



100 Years of Service

Menlo Park Fire Protection District

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September 6, 2016

I would strongly suggest that the Fiscal Evaluation of Fire Services item coming before the Atherton Town Council on September 7, 2016 at 3 pm, be tabled or postponed based upon the following important factors:

1. **Relationship** – The Town and the District both work for the same constituents or residents. Government works better when we work together and not at cross purposes. I have a deep concern that the divisive way in which this is going will significantly damage our relationship that would not be in the best interests of the residents we serve, or our organizations.
2. **Detachment** - We met with Martha Poyatos from LAFCo today, as she articulated in her e-mail to both of us, what you are proposing is not only “unprecedented” it is an over simplification of a much more detailed process that makes “detachment” extremely difficult for many good reasons that will affect your anticipated property tax return.
3. **Fiscal Information** – I had our consultant with MuniServices re-run the data on the 37 Tax Rate Area’s (TRA’s) for the Town. Simply put, the numbers you have provided in your report to the Council are off by several million dollars. We have determined that the amount you listed is well in excess of what the Fire District actually receives in property tax dollars.
4. **Service Delivery** – Your report understates what potential service capability this area of the Fire District actually receives. The reference to Automatic Aid and a seamless response from other fire agencies is an over simplification of a much more complex set of methodologies used to ensure a high level of critical essential emergency services and coverage. It fails to address daily non-emergency movements and backfills for trainings, inspections, maintenance/repairs and other impacts among other things.
5. **Equity** – The first time I heard this term used in conjunction with this subject was from a reporter the evening before we met for lunch last week to discuss your proposal. Along with “detachment” and Atherton exploring other methods of Fire Service Delivery the Town Council could select, it was both disappointing and disturbing. The strength of the Fire District model is that it focuses on providing superior emergency and fire services delivery for everyone in the service area equally and regardless of jurisdiction. It is extremely efficient and cost effective.

6. **Municipal Service Review** – The Fire Board will be having a Special Meeting on Thursday to review a resolution that would support a municipal services review study, conducted by LAFCo, to evaluate all of the Fire Agencies in the County for potential changes, efficiencies, consolidation and cost savings. The Fire District hopes the Town will be able to support that effort.

7. **Meeting Proposal** – We propose that we have a meeting in which a representative from LAFCo, a Fire Board and Council member, or two, meet with you and I to jointly discuss all of these issues.

In summary:

I recommend that you postpone, or table, the proposed item and schedule a new meeting with the Fire District and LAFCo, as soon as possible, so we can collectively discuss this information.

If you chose to not table or postpone this item, in surveying the availability of the Board President and Vice-President, my staff and myself regarding attendance and based upon the mid-afternoon meeting timeline, both Board members are not available to attend and the Deputy Chief and I are already committed to an important, pre-scheduled, County Fire Chiefs meeting.

Thank you

Harold Schapelhouman, Fire Chief

Cc: Fire Board, clerk, file