them then. I don’t want to do a scare
tactic, because for years we’ve always needed more help in
the fire areas in the county particularly. And so this
isn’t a new problem just because of the fires have happened,
this problem has been around since I can remember. So it’s
not a new problem, it’s a way to find funding to fund this;
and I’ll support it to go up to the next level, but I want
to be very, very adamant here that I’m not supporting taxes
for cities and things like that. I mean if there’s problems
with different areas and things, I don’t want to go there.
What I want to do is do my job on LAFCO and go through all
this information that I’ve received. So, we need to find a
way to get the support, and this is going to go to the county...am I correct on that, before we go out to the funding, somebody tell me this all moves into the county and the county votes on it?

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: This will go to the Board of Supervisors. We’re keeping the dialog alive by moving it forward. Issues that have been discussed here, how to fund it, will all come in play as it moves forward. The other issues related to levels of service, like once again, I would just recommend to our Commission focus on the fact that we’re talking about day-to-day operations. Catastrophic events are going to occur. We’ve seen several of those unfortunately in the last few years, but this is a day-to-day operation we’re paying to make our county more whole than it is right now. And the funding pieces, whatever that rolls out to be - Hollingsworth, special tax, sales tax, what have you, money from the sky - will all come forward and be brought to light. And a forum that is more related to dealing with those issues than we are as a commission. So what we have before us is our staff report and recommendation. We’ve heard the dialog from the fire folks that are here, including another proposal or issue across the board. It relates to what’s going to happen with the current money the county is providing. But I think we
need to move this forward so that we can see it get other
dialog by those that have stronger powers.

           COMMISSIONER REXFORD: Okay. Well thank you for
that. So if it fails in the county and the county doesn’t
have the money, then what happens. We don’t move to go to
the state for money. So instead if the county does not
support this.

           CHAIRMAN VANDRLAAN: In any event, it would come
back to us for either results that would happen with the
county or for ratification or condition.

           COMMISSIONER REXFORD: My other question is, and I
think Dianne brought it up and I’m very concerned and I want
to make sure that nothing happens to the outland areas, that
they do not lose manpower and they do not lose anything like
that?

           CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: That’s correct. That’s what
the baseline tenants have requested.

           COMMISSIONER REXFORD: Everything stays the same?

           CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Correct.

           COMMISSIONER REXFORD: The other thing is we might
want to look back in court, about what the gentleman said in
all those counties and all those places out there like
Julian and those that he was looking for some kind of
enhancement. I don’t know if we’d looked at that, but you
know if this is going to come back and forth, I think this
is something you might want to look at. So I believe that’s
my take on it and I will support it going forward, but I
have some concerns about taxing people and things.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Commissioner Menshek.

