

Brentwood to consider starting own fire district

By Hannah Dreier
Contra Costa Times

Posted: 05/11/2011 05:23:07 PM PDT

Updated: 05/11/2011 06:53:07 PM PDT

BRENTWOOD -- Citing their responsibility to keep residents safe, city leaders have decided to explore pulling out of the struggling East Contra Costa Fire District.

The City Council this week instructed staff members to prepare the necessary paperwork for an application to the Local Agency Formation Commission, which governs boundary changes and the formation of special districts, for a Brentwood-only fire agency. The council will decide whether to proceed with the application after the city staff presents the appropriate forms and resolutions at the May 24 council meeting.

Council members emphasized that they are only exploring options, not abandoning the financially strapped East County agency.

"I don't believe we have an option but to evaluate all of the options that are in front of us," said Councilman Erick Stonebarger, who sits on the East Contra Costa fire board and the city's ad-hoc fire subcommittee.

The East Contra Costa Fire District was formed in 2002 through the consolidation of three local agencies. It is funded almost entirely by property taxes, and has struggled in the wake of the housing crash.

The district hoped to remain solvent with the help of a property assessment, but that effort stalled earlier this month when directors scuttled a report needed to bring the matter before voters.

Postponing a decision on how to drum up funds will force the district to continue going through its savings at a rate of

\$2 million this year alone, according to fire Chief

Hugh Henderson.

The assessment would have generated an estimated \$3.9 million the first year for the fire district, which is expected to run out of reserves before the end of the 2012-13 fiscal year.

On Tuesday, Firefighters Local 1230 President Vince Wells urged the council not to abandon the fire district.

"We'd hate to see this effort from Brentwood to alienate itself from the fire district," he said, noting that the city benefits from all six East County fire stations, not just the two in its city limits.

But the council agreed that the city needs to prepare for the possibility that the fire district will run out of money, leaving residents vulnerable to fires and other emergencies.

"Brentwood has to protect its own," Mayor Bob Taylor said. "We have to protect our citizens and our businesses."

The city has not yet assessed the financial impact of leaving the fire district.

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Commission looks to July to decide Mt. Diablo health district's fate

By Sandy Kleffman
Contra Costa Times

Posted: 05/11/2011 08:15:49 PM PDT

Updated: 05/12/2011 06:21:07 AM PDT

MARTINEZ -- A regulatory agency requested more information Wednesday before it considers whether the Mt. Diablo Health Care District is a waste of taxpayers' money and should be dissolved, or whether it performs a valuable public service.

The Local Agency Formation Commission asked staff members to report July 13 on the steps for dissolving the district, who would pay for it and what would need to be studied before the issue could be put to a public vote in Central Contra Costa in November 2012.

The commission also requested details about the district's activities. In 2007, it asked the district to provide annual progress reports. It received one report in October 2008, but none since.

At its July meeting, the commission will debate whether to pursue dissolution, have another agency assume the district's responsibilities and liabilities, or whether to maintain the status quo because of the student CPR training and other benefits the

district provides.

"I believe that this is a valid topic for LAFCO to consider," said commissioner Don Tatzin, who also is a Lafayette council member. "At the end of the day, this remains a very small agency."

The commission took up the issue at the urging of the Contra Costa Taxpayers Association, which recently joined three previous Contra Costa County grand juries in seeking to have the district eliminated.

Kris Hunt, executive director of the taxpayers group, argued that the district has not

had a purpose since it gave up control of then-Mt. Diablo Medical Center in Concord in 1997, and merged the hospital with the John Muir Health system. It now uses much of the \$265,000 in property taxes it collects annually to sustain itself, including providing health benefits to its members, she said.

Health district board member Roy Larkin



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training to 6,000 freshmen in the Mt. Diablo Unified School District. At a cost of \$76,000, it provided each of those students with take-home kits that included a DVD, handbook and inflatable mannequin.

