



**BENICIA CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA**

**Conference Room 1
October 18, 2011
6:00 PM**

*Times set forth for the agenda items are estimates.
Items may be heard before or after the times designated.*

I. CALL TO ORDER (6:00 PM):

II. CONVENE OPEN SESSION:

A. ROLL CALL.

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.

C. REFERENCE TO THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF THE PUBLIC:

A plaque stating the fundamental rights of each member of the public is posted at the entrance to this meeting room per section 4.04.030 of the City of Benicia's Open Government Ordinance.

III. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT:

This portion of the meeting is reserved for persons wishing to address the Council on any matter not on the agenda that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the City Council. State law prohibits the City Council from responding to or acting upon matters not listed on the agenda. Each speaker has a maximum of five minutes for public comment. If others have already expressed your position, you may simply indicate that you agree with a previous speaker. If appropriate, a spokesperson may present the views of your entire group. Speakers may not make personal attacks on council members, staff or members of the public, or make comments which are slanderous or which may invade an individual's personal privacy.

A. WRITTEN COMMENT.

B. PUBLIC COMMENT.

IV. CONSENT:

A. MINUTE ACTION APPROVING RESPONSE TO 2010-2011 GRAND JURY REPORT “PUBLIC SAFETY VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS FIRE EMERGENCY SERVICES”. (Fire Chief, City Manager)

The 2010-2011 Solano County Grand Jury issued a report on “Public Safety Volunteer Programs Fire Emergency Services”. In the report there is one (1) finding that Benicia needs to respond to in writing. Under State law, the City Council must approve the response.

RECOMMENDATION: Approve by minute action the response to 2010-2011 Grand Jury Report entitled “Public Safety Volunteer Programs Fire Emergency Services”.

V. CLOSED SESSION:

A. CONFERENCE WITH LABOR NEGOTIATOR
(Government Code Section 54957.6 (a))

Agency negotiators: City Manager, Administrative Services Director

Employee organization: Benicia Firefighters Association (BFA).

B. CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL-ANTICIPATED LITIGATION

Initiation of litigation pursuant to subdivision (c) of Section 54956.9

Number of Potential Cases: (1)

VI. ADJOURNMENT (7:00 PM):

Public Participation

The Benicia City Council welcomes public participation.

Pursuant to the Brown Act, each public agency must provide the public with an opportunity to speak on any matter within the subject matter jurisdiction of the agency and which is not

on the agency's agenda for that meeting. The City Council allows speakers to speak on non-agendized matters under public comment, and on agendized items at the time the agenda item is addressed at the meeting. Comments are limited to no more than five minutes per speaker. By law, no action may be taken on any item raised during the public comment period although informational answers to questions may be given and matters may be referred to staff for placement on a future agenda of the City Council.

Should you have material you wish to enter into the record, please submit it to the City Manager.

Disabled Access or Special Needs

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and to accommodate any special needs, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact Anne Cardwell, the ADA Coordinator, at (707) 746-4211. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to the meeting.

Meeting Procedures

All items listed on this agenda are for Council discussion and/or action. In accordance with the Brown Act, each item is listed and includes, where appropriate, further description of the item and/or a recommended action. The posting of a recommended action does not limit, or necessarily indicate, what action may be taken by the City Council.

Pursuant to Government Code Section 65009, if you challenge a decision of the City Council in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the public hearing described in this notice, or in written correspondence delivered to the City Council at, or prior to, the public hearing. You may also be limited by the ninety (90) day statute of limitations in which to challenge in court certain administrative decisions and orders (Code of Civil Procedure 1094.6) to file and serve a petition for administrative writ of mandate challenging any final City decisions regarding planning or zoning.

The decision of the City Council is final as of the date of its decision unless judicial review is initiated pursuant to California Code of Civil Procedures Section 1094.5. Any such petition for judicial review is subject to the provisions of California Code of Civil Procedure Section 1094.6.

Public Records

The agenda packet for this meeting is available at the City Manager's Office and the Benicia Public Library during regular working hours. To the extent feasible, the packet is also available on the City's web page at www.ci.benicia.ca.us under the heading "Agendas and Minutes." Public records related to an open session agenda item that are distributed after the agenda packet is prepared are available before the meeting at the City Manager's

Office located at 250 East L Street, Benicia, or at the meeting held in the Council Chambers. If you wish to submit written information on an agenda item, please submit to the City Clerk as soon as possible so that it may be distributed to the City Council. A complete proceeding of each meeting is also recorded and available through the City Clerks Office.

