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The Grand Jury also reviewed

- Annual budgets of each fire protection district, city fire departments and the county fire departments
- Policies and procedures of nine fire protection districts, two county fire stations and the Pajaro Dunes Fire Department

Findings

1. The Grand Jury found that the facilities and equipment at the fire stations were well maintained.
2. Most of the fire departments train together and respond to emergencies using mutual aid that employs the “closest to the incident” policy, which means the nearest firefighting resource will respond regardless of district boundaries. See Map.
3. Consistent with most fire departments around the nation, only about 10% of the emergency calls are fire related. The remaining 90% of the emergency calls are
 - Medical
 - Vehicle accidents with trapped or injured persons
 - Other rescue services
 - Hazardous material spills
 - Vehicle or residence lock outs involving infants or elderly persons.
4. Each fire service within the County of Santa Cruz has programs that teach children fire prevention and safety. The CDFFP has its “Smokey the Bear” program, which it shares with other departments. Some departments use “Sparky” the dog in their programs. All of these programs are designed to teach children the following:
 - Not to play with fire
 - How to report a fire if they see one in their neighborhood
 - How to escape their home should it catch on fire
 - How to “stop, drop and roll” should their or someone else’s clothes catch on fire
 - The importance of smoke detectors, and maintaining them
 - How to reduce fire hazards in their homes
5. The fire protection services also have available two “burn trailers”. These are designed to simulate fires in the home and children can actually practice preventing fires as well as escaping from a burning home. The Scotts Valley Fire Protection District owns one of these burn trailers and the Zayante Fire Protection District owns the other. One of these simulation trailers is usually on display at the Santa Cruz County Fair each year.
6. All but two of the fire protection services in the county use volunteer firefighters. Some fire protection departments are almost exclusively supported by volunteer firefighters, with the exception of the Chief and one or two other staff.
7. According to newly enacted Regulations of the California Code a minimum of four firefighters, “two-in, two-out”, are required at the scene of a structure fire before firefighters may enter a burning structure. This requirement does not apply where there is an imminent threat to persons inside the structure. Some of the fire protection departments in the County do not have the firefighter staff to satisfy the “two-in, two-out” requirement.

8. The following were found to be fire service obstacles common to all fire protection services, and therefore serve as the basis for many of the public education and public awareness campaigns waged by them. The education and awareness campaigns stress
 - Maintaining a safe zone of 30 feet to 100 feet around homes free from flammable vegetation
 - Private roads be
 - cleared of brush
 - clear of low hanging branches
 - wide enough to accommodate fire engines
 - Post bridges with the maximum allowable weight limit
 - Post addresses to ensure visibility from the street
 - Multiple homes sharing a common private road, where the addresses are clustered at the entrance, should post each address again at the entrance to each property
 - Roofs and rain gutters should be cleared of flammable debris
 - Spark arrestors should be installed on all chimneys
 - Water sources such as pools and water storage tanks must be close enough to the house to be useful
 - Lack of adequate turn-around space for a fire engine
9. Application of Compressed Air Foam uses minimal water, resulting in hoses being lighter and more easily managed, and reducing the amounts of water required to be trucked to remote areas. The use of foam on a structure fire reduces the amount of water damage to the structure and contents.
10. The Santa Cruz County Fire Chiefs Association is an active association that promotes cooperation among the various firefighting services. In addition to the fire chiefs, the membership includes associate members from the cooperating fire service agencies such as ambulance service providers, helicopter transport providers, the County's Emergency Medical Service Agency (EMS) and Cabrillo College. The Santa Cruz County Fire Chiefs Association
 - Conducts meetings at regular intervals to discuss matters pertinent to county-wide fire service issues
 - Promotes uniformity of the fire service throughout the county
 - Provides a medium of exchange of information and ideas among fire service personnel
 - Develops and coordinates solutions to fire service problems that are common throughout the county
 - Promotes the general welfare of the public and the fire service
11. The Fire Chiefs Association has an operations section that performs countywide training, which
 - Promotes uniformity of training and operations
 - Maintains, manages and improves mutual aid and automatic aid programs between agencies
 - Develops mutual training and drills
 - Develops solutions to common operational problems

