

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

For the meeting of March 8, 2023

To: Ross Valley Fire Board

From: Jason Weber, Fire Chief

Subject: Receive Presentation from Local Motion Solutions (LMS) on Leadership and Governance Study, and Direct Staff as Appropriate

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends The RVFD Fire Board provide direction to staff to further explore a single option for Leadership of the Ross Valley Fire Department and direct staff to negotiate terms and conditions and return to your Board with additional details for policy consideration.

BACKGROUND

In July 2022, Local Motion Solutions was selected to develop a high-level report outlining future leadership and governance options available to the Ross Valley Fire Department. In January staff and consultants provided an overview of the Local Motion Solutions study on the future Leadership and Governance options for the Ross Valley Fire Department. Staff was asked to provide each Town with a summary of the report and return to this Board meeting to provide a summary of the discussions with each Town and answer any questions raised by your Board or Council members.

In August 2018, the RVFD entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Marin County Fire Department (MCFD) to provide administrative and executive services. However, the MOU between RVFD and MCFD terminates on June 30, 2023. The Ross Valley Fire Department has used the services provided by MCFD as outlined in the MOU for “Fire Chief” and other command/leadership since August of 2018 (Attachment 2). However, the MOU won’t be renewed. Instead, the department is using the opportunity to review options for a path forward for governance and leadership, ensuring the long-term sustainability of Fire and Emergency Services.

Shared and consolidated services have a long history in the Ross Valley. The Ross Valley Fire Department (RVFD) is a consolidated department of Ross, San Anselmo, Sleepy Hollow, and Fairfax. The Department’s history can be traced to the early 1900s, starting with the formation of small volunteer fire departments in the newly formed towns of Ross, San Anselmo, and Fairfax. Built near the wildfire-prone slopes of Mount Tamalpais, these communities were and continue to be acutely aware of the risk of fire.

In 1982, the Fairfax Fire Department and the San Anselmo Fire Department joined forces and became the Ross Valley Fire Services. At the time, Sleepy Hollow was receiving fire protection

from the Town of San Anselmo through a service contract. Sleepy Hollow chose not to become a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) member while maintaining a non-voting seat on the Board. In 2010, the JPA expanded to make Sleepy Hollow a full JPA member, ending its contract for service with the Town of San Anselmo.

In 2012, Ross Valley Fire Department's Board of Directors voted to consolidate fire services with the Town of Ross, incorporating the Town of Ross Fire Station 18 into the Ross Valley Fire Department. Therefore, the current aggregate population of the Department's service area is estimated to be 25,572, served from 4 fire stations with nine (9) suppression personnel on duty daily.

The department is seeking options for the succession of the MOU, which could include multiple scenarios that require research and, ultimately, policy options to be presented to the RVFD Fire Board.

The RVFD released a request for proposal after the May Fire Board meeting, soliciting a contractor to complete a leadership and governance study. RVFD received three proposals from well-qualified vendors to complete the study. The RVFD Management Team including a member of the Sleepy Hollow Fire District reviewed the three proposals. The Fire Board selected Local Motion Solutions (LMS) to complete the "Governance and Leadership" study.

The attached final draft report from LMS provides a high-level overview of options related to both leadership and governance. This report is not intended to provide details of each option but a list of options with high level pros and cons of both leadership (Fire Chief and Executive Staff) as well as Governance (JPA, District, etc.) options.

DISCUSSION:

The Ross Valley Fire Board received a presentation including results of the governance and leadership study at their meeting on January 11, 2023, staff was directed to bring the presentation to each Council ensuring opportunity for public input/engagement and answer questions each Council may have. On February 9, 2023 staff presented to the Ross Town Council and on February 15, 2023 Fairfax Council held a special meeting to hear the information. The Ross Town Council had a majority of council members interested in learning more about the details of a shared services agreement with Central Marin Fire. Fairfax Town Council unanimously supported exploring the shared services option and returning to the Fire Board with details, after engagement with Central Marin Fire and San Anselmo Council also unanimously voted to pursue discussions with Central Marin on a shared services option.