AGENDA ITEM
CITY COUNCIL MEETING DATE - OCTOBER 18, 2011

DATE : October 18, 2011

TO : Mayor and City Council

FROM : Brad Kilger, City Manager
Steve Vucurevich, Fire Chief

SUBJECT : **MINUTE ACTION APPROVING RESPONSE TO 2010-2011 GRAND JURY REPORT “PUBLIC SAFETY VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS FIRE EMERGENCY SERVICES”**

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve, by minute action, the response to 2010-2011 Grand Jury Report entitled “Public Safety Volunteer Programs Fire Emergency Services”.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The 2010-2011 Solano County Grand Jury issued a report on “Public Safety Volunteer Programs Fire Emergency Services”. In the report there is one (1) finding that Benicia needs to respond to in writing. Under State law, the City Council must approve the response.

BUDGET INFORMATION: N/A

GENERAL PLAN: N/A

STRATEGIC PLAN:

Relevant Strategic Plan Issue and Strategy:

- Strategic Issue #1: Protecting Community Health and Safety
 - Strategy #5: Promote community and personal health

BACKGROUND: Staff recommends that the City of Benicia agree with finding number one; however, regarding recommendation number one, we do not have enough in-depth knowledge of the operations for the other Fire Departments within Solano County. The attached letter provides the proposed response for your consideration.

Attachments:

- Grand Jury Report entitled “Public Safety Volunteer Programs Fire Emergency Services”
- City response letter

GRAND JURY



Hall of Justice
600 Union Ave
Fairfield, California 94533
(707) 435-2575
Fax: (707) 435-2566

cmstrickland@solano.courts.ca.gov

June 30, 2011

Sent via email

Re: **2010-2011 Grand Jury Report**

Pursuant to the Penal Code §933, attached is a copy of the 2010-2011 Grand Jury Report entitled "Public Safety Volunteer Programs Fire Emergency Services". A copy of the report will be posted on the Grand Jury webpage on July 5, 2011. Courtesy copies will also be sent out on the same date.

Please be advised that, under Penal Code §933.05(f), "No officer, agency, department, or governing body of a public agency shall disclose any contents of the report prior to the public release of the final report." Thus, the contents of the Grand Jury report cannot be released to or discussed with members of the public or the press prior to the report's publication on the Grand Jury's website.

Comments to the report may be submitted to the Presiding Judge of the Solano Superior Court within 60 days from June 30, 2011.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara A. Morris".

Barbara A. Morris
Foreperson
2010-2011 Solano County Grand Jury

Enc: Final Report
BM/cms

PUBLIC SAFETY VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS FIRE EMERGENCY SERVICES

2010-11 Solano County Grand Jury

I. SUMMARY

Due to the current economic situation in Solano County, the 2010-11 Grand Jury elected to examine the volunteer programs of the Solano County City Fire Departments. Volunteers have allowed city fire departments more flexibility in providing a high level of service to our communities. This mixture of career full-time and volunteer/reserve firefighters eases the burden on already restricted budgets. This approach has allowed cities to improve efficiency and reduce cost.

The cities of Benicia, Dixon, Fairfield, Rio Vista, and Suisun City actively promote the use of volunteers in their fire safety programs. The Vallejo and Vacaville Fire Departments do not use volunteer firefighters.

Because the relationship between the fire departments and cities is crucial to the well-being of the citizens given the critical functions they perform, fire department volunteer programs are beneficial to the community. The cities should take advantage of the use of volunteers in their firefighting services.

II. INTRODUCTION

Due to the current economic situation in Solano County, the 2010-11 Grand Jury elected to examine the volunteer programs of the Solano County City Fire Departments. The following table gives general information about each city and its fire department in Solano County:

City	Benicia	Dixon	Fairfield	Rio Vista	Suisun City	Vacaville	Vallejo
Population	26,865 (2010 Census)	17,605 (2010 Census)	106,502 (2009, per Fire Chief)	8,374 (2010 Census)	28,188 (2010 Census)	96,905 (2010 Census)	117,798 (2010 Census)
Fire Department Current Budget	~\$7,000,000	\$3,309,252	~\$14,000,000	\$1,069,741	\$909,100	\$16,157,901	~\$17,000,000
Square Miles Served	13	6.7 320*	36.7	7.5	4.1	28 160**	53.58
Number of Full-time Paid Staff	1 -- Chief 1 -- Deputy Chief 2 -- Battalion Chiefs 20 -- Career Firefighters 1 -- Fire Code Enforcer 1 -- Secretary ½ - Mgmt Analysis	1 -- Chief 2 -- Division Chiefs 3 -- Captains 6 -- Fire Engineers 5 -- Career Firefighters/ Paramedics 1 -- Career Firefighter	1 - Chief 1 - Deputy Chief 3 -- Battalion Chiefs 1 -- Code Enforcement Officer	1 -- P/T Chief 1 -- Fire Marshall P/T 3 -- Captains 3 - Paramedics	1 -- Chief 2 -- Admin. Fire Captains	1 -- P/T Chief 1 -- Division Chief 3 -- Battalion Chiefs 12 -- Captains 15 -- Engineers 25 -- Firefighter/ Paramedics 14 -- Firefighters 1 -- Fire Prevention Specialist 1 -- Fire Plans Examiner/Inspect or 1 -- Fire Safety Coordinator 1 -- Sr. Admin Clerk	1 -- Chief 3 -- Battalion Chiefs 67 -- Career firefighters 1 -- Training Division Coord. 1 -- EMS Coord. 2 -- Fire Prevention Inspectors

Abbreviations:
EMS – Emergency Medical Services
P/T – Part Time

* Dixon Fire Protection District
**Emergency Medical Response only

IV.A.6

City	Benicia	Dixon	Fairfield	Rio Vista	Suisun City	Vacaville	Vallejo
Number of Fire Safety Volunteers	8 – Reserve 3 – Phoenix 6 – Logistic Unit	9 – Firefighters (12– additional approved)	14 – Reserve Firefighters (18 approved)	19 – Reserve Firefighters 5 – Volunteers	1 – Deputy Chief 4 – Battalion Chiefs 8 - Captains 4 – Engineers 3 – Drivers / Operators 20 – Firefighters 4 – Rookies		
Number of Incidents	2,039 (68.8% medical, 5.4% fire)	1,834 (50% medical, 30% all others)	9,500 (80% medical, 20% fire)	1,100 (70% medical)	1,842 (70% medical)	7,880 (80% medical; 5% fire)	12,500 (75% medical)

Volunteers are community members who perform tasks without salary. All volunteers go through training depending on their placement. Reserve firefighters receive appropriate advanced training and must serve a specified number of hours per month according to the individual city's requirements. Reserve firefighters are required to complete a competency program by fire departments.

A. Benicia Fire Department

The Benicia Fire Department (BFD) uses volunteers to support career firefighters in the delivery of fire and life safety services. BFD has three categories of volunteers:

- The Reserve Volunteer Firefighters
- The Phoenix Volunteer Firefighters
- Logistical Support Unit

In addition, BFD has two other volunteer programs involved with fire safety: the Fire Explorer program, which is made up of young men and women ages 14 to 21, and a program that uses amateur radio operators to assist with communication.

B. Dixon Fire Department

At the time of this investigation, the Dixon Fire Department (DFD) had nine volunteer firefighters and was expecting to add 12 more volunteer firefighters. The DFD provides emergency fire, rescue, and medical services to the citizens of Dixon. By contractual agreement, the City also provides fire protection services to the surrounding 320-square-mile Dixon Fire Protection District, with a total population of 21,000.

C. Fairfield Fire Department

With further budget cuts affecting Fairfield, the use of volunteers is increasing in the Fairfield Fire Department (FFD), which allows for services and programs to be available for the public. Currently, the FFD uses volunteers for the following:

- Reserve firefighters
- Fire explorer cadets
- Assistants in the administrative division

D. Rio Vista Fire Department

All fire departments in Solano County are trying to reduce costs and maintain services. Although the City of Rio Vista had authorized 40 volunteer/reserve firefighters, due to budget constraints, the total volunteers at the time of this investigation was limited to 24. The Rio Vista Fire Department (RVFD) has the following categories of volunteers:

- Reserve firefighters

- Volunteer firefighters
- Fire explorer cadets

E. Suisun City Fire Department

The Suisun City Fire Department (SCFD) has three full-time paid personnel, and the remainder are volunteers. The Grand Jury learned SCFD volunteers are the regular On-Duty Firefighting Force, with full duties. Every response is answered by the volunteer firefighters. SCFD has the following categories of volunteers:

- Deputy Chief
- Battalion Chiefs
- Captains
- Engineers
- Drivers/Operators
- Firefighters
- Rookies

F. Vacaville Fire Department

Historically, the City of Vacaville and the surrounding area relied heavily on volunteer firefighters. Currently, the Vacaville Fire Department (VVFD) consists of 71 sworn full-time firefighters, four civilian employees, and no volunteer firefighters.