COMMISSIONER MENSHEK: Thank you very much Mr.
Chair. In my opinion, I think LAFCO’s mission on this issue
is about 99% complete today. We’ve done all the work.
We’ve put an excellent proposal together, and now that last
piece of 1% is a part that needs to go to the Board of
Supervisors. And I urge you to move that today and allow
that decision to be made. At that point then, if it’s made
by the Board of Supervisors one way or another, then it
simply comes back for ratification at that point. Having
said that, I heard a lot of testimony and a lot of my fellow
commissioners made comments, but what we need to remember
also is Prop C. Prop C was overwhelming, never unanimous
just like this commission is never unanimous, but it’s the
majority and that’s the way our government and county and
county works. Prop C and all the Fire Districts’ Association
- in support, Fire Chiefs’ Association - in support, this
Commission - in support. The overwhelming support for Prop
C is something that we need to listen to. Fires are a fact
of life here, but what’s unacceptable to me is the 20
fatalities. These are not once occurring fires, they’re
occurring on a regular basis. And I said this many times,
something changed in the year 2000; the Viejas Fire, 01
Gavlin Fire, 02 Pines Fire, 03 Cedar Fire, 04, and it just
keeps going and going and getting bigger and bigger. We do
need a single source role of administration for our fire
program in the back country. Not just for the big fires; the
chiefs hit it right on the money today, it’s the day-to-day
operations. It’s the medical, it’s the training, it’s the
EMS delivery service out there; but we’re the only large
county in the state that doesn’t have an organized fire
protection entity in the back country, in our unincorporated
areas. In fact we have millions of acres that are in no
jurisdiction what so ever. That needs to be looked at. All
the other models of fire service delivery are using a single
source agency to administer their fire protection
agreements, administer their fire programs. And yet we’re
having large, disastrous, fatal fires. It’s a wake up call
for us, it’s a wake up call for us and we’re just not
getting it. I was looking at a document here by the Board
of Supervisors and it says codifying December 1988, the Fire
Emergency Services of San Diego County prepared by George
Bailey supervisor second district, “the county needs to
identify within its own organizational structure, needs to
take into consideration the public safety services provided
by fire agencies. Subregional consolidations and functional
consolidations have great potential for creating more cost
effective service delivery through fire agencies. Distribution equipment, facilities, and personnel can be enhanced. It starts with augmentation funds and provides the most compelling incentive.” And that’s what we’re trying to do today. The Zone 8 program has some validity to it. They need some incentives. The consolidations that are sitting there right now, there are agencies that want to consolidate outside of Phase I; but there’s no incentive. I’m employed as a battalion chief by a consolidated agency. In 1988, Spring Valley and Mount Helix consolidated; there was an incentive provided by the county and we didn’t need to come up with outside funds. They said we’ll need a little piece of the growth of property tax, and it was extremely successful and it continues to be successful today. At one point we had sixty plus fire agencies in this county; imagine the command and control structure in trying to coordinate that when we have these type of incidents. So, we’re the only county out there that’s doing it oddly, we’re the only one out there in the top five now I believe in devastating fires and fatalities. It’s unacceptable to me as a citizen, unacceptable to me as an elected official, and it’s certainly unacceptable to me as a battalion chief and a career fire professional in this county. And I find it abysmal that we cannot move forward after 20 to 30 years of work, we bring a program together and cannot find
funding. It’s embarrassing to me, and so at this point we need to move this forward to the Board of Supervisors and allow them to make a decision on this. And if the Board of Supervisors has a certain amount that they can put in—fantastic, we appreciate that. Next point being is at some point our citizens also have to have some responsibility and input in this. We as a fire agency, we as a fire profession, ask our citizens in the County of San Diego to be on their own; be self prepared and self sufficient for 72 hours. And it’s a hypocrisy because we as a fire service can’t even sustain on our own for 72 hours; we kept harassing our citizens to do this. One of the speakers said before we’re a geographical island for mutual and automatic aid. We’re the last bit of food chain in 58 counties. In fact we should have double the resources of any other county because of that simple geographic isolation out there, our resources are siphoned off. And the county can’t do it all alone, the cities can’t do it all alone, and the special districts can’t do it all alone. So at some point the county needs to make a decision on this, and at that point whatever they’re willing to put in that’s the baseline amount, then we need to go to the public—next topic, do you or do you not want to pay for fire protection. And that could be property tax, it could be sales tax. I don’t know, it could be in the form of a Prop 172 money, the enhancement that was
done in 93; sore point to all firefighters granted. However, if there was dedicated revenue to fire service that was equitably divided among the voting entity, such as a quarter cents sales tax; half of that go to the cities, one half of that - half going to the consolidation the other half going to the existing fire district - has to be equitably distributed. However, two things need to occur, this needs to move to the Supervisors for finality on this particular phase and we really need the Board of Supervisors involved to do this - call for the election. Let’s let the people vote and decide the local service that they want for our county today. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Commissioner Jacob.

