

10. Consider notice of intent to establish a County Fire Department Advisory Group, and take related actions ()



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On September 10, 2024, the Board of Supervisors repealed Chapter 2.120 of the Santa Cruz County Code, officially sunsetting the Fire Department Advisory Commission (FDAC).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 On September 10, 2024, the Board of Supervisors formally repealed Chapter 2.120 of the County Code, enabling this transition.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:

Michael Beaton

Recommended By:

Carlos J. Palacios, County Administrative Officer

Artificial Intelligence Acknowledgment:

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



COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT ADVISORY GROUP (FDAG) OPERATING PROCEDURES

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Fire Department Advisory Group (FDAG) will be:

- A. To consult and advise the General Services Department (GSD) on specific matters relating to County Fire and the County's fire protection, rescue, and emergency medical services program, including potential changes or organizational restructuring; and
- B. 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.

2. TERM OF ADVISORY GROUP

The term of the FDAG shall commence on the date that written notice is provided to and adopted by the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors, of the establishment of this department advisory group. The termination date for the FDAG shall be December 31, 2026, unless otherwise extended by the GSD Director, and with notice of extension provided to the Board of Supervisors prior to extending the term.

3. GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

- A. The FDAG will not be governed by the Brown Act. In accordance with Santa Cruz County Code Section 2.38.071(A)(5), these Operating Procedures provide alternate procedures to ensure public participation, noticing of meetings, quorum requirements, minutes, and establishment of subcommittees.
- B. The FDAG will operate without formal bylaws. In accordance with Santa Cruz County Code Section 2.38.140, the Director of the General Services Department

(Director) will oversee and determine all necessary procedures for the conduct of business within the advisory group.

4. MEMBERSHIP

- A. In accordance with County Code Section 2.38.080, each FDAG member shall be a resident of, or employed in, Santa Cruz County.
- B. The FDAG will consist of no less than five (5) appointed individuals fitting the membership criteria. No maximum number of members will be specified and will be left to the discretion of the Director.
- C. The initial invitation for membership of the FDAG will consist of the former members of the Fire Department Advisory Commission and will change in composition depending on subject matter expertise.
- D. Any person seeking to serve on the FDAG may make a request for membership selection to the Director. Requests for membership must be submitted either electronically or in paper format as a written request, and should include the requestor's name, current contact information, confirmation of eligibility of living in or working in Santa Cruz County, and any related background or experience the requestor holds on matters related to County Fire and the County's fire protection, rescue, and emergency medical services program.

5. TERMS OF MEMBERSHIP

- A. In accordance with County Code Section 2.38.100 (D), FDAG members are intended to serve a term for the life of the group, or until removed by the Director.
- B. The FDAG composition will be adjusted as needed to ensure relevant expertise aligns with the specific matters under consideration.

6. SUBCOMMITTEES

- A. Subcommittees and/or ad hoc committees of the FDAG may be established and dismissed by the Director or their designee to accomplish work on a specific project of the department.
- B. Subcommittees and/or ad hoc committees will report to the Director or their designee for the duration of the committee's term.

7. MEETINGS

- A. The FDAG will meet on an as-needed basis.
- B. FDAG meetings will be held virtually or at locations throughout the county, as determined by the Director or their designee, in advance of each meeting.
- C. No in-person meeting of the FDAG will be held in a facility or any location that excludes any person, or persons, on the basis of race, religion, color, creed, national origin, ancestry, physical or mental disability, medical condition (including cancer-related and genetic characteristics), marital status, sexual orientation, age (over 18), veteran status, gender, gender identity or pregnancy. In accordance with County Code Section 2.38.130 (C), all meetings shall be held at locations which are accessible to the public and which are functional for, usable, and accessible to persons with disabilities.
- D. FDAG meetings will not require a quorum of its membership, or any minimum attendance of members.
- E. All FDAG meetings shall be facilitated by the Director or their designee(s).