G. Vallejo Fire Department

For at least 35 years, the Vallejo Fire Department (VFD) has operated without volunteers. During the Grand Jury investigation, it discovered the situation was complicated: the Union was concerned about displacing career firefighters; there were concerns about the costs associated with providing workers' compensation; the VFD did not currently have the resources to start a volunteer program; there were concerns about the potential availability of volunteers to respond to emergencies; most importantly, there were safety issues.

III. METHODOLOGY

The Grand Jury sent letters requesting information on volunteer programs for the following city fire departments:

- Benicia
- Dixon
- Fairfield
- Rio Vista
- Suisun City
- Vacaville

- Vallejo

The Grand Jury reviewed all the information received from the city fire departments to ascertain their use of volunteers, and it interviewed the Fairfield Fire Chief and the Rio Vista Interim Fire Chief. In addition, site visits, emails, and telephone interviews were conducted with other Fire Departments. The Grand Jury reviewed each city's website for pertinent information.

IV. STATEMENT OF FACTS

A. Benicia Fire Department

The Benicia Fire Department has three categories of volunteers. The Reserve Volunteer Firefighters are assigned to work alongside career firefighters and serve a minimum of two 24-hour shifts per month. The BFD increased its use of volunteers with the addition of the Reserve Volunteer Firefighter (RVF) program approximately a year and a half ago. There are currently eight members of that group. BFD trains volunteers for their assigned roles.

The second category of volunteers, referred to as the Logistical Support Unit, does not serve as firefighters. Instead, they assist at the scene of emergencies by providing support functions, such as changing air bottles the firefighters use, picking up fire hoses, providing refreshments for the working crews, and managing staging areas.

The Phoenix Volunteer Firefighters report to the main fire station as requested to support emergency operations. BFD is currently having difficulty in attracting and retaining volunteers for the Phoenix Volunteer Program. The department is looking into ways to increase participation, which could result in changes to the program.

Background checks are run on all volunteers except Logistical Support Volunteers, who do not engage in firefighting activities.

BFD has an approximate annual budget for the following programs:

- Volunteer Firefighter - \$28,500
- Fire Explorer - \$1,500

Volunteers are not paid for their time but are covered by the City's Workers' Compensation insurance. The Grand Jury learned that the use of volunteers saved the City an estimated \$36,560 in 2010, based on 4,570 hours at \$8.00 per hour (data provided by BFD).

B. Dixon Fire Department

The Dixon Fire Department requires new volunteers to be Fire Academy graduates and provides training in-house. Orientation for all City volunteers is provided at City Hall. There is ongoing training for new volunteers and in-service training on new equipment. Specialty training is available when courses are hosted on-site.

The use of volunteers has allowed the DFD to provide public education programs and events that it would not otherwise support due to limits on overtime costs. Volunteers are also used to supplement staffing where resources are lacking. At the time of this investigation, DFD had nine volunteer firefighters and expected an additional 12 volunteer firefighters.

C. Fairfield Fire Department

Currently, the Fairfield Fire Department uses volunteers for the following positions:

- Reserve firefighters (18-30 years old) – trained in firefighting skills
- Fire Explorer Cadets (14-20 years old) – trained in basic CPR and basic firefighting.
- Assistants (volunteers who perform clerical functions) – drawn from the Citywide Volunteer Program

The FFD relies heavily on volunteerism and spends approximately \$35,000 on volunteer programs. The money is used to equip, train, and conduct background checks on all volunteers.

During the past three years, the use of volunteers by the FFD has increased due to the economic downturn. The Grand Jury learned the use of volunteers will continue to rise based on the economy. The FFD service level capability has improved exponentially, in part because of the volunteer programs. For example, the Vegetation Management Program (Weed Abatement) would have been eliminated because the paid part-time firefighter's position was eliminated. Instead, a volunteer is patrolling the area and posting signs on abandoned properties.

The Grand Jury learned the annual cost savings realized through the use of volunteers is \$336,220, determined by multiplying the annual hours logged by volunteers times an hourly rate of \$22.79 derived from the California Independent Sector (the Independent Sector publishes an average hourly rate comparison for agencies to use when calculating cost savings from volunteer usage). It also learned that the benefit to the community is well worth the expense and the ongoing effort by staff to administer the program.

D. Rio Vista Fire Department

The Rio Vista Fire Department, with the help of volunteers, is still able to maintain a three-man engine company. When volunteers are available, it uses four- or five-man engine companies.

After completion of Firefighter 1 Academy, the RVFD provides a mini-fire academy as part of its tailored training programs. All volunteers are also required to participate in a minimum of two training drills each month. Specialized training may be required beyond the two monthly drills.