COMMISSIONER JACOB: Thank you Mr. Chairman. I would consider this to be a landmark decision by this commission like none other that we have been faced with before. If we don’t move forward today with this, then the efforts of the last four years - not to speak of the last twenty years - will have been forgotten. And there’s a reason that this has not happened at this time, it hasn’t happened sooner. If it was easy, it would have been done; but we all know how difficult this has been. We are in a cross-road and I think it is important to move forward. Let me just make a couple of comments on some of the things that have transpired. First a big thank you to all of the fire
personnel, all the men and women in the firefighting service and emergency services and law enforcement. What an incredible job once again that you did in your response to this most recent fire. And there’s always the silver lining and who would ever have guessed that four years after the Cedar Fire that we would be faced with another major fire. I think we all considered the Cedar Fire a thirty-year event. Well, here we are once again, and it will happen again. What I think the Fire Storm 2007 has done for us, it has given us another big kick to move forward to do something that we have never done before in this region. And as Andy said that we are the only large county in the State of California that does not have some kind of a countywide fire entity, and that is our goal is to do just that. This is but the first step. The county initiated a program right after the Cedar Fire, and in fact we have invested over $120 million dollars of county money into improving notification, evacuation procedures, the resources, twenty-nine fire engines, fire equipment at one time or another, vegetation management, and there’s a whole list of things. And that was done because we wanted, as a Board of Supervisors, to get out the door with some money as soon as we could to make things better and to improve the service; but it’s not enough, there is more work to be done. And yes there’s been comment, several of you commented on
the Hollingsworth bill which is on hold, and the reason it was on hold is because the consultant did want to see more specifically what our plan for consolidation looked like. We have all known that that is an uphill battle and it’s a long shot, but it’s a fairness issue too because fact is State of California has been using at least $300 million dollars of our property tax money every single year and it’s not fair. What that bill has done though, in my personal conversations with our delegation in Sacramento, is it’s opened a dialog, it’s opened the process and we’ve gotten a lot of interest from our delegation on both sides of the aisle. And they’ve learned a lot as to what our issues are here in this region in terms of fire and emergency medical services. So whether this bill is successful or not, the State has a role, the State has a responsibility to partner with the county and maybe the voters - who knows - in coming up with some kind of a solution, a regionalized solution to solve our fire and emergency medical preparedness. We’re not the best that we could be. And it’s my goal, and I hope it’s our goal, to make us the best prepared we can possibly be in this region. So the dialog began with that legislation, and the dialog has not stopped yet; and I intend to keep that going. And I hope I have some help on that too. We have a lot of support for the LAFCO recommendation here. In fact there has only been one
speaker in opposition; and if there were others who were
opposed to this, this is the opportunity to come before the
board and to speak. We have heard from the Fire Chiefs’
Association that they are supportive of us moving forward.
We have heard form the Fire Districts’ Association. We have
heard a Zone 8 proposal and a recommendation and support
from all of those fire agencies within Zone 8 and three
outside of Zone 8 urging us to move forward. And we also
have the San Diego County Tax Payers’ Association here,
which has also been supportive and Lani Lutar is here and I
think she got her slip in a little late or she probably
would have spoken too. This is a regional issue, and I
think the Cedar Fire and this most recent fire storm did for
all San Diegans – who were incredible by the way – is it did
underscore dramatically, that fire and emergency medical
services is a regional issue. What happens in east county,
and that’s where most of the fires are starting, east and
north county, and they come into the cities; it affects
everybody in the regions, but not to be forgotten, that
about 90%-95% of the calls are emergency medical services.
And when a person drives from the coast out to Julian, out
to Campo, up to San Pasqual Valley, or vice versa, you
expect for emergency medical personnel to be there to
respond and to know that in most of these areas they’re
volunteers out there and you better hope that they’re home
that day you have that accident or there’s not going to be a
response. We need to do better and we can do better. But
it is a regional issue and every single San Diegan in this
region has an issue in this whether it’s fire or emergency
medical. It’s the day-to-day activities of response that’s
important. What’s this really going to do? The bottom line
is ultimate plan – 1 chief instead of 13 chiefs, 1 board
instead of 13 boards, centralize command and control of
resources, better coordination of training, communications,
vegetation management, inspections, all of the functions of
the fire service, the deployment of resources, stations will
be staffed 24/7 able to respond to major fires and daily
emergency calls. It reduces bureaucracy, it does not add,
it creates greater efficiency, greater coordination and
significantly reduces bureaucracy. So I am prepared at this
time to put a motion on the floor to approve the LAFCO
recommendation and to move forward to the Board of
Supervisors a summary of the testimony that has been
provided here today, including the Zone 8 proposal that was
brought before us; and that would be my motion.

