

## **ROSS VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT STAFF REPORT**

For the meeting of: May 14, 2014

To: Board of Directors  
From: Mark E. Mills, Fire Chief *MEM*  
Subject: Filling of Vacant Firefighter Positions

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### **RECOMMENDATION:**

For the Board's information.

### **BACKGROUND:**

The Department had two vacant Firefighter/Engineer positions. These vacancies are a result of the retirement of Battalion Chief Brian McCarthy and Captain Jack Barry. As directed by the Board, the Department conducted an entrance level Firefighter examination. An eligibility list was certified by the Executive Officer on February 27, 2014.

### **DISCUSSION:**

The Department's daily staffing by position consists of (1) Fire Chief, (1) Battalion Chief, (4) Captains, (4) Firefighter/Engineers, (1) Inspector and (1) Administrative Assistant. Within the Captain and Firefighter/Engineer rank, the Department's staffing calls for nine Paramedics. There were two vacant Firefighter/Engineer positions.

Ross Valley Fire is unique among all of the Departments in Marin, in that we staff each engine with only two personnel. Every other Department staffs some or all of their engines with three personnel. This means that there is one Captain, one Engineer and one Firefighter on the engine company. When any of these agencies has a vacancy, they hire an entry level Firefighter. The Firefighter is put through a limited training academy prior to assignment on an engine company.

In many departments the Engineer rank is achieved through the promotional process. Because Ross Valley Fire staffs each engine with only two personnel – a Captain and an Engineer – all new hires must have sufficient training to actually drive each engine and function as an Engineer. This training process is very intensive, time consuming and expensive. In most departments the rank of Engineer can only be achieved after completing 3 to 5 years (depending on department) of service as a Firefighter. At that point, the Firefighters are eligible to compete for the promotion to Engineer.

After interviewing the three top candidates, the Chief made conditional offers of employment to the two top candidates, Brian Galli and Scott Poppe. Both candidates underwent a thorough background investigation, psychological and physical evaluation. Both candidates began their training on May 1, 2014.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

In the short term, the cost of the two trainee Firefighters is approximately \$8,300 per month for nine months, totaling roughly \$74,000. Additionally, the full time positions have to be filled with overtime Firefighter / Engineers. In the long term, once the Firefighters have completed their Engineer training, the salary and benefit cost, will be offset by the reduction in overtime cost. The filling of the vacant Firefighter positions and overtime adjustments have been included as part of the proposed 2014/15 budget.