It also has provided defibrillators at schools and community meeting sites, and in 2008 issued grants to local organizations.

Hunt questioned whether another agency could provide such services at a cheaper cost. She noted that lifetime health and dental insurance for one current and one former board member have created a \$700,000 unfunded liability for the district, with no plan to deal with that issue.

"The district doesn't have a good handle on its finances," said taxpayers association member Wendy Lack.

The health district encompasses about 200,000 residents in Concord, Martinez, Clyde, Pacheco, and portions of Lafayette and Pleasant Hill.

Even if the district is dissolved, there would be no break for taxpayers. The property taxes would continue to be collected. The money that is left over after meeting the district's obligations would be redistributed to other tax-supported agencies.

Brentwood to study leaving fire district

by Rick Lemyre
05.12.11 - 11:00 am

Brentwood Press
Thursday, May 12, 2011



The Brentwood City Council voted unanimously Tuesday to begin work on possibly establishing a Brentwood-only fire department, a decision that could cripple the effort to save the financially beleaguered East Contra Costa Fire Protection District that now serves the city.

The move comes a week after the ECCFPD's eight-member board, which includes four Brentwood councilmen, unanimously rejected an engineer's report that was to have been the basis for forming a district-wide benefit assessment district. The district is currently spending about \$2.5 million per year more than it receives in property taxes, a result of plummeting property values and a tax revenue share established when the population was smaller and local fire service was provided mostly by volunteers.

Unless new revenue source is found, the district will run out of money by the middle of 2012. The rejection of the engineering report means no new money will be available until at least the beginning of 2012, assuming another revenue measure is put before voters and passed in the meantime.

Brentwood's vote approved the recommendation of its Fire Subcommittee (Vice Mayor Steve Barr, also a fire board member, and Councilman Erick Stonebarger, also the fire board president) which was established several months ago "to work parallel (with the district's effort) because we knew there was a chance we would go down this path," Stonebarger said. It amounts to a Plan B, he said, not an abandonment of the effort to find a solution for the entire district. "It's putting us in a position to have an option" so that residents of Brentwood would still have fire service should efforts to save the ECCFPD continue to be unsuccessful.

Gil Guerrero, vice president of firefighter's union Local 1230, urged the council not to make the move. He called it "premature" to begin down the separation path before having collected enough information to know if separation was even possible, and thinks it will undermine the public trust needed to save the district.

"It sends the wrong message," he said. "People will wonder: are they (Brentwood) lowering their life boats? Is the president (Stonebarger) leaving the ship?" The uncertainty will only make passage of any revenue enhancement that might save the district all the more difficult.

Discovery Bay resident Bob Mankin agreed, telling the council that the move "left a crater in your credibility" and that it's possible a vote of "no confidence" might be registered against the Brentwood contingent by the rest of the fire board when it meets again in June.

Commissioner Jim Frazier, also Oakley's mayor, isn't even sure that the next fire board meeting can be held. Given Brentwood's decision to look at going it alone, lawyers are looking at whether they can continue to vote on district matters and, since a quorum of Brentwood's council sits on the fire board, whether they can even discuss their decisions as a City Council at fire meetings.

Even if it's legally OK, the move, made without informing the rest of the fire board, has destroyed Frazier's trust in his fellow board members from Brentwood.

"I have no faith in them anymore," Frazier said.

Brentwood's decision to move now was based on the estimated 12 to 18 months it could take to create a new district through the Local Agency Formation Commission, which oversees the

creation of special districts. The process would include negotiating with the county for current fire tax revenue collected from Brentwood, creating a service plan and securing the additional revenue needed from Brentwood residents in order to finance its own district.

“They’re going to have to pay more either way,” union President Vince Wells said. “Why pay a few more dollars to (form a new district) when you can pay a few more dollars to keep this district? No matter which plan it is, it’s going to cost more money.”

