



County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors

Agenda Item Submittal

From: General Services Department

Subject: Board Notice to Establish County Fire Department Advisory Group

Meeting Date: February 11, 2025

Formal Title: Consider notice of intent to establish a County Fire Department Advisory Group, and take related actions

Recommended Actions

1. Accept and file notice of intent to establish a County Fire Department Advisory Group; and
2. Direct the General Services Department to submit Advisory Group attendance reports relative to SCCC 2.38.170(E) to the Board at the end of each calendar year.

Executive Summary

On September 10, 2024, the Board of Supervisors repealed Chapter 2.120 of the Santa Cruz County Code, officially sunsetting the Fire Department Advisory Commission (FDAC). In its place, the General Services Department (GSD), which oversees the County Fire Department, proposes establishing a County Fire Department Advisory Group (FDAG) in accordance with Santa Cruz County Code Chapter 2.38.071. This memo serves as the required notice of intent to form the new advisory group, which will provide valuable operational and strategic recommendations concerning the County Fire Department.

Discussion

The decision to transition from the Fire Department Advisory Commission (FDAC) to a County Fire Department Advisory Group (FDAG) stems from evolving service needs and organizational goals. At its July 17, 2024, meeting, the FDAC voted to dissolve and support the creation of a more flexible advisory group under GSD oversight. On September 10, 2024, the Board of Supervisors formally repealed Chapter 2.120 of the County Code, enabling this transition.

The purpose of the County FDAG will be:

- 1) To consult and advise GSD on specific matters relating to County Fire and the County's fire protection, rescue, and emergency medical services program, including the potential transition of County Fire to an Independent Fire District, as considered by the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO); and
- 2) To work closely with GSD to ensure that the interests of the Santa Cruz County Fire Department and the people residing within the County Fire Department jurisdiction are protected and promoted.

In fulfilling these duties, the FDAG will explore alternatives to the governance structure of County Fire, with a focus on making it more effective. The FDAG will collaborate with other fire agencies and groups concerned about fire and emergency services to

examine options for improving services for all who live and work in Santa Cruz County.

The FDAG will operate without formal bylaws and will not be governed by the Brown Act. In accordance with Santa Cruz County Code Section 2.38.071(A)(5), alternate procedures concerning public participation, noticing of meetings, quorum requirements, minutes, and any other appropriate matters will be provided.

To establish the FDAG per the procedures specified in Chapter 2.38 of the Santa Cruz County Code, the General Services Department (GSD) has drafted the attached County Fire Advisory Group (FDAG) operating procedures for the Board's consideration. These operating procedures, among other provisions, specify the FDAG's purpose; its membership at the onset of establishing the group; criteria for selecting future members; the termination date of December 31, 2026 unless extended; and the organization and procedures for the group, which includes public participation, noticing of meetings, no-quorum requirement, agendas, minutes and reports.

The GSD Director has extended an invitation to the former FDAC members to join the FDAG as its inaugural membership. FDAG members, who are not County employees or employees of other public agencies serving in their official capacity, are eligible to receive the stipend established by Board resolution.

By establishing the FDAG, the County aims to maintain a robust, adaptive advisory structure that supports effective fire protection and emergency services while fostering community involvement and expert input.

Financial Impact

A \$100,000 budget to support the stipend program was included in the Fiscal Year 2024-25 Budget. This budget will accommodate stipends for members of commissions and department advisory groups.

Strategic Initiatives

6.D (Operational Excellence: Continuous Improvement)

1.C (Comprehensive Health & Safety: Local Justice)

Submitted By:

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Recommended By:

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Artificial Intelligence Acknowledgment:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) did not significantly contribute to the development of this agenda item.