The report is broken into two principal areas for consideration (1) Leadership options (Fire Chief and executive leadership of the Department), second (2) Future Governance of the Department (How is the Department is governed – Joint Powers Authority, Dependent District, Independent District, etc.). **At this time staff is asking the Fire Board to consider a leadership option with the goal that future governance, which can take years to develop, should be considered as part of this decision, but not acted upon now.**

The report outlines four (4) options for leadership; 1. Contract for Service, 2. Joint Powers Agreement (shared services), 3. Joint Powers Authority and 4. Stand-alone fire agency (Fire Chief). LMS conducted extensive interviews with policy makers, adjacent agencies, labor representatives and Town executive staff. Some leadership options have been narrowed by allied agencies unable to accommodate expanding or sharing services. **At this time based on available options, staff is asking the Fire Board to narrow discussions and options to a stand-alone fire agency (Fire Chief & Executive Staff) or Joint Powers Agreement (shared services). Central Marin Fire is the only allied agency that expressed an interest in furthering discussions of the shared services option.**

Shared Services Agreement:

At this time, only one agency has expressed an interest in a shared services agreement. This interest needs further exploration and will require staff from both agencies to work on a draft agreement amendable to both parties. It would be pre-mature to provide anything more than high level, conceivable options with this shared services model. If the Fire Board directs staff to move forward with this option, staff will work with Central Marin Fire to explore the option further, develop detailed information and determine potential for a future long-term relationship.

As highlighted in the chart below the size and configuration of the two departments are very close. These similarities provide an opportunity that may not exist if the two were very different.

Demographics of Central Marin Fire and Ross Valley Fire Department

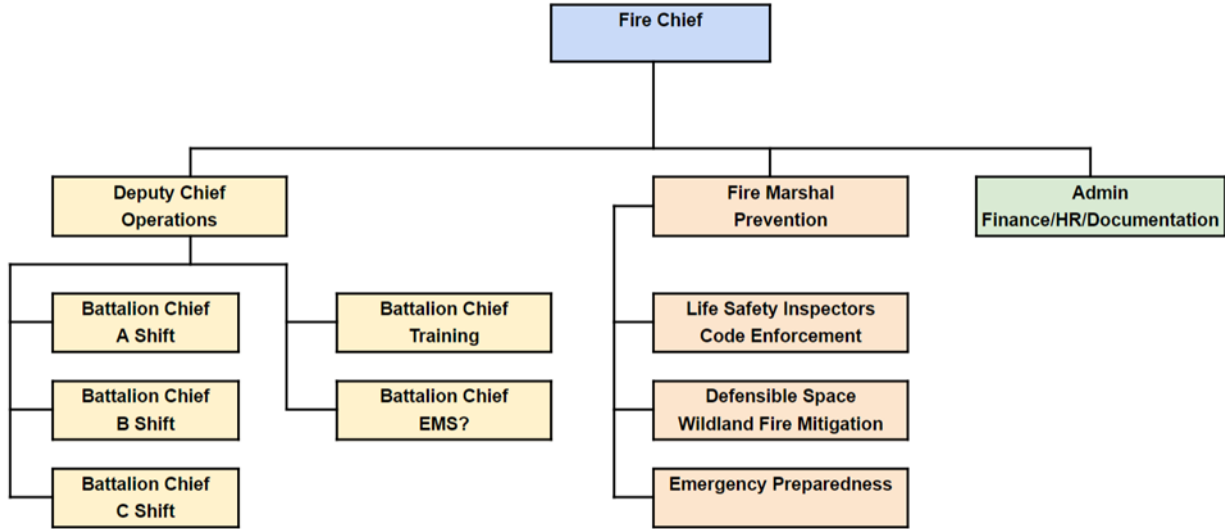
	Population	Budget	Personnel	Stations	Engines	Ambulance	Incidents
RVFD	25,572	\$12 mil	38	4	4	0	2831
CMFD	23,079	\$10.6 mil	42	4	3	1	3646