8. NOTICING OF MEETINGS

- A. Notice of each meeting of the FDAG will be posted on the County Fire Department web page at least three (3) days prior to the meeting.
- B. Each FDAG member will electronically receive an invitation to the meetings at least three (3) days prior to each meeting. Members will be prompted to reply within 48 hours to confirm attendance at the meeting so that attendance can be tracked.
- C. The public may be invited to specific meetings or public engagement opportunities as determined in advance by the Director or their designee and the FDAG:
 - i. There is no set number of meetings or public engagement opportunities. Planning for potential public engagement will be a standing item on each regularly scheduled FDAG meeting, so that the group may discuss why, when and where to potentially engage with members of the public through public engagement efforts.
 - ii. During FDAG meetings or events that involve public engagement, guests will not be required to register their name or fulfill any other obligation as a condition to attend an FDAG meeting or public engagement event but may

volunteer such information for inclusion in any FDAG meeting minutes being kept, or for the sole purpose of contact for information related to FDAG or County Fire Department related activities.

- iii. For publicly held meetings, a link will be provided for virtual meetings, or the location will be shared for in-person meetings.

- D. While some FDAG meetings will not be held publicly, the public will be able to access the FDAG meeting notice, standing agenda, and minutes for those meetings by either independently viewing them on the County Fire Department website or by requesting the materials to be sent electronically, as available.

9. AGENDAS

- A. All meetings of the FDAG will include a standing agenda with the following items incorporated:

- i. Welcome and introductions
- ii. Director's Report
- iii. Advisory topics of interest for round table discussion
- iv. Potential public engagement opportunities

- B. FDAG members who wish to add specific Advisory topics to an upcoming FDAG meeting agenda may submit those topics to the Director or their designee at least three (3) days in advance of the meeting.

- C. Agendas for publicly held FDAG meetings or public engagement opportunities will be posted on the County Fire Department website at least three (3) days in advance of the public meeting or engagement opportunity.

- D. The Director may add to or change specific Director's Report, Advisory and Public Engagement topics as planned, if the need to seek advice or counsel on differing, pressing topics of interest arise after planned topics are shared with FDAG members.

10. MINUTES

- A. In accordance with County Code Section 2.38.160 (C), FDAG meeting minutes shall be prepared and maintained by the Director or their designee.
- B. FDAG meeting minutes shall contain summaries on the major considerations discussed, meeting dates, times, locations, and attendance.

- C. Once finalized, FDAG meeting minutes shall be published and made available on the County Fire Department public-facing website.

11. REPORTS

- A. In accordance with Conty Code Section 2.38.170 (C), the FDAG will issue a report to the Director according to a schedule set by the Board of Supervisors. The report shall highlight the activities, accomplishments and future goals of the group and shall utilize the following report format:
 - i. Role(s) of the FDAG;
 - ii. Meeting dates, time and location;
 - iii. FDAG meeting attendance;
 - iv. FDAG goals set, and accomplishments met during the reporting period, including a summary of activities, special projects and workshops or seminars that FDAG members have participated in, when applicable; and
 - v. FDAG future goals.
- B. In accordance with County Code Section 2.38.170 (E), the Director will submit an attendance report to the Board of Supervisors at the end of each calendar year.

12. PUBLIC RECORDS

In accordance with County Code Section 2.38.260 (D), all FDAG public records shall be maintained as accessible to the public, pursuant to the California Public Records Act.

13. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

To ensure public participation and provide notice to the public, all meeting agendas will be available on the County Fire web page at least three (3) days before the meeting date. For publicly held meetings, the FDAG will permit public attendance and participation, allowing public comments at the end of the meeting. For meetings not held publicly, the public may submit their comments via email for consideration.

14. STIPENDS AND EXPENSES

- A. In accordance with Santa Cruz County Code Section 2.38.180 (A), FDAG members may receive a stipend as compensation for their public service as established annually by resolution of the Board of Supervisors.

- B. In accordance with Santa Cruz County Code Section 2.38.180 (C), FDAG members shall not be entitled to reimbursement for traveling and other expenses.



