

**ROSS VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT  
STAFF REPORT**

For the meeting on January 12, 2024

To: Board of Directors

From: Dan Mahoney, Interim Fire Chief and Dave Donery, Executive Officer

Subject: Receive Update on Shared Services Discussions with Central Marin Fire Department and Direct Staff as Appropriate.

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

Receive update on Shared Services discussions with Central Marin Fire Department and direct staff as appropriate.

**BACKGROUND:**

In August 2018, the Ross Valley Fire Department (RVFD) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Marin County Fire Department (MCFD) to provide administrative and executive services. At the April 2022 Ross Valley Fire Department Board Of Directors (Board) meeting, MCFD notified the Board there was not an interest in renewing the agreement after the set expiration date of June 30, 2023.

At the May 2022 Board meeting, approval was granted to provide a request for proposal to explore policy options in relation to the Department's leadership and governance after the MCFD MOU expired.

In July 2022, Local Motion Solutions (LMS) was selected to develop a high-level report outlining future "Leadership and Governance" options available to the RVFD.

At the January 2023 Board meeting, staff presented the results of the LMS "Leadership and Governance Study". Staff was directed to bring the presentation to each Town Council (Council) ensuring opportunity for public input/engagement, and answer questions each Council may have.

Staff presented the "Leadership and Governance Study" (Attachment 1) to the Ross Town Council on February 9, 2023, to the Fairfax Town Council on February 15, 2023 by means of a Special Meeting and to the San Anselmo Town Council on January 24, 2023. 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. The Fairfax and San Anselmo Town Councils unanimously supported exploring the shared services option and returning to the Board

with details.

At the March 2023 Board meeting, staff presented a recommendation to the Board, based on the “Leadership and Governance Study”, asking for direction to further explore a single option for leadership of the Ross Valley Fire Department (Attachment 2) . The two options presented were as follows:

1. “Pursue the development of a stand-alone fire agency (Fire Chief & Executive Staff)” or;
2. “Pursue a Joint Powers Agreement (shared services)” with Central Marin Fire Department (CMFD). *\*CMFD was the only allied agency that expressed an interest in furthering discussions of the shared services option.*

The Board directed staff to explore terms and conditions in relation to a “Joint Powers Agreement (shared services)” with CMFD and return to the Board with policy options.

### **SHARED SERVICES UPDATE:**

After the March 2023 Board meeting, staff began engaging in discussions with city managers and command staff (Chief Officers) from both agencies (RVFD/CMFD) relating to shared services. These discussions included sharing of “Senior Leadership” (Fire Chief, Deputy Chief, Fire Marshall and Battalion Chiefs). Discussions were productive. A conceptual organization chart was created with existing personnel from both agencies to support a shared services model for “Senior Leadership”.

Both agencies envisioned that shared services would lead to a Joint Powers Authority (Merger) in the future. It was agreed that an in depth study of what a merger could entail financially for each agency would be beneficial and would support the initial steps of a shared services with “Senior Leadership”.

Shared Services discussions paused in June 2023 as RVFD staff focused on the RVFD Board-level issues from June 2023 - October 2023. On December 1, 2023 managers from each of the CMPD and RVFD jurisdictions reconvened to resurrect the discussion regarding opportunities to share services. The outcome of this discussion was that there is a strong interest in exploring options of combining functions within the current Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority (MWPA) Central Area Program, and shared services options with the fire prevention functions in the near future. Central Marin managers expressed that although there remains an interest in discussions regarding sharing services at the “Senior Leadership” level (as discussed up to June 2023) in the near future, they prefer that the fire prevention work should come first.

## **DEPARTMENT'S CURRENT SITUATION:**

At the June 2023 Board meeting, the Board approved funding starting July 1, 2023 up to December 31, 2023 for a "Senior Leadership" command structure to include an Interim Fire Chief and Interim Deputy Chief with the expectation that a shared services agreement would be agreed upon with CMFD by January 1, 2024.

In October 2023, staff recognized that shared services discussions were moving slower than expected and that the current RVFD command structure, which has been working very well for the department and community, would need to be extended through the end of the current fiscal year. A special board meeting was held on November 27, 2023 where the Board approved an extension of the Departments command structure through June 30, 2024, while staff continued discussions with CMFD.

The Department's current "Senior Leadership" command structure includes temporarily placing an incumbent Battalion Chief into the Interim Fire Chief role, another incumbent Battalion Chief into an Interim Deputy Chief role, and two incumbent Captains into Acting Battalion Chief roles, leaving four of our five "Senior Leadership" positions temporarily filled. In addition, two incumbent Engineers were placed into Acting Fire Captain roles.

Staff feels the current "Senior Leadership" organizational structure is essential for the Departments future success, however the way these positions are currently staffed is not sustainable past June 30, 2024 for the following reason:

- Moving Battalion Chiefs, Captains and Engineers into Interim and Acting positions causes a trickle down effect at all levels, ultimately leaving the Department unable to hire for vacancies created at lower ranks until each one of these positions is staffed with a permanent appointment. This has recently created staffing challenges such as forcing employees to work multiple days outside of their regular work schedule to maintain the Departments minimum staffing.

## **NEXT STEPS:**

With the current status of a shared service option for "Senior Leadership" with CMFD not a viable option in the near future, and the current command structure not sustainable past June 30, 2024, Staff is recommending the Board consider the remaining option presented at the March 2023 Board meeting. Based on the LMS "Leadership and Governance Study" this is the only option the department currently has:

- Pursue the development of a stand-alone fire agency (Fire Chief & Executive Staff)

Staff feels this option will continue to provide sustainability of Fire and Emergency Services for our community, while providing enough flexibility to revisit a shared services discussion relating to "Senior Leadership" with CMFD.

If directed, staff is prepared to bring back details and fiscal impacts on this option for the Board to further discuss at the February 14, 2024 Board meeting.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

This report has no fiscal impact.

**Encl.:** Local Motion Solutions Leadership and Governance Study – **Attachment #1**  
Staff Report Governance and Leadership Study- March 2023 – **Attachment #2**