Stand-alone Agency with Fire Chief and Executive Staff:

Prior to the agreement with the Marin County Fire Department, Ross Valley Fire Department historically had a Fire Chief that served as the Executive of the Fire Department with three Battalion Chiefs (one on each of the three shifts) to serve as the on-duty shift commander and carry additional administrative duties that are generally categorized as Operations, Administrative and training. This structure is common in smaller agencies where leadership manages several programs within the organization. Larger agencies break down these tasks and typically have shift Battalion Chiefs that manage the daily operations and response to incidents and Battalion Chiefs working an administrative schedule, manage programs such as EMS, Fire Prevention and Training, independent of other duties. Typically, this group of mid-managers is crossed trained and can fill-in accordingly as need dictates. Demands on the fire service have increased over the last several decades to include increased fire prevention work, like vegetation management and pre-fire planning, training requirements to stay compliant with federal and state mandates and recommendations including National Fire Protection and CALOSHA. Administrative duties have also expanded including more complicated payroll, personnel actions including Firefighter Procedural Bill of Rights, employee evaluations, mentoring and succession planning.

These additional duties placed upon Executive and mid-level management are principal drivers in

LMS recommending that the existing contract should not be replaced with a single Fire Chief but should include a Deputy Fire Chief and Fire Marshal. It is important to note, from an industry perspective there is no defined organizational structure or statute that requires a certain staffing model or level. This recommendation is based on comparison of like organizations and workload measures including interviews with existing staff.



Examples of small to mid-size Fire Departments in the Bay Area

Agency	Type	Population (≈ 500)	Area (Sq Miles)	Budget (Millions)	Stations	Personnel	Safety Personnel	Chief Officers	FP Rank	FP Safety
Rancho Adobe	District	28,000	89	7.2	3	29	28	4	B/C-FM*	Yes
Sonoma Valley	District	48,000	78	16.6	4	62	59	6	B/C-FM	Yes
Sonoma County Fire	District	75,000	195	34.3	9	107	98	9	BC-FM	Yes
Goldridge Fire/North Bay	District	40,000	240	9.0	3	32	30	6	Div/C-FM	yes
Petaluma	City	59,800	14.5	20.2	3	67	59	6	FM	Yes
El Cerrito	City/JPA	31,000	4.6	13.3	3	37	35	5	B/C-FM	Yes
Dixon	District	25,000	320	6.4	1	22	20	5	A/C-FM	Yes
Davis	City	68,700	133	15.3	3	45	44	5	Div/C-FM	Yes
Piedmont	City	11,000	1.7	8.0	1	24	23	1	Capt-FM*	Yes
Central County (San Mateo)	JPA	66,000	14.9	32.7	7	88	74	8	FM	Yes
Menlo park	District	90,000	30.1	75.1	7	151	123	12	Div/C-FM	Yes
Woodland	City	61,000	15.3	13.8	3	50	47	5	FM	Yes

The above organizational chart helps visualize how a typical small to mid-size organization is structured ensuring adequate span of control and delegation of work. The lower chart provides examples of small to mid-size Fire Departments in the Bay area including population and area served, as well as budget and number of personnel including chief officers.

NEXT STEPS

Staff recommends your Fire Board provide direction to staff to further develop one of two leadership options developing detail including costs, organizational structure and any employee impacts that will ultimately be presented to the Fire Board for policy consideration.

OPTIONS

Staff recommends that the Council provide San Anselmo Fire Board members direction related to a preferred leadership option to explore further and develop detail necessary to ultimately return with a policy option for Fire Board consideration.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The receipt of this staff report and Local Motion Solutions (LMS) presentation has no direct fiscal impact. LMS remains under contract for work associated with the leadership and governance study.

Encl.: LMS Presentation – **Attachment #1**

Future Governance and Leadership Draft Report from LMS – **Attachment #2**