12. In accordance with a revenue sharing policy adopted in 1978 by the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors, the unincorporated area fire protection services receive a distribution of Proposition 172 funds for projects or items of benefit which have been recommended by the Santa Cruz County Fire Chiefs Association. This annual distribution is equivalent to twelve percent of the growth in Proposition 172 revenue. For fiscal year 2001-02, the Fire Chiefs Association plans to use these funds as follows:
 - 70% for training and training facility needs
 - 15% for communication system upgrades
 - 10% for fire prevention activities
 - 5% for development of special teams (hazardous materials, confined space rescue, etc.)
13. Some fire protection districts with limited resources have devised creative ways to increase their ability to provide services and to augment their annual revenues. For example, one fire protection district contracted with an ambulance service to house its ambulance and the paramedic staff, in exchange for rental income, cross training, night security and extra office assistance. Others hold pancake breakfasts and other community based fundraisers.
14. Volunteer firefighting programs provide introductory training and other opportunities to people who want to make firefighting their career or assist their community. When a fire department has an opening for a paid firefighter, it is usually filled from the ranks of the volunteer firefighters.

Conclusions

The budgets in some fire protection districts are too small to provide for a paid firefighter staff. Without volunteer firefighters in these areas, there would be inadequate fire protection.

Volunteer firefighters as well as paid firefighters should be acknowledged for their valuable service to the community.

To comply with the new law requirements of “two-in, two-out” in fighting structure fires, firefighters must wait until additional firefighters arrive at the scene before entering a structure. This increases the possibility of losing a structure or human life if a person is unable to make their presence known to the firefighters.

Recommendations

1. The Board of Supervisors should fund a countywide firefighting training facility that provides fire departments with “live structure fire” drills and standardize procedures.
2. Each fire protection service should explore the feasibility of Compressed Air Foam Systems. Under certain circumstances, this system could be a valuable tool in fighting some fires.

Response Required

Entity	Recommendations	Respond Within
Board of Supervisors	1, 2	90 Days

Review of Boulder Creek Recreation and Park District

Background

The Boulder Creek Recreation and Park District (BCR&PD) is a small, limited-purpose district created by citizens prior to 1958. The 2000-01 budget lists \$162,984.00 in total revenues and \$175,729.10 in total expenditures. The district currently employs a full-time General Manager, a part-time maintenance person, and three recreation/teen leaders who work a combined total of less than 20 hours per week.

The Recreation and Park District serves residents of 5,720 homes in and around the mountain town of Boulder Creek. It is governed by five elected directors. The current board of directors is comprised of three incumbents and one new member voted in at the November 2000 election. One vacancy exists as a result of the death of a newly elected director. A new member was to have been appointed at the May 2, 2001 meeting.

The 1997-98 and 1999-00 Grand Juries received complaints concerning the Boulder Creek Recreation and Park District.

Scope

Between September 2000 and May 2001, members of the Grand Jury attended six regular meetings and one special meeting of the BCR&PD Board of Directors. The fieldwork for this report was completed on June 1, 2001.

The Grand Jury reviewed the following:

- BCR&PD agendas and minutes of the board of director meetings, February 2, 2000 to February 7, 2001
- BCR&PD Policy and Procedures Manual
- BCR&PD job descriptions
- Letter of intent to resign from an incumbent director, November 3, 2000
- Letter of response regarding letter of intent to resign from BCR&PD legal counsel, December 15, 2000
- 1997-98 Santa Cruz County Civil Grand Jury Final Report
- 1999-00 Santa Cruz County Civil Grand Jury Final Report
- BCR&PD audited financial statements
- Santa Cruz County Statement of Vote, November 7, 2000

