

**Ross Valley Fire Department Board of Directors
STAFF REPORT**

For the meeting of November 10, 2021

To: Ross Valley Fire Board

From: Jason Weber, Fire Chief

Subject: Receive Update Surrounding Ross Station 18 Options – Consider Proposed Options to Amend JPA and Direct Staff on Preferred Option

RECOMMENDATION

Receive update surrounding Ross Station 18 options – Consider proposed options to amend JPA and direct staff on preferred option.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

At your October 13, 2021 Fire Board meeting, the Fire Chief presented an update surrounding the Town of Ross fire station facilities and options related to alternative services if the Fire Station in Ross were not re-built. Your Board directed staff to return after the presentation allowing Board Members time to review the materials and present to each Town Council.

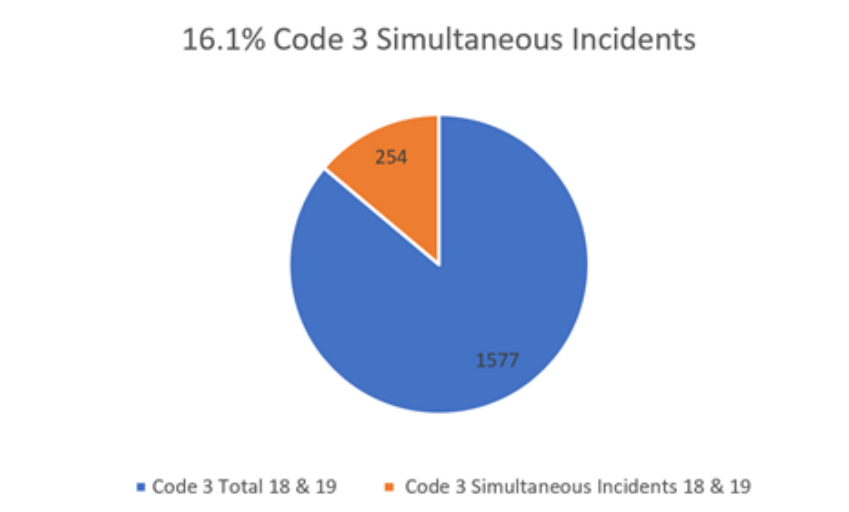
After receiving feedback from each Council and your Fire Board, staff is narrowing the options to focus on policy related items in Option 2, elimination of Engine 18 and shifting personnel West to other stations.

Eliminate Engine 18, shift personnel West to other stations
(One less engine; no reduction in personnel)

Operational Considerations:

- Response times in the Ross Station 18 area will increase by approximately 2 minutes with the engine now coming from Station 19 on San Anselmo Ave. for a response to 90% of calls within 09:31 minutes from the current 07:31 minute response times.
- The current simultaneous incident activity (code three incidents for Station 18 and 19) for the calendar years 2019 and 2020 is 254, or 16.1% of 1,577 incidents. The data shows that we expect E19 to be unavailable to serve Station 18 or Station 19 zones requiring a more distant engine to respond 16.1% of the time or approximately 127 times per year.

