

**ROSS VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT  
STAFF REPORT**

For the meeting of February 14, 2024

To: Board of Directors

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

Subject: Receive Report On Ross Valley Fire Department Stand Alone Fire Chief Model and Associated Costs and Provide Direction to Staff.

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**RECOMMENDATION**

Receive Report On Ross Valley Fire Department Stand Alone Fire Chief Model and Associated Costs and Provide Direction to Staff.

**BACKGROUND**

At the January 12, 2024 Special Meeting of the Ross Valley Fire Department (RVFD) Board Of Directors (Board), staff provided an update on the current situation relating to the shared services discussions with Central Marin Fire Department (CMFD).

Staff highlighted that 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 CMFD and RVFD jurisdictions reconvened to resurrect the discussion regarding opportunities to share services. The outcome of this discussion concluded 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” (management staff consisting of Fire Chief and Deputy Chief) level in the near future, they prefer that the fire prevention opportunities be explored first.

Staff explained the current status of a shared service option for “Senior Leadership” with CMFD was not viable in the immediate future, and the current RVFD command structure was not sustainable past June 30, 2024. Staff recommended the Board consider the remaining option that Local Motion Solutions (LMS) identified in their “Leadership and Governance Study”. That option was as follows:

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

During the meeting on January 12, 2024, Staff was directed to bring back details and fiscal impacts on this option for the Board to further discuss at the February 14, 2024 Board meeting.

## **DISCUSSION**

As mentioned above, the LMS “Leadership and Governance Study” has identified the Departments only remaining option at this time is a “stand-alone fire agency”. The study identifies, modern day fire service needs that include positions to consider for an organization the size of RVFD and quotes, “To create a management staff of appropriate size, Ross Valley would likely have to hire/promote not only a Fire Chief but likely a Deputy Chief and possibly a Fire Marshal “ (LMS p 22).

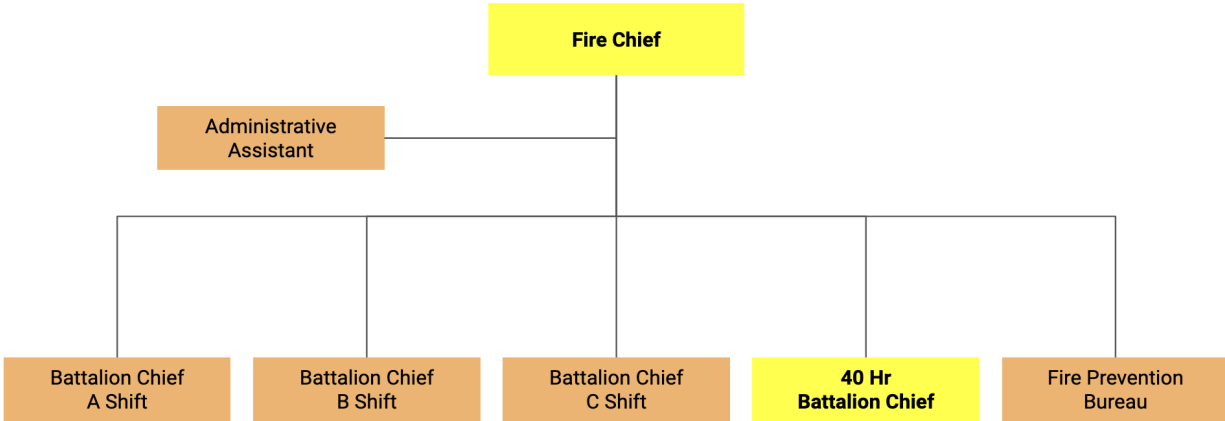
It is recommended that the following “RVFD Stand Alone Fire Chief Command Structure Proposal” be established and **re-evaluated in 12 months** to ensure the proposed positions are sufficient to support the organization. The proposed command structure also takes into consideration, and allows for flexibility relating to shared services discussions in the future.

## **RVFD STAND ALONE FIRE CHIEF COMMAND STRUCTURE PROPOSAL**

The Department's current “Senior Leadership” includes temporarily placing an incumbent Battalion Chief into the Interim Fire Chief role, and an incumbent Battalion Chief into an Interim Deputy Chief role. This model has proven to be successful over the last year, as the Interim Deputy Chief role, one RVFD has never had before, provided much needed organizational support working alongside the Interim Fire Chief. Staff feels a similar command structure model is essential for the Department's future success.