Findings

1. The Grand Jury found that complaints to previous grand juries regarding BCR&PD were specific to the manner in which the board conducts its business.
2. The current Grand Jury has observed behavior on the part of some board members and former board members that was typically rancorous, divisive and many times insulting. This follows similar findings by the 1997-98 and the 1999-00 Grand Juries.
3. At many board meetings, members of the audience were frequently out of order, making loud comments that were inappropriate, disruptive and, occasionally, insulting.
4. Three special meetings were held to fill the vacant board seat: May 2, May 16 and May 31, 2001. Although there were four to five nominees at each meeting, the board deadlocked on each nominee and failed to appoint a new board member. One of the nominees received the highest number of votes of the runners-up in the November 2000 general election.
5. According to differing legal opinions, the BCR&PD Board has either 30 days or 60 days after notification to replace the absent director. The BCR&PD Board may fill the vacancy by appointing a new director by a majority of sitting board members or calling for a special election at a cost of approximately \$15,000. Otherwise, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors becomes the appointing body.
6. The Policies and Procedures Manual has been partially updated during regular meetings of the board of directors. Updated policies and procedures were not included with the Policies and Procedures Manual.
7. Between February 2, 2000 and February 7, 2001, the agendas for the board meetings carried up to 40 items listed as “unfinished business.” Meetings commenced at 7:30 and frequently ran to 10:30 p.m. or later. During this period of time, nine special meetings were held in an attempt to complete unfinished business.
8. According to the May 3, 2000 minutes, a motion was passed limiting public input to two minutes for initial input and one minute for rebuttal.
9. According to the minutes, the June 14, 2000 special meeting was adjourned after two of four directors walked out 35 minutes into the meeting. The minutes did not reflect the reason for their departure.
10. On November 3, 2000, four days before the election, one of the incumbent directors mailed a letter of resignation. Although this letter is listed in “Correspondence” in both the December agenda and minutes, no further information or discussion is noted regarding this matter. The January 3, 2001 minutes record unanimous passage by the four directors present to declare that there was no vacancy on the board at that time. The director who sent the letter of intent to resign continues to serve on the board as of June 1, 2001.

This letter addressed to the general manager stated, in part, “[o]ver the last month we have had several discussions about my thoughts concerning the possible resignation of my position as a Director of BCR&PD...Thank you for keeping this information confidential while I was coming to a final decision.” The letter goes on to state that the director would officially resign on December 6, 2000. The letter also states the general manager might provide copies of the letter to other directors after the November election results had been posted.

11. The incumbent director who wrote the letter of intent to resign did not vacate his seat in January 2001. At the direction of the board, the general manager requested clarification from the BCR&PD legal counsel regarding whether the letter constituted an actual resignation with a resulting vacant seat on the board. In response the legal counsel for the BCR&PD stated that although the resignation letter was on the agenda for the meeting of December 6, 2000, the meeting was adjourned before the item was called, and therefore the letter of intent to resign was never officially delivered by the director.
12. After December 6, 2000, the six committees of the district no longer reported to the board. However there was no discussion for this lack of committee input in the minutes. At the March 7, 2001 board meeting it was stated that there were no longer any functioning committees.
13. Official minutes of the board meetings are brief, sometimes incomplete and difficult to follow as they may vary in format from month to month. The February 17, 2000 special meeting, which was subsequently cancelled, listed 38 items to be acted upon in numerical order, yet in the minutes of the March 1, 2000 special meeting the actions taken on these items are listed using the alphabet, including the use of double letters. This makes cross-reference extremely difficult and time-consuming.
14. Minutes of the board meetings received by the Grand Jury did not contain attachments that were referred to in the minutes.
15. Job descriptions for the BCR&PD are not uniform in format. Some job descriptions are inadequate and lack basic information regarding the jobs. One job description contains inappropriate information such as committee findings. The job description for the general manager is adequate and in an accepted format, however has not been approved by the board.
16. According to the Policies and Procedures Manual, the BCR&PD general manager shall receive a performance evaluation annually. Her most recent evaluation was in December 1996. A special meeting in closed session was scheduled May 17, 2000 for review of the general manager's job performance and goal setting. This meeting was subsequently cancelled and not rescheduled.
17. Members of the 2000-01 Grand Jury attended board meetings where derogatory remarks were made by one director regarding the general manager's job performance.
18. The BCR&PD operated at a loss for fiscal year 2000-01. This shortfall was covered by district reserves.
19. Of 6,136 voters registered within Boulder Creek Recreation and Park District, 4,633 voted on November 7, 2000 in the BCR&PD board of director's election. This represents greater than 75% voter turnout.