Simultaneous Incident Data Engine 18 & 19

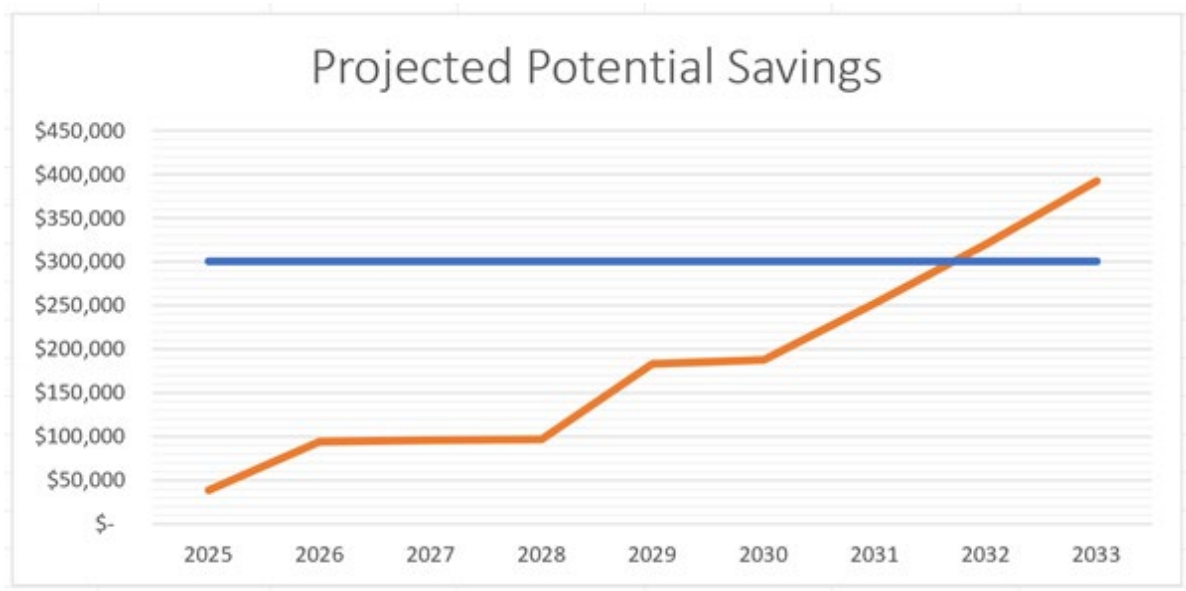


- Moving from four engines to three engines will require a more dynamic deployment, including moving up and covering from allied agencies when multiple incidents occur.
- The speed at which additional firefighters arrive at incidents will improve in all areas except the Town of Ross. In addition, by moving the personnel West, other response zones within the RVFD will see an improvement in the time it takes for personnel to arrive and complete critical tasks on the fireground or medical care.
- This Option proposes moving three of the six Ross positions to Station 19, raising E19 staffing from two personnel to three and a second engine, either E21 or E20, from two to three personnel. Again, this change positively impacts the speed and number of firefighters that would arrive at an incident improving the multi-unit effective response from San Anselmo West.
- Of the 265 EMS incidents in Ross during 2017 and 2018, M18 (Medic 18) was not available 57 times, or 21% of the time. The next arriving ALS unit under a proposed plan would be an engine company with an average increased response time of 2 minutes.

Fiscal Impacts:

- Option 2 has annual operational cost savings of \$300,000 that are not fully recognized until ten years in the future. These savings include:
 - Reduction in future vehicle replacement funding as RVFD will reduce from four frontline engines to three, for approximately \$40,000 in annual savings.
 - The remainder of the projected savings is recognized through the attrition of three (3) Captains and three (3) Engineer positions. In addition, the proposed changes include the transition to six (6) Firefighter Paramedic positions.

Projected Savings – Option 2



- Option 2 has one-time capital provisional cost estimates of \$210,000 for interior remodel at one of the stations where staffing would increase to meet contemporary sleeping and bathroom needs.
- Ross Valley Paramedic Authority Lease agreement, currently \$32,000 annually payable to RVFD for use of Ross Facility.

Labor Impacts:

- As directed by the RVFD Board, we have met with Labor and discussed impacts related to each of the four Options. Labor does not feel it would be fair to their membership to impose a more aggressive schedule than attrition to recognize savings for this option. However, they are open to converting the existing three Captains positions, and three Engineer positions to Firefighter Paramedic positions over time versus “y”-rating or a reduction in force process.
- If this Option is selected, ratification of an agreement with the Labor group would be necessary.

Allied Agency Impacts:

- Kentfield Fire District regularly uses E18 to cover their zone while training or committed on other incidents. RVFD’s ability to continue to cover would have to be considered by Kentfield as the response time would be greater.

JPA Impacts:

- Moving from four to three stations and adjusting Member contribution percentage requires amending the JPA Agreement, which must be approved by each Member agency.

Policy Considerations for your Board:

- Staff is recommending savings (estimated to reach \$300k annually) in staffing and vehicle replacement (1 less engine) be attributed to Ross as savings materialize.
- Staff is recommending one-time capital costs associated with interior remodels at the Fairfax Station 21 be covered by the Town of Fairfax (estimated not to exceed \$210,000)
- Staff is recommending that personnel moving West from Station 18 be located at Stations 19 and 21.
- Staff is recommending the lease agreement with the Ross Valley Paramedic Authority (RVPA) for housing a paramedic ambulance and crew (currently \$32k annually payable to RVFD) be redirected to the Town of Ross after Ross completes the construction of a \$2 mil ambulance quarters with an increase to the lease amount of \$50k annually.
- Staff is recommending implementation date of July 1, 2025 if agreement is reached.
- Staff is recommending Ross would share in Station 19 facility costs under proposed formula of incident activity percentage (currently 27%) for capital repairs and building maintenance.
- Staff is recommending Ross cover reasonable hard costs (RVFD attorney fees) associated with this decision and subsequent amendments to the JPA.
- Staff is recommending Labor items be carried out in the form of a “side letter of agreement” which will be drafted at your direction.
- Staff is recommending the Labor Mgmt. Sub-Committee meet regularly (at least quarterly) to address the remaining engine company staffed with two personnel.

SUMMARY:

The RVFD Board and RVFD JPA Members are being asked to consider and, ideally, reach a consensus on a single option. Based on a straw poll at the RVFD Board meeting in October and subsequently discussions at the Council meetings, the preferred option and focus of this report is Option 2. All options including option 2 come with trade-offs that have impacts on each community served. It is essential to consider as a Fire Board member that services provided to each community are mutually dependent on each other as a collective system vs. a single engine company or individual communities.

All Options will require amendments to the [Ross Valley Fire Department Joint Powers Agreement](#)

(JPA); language in the JPA details the mechanisms to carry out changes. Any proposed changes including service levels or member contributions would need to be ratified.

Staff strongly feels that keeping the JPA intact is of utmost importance moving forward. As discussed, several times, each community is mutually reliant on other Members of the RVFD JPA to provide adequate services to their community. No single agency could provide adequate fire services on its own.

If the inability to achieve consensus leads to a withdrawal from the JPA by any Member agency, the near-term adverse financial and operational consequences would be likely for the withdrawing and remaining Members. Such financial and operational consequences include expenses related to implementing a withdrawal, liability for unpaid costs and debts, and the costs of re-establishing the ability to provide fire protection to each Member's jurisdiction. (See JPA Agreement, Section 13.4)

NEXT STEPS:

Your Board is being asked to narrow to a single option and consider staff recommendations related to that option – Directing staff to make proposed amendments to the JPA and returning to your Board for review and consideration.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This Staff Report outlines potential fiscal impacts associated with the decision surrounding Option 2. The receipt of this Staff Report does not have any associated fiscal impact. We will return to your Board with proposed JPA amendments including specific fiscal impacts.