The City of Rio Vista has undertaken a new program of building a live burn structure, a building used to practice fire-fighting. It was built primarily by firefighters and city volunteers.

RVFD has a part-time paid interim Fire Chief who is a retired firefighter. The Fire Chief's position is part-time, which saves the City \$76,000 annually. The Fire Marshal's position is also part-time.

E. Suisun City Fire Department

The Suisun City Fire Department has a completely different staffing model than other paid fire departments in the county. The paid staff responds and supervises the day shift. They also support the volunteers in training, maintenance of equipment and facilities, and administrative functions. The paid staff supervises the weekday shifts. All staff except the Fire Chief and two Station Captains are volunteers. The Deputy Chief, Battalion Chiefs, Captains, firefighters and rookies are volunteers.

The volunteers staff the fire engines 24/7/365. Volunteers fill all positions including the Command staff functions at a response. The volunteer Duty Officer – Battalion Chiefs are in charge of the shift. Volunteers for the SCFD work 12-hour shifts in the station and are required to do a minimum of five shifts a month. Most do several more than minimum.

All SCFD volunteers are trained to the firefighter 1 level. Most volunteers have already finished a Firefighter 1 academy and become a State Fire Marshal Certified Fighter 1 within one year. Volunteers that live within the City limits will be trained from no experience to a State Fire Marshal Firefighter 1 level. About 80% of the volunteers are EMT-1's. The SCFD Fire Chief is responsible for training and offering various other training opportunities. In addition, the Chief plans and coordinates all operational activities for the department.

The Grand Jury learned that through volunteer efforts, the SCFD is currently saving the city about \$6.3 million annually and that the department successfully responded to 1,756 incidents in 2010 (data from SCFD).

F. Vacaville Fire Department

At the time of this investigation, the Vacaville Fire Department had no volunteer firefighters. VVFD consists of 71 sworn full-time firefighters and four civilian employees.

G. Vallejo Fire Department

At the time of this investigation the Vallejo Fire Department had no volunteer firefighters.

V. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding 1 – Not all Solano County cities are taking full advantage of fire safety volunteers, which could potentially decrease the cost to taxpayers for fire protection services.

Recommendation 1 – All Solano County cities should maximize the use of fire safety volunteers for their fire departments.

Finding 2 – The Cities of Vacaville and Vallejo are not taking advantage of the use of fire safety volunteers to minimize the expense of providing emergency services to those communities.

Recommendation 2 – These cities should investigate and implement the use of fire safety volunteers.

COMMENTS

The Fairfield Fire Department is to be commended for offering educational scholarships for financially disadvantaged young adults who are interested in a fire service career.

Suisun City provides a good working model for fire volunteers helping their city to the fullest.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

Vacaville City Council (Findings 1 and 2)
Vallejo City Council (Findings 1 and 2)
Benicia City Council (Finding 1)
Dixon City Council (Finding 1)
Fairfield City Council (Finding 1)
Rio Vista City Council (Finding 1)
Suisun City Council (Finding 1)

COURTESY COPIES

Solano County Director of the Office of Emergency Services
Benicia Fire Department
Dixon Fire Department
Fairfield Fire Department
Rio Vista Fire Department
Suisun Fire Department
Vallejo Fire Department
Vacaville Fire Department



October 14, 2011

Barbara Morris, Foreperson
2010-2011 Solano County Grand Jury
Hall of Justice
600 Union Avenue
Fairfield, Ca. 94533

Re: City of Benicia Response to Finding 1 and Recommendation 1 of the 2010-2011 Grand Jury Report Titled "Public Safety Volunteer Programs Fire Emergency Services."

Dear Foreperson Morris:

In response to your request dated June 30, 2011 regarding the Grand Jury Report, the City has prepared the following responses. These responses were approved by the City Council at their meeting of October 18, 2011.

Finding 1: The City of Benicia does not have enough working knowledge of the operations for the other fire departments in Solano County, and therefore we feel it would be inappropriate to comment on your recommendation. Our Reserve Firefighters, Phoenix Firefighters, and Logistical Support Staff are all volunteer programs within the fire department that have proven to be financially and operationally efficient.

In addition please make the following revisions to the document:

Summary of Department Resources (page 2): Please delete the Deputy Chief position. Please delete the 2-Battalion Chiefs positions and replace them with 2-Division Chiefs. Please change the number of Career Firefighters from 20 to 27. Please add 1-Fire Marshal. Please delete 1-Fire Code Enforcer position and replace with 1-Community Preservation Officer. Please delete ½ Management Analyst position.

Please let me know if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Brad Kilger
City Manager