Staff is asking the Board to consider the following command structure to support a “Stand Alone Fire Agency”:

- Filling the Fire Chief’s vacancy
- Creating a new full time Battalion Chief position, assigned to a 40 hour work schedule. This new Battalion Chief position will replace the temporarily created Interim Deputy Chief position.



The proposed new Battalion Chief (40hr) position will replace the position of the Departments current temporary Interim Deputy Chief.

Based on analysis of the Interim Deputy Chief job duties within the last 6 months, Staff feels at this time, these duties fall under the position of a Battalion Chief rather than a Deputy Chief. The position has proven to provide the Department with much needed support at the Chief Officer level allowing for Staff to take action on items such as: three person engine staffing and implementation, fire station remodels at Stations 20 and 21 (to include temporary housing of on duty personnel), and preparing for the closure of Fire Station 18. These items are still ongoing and will need continued attention to ensure fiscal accountability and timely completion. The position will also provide organization depth at the Chief Officer “administrative level” as the department has not increased its administrative support at any level since the early 1990’s (30 years). Furthermore, this position will provide an enhanced service to our community by providing emergency response while on duty, to incidents when needed, at times alleviating the need to rely on outside agencies from further away.

In addition, all fire departments in Marin of similar size, have at least one Chief Officer position similar to Staff’s recommendation.

**ASSOCIATED SALARY COSTS**

Associated costs below for both the Fire Chief and new Battalion Chief (40hrs) include salary and benefits (fully burden costs).

**Fire Chief** - The current Interim Fire Chiefs cost is \$330,347 (fully burden). An exact cost amount will be determined once a contract is agreed upon for the new Fire Chief. Filling this position is not anticipated to impact member agencies' costs in Fiscal Year 2024-2025, as money was already allocated in the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 budget to account for the Department’s transitional phase due to the MCFD contract ending.

**Battalion Chief (40hrs)** - Costs for this position will be approximately \$291,693 (fully burden), understanding that an exact amount will be determined once negotiations are completed with the

Chief Officers Association bargaining group, as the position of a Battalion Chief (40hrs) is not covered under the current Chief Officer MOU. This new position is expected to impact member agency costs in Fiscal Year 2024-2025 as estimated below.

ESTIMATED FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025 COST INCREASE				
FY	Fairfax	Ross	San Anselmo	Sleepy Hollow FPD
Percent Share	23.30%	23.37%	40.53%	12.80%
FY24-25	\$67,964	\$68,168	\$118,223	\$37,336

**ASSOCIATED EMERGENCY RESPONSE VEHICLE COSTS**

**Fire Chief** - Although the Fire Chief is not part of the normal response force, it is common practice to have this position staffed in an emergency response vehicle as they provide support to expanding incidents (large structure fire, earthquake, wildland fire, evacuations, ect). The estimated cost of a new Fire Chief’s emergency response vehicle is approximately \$125,000.

**Battalion Chief (40hrs)** - The new Battalion Chief position will have the same operational qualifications as the current three Battalion Chiefs (shift), providing much needed depth to the organization not just administratively but during emergency incidents and staffing challenges. The estimated cost of a new Battalion Chiefs emergency response vehicle is approximately \$140,00.

Staff recommends the Board consider funding the combined vehicle cost of approximately \$265,000 by means of “Undesignated Reserves” (Reserves). After the purchase of these two vehicles, the reserve account balance will be approximately \$2,481,451. This amount is 17.2% of the current budget still within the Department’s Reserve Fund Policy of 10%.

**NEXT STEPS**

If the Board supports the Staff recommendation, refined costs and details of both the proposed positions of Fire Chief and Battalion Chief (40hrs) will be brought back to a future meeting for your consideration of approval. The first step in this process will be a discussion in closed session at the end of this meeting agenda.

## **FISCAL IMPACTS**

There are no direct associated fiscal impacts to this report. Depending on Board direction, it is anticipated that there will be fiscal impacts in the future, however a Staff report will be provided to the Board at that time.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Local Motion Solutions Leadership and Governance Study - **Attachment #1**