COMMISSIONER POCKLINGTON:  Second. And I would
like to make comments Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN:  Yes. There’s a motion to
second. Commissioner Pocklington.

COMMISSIONER POCKLINGTON:  You know I was the
chairman of this Commission four year ago, and the fire
ing thing came up right near the end of my responsibility, and
Andy was elected to be the new chairman. I thought what a
great guy to have this job, because I didn’t want it. It’s
such a dramatic and big job. So we’ve been working on this
thing for three full years and it’s finally coming to a
conclusion; and it’s a money issue, there’s no doubt about
it. So we do need to move it to the Board of Supervisors
and hopefully they’ll be able to find a ways to provide that
money. And I want to thank Mr. Ott and his staff for all
the hard work that they’ve done, and for all of you out
there in the audience who have been working on this. You’ve
done a tremendous job and especially the firefighters. I
want to end up with a couple of stories, because it’s all
dramatic from this last fire. I have a friend who lives in
north county and he was telling me about the fire and how
close it came to his house, in fact it was saved by a fire
crew. I said well what district was that or what city? He
said, “Bud, it was a small city sitting outside of
Sacramento, California that came down here and saved our
house.” And we had so many of them that came from other
parts of the state, even from Arizona I think, and New
Mexico. So I mean it was super to have these people coming
in to help save our property and save lives. The other
thing happened is that we actually got an evacuation order
for our treatment plant down in Sweetwater Authority on the Sweetwater Reservoir; and they were ordered to start moving out, and about 10 o’clock that morning two Navy helicopters came into Sweetwater. They spent the whole day there to put the fire out that was coming down the hill from Mount Miguel, and we didn’t have to evacuate; we didn’t have to pack up and move out of the treatment plant. The other thing is that I’m in the water business; I serve on about four different water boards – San Diego County Water Authority and also the Metropolitan Board District – and we have a very deep concern about droughts. The last eight years we’ve had seven years below average of water; and with the ocean and climate changes, every indication is that we are going to have droughts pave through here much quicker. We’re very concerned about us being able to provide the water that we need. So these fires are not going to go away – they’re not going to go away. There was an interesting article in the paper this week in the City of San Diego Fire Chief and the need for more stations, more fire engines; so this is not just one portion of the county, it’s the whole county that we need to take a look at. And I hope that the Board of Supervisors...I’m glad I’m not in your shoes. You’ve got to find a way to provide funding. And if you don’t we’re going to be back here fighting the same problem again.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Are there any others? Mr.
Horn has a clarification.

