

**ROSS VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT  
STAFF REPORT**

For the meeting of: May 10, 2017

To: Board of Directors  
From: Dan Mahoney, Acting Fire Chief  
Subject: Proposed Fire Inspector/Fire Marshal Positions

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Board authorizes staff: 1) to pursue a shared services agreement with Corte Madera, Larkspur and Kentfield in the future, to provide fire inspection services and 2) to add a Fire Marshal Position subject to Board approval of the Fire Marshal classification and the shared services agreement.

**BACKGROUND:**

On January 1, 2017 Ross Valley Fire Department entered into contract services with Corte Madera Fire Department for plan checking. These services are working out exceptionally well for both agencies. Chief Pomi (Kentfield Fire District) and Chief Shurtz (Larkspur Fire Department) have expressed interest in expanding these services to their department, which would also include vegetation management and an inspection program.

**DISCUSSION:**

The initial shared services agreement began on January 1, 2017. Plan checking services entail all projects within the Town of Corte Madera that require a permit. These projects range from large commercial remodels, to small residential bathroom or kitchen upgrades. The workflow is divided between the current fire inspectors within the Department. One inspector conducts an in house plan check and identifies fire department requirements for the project. The other inspector conducts all field inspections to ensure these requirements are met.

Our existing two fire inspectors would not be able to adequately and efficiently keep up with the expected workload, if the services were expanded. The Department would require one additional fire inspector to be hired. The fully burdened cost for this position would be approximately \$150,278 (non safety employee). Corte Madera, Larkspur and Kentfield have agreed to pay for half (\$75,139) of the cost of the position. The Department would pay for the other half (\$75,139) from fees collected for inspections. The creation of a Fire Marshal position from one of the existing inspector positions would also be needed to supervise the inspectors, and manage the program. Corte Madera, Larkspur and Kentfield have agreed to pay for half (\$7,500) of the added cost of the position. The Department would pay for the other half (\$7,500) of the position. In essence, the Department would promote an existing inspector to the newly created Fire Marshal position and fill the newly vacant inspector position.

**AGENDA ITEM #** 3  
**Date** 5/10/17

In a four month period the Department has experienced an increase in plan checking revenues of \$20,605, directly related to our services with Corte Madera. Estimated revenue for plan checking services in Corte Madera for fiscal year 2017-2018 is \$82,416. If the Department were to expand services into Larkspur, a total estimated revenue for plan checking services of Larkspur for fiscal year 2017-2018 would be \$36,082. If the Department were to expand services into Kentfield, a total estimated revenue for plan checking services of Kentfield for fiscal year 2017-2018 would be \$46,774. The total estimated revenue from Corte Madera, Larkspur and Kentfield in 2017-2018 would be \$165,272.

A shared services agreement or MOU would be created between Corte Madera, Larkspur, Kentfield and the Ross Valley Fire Department. The agreement for services would be for an initial 2 year period. The agreement would detail the services to be provided as well as costs to the parties. The two year period should provide adequate time to evaluate the structure and service model. Once an agreement is negotiated, staff would return to the Board for approval of the agreement, the Fire Marshal classification, and budget appropriations.

#### **SUMMARY:**

Departments throughout Marin are embracing the idea of different cost sharing avenues to provide services. This opportunity provides the Department with an avenue to increase our revenues and explore the viability of shared services models, with no projected fiscal impact to the Department. This could open discussions for additional cost sharing opportunities with our neighboring departments.

The Department will be required to add/create a Fire Marshal position to manage the increased workload and supervise the inspectors.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

The estimated cost for providing the additional services is approximately \$165,000 which is the cost for creating the new Fire Marshal position. Corte Madera, Larkspur, and Kentfield have agreed to pay for half of the position. The other half of the costs are anticipated to be covered by the collection of the plan fees.

Under this proposal, the Department would collect all inspection fees from Corte Madera, Larkspur and Kentfield. Staff believes the fees collected from Corte Madera alone will cover the Department's share of the position. The fees (estimated \$82,856) collected from Larkspur and Kentfield would be surplus revenue for the department.

The risks to the Department are: 1) if collected fees are insufficient to cover half of the cost, the Department will need to make up the difference and 2) if the parties terminate the services after two years, the Department will have an additional position to fund.