



MENDOCINO COUNTY *MEMORANDUM*

Date: April 5, 2016

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Supervisors Dan Hamburg and Dan Gjerde,
Ad Hoc Committee on Fire and Emergency Services

Subject: Recommendations for first steps and next steps for fire funding

On November 17, 2015, the Board of Supervisors appointed the two of us as an ad hoc committee to work with County staff and local fire departments and emergency medical services so we could possibly bring back recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. Since that time, we concentrated our discussions with the fire departments and County staff. On March 14, 2016 the ad hoc reported out with its recommendations for first steps and next steps.

With this memo we are expanding upon our recommendations from March 14.

First Steps: Proposition 172 Funding

“Proposition 172 was placed on the ballot by the Legislature and the Governor to partially replace the \$2.6 billion in property taxes shifted from local agencies to local school districts as part of the 1993-94 state budget agreement.” – California Legislative Analyst Office, Proposition 172 – How Did it affect spending for Public Safety?

Here in Mendocino County, like the rest of the State, County government lost the lion share of property tax revenues the State shifted to local schools. That said, Auditor-Controller Lloyd Weer is providing information, attached to this memo, showing nearly every special district providing fire protection also lost a modest portion of their property tax dollars to local schools. Given this, as first steps the ad hoc committee recommends the board direct:

- 1) Fire Protection made eligible for Proposition 172 funds.
- 2) Staff to prepare the FY2016-17 County budget with pages that illustrate allocation of Proposition 172 funds, as well as the County’s maintenance of effort for funding public safety departments, as required by AB 2788. Both the Auditor-Controller and the CEO’s office agree this can be done and would go a long way to provide the transparency requested by others, including the 2016 Grand Jury.
- 3) Recognize that proposition 172 provided a proportional replacement for property tax revenues shifted to schools through the Educational Revenue Augmentation Fund (ERAF), and that fire departments, and fire companies, should receive the same proportion of funds allocated to County-run public safety services (estimated at 46.6% in FY 2016-17). Supervisors also intend to make whole the funding of the Sheriff, Jail, District Attorney and Probation services, by increasing the County's contribution from non-172 funding sources. The draft FY 2017 budget would be so constructed, with

roughly \$6,484,106 allocated to the sheriff, jail, probation and district attorney budgets (representing 46.6% percent of funds the County lost with ERAF) and roughly \$564,874 allocated to fire service (representing 46.6% of funds the districts lost with ERAF).

- 4) Acknowledge that the County of Mendocino has historically provided General Fund, Special District 3 and other funding in support of fire service, and instruct the draft FY 2016-17 County budget include a separate page illustrating all County support for fire and emergency services, including Proposition 172 and Special District 3 funds.
- 5) Staff to recommend a practical way to allocate Proposition 172 funding to fire protection, taking into account comments raised to the ad hoc committee by the Auditor-Controller and other County staff. To address these concerns, staff might recommend the allocation of Proposition 172 funding for fire and emergency dispatch services, with Special District 3 funds (currently amounting to some \$170,000) allocated to support the fire and emergency services.

Next Steps: Work with Fire Departments to seek other funding and cost savings

Meet with CalFire, local fire departments and representatives of Senator Mike McGuire and Assembly Member Jim Wood to discuss the allocation of State Responsibility Area (SRA) fees, with the goal of convincing the State to re-direct a portion of funding to local fire departments. This work should be coordinated with California State Association of Counties and Rural County Representatives. An initial meeting is set for April 8, 10am, in the County Administration Building.

The ad hoc committee also intends to meet with the fire departments and emergency medical services to discuss ways to allocate Special District 3 funds, and whether or not to pursue voter approval to increase this funding source. The ad hoc committee would then bring back recommendations for further action by the board of supervisors.

Work with County staff and local fire departments to explore options to share and cut costs.
Work with local fire departments to help them meet their remaining funding gaps, as those funding gaps are identified with further details.

The ad hoc committee would recommend the board act on the list of five First Steps and endorse the list of three Next Steps. The ad hoc committee members are willing to continue to volunteer their time with this work and to follow-up with the Next Steps.