COMMISSIONER HORN: Yeah, sure. Commissioner Menshek brought this up, and it’s about the clearing. I would like to point out that I think one of the root causes of our fires is that we have allowed wicks to grow into our cities. We have the MSCP, which allowed the Cedar Fire to go from Ramona into the City of San Diego. Years ago when I was at a Charger game, I headed north as fast as I could because I had a Harmony Grove fire that burned into Carlsbad. Why? Because we had put a wick right down through the brand new homes. We just basically channeled the fire and moved it in Poomacha - the Poomacha Fire, which is Mount Palomar - because we were allowed by the federal government to clear the forest and take the fuel away from the town and away from the observatory. So those volunteer departments and Cal-Fire were able to channel that fire and move it to the north and keep it away from any structure or the observatory. I think the real issues here for us, as much as it is equipment, is we have to get the state and federal governments to sit down with us - Fish and Game and Fish and Wild Life - and allow us to clear, and I mean clear remove fuel and I mean make it naked, I mean we’ve got to clear fuel out of these wicks. San Pasqual was the wick for Rancho Bernardo; my daughter’s home is one of four that stood, and thank God those guys fought that fire, but it was
extremely difficult for them. Not only did they have enough
equipment, but the massive movement in that fire in less
than three hours was unprecedented. So as long as we have
this fuel and we allow it because we want to have green
trees, and we want to have this growth between our homes.
Poway, you lost your homes in Poway. Why...because you had a
wick and allowed the fire to get in there. I really think,
and not picking on anyone, but we have got to sit down and
face reality the federal government...cause most of this
county is owned by the feds, and the next biggest part is
the State of California and then it comes to us and we have
to remove the fuel out of these wick. So when fire moves at
forty miles or sixty miles an hour down a canyon, and when
it gets to a a three mile stretch where we have been allowed
to control burn - which we don’t do any more - then we could
stop that fire long enough or slow it long enough to put it
out or keep it from going into town. So if we’re not
allowed to remove fuel from these areas, we’re going to
continue to have this. As pointed out, we have had this for
145 years of newspaper coverage of southern California, and
we’re going to continue to have it until we get rid of fuel,
period.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Before that, I don’t think
that we get a lot of advocates here in this room for fuel
management. It would be nice to see the county take a lead
in that. Commissioner Rexford.

COMMISSIONER REXFORD: I’d like to follow-up on that. The City of Poway has just in the last two-three weeks did a new fire code of how the house can be built. This month we’re meeting with Fish and Wild Life and we’re going to the state and federal government. Our Mayor Mickey Cafagna, he is running it back to SANDAG for the 18 cities to work at removing the fuel and what how much you can do in that because I do think that we’ve been hampered; but you see what happens, the cities have to take a stand and I believe they’re going to be that stand as we speak and Poway right now is taking the lead and going up and talk to Fish and Wild Life and the representatives. So I think that is a must. I think a lot of the county areas need to be to have events of things if its 100, 200 acres, 300, what ever it is to protect those homes. And the federal government has sided with us, and we did the overlay. And when I looked at the overlay at city council, half of Poway is in the high-high fire area and of course their insurance is going to go up and when they build homes it’s going to go up; but it’s important that we, as a county and all the cities, work together with the state and go right now and say we won’t take this any more. We won’t have our homes burning just because of your habitat planning, cause they lost the animals too. But I also wanted to follow-up with this
gentleman here about the 172...(in audible)...

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Commissioner Hilliard.

COMMISSIONER HILLIARD: Del Mar as you know is the smallest city and we are part of the county and it’s part of our concern as well, and we recognize that. In this last fire, our fire truck was dispatched to Potrero. Our emergency operation center was handling calls from Santee to the east. It’s a county problem, it’s our problem, and we stand with the rest of the county in addressing the problem. There are many pieces to the puzzle. I agree with a little bit with what Bill Horn said that perhaps it there would be more effective ways to combat these fires, but once they get rolling, once the get rolling you can’t stop them. So the key is to try and stop them before they get rolling. Starting with what Supervisor Horn said about the wicks, it’s true. We have Crest Canyon, which is our wick. We attempted to clear it, we cleared that part that was owned by Del Mar. State of California refused to allow us to clear that part that was owned by them, and the City of San Diego said no we want to preserve the habitat on our side. So we still have that problem, we have to jointly work together. What is absolutely clear is we’re on our own for the first 24 to 48 hours. Federal emergency responders were not prepared to respond to an emergency. The state can’t act with bureaucratic problems they have swiftly enough. We
have to be prepared to do our own thing and to do what we can do to stop the fires before they get rolling. Who pays for all that? We’re paying now. We pay to send our fire truck, we pay for smoke damage, we were evacuated...every single one of us has family who had fire whip right down the river valley and destroyed a lot of things in it’s path; creatures, brush, buildings. The issue is can we reduce that bill, and can we do it in a way that stops and seize fires in their tracks. And I thank we have Mr. Ott, and I’m going to move the motion. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Thank you. Commissioner Jacob.

