



LAKEPORT FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

445 North Main Street, Lakeport, CA 95453
Telephone: (707) 263-4396 Fax: (707) 263-7087
Web Site: www.lakeportfire.com



Daniel J. Grebil
Interim Fire Chief

September 13, 2022

The Honorable Michael Lunas
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
County of Lake
255 Forbes Street
Lakeport, CA 95453

Dear Judge Lunas,

As the governing body of the Lakeport Fire Protection District, the Board of Directors have prepared comments on the findings and recommendations pertaining to the 2021-2022 Lake County Grand Jury Final Report entitled "Lakeport Fire Protection District – Governing Missteps." These comments are being submitted pursuant to Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05.

FINDINGS

F-1: The Board members are unpaid and are appointed - by the City of Lakeport (two members) and the Lake County BOS (three members) - not elected by District residents.

Agrees with the findings

F-2: The Board has no process to rotate automatically the office of Chairman, and the current Chairman has held that position for many years straight.

Disagree wholly, the Board annually selects a Chair and Vice-Chair and the current Chair has not held that position for many years straight.

F-3: The Board has not voted to accept a proposed Policies and Procedures Manual.

Agrees with the findings

F-4: The Measure M parcel tax legal requirements for a separate account and annual public accounting have not been met.

Disagree partially with the finding as the Measure M parcel tax is allocated into a separate revenue account. The annual public accounting is now being met.

F-5: Adherence to Brown Act requirements has been lacking in regard to entrances being unlocked to the public during Board Meetings.

Disagree wholly as the Board is not aware of any public limitations to accessing their public meetings.

F-6: Adherence to Brown Act requirements has been lacking in regard to the provision of agendas to the public that include attached documents.

Agrees with the findings

F-7: Adherence to Brown Act requirements has been lacking in regard to the Board meeting location's lack of wheelchair (disabled) access.

Disagree partially because the Board is not aware of any disabled persons not having access to the Board meetings.

F-8: Adherence to Brown Act requirements has been intermittent in regard to publicly reporting actions, if any, along with the vote, occurring during a closed session.

Disagree wholly as the Board routinely reports out any action taken, including any votes taken, in closed session.

F-9: Major financial decisions are pending regarding the two LFPD Stations in Lakeport, the Finley station, and the vacant property.

Agrees with the findings

F-10: No Fee Schedule has been created and adopted for the requisite annual inspections of business and residential facilities, and, to fulfill this requirement, staffing may also need to be increased.

Agrees with the findings

F-11: Physical exams and cancer screenings for paid and volunteer firefighters were not provided annually for several years. None of this year's exams included cancer screenings.

Agrees with the findings

F-12: The LFPD has no Safety Officer, Battalion Chief, or Fire Marshall as backup for the interim Chief.

Agrees with the findings

F-13: There is no designated on-call Chaplain or mental-health specialist to help the staff process traumatic events

Agrees with the findings

F-14: The firefighter who is filling the role of Fleet Mechanic uses his personal equipment.

Disagrees wholly with finding as the Lakeport Fire Protection District has no Fleet Mechanic.

F-15: Stations 50 and 52 lack vehicle exhaust systems.

Agrees with the findings

F-16: Stations 50 and 52 are not earthquake-proof.

Agrees with the findings

F-17: Station 50 contains asbestos, has non-Code electrical connectivity (with power cords running from the attic through the ceiling), and has roof leaks.

Agrees with the findings

F-18: The District was and is losing revenue due to inadequate ambulance billing coding and collection practices.

Disagree wholly as the Board is not aware of losing any revenue due to inadequate ambulance billing coding and collection practices during the term of this Grand Jury's report.

F-19: For a period of years, the Board did not provide sufficient oversight on correcting budgetary deficits.

Agrees with the findings

F-20: Firefighter layoffs were demoralizing to staff and community.

Agrees with the findings

F-21: The staff (paid and volunteer) and the Board lack effective communication, a sense of collaboration while facing serious ongoing issues, and mutual understanding.

Agrees with the findings

RECOMMENDATIONS

R-1: That a full forensic audit be conducted of the LFPD, specifically regarding Measure M revenue and expenditures. (F-4)

The recommendation has not yet been implemented as the Board relies on its Annual Independent Audit to articulate Measure M revenues and expenses.

R-2: That the LFPD comply with all of the provisions of the Brown Act. through F-8)

The recommendation has been implemented.

R-3: That the Board decide and vote whether to sell, upgrade, or further develop its various properties – Station 50, Larrecou property, Finley station, and Station 52. (F-9, F-15 - F-17)

The recommendation requires further analysis that the Board will be undertaking within the current fiscal year.

R-4: That the acting Fleet Mechanic be given a clear and regular maintenance schedule and be provided district equipment and property. (F-14)

The recommendation has not yet been implemented as the Fire District does not have a Fleet Mechanic.

R-5: That physical exams and cancer screenings be conducted locally on all paid and volunteer firefighters annually. (F-11)

The recommendation requires further analysis and Fire District staff is researching mobile on-site physical exams and cancer screenings.

R-6: That the next Chief have operational backup in the form of a Safety Officer, Battalion Chief, and/or Fire Marshall. (F-12)

The recommendation requires further analysis as to the feasibility and fiscal impact.

R-7: That a Board Ordinance be established and implemented that allows the department to charge and collect appropriate fees for annual inspections of business and residential facilities. (F-10)

The recommendation requires further analysis as to the feasibility and fiscal impact of further exactions from the residents, property and business owners of the Fire District in the form of additional fees beyond the property and special taxes paid.

R-8: That the LFPD make a formal arrangement with a Chaplain or mental health specialist in-County to be on-call to assist the firefighters in processing traumatic events. (F-13)

The recommendation requires further analysis as to the willingness of Fire District employees and volunteers for such an arrangement.

R-9: That the LFPD Board vote to convert to implementing district-wide election, rather than City or County appointment, of its five members. (F-1)

The recommendation has not yet been implemented as California Fire District Law allows for the appointment of Directors verses being elected.

R-10: That the Board approve and adopt organizational and operational Policies and Procedures that include specifying periodic rotation of the role of Chairman. (F-2, F-3)