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Plumas LAFCo

*The Local Agency Formation Commission
Serving Plumas County*

Attachment 18

February 11, 2019

Office of the State Fire Marshal - State Fire Training

2251 Harvard Street, Suite 400,

Sacramento CA 95815

Attachment 18

RE: Support of Reinstating a Volunteer Firefighter Training Level Dear Fire Marshal Mathisen:

Fire services have leapt to the forefront of discussions amongst governing agencies after the widespread destruction that wildfires have wrought in the State over the last two years. Additionally, here in Plumas County local conditions and challenges have underscored the need for a focused effort at making improvements to fire service structure and efficiencies. The Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) in each County is charged with ensuring logical boundaries and efficiency of municipal services, and as such, has determined that the issues faced by the fire agencies are a concern in need of addressing proactively and in collaboration with all stakeholders county and statewide, which includes CAL FIRE and the Office of the State Fire Marshal.

I am sure you are well aware of the multitude of challenges faced by fire providers across the State in delivering an adequate and sustainable level of services. Here in Plumas County, fire providers appear to be particularly hard hit. Given the rural nature of Plumas County where most districts rely entirely on volunteers, combined with the structure of several small fire districts developed around individual communities, fire providers here draw from a dwindling and finite pool of possible able-bodied firefighters. Simultaneously, volunteerism is on a national decline and more training is demanded of those that choose to give their time.

The onus of finding and training a sufficient number of firefighters to provide an adequate level of services is having a crippling effect on our fire agencies. One fire provider recently had to close its doors due in large part to a dearth of willing volunteers. Another fire district is providing services in the extended territory, spreading thin its

unchanged volunteer resources. LAFCo has become aware that several fire agencies in the County are struggling to address this issue and are searching for service structure changes to manage or, at the least, alleviate some of the burden created by this challenge.

At a recent LAFCo meeting, several Plumas fire providers took part in a discussion regarding the issues faced and the manner in which LAFCo could assist and support the agencies in addressing the issues. A common constraint for a majority of the fire providers present was the elimination of the Volunteer Firefighter certification and the need for all firefighters to train to a Firefighter I level regardless of if the firefighter is in a paid or volunteer position. The Commission would like to indicate its support of reinstating a Volunteer Firefighter certification to alleviate some of the burden on these small fire agencies that are already facing struggles with the aforementioned volunteer constraints. While it is understood that all firefighters should have proper equipment and training for the types of calls to which they respond, it seems as though certain training streamlining could occur to support our struggling agencies in achieving appropriate staffing levels.

Perhaps there are other ways in which your office or CAL FIRE in general could provide training support that would address this issue. We are open to your other ideas to provide the much necessary support these fire agencies need. LAFCo looks forward to engaging in continued discussions with Office of the State Fire Marshal on ways to promote positive change for our fire service providers.

Yours sincerely,



Tom Cooley

Chair, Plumas Local Agency Formation Commission

cc: California State Firefighters Association
Plumas County Board of Supervisors
City of Portola
Beckwourth Fire Protection District
C-Road Community Services District
Chester Public Utility District
Crescent Mills Fire Protection District

Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District Gold Mountain Community Services District
Graeagle Fire Protection District

Greenhorn Creek Community Services District Hamilton Branch Fire Protection District

Indian Valley Community Services District

La Porte Fire Protection District

Long Valley Community Services District

Meadow Valley Fire Protection District

Peninsula Fire Protection District

Plumas Eureka Community Services District

Plumas Eureka Community Services District Prattville-Almanor Fire Protection District

Quincy Fire Protection District

Sierra Valley Fire Protection District

West Almanor Community Services District California Fire Chiefs Association

Plumas County Office of Emergency Services Governor's Office of Emergency Services

Northern California EMS, Inc.