

Honorable Mayor and Members of the Hermosa Beach City Council
Special Meeting of January 9, 2016

ISSUE PAPER – FIRE SERVICES DELIVERY

Pete Bonano, Interim Fire Chief

Background:

Fires are on the decline nationwide, but that doesn't make the job of a Hermosa Beach Firefighter any easier. In fact, it may be harder now. Not only are fires more complicated these days, but the scope of a firefighter's job has increased drastically and now includes fire prevention, public education, safety inspections (new construction and existing businesses), prehospital care and disaster preparation and recovery. Ultimately, today's firefighter is an individual who is trained and equipped to respond to fires, medical aids, traffic accidents, hazardous material spills, terrorist attack just to name a few.

While over the past 10 years the number of incidents has doubled, the Fire Department's staffing has been reduced from twenty (Fire Chief, Assistant Chief and 18 Firefighters) to sixteen (Fire Chief and 15 Firefighters), causing Hermosa Beach to rely more on our neighboring Fire Departments for assistance and the loss of administrative functions here in Hermosa. This reduction in staffing has contributed to the following issues:

Assistant Chief

- Loss of 40 hour Administrative Chief and all of the tasks and responsibilities assigned to Assistant Chief
- Loss of an established chain of command in the absence of the Fire Chief
- Lack of representation at Area G and Countywide meetings where decisions are made that affect Hermosa Beach
- Fire Marshal responsibilities assigned to a shift Captain impacting contractors
- Pause in policy development

Sixth Firefighter

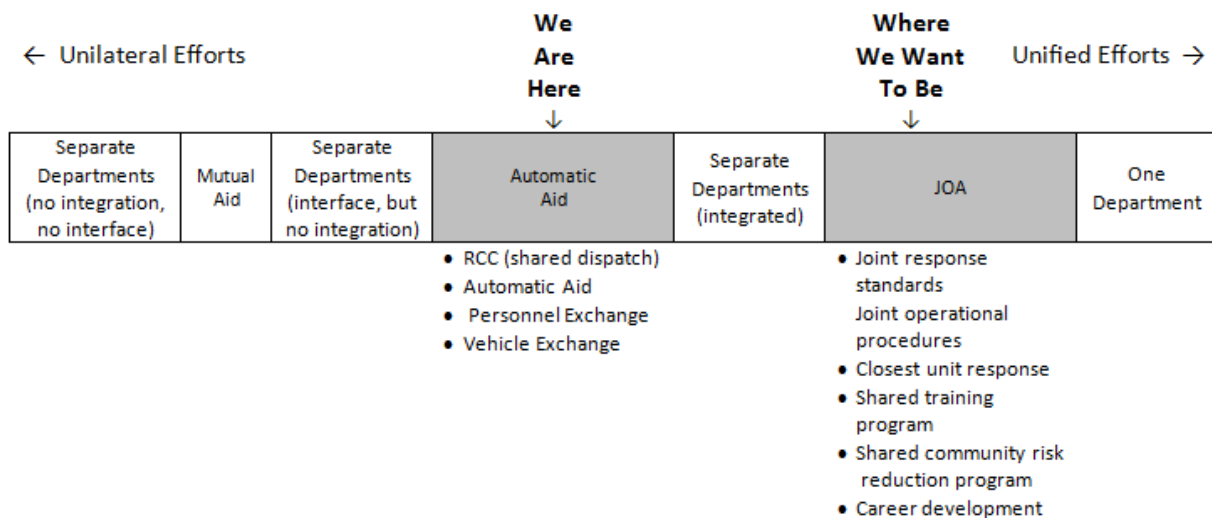
- Ability to restock narcotics without taking Rescue 11 out of service
- Ability to staff a second rescue or engine when either one is out of the City
- Ability to make an aggressive fire attack without waiting for neighboring fire agencies
- Ability to respond to non-emergent customer service issues without taking a responding unit out of service

Over the years the City has contracted with several different consulting firms to study the delivery of fire services in Hermosa Beach. The findings of these various consultants were consistent in recommending that the City should concentrate on sharing resources to reduce redundancies as opportunities become available. In 1995 Ralph Anderson & Associates recommended to consolidate communications; develop automatic aid agreements with boundary drops; joint training, public education and fire prevention programs; apparatus maintenance. The Matrix Study in 2007 states “There is a substantial need to enhance the management/supervisory ability of the department to meet basic operational and customer service needs.” The 2013 ICMA and the 2015 Citygate study both recommend the City consider opportunities to consolidate services to enhance the organizational management of the Hermosa Beach Fire Department.

Currently, Hermosa Beach and Manhattan Beach Fire Chiefs are developing a Joint Operational Area (JOA) Agreement which is based on the Citygate recommendations. It is the intent of the JOA to seek out and employ cooperative methods, practices, policies and procedures that may serve to sustainably maintain or improve public safety services to the citizens and visitors of the Cities. The establishment of a Manhattan Beach-Hermosa Beach JOA may improve the existing practices of both Fire Departments assuring the highest levels of firefighter safety, consistent emergency operations, EMS, and other emergency services and create an enhanced partnership between the Cities.

The graphic below represent where the two departments are today and the possibilities for the near future.

Continuum of Regional Fire Protection & Medical Services



Policy Considerations:

Policy considerations should be evaluated using quality of service, value, financial performance and the risk/safety element of our citizens and firefighters. Other considerations include meeting the goals of the current Strategic Plan for both the Fire Department and the City.

Option 1: (current direction)

Continue to develop and implement the JOA with Manhattan Beach. Option 1 fulfills the majority of the recommendations of the various consultants listed above. In addition to the Citygate recommendations, Option 1 provides for the opportunity to share Chief Officers between the two fire departments. At the direction of the City Managers, both Fire Chiefs have had preliminary discussions on the pros and cons of sharing Chief Officers.

Option 2:

Contract the Fire Department out to a neighboring agency eliminating the Hermosa Beach Fire Department. Under this Option the City would simply write a check each month for the delivery of fire services. Option 2 may result in a cost savings at the Fire Chief's position.

Option 3:

Reinstate Chief Officer(s) below the rank of Fire Chief and the sixth Firefighter on each shift and rebuild the Hermosa Beach Fire Department into a first class Fire Department providing the full range of services. Option 3 results in a budget increase of approximately \$350K to \$500K annually depending on the staffing model. In addition, Option 3 would continue to pursue efficiencies and opportunities with consolidating services with Manhattan Beach such as the Ambulance Operator and Emergency Management Programs.

Option 4:

Maintain the status quo and make no changes. The fragility of Option 4 and the reliance of neighboring fire agencies with reduced staffing is unsustainable and in many areas falls short of meeting acceptable standards for an urban fire department.

Next Steps:

If not redirected by City Council, continue to work towards Option 1 implementing the Citygate recommendations through the JOA and continue discussion on sharing of Chief Officers with the Manhattan Beach Fire Department.

Attachments:

None

Respectfully Submitted by: Pete Bonano, Interim Fire Chief

Concur: Tom Bakaly, City Manager

Noted for Fiscal Impact: Viki Copeland, Finance Director

Legal Review: Mike Jenkins, City Attorney

Approved: Tom Bakaly, City Manager