SANTA CRUZ
COUNTY FIRE
DEPARTMENT

COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT ADVISORY GROUP (FDAG)

OPERATING PROCEDURES

Chief Wilson
Michael Beaton



COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT ADVISORY GROUP (FDAG)

1. PURPOSE



The purpose of the Fire Department Advisory Group (FDAG) will be:

- To consult and advise the General Services Department (GSD) on specific matters relating to County Fire and the County's fire protection, rescue, and emergency medical services program, including potential changes or organizational restructuring; and
- 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.



COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT
ADVISORY GROUP
(FDAG)

OPERATING PROCEDURES

COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT ADVISORY GROUP (FDAG)

2. TERM



COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT
ADVISORY GROUP
(FDAG)

OPERATING PROCEDURES

Commencement:

The term of the FDAG shall commence **on the date that written notice is provided to and adopted by the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors**, of the establishment of this department advisory group.

Termination:

The termination date for the FDAG shall be **December 31, 2026**, unless otherwise extended by the GSD Director, and with notice of extension provided to the Board of Supervisors prior to extending the term.

COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT ADVISORY GROUP (FDAG)

3. GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS



COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT
ADVISORY GROUP
(FDAG)

OPERATING PROCEDURES

- The FDAG will not be governed by the Brown Act. In accordance with **Santa Cruz County Code Section 2.38.071(A)(5)**, these Operating Procedures provide alternate procedures to ensure public participation, noticing of meetings, quorum requirements, minutes, and establishment of subcommittees.
- The FDAG will operate without formal bylaws. **In accordance with Santa Cruz County Code Section 2.38.140**, the Director of the General Services Department (Director) will oversee and determine all necessary procedures for the conduct of business within the advisory group.

COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT ADVISORY GROUP (FDAG)

4. MEMBERSHIP

- In accordance with County Code Section 2.38.080, each FDAG member shall be a **resident of, or employed in, Santa Cruz County.**
- The FDAG will consist of **no less than five (5) appointed individuals** fitting the membership criteria. No maximum number of members will be specified and will be left to the discretion of the Director.
- The initial invitation for membership of the FDAG will consist of the **former members of the Fire Department Advisory Commission** and will change in composition depending on subject matter expertise.
- Any person seeking to serve on the FDAG may make a **request for membership selection** to the Director. Requests for membership must be submitted either electronically or in paper format as a written request, and should include the requestor's name, current contact information, confirmation of eligibility of living in or working in Santa Cruz County, and any related background or experience the requestor holds on matters related to County Fire and the County's fire protection, rescue, and emergency medical services program.



COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT
ADVISORY GROUP
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OPERATING PROCEDURES

COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT ADVISORY GROUP (FDAG)

5. TERMS OF MEMBERSHIP



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ADVISORY GROUP
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OPERATING PROCEDURES

- In accordance with County Code Section 2.38.100 (D), **FDAG members are intended to serve a term for the life of the group**, or until removed by the Director.
- The FDAG composition will be **adjusted as needed to ensure relevant expertise aligns with the specific matters** under consideration.

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6. SUBCOMMITTEES



- Subcommittees and/or ad hoc committees of the FDAG may be established and dismissed by the Director or their designee **to accomplish work on a specific project of the department.**
- Subcommittees and/or ad hoc committees will **report to the Director or their designee** for the duration of the committee's term.



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7. MEETINGS

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- FDAG meetings will be held **virtually or at locations throughout the county**, as determined by the Director or their designee, in advance of each meeting.
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- FDAG meetings **will not require a quorum** of its membership, or any minimum attendance of members.
- All FDAG meetings shall be **facilitated by the Director** or their designee(s)



COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT
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OPERATING PROCEDURES

COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT ADVISORY GROUP (FDAG)

8. NOTICING OF MEETINGS (1)



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COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT ADVISORY GROUP (FDAG)

8. NOTICING OF MEETINGS (2)



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