COMMISSIONER JACOB: Just a couple of other great comments. One of the things that Supervisor Horn and I do agree on today is the vegetation management issue. The vegetation management is so important and we learned that because the Board of Supervisors back after the Viejas fire in 2001, initiated action that formed a wild land task force. And that included federal, state, local agencies, as well as the wild life agencies. And they put together a report, and basically the results of that report it stated emphatically that the single most important thing that we can do in this region to better manage another major fire is vegetation management. And at the time they recommended prescribed burns of 27,000 acres a year. Now I checked
recently and we’re doing about 3,000 acres a year; so we’re not meeting the goal that was laid out. And in talking to some of the Cal-Fire officials who are in charge of some of these programs, it takes them up to a year to get through all the bureaucratic red tape, all the environmental impact reports that it takes to do a prescribed burn. Now that has to stop, and that’s where we need some changes in the law or something. Maybe the county and cities can work together along with fire agencies to get waivers of those laws so that we can engage in a very aggressive vegetation management plan. That is one piece of the puzzle. It’s like the mayor said, it’s not the total solution, but it’s a very important piece that we can do and should do better; but we need the cooperation of state and federal officials in order to accomplish that goal, including changing some of those laws to make sure that we can do these prescribed, as they call control burns, quicker. The same with maintenance of fire breaks and those kinds of things. Certainly a valid point Supervisor, and I agree with you and I hope that we can do some things that the county working with the cities where we can engage in a more aggressive plan to do just that.

COMMISSIONER HORN: You might remember the little fire we had in Julian or Laguna, wherever it was, that burned towards Montezuma Valley. I had duty that night and
I remember that the fire commander wanting to cut a fire road across to save Montezuma Valley and the EPA refusing to allow them to do it at 11:30 at night, and it burned all of Montezuma Valley and all the homes and everything else because of some idiot wouldn’t allow the fire commander to be in charge. So when it comes to public safety, I think if these guys are in charge and the fire is active, they should override the environmental issues – all those kinds of issues – except for health and safety; but other than that, I think some of these regulations are just idiotic. And we’re not going to solve it with this, but they need to be addressed because like every one of these guys sitting out here can tell you they’ve run up against that at some point.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Are there any other comments, questions? Well I’m longer in the tooth than a lot of the fire folks here. I go back to the designs for disaster relief that was made after the Malibu fire in the 60’s which burned all the way to the ocean. So here we are kicking this can down the road, not just in our county, but I think our county is designed for disaster and we’ve seen that. So if there are no other comments or questions from our questions from our staff, I think we would call for the question that’s acceptable. Roll call vote please.

COMMISSION SECRETARY MANDAPAT: Commissioner Vanderlaan.
CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Yes.

COMMISSION SECRETARY MANDAPAT: Commissioner Horn.

COMMISSIONER HORN: No.

COMMISSION SECRETARY MANDAPAT: Commissioner Pocklington.

COMMISSIONER POCKLINGTON: Aye.

COMMISSION SECRETARY MANDAPAT: Commissioner Jacob.

COMMISSIONER JACOB: Yes.

COMMISSION SECRETARY MANDAPAT: Commissioner Hilliard.

COMMISSIONER HILLIARD: Yes.

COMMISSION SECRETARY MANDAPAT: Commissioner Rexford.

COMMISSIONER REXFORD: Yes.

COMMISSION SECRETARY MANDAPAT: Commissioner Menshek.

COMMISSIONER MENSHEK: Aye.

COMMISSION SECRETARY MANDAPAT: Commissioner Faulconer.

COMMISSIONER FAULCONER: Yes.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLAAN: Motion carries?

COMMISSION SECRETARY MANDAPAT: Motion carries.

CHAIRMAN VANDERLANN: Okay, is there any other business before us Mr. Ott?
EXECUTIVE OFFICER OTT: None.

CERTIFICATE

I, Michael D. Ott, certify that the foregoing is a transcript of electronic sound recording of the proceedings for Item 9 from the December 3, 2007 Local Agency Formation Commission meeting, which was technically corrected by LAFCO staff.

MICHAEL D. OTT Date