Councilman Bob Brockman bristled at the suggestion that launching a Plan B meant Brentwood had given up all hope for the district, but at the same time he painted a less-than-rosy picture. “It’s foolish to think that we don’t want the best for the whole district,” he said. “I would prefer to save the whole district if it’s possible, but honestly, I don’t know if it is.”

Councilman Joel Bryant said he voted for the move because he had always been taught “If you don’t have a back-up plan, you don’t have a plan.” Still, he wants to try to keep the district whole.

“I don’t see what harm there is in getting everyone together, locking the door, bringing in some pizza, and hammering this out.”

Oakley Councilmember and fire board member Pat Anderson said Brentwood’s move “feels like an abandonment of the group process.” She thinks the ECCFPD might still be saved if a bridge loan can be arranged to keep it afloat for five years while a plan is put together to find permanent funding. Even if that were possible, she added, it would certainly be more difficult now that a political split exists in the district.

Commissioner and Vice Mayor Kevin Romick said he also wishes Brentwood had waited, if only to bring the discussion to the full fire board for discussion prior to a sudden decision to pursue an opt-out plan. He said he has asked the issue be placed on the Oakley council agenda to determine his city’s best course of action.

Saturday, May 14, 2011

Contra Costa Times Readers Forum: Firefighters must do their part in crisis

By Jeff Rubin
Contra Costa Times Readers Forum
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Posted: 05/13/2011 04:00:00 PM PDT

Updated: 05/13/2011 04:55:08 PM PDT

A REPORT of Pinole Fire Department activities on the city's website yields very interesting statistics.

These statistics are relevant because there has been much discussion about the Pinole City Council's decision to close fire Station 74, the Pinole Valley station, beginning July 1 because of the city's fiscal crisis.

In the 60 days station 74 was open from Jan. 1 to March 31 (it was browned out the other 30 days), Station 74 responded to 124 calls, or 2.06 calls per day. Of these 124 calls, seven were fire calls; only one was in the valley, a vehicle fire, not a house fire.

In January, station 74 responded to 44 calls. None were fire calls. In February, Station 74 responded to 34 calls. Of these one was a fire call, in the city, not the valley. In March, Station 74 responded to 46 calls. Of these, six were fire calls, four structure and two vehicle. Only one fire call was in the valley, a vehicle fire.

Of the total of 124 calls responded to by Station 74 from January through March, there was only one fire call (a vehicle) in the valley. The other fire calls were assisting Station 73 in the city or district. Nearly all of the other 120 calls were medical calls, most of the nonemergency variety.

These statistics are also relevant because Local 1230 of the International Association of Firefighters, which represents the Pinole firefighters, apparently is refusing to negotiate pay cuts and have

the firefighters pay their share of the employee portion of the city's contributions to their own pension funds -- as the San Jose Fire Department recently did.

Apparently the union feels that closing Station 74 is its contribution to Pinole's budget woes. Rather than being conciliatory, as the San Jose firefighters were in their negotiations, Local 1230 representatives chastise the city council and accuse council members of not caring about public safety and not negotiating the upcoming contract in good faith.

Two calls per day on average? How many for fires? Is the city getting its money's worth by paying paramedics a firefighter's salary, benefits, and retirement compensation? Could all these medical calls be outsourced at a cost savings to the city?

How does this service compare to that offered by the Pinole Recreation Department, whose very existence is threatened by budget cuts? Will the city devote its entire budget to public safety (police and fire)? Will Pinole become a city where there are no recreation activities for its citizens? What will the thousands of people served by the Pinole Recreation Department -- from toddlers at Tiny Tots to the elderly at the Pinole Senior Center -- do to replace these services, if they are eliminated?

At a fire workshop in June 2010, the then-Local 1230 vice president began his harangue against the city council by saying his men had not had a raise in three years. Then he accused the city council of not having public safety as a priority, and excoriated the council for the new one-year contract the city -- and he! -- had just negotiated and approved. He's not their spokesman any longer.

During the public-comment period, when I said the firefighters seemed to be more concerned about money than public safety, another firefighter said I had "warped morals and ethics."

This firefighter made more than \$125,000 in 2009, including nearly \$22,000 in overtime.

Pinole is broke. Since the city began layoffs in fiscal year 2008-09, 42 people and 53 positions are gone from a work force that once totaled approximately 140 people. The city has eliminated about 30 percent of its staff and frozen and/or eliminated nearly 38 percent of its positions.

The layoffs have affected every department; some are operating on next-to-skeleton crews. City Hall hasn't been open to the public five days a week for the last year.

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As Pinole struggles to remain a full-service city, and not resort to outsourcing police and fire services to county departments, as several Peninsula cities have done, more cuts are likely.

Every department faces this except fire and police. The council says no firefighters or police officers will be laid off.

With those assurances, it would be refreshing to hear a Local 1230 representative say, "We'll take a pay cut and pay our share of our pension contributions, and we'll do the best we can with what we have because we know the city is broke and has laid off 42 people already and we're all in this together."

What are the odds of that?

Jeff Rubin is a member of the Concerned Citizens of Pinole. He is a resident of Pinole.

Monday, May 16, 2011

Pleasant Hill recreation district confronts tight budget

By Lisa P. White
Contra Costa Times

Posted: 05/13/2011 09:28:14 PM PDT

Updated: 05/16/2011 07:20:12 AM PDT

PLEASANT HILL -- With a shrinking budget and three new facilities opening in the next few years, the Pleasant Hill Recreation and Park District board is taking a hard look at employee compensation and future revenue.

"We're in a change situation and it's going to require some financial forecasting of a type that's a little unusual (for the district)," board Chairwoman Sandra Bonato said.

On Wednesday, the Budget and Finance Committee will get its first look at the preliminary budget for the 2011-12 fiscal year. Salaries and benefits make up about 75 percent of the district's \$6 million budget.

Currently, the recreation district pays the employee contribution to CalPERS and the entire premiums for family medical, dental and vision coverage for its 24 full-time employees. The district also pays part of the premiums for employees who work more than 20 hours per week. In 2010, the district paid \$352,060 for health benefits and \$149,821 to cover the employee share of the retirement contribution.

Earlier this year, the district laid off staff and reduced employees' hours to make up a \$300,000 budget shortfall caused by a decline in property taxes and less revenue from classes and activities.

Nonetheless, it's an exciting time in the district, with groundbreaking for the long-awaited new teen and senior centers scheduled for next month. Construction on a new community center starts next year. Funding for those three projects comes

from a \$28 million bond voters approved in 2009.

But when the new facilities open, the district will need money for additional staff and maintenance. Bonato thinks this is an opportune time for the board to consider making changes to employee benefits and to reexamine the programs the district offers. Board members plan to consult with an attorney to review their options regarding benefits, furlough days, comp time and other issues related to employee compensation.

For example, at a meeting earlier this year General Manager Bob Berggren recommended taking a look at a two-tiered system in which new hires would receive fewer benefits than current workers.

District employees paid part of their pension contribution until 2002, when the district took on the entire employee share. That year, the district's total CalPERS contribution was \$98,151, according to district records. By 2010, the CalPERS obligation had ballooned to \$394,101.

"I think that it would be appropriate for employees to contribute to their retirement benefits, yes. What that means in terms of specifics is part of the planning and part of the evaluation we need to do," Bonato said.

However, board members disagreed about whether to make policy changes now or wait until after the new buildings open. Sherry Sterrett argued that it would take six to eight months to develop new policies, too late to affect the upcoming fiscal year's budget.

But Bonato said they shouldn't wait, especially if they agree to ask employees to pay for some of their medical and retirement benefits. She also wants staff to be more creative about finding ways to boost revenue while the senior and community centers are being built.

"I would like to see more programs relocated and greater use of the parks as outdoor classrooms and new programs," Bonato said. "It's a great opportunity for the district to examine our programs and reinvigorate what we offer to our community."

Lisa P. White covers Martinez and Pleasant Hill. Contact her at 925-943-8011. Follow her at [Twitter.com/lisa_p_white](https://twitter.com/lisa_p_white).

Contra Costa Fire District receives \$6.5 million grant

By Rick Hurd
Contra Costa Times

Posted: 05/16/2011 09:09:13 PM PDT

Updated: 05/17/2011 05:16:55 PM PDT

Two Contra Costa Fire District stations slated for closure will remain open for at least the next two years after the federal government announced Monday that it is awarding the fire district a \$6.5 million grant.

The grant, which is part of a federal program called Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response, or SAFER, will "significantly enhance the safety for the community and our firefighters by keeping resources in service," Chief Daryl Louder said in a news release.

The grant is provided through the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which is part of the Department of Homeland Security.

The additional funding, which the fire district voted to accept Tuesday, will pay to keep 21 firefighters employed. The fire district's 2011-12 budget called for as many as five stations to be closed.

"We're so short-staffed now, well below the minimum staffing. So we've been covering all those positions with overtime," Fire Marshal Lewis Broschard said. "By being able to hire these firefighters full-time, that allows us the flexibility to keep open two of those stations."

State budget cuts and the reduction in property tax revenues have taken a toll on the fire district's coffers, and Broschard said the district was operating under the assumption that five stations would be closing. The grant gives the district two more years to find permanent funding.

"In two years, this revenue stream is no longer there unless the SAFER

program is still there, and we're successful at getting it," Broschard said. "But this buys us time."

The fire district is pinning some of its hopes for future revenue on a parcel tax initiative it hopes to have on either the June 2012 or November 2012 ballot.

The proposal was presented to the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors in March, Broschard said.

Rick Hurd covers public safety. Contact him at 925-945-4780.



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Brentwood, Oakley consider fire district's future

By Rowena Coetsee and Roman Gokhman
Contra Costa Times

Posted: 05/25/2011 02:47:52 PM PDT

Updated: 05/25/2011 03:07:36 PM PDT

Brentwood and Oakley leaders said this week they are committed to saving the financially troubled East Contra Costa Fire District, but Brentwood nonetheless will pursue the possibility of forming its own fire department.

"This is our plan B; plan A is to fund the current district to provide service," Councilman and fire board President Erick Stonebarger said.

The fire agency that serves far East County has struggled to remain solvent in the wake of the housing crash, and is expected to exhaust its reserves before the end of the 2012-13 fiscal year. Plans to ask voters to approve a property assessment to fund the district have stalled.

The East Contra Costa Fire District's nine-person board of directors includes members from the Oakley and Brentwood city councils.

At Tuesday's City Council meeting, Brentwood officials said they have started researching other ways the city could provide protection if it were to withdraw from the fire district.

In addition to contacting the county's Local Agency Formation Commission -- a state-mandated body that governs boundary changes and the formation of special districts -- planners also have spoken with independent attorneys and sought advice from a fire chief who retired from another district.

Brentwood's decision to explore forming its own fire department doesn't sit well with some Oakley residents.

"I think they're a bunch of prima donnas," Jim Howard said at Oakley's council

meeting. "They've always felt they're a big brother and can do what they want."

Council members mostly agreed that those of them who sit on the fire district board should keep looking for ways to keep that agency afloat.

"We can't divide ourselves. This is a whole district," said Councilwoman Pat Anderson, a director on the fire board.

She doubts the fire district can survive without the property tax revenue from Brentwood residents.

Brentwood contributes about half of what the district collects from property taxes, said fire Chief Hugh Henderson.

Given the fire district's precarious finances, Anderson predicts that the Local Agency Formation Commission would deny the city's application even if it does decide to submit one.

State law requires the commission to consider the economic effect that a withdrawal would have on adjoining areas, but that's just one of 15 factors her agency must weigh, said the agency's executive director, Lou Ann Texeira. None of those considerations alone would determine LAFCO's decision, she added.

Oakley Mayor Jim Frazier and Vice Mayor Kevin Romick, also directors on the fire board, plan to meet Friday with the Contra Costa Fire District's chief to get a better idea of how much additional revenue far East County's fire district would need for a

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merger to be an attractive prospect.

Consolidating with ConFire would create economies of scale and put many more resources at residents' disposal, said Frazier, who called the scenario a long-term goal of his.

Meanwhile, Brentwood's city attorney and assistant city manager already have met with LAFCO to discuss the agency's requirements.

In the next couple of weeks, Brentwood's ad hoc fire committee also will meet to review options.

Stonebarger, a member of the committee, acknowledged that the city has taken heat for its position but said it must protect its residents.

"The fire district (in the future) can only support half of what it's doing now," he said. "The horizon is approaching. I don't think we're early by any measure."

Contact Roman Gokhman at rgokhman@bayareanewsgroup.com or 925-779-7189 and Rowena Coetsee at rcoetsee@bayareanewsgroup.com or 925-779-7141.



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Ambrose to take over county parks in Bay Point

By Rick Radin
Contra Costa Times

Posted: 05/26/2011 01:32:06 PM PDT

Updated: 05/27/2011 01:55:58 PM PDT

BAY POINT -- The local park district is close to taking over five parks operated by Contra Costa County in this unincorporated community as part of a proposed lawsuit settlement.

Under a tentative agreement, the county would give \$473,000 in fees to the Ambrose Recreation and Park District and turn over Lynbrook, Hickory Meadows, Viewpointe, Boeger and TradeWinds parks, which total about 7 acres.

Ambrose would own and maintain the parks that were built by developers since the 1980s.

The district sued in December 2009, seeking a larger portion of fees under the 1975 Quimby Act that requires developers to pay for building and maintaining parks and other amenities within their projects.

Ambrose owns and operates three parks and a community center in Bay Point.

"Instead of (contesting) the lawsuit, they said 'We'll give you all the money if you take over the parks,'" said Tarry Smith, the district's general manager.

Ambrose currently has to request money from the county for individual projects, Smith said.

The Ambrose board is scheduled to consider approving the settlement June 9, with Contra Costa supervisors following June 21.

"It's odd that these overlapping jurisdictions evolved over the years," said Brian Balbas, a deputy public works director for the county who helped negotiate the deal. "(The agreement) will help to minimize potential problems in the future."

The fees would complete Ambrose's

campaign to raise \$2.2 million to build a new swimming pool, dressing rooms and other facilities at Ambrose Park, off Bailey Road.

Ambrose Park's old pool was built shortly after the district was formed in the late 1940s.

It has been closed for two years because the district did not want to invest more money in an obsolete facility.

Ambrose will take bids on the new pool later this year; officials hope to complete the project by 2013, Smith said.

Before the suit, Ambrose asked the county for help building the pool but was turned down, he said.

The district is also applying for \$3 million to \$4 million in state money for other Ambrose Park improvements, including building an artificial surface soccer field and refurbishing the amphitheater, parking lot and picnic areas, Smith said.



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Cities discuss fire options

by Rick Lemyre and Samie Hartley
05.26.11 - 11:29 am



In meetings at opposite ends of the beleaguered East Contra Costa Fire Protection District Tuesday, the Oakley and Brentwood city councils struggled separately with what to do about their common problem.

The severely under-funded district, operating on a \$2.5 million annual deficit, serves 250

square miles of East Contra Costa and stands to run out of money by the middle of 2012. Since taking over from the County Board of Supervisors in January of 2010, the district has been run by a nine-member board that includes four Brentwood city councilmen, three Oakley council members and two members from the unincorporated areas of the district.

Earlier this month, the ECCFPD Board unanimously rejected as “legally indefensible” an engineer’s report that was to have been the basis for a \$98-per-year, per-parcel benefit assessment that could have kept the ECCFPD afloat.

The rejection of the report means no new revenue will come to the district this year, and the timeline for crafting another revenue measure will bring the district perilously close to insolvency before another solution can be implemented.

As a result, the Brentwood City Council at its May 10 meeting directed city staff to begin the work necessary to apply to the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) to form its own fire department. Councilman Erick Stonebarger, also the ECCFPD Board chair, said the move amounted to a “Plan B” designed to assure that, should the efforts to save the ECCFPD continue to be fruitless, Brentwood residents would still have fire protection. The LAFCO process is also lengthy, said Stonebarger, hence the need to begin work now on a “parallel track” to the ongoing efforts to save the ECCFPD.

The move triggered an angry response from the Oakley ECCFPD representatives, who felt it showed Brentwood wasn’t fully committed to saving the existing district. They also were concerned that Brentwood’s action, and the subsequent political split in the district, could doom future efforts to pass a district-saving tax.

At Tuesday’s City Council meeting, the Oakley representatives re-affirmed their commitment to the ECCFPD. Vice-mayor Kevin Romick, also a fire board member, said he understands why Brentwood wants to pursue separating from the district, but believes the decision is premature. The district has a year to find a way to stay alive, and he believes that way will be found.

“We’re not done,” Romick said. “We have 12 to 18 months to work out a resolution. We’re not done. Brentwood might be looking for other alternatives outside the district but the remaining five members on this board will be actively looking for other alternatives to solve this crisis. We’re not walking away from it. We’re not throwing our hands up in the air and saying there’s nothing we can do. ... There are alternatives and we can solve this.”

Meanwhile, over in Brentwood, the City Council began its discussion by re-iterating that saving the existing district was its first choice. “This is our Plan B,” Stonebarger said. “Our Plan A is to fund the current district.” He acknowledged that the Brentwood representatives had “taken a lot of heat” over the move, and that it had been made without discussing it with the entire ECCFPD first.

“There are Brown Act problems,” he said, referring to the state’s open-meeting laws that, because a quorum of the council sits on the fire board, restrict what it can discuss when not in a publicly posted council meeting. Also, city staff had already run into some delays, re-affirming the need to expedite the matter.

Still, City Manager Donna Landeros told the council that much had been accomplished. Meetings had been held with LAFCO Executive Director Lou Ann Texeira, and a “resource team” of city staff, county officials, and fire service and legal consultants is being formed. Landeros said the process would be long and complex, but that Texeira did not throw cold water on the entire idea of a Brentwood-only department.

“I think she understands our local priority to have a Plan B,” Landeros said. “Plan A has been kicking around for 10 years.”

The ECCFPD was created when the supervisors merged three smaller districts into one in 2001.

Brentwood Press
Thursday, May 26, 2011

Possible Plan B's were also a topic in Oakley. Council member Randy Pope expressed faith in the ECCFPD but wants to ensure that Oakley residents get ample fire protection should Brentwood's application be submitted and approved. He suggested that the city also look into the LAFCO process, as well as consulting with CONFire, which serves Antioch, about a possible merger. Mayor Jim Frazier agreed, announcing that he, Romick and City Manager Bryan Montgomery planned to meet with CONFire this week to discuss what the district needs to do to make a merger happen.

Frazier also said he wants to meet with Stonebarger and ask Brentwood to reconsider its position so that the district appears as a united front. "We need to send a clear and concise message as a district and let the people make the determination of what kind of services they want," Frazier said.

"It's their decision. Do they want pay more to the fire district or do they want to pay more to their insurance company? That's just the way it goes. Giving them the clear message is what we have to do."

The next ECCFPD board meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 6 at 6:30 p.m. at Oakley City Hall, 3231 Main St.