

**ROSS VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT
STAFF REPORT**

For the meeting of: January 14, 2015

To: Board of Directors
From: Mark Mills, Fire Chief *MM*
Subject: Challenge Coins

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file.

BACKGROUND:

Members of the U.S. military have a long-standing tradition of carrying a special coin symbolizing unit identity and esprit de corps. The coins represent their bonds that have been forged in battle. Today, soldiers, sailors, aviators, and Marines, as well as police officers and firefighters carry challenge coins. The coins capture in metal, the essence of their affiliation and their fierce organizational pride.

The tradition of challenge coins can be traced back to soldiers from the Civil War. The warriors left for battle with a coin from home in their pocket and kept it after the conflict as a lasting remembrance of their wartime experiences. The popularity of challenge coins spread during the Vietnam War, inspired by Special Forces that minted coins to express the unique identity and strong bond forged between them. Other units wanted their own coin to build camaraderie and symbolize their pride of membership in an elite group.

The coins now identify the bearer as a member of a particular unit with a well-defined history and mission. The coins are minted bearing the revered symbols and mottos of the organization. A challenge coin is not merely a token; it is a tangible source of pride at every level in the chain of command.

DISCUSSION:

The entire department attended a three-day class taught by Howard Cross, from the National Fire Academy. During the class, the staff developed the core values that, as a group, they felt best described the organization and the image they wished to portray. All of the attributes were listed and signed by the staff and are now memorialized in each station. The three most important values as identified by the group were

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commitment, integrity, and courage. Those three core values have been minted into the department's challenge coin as a constant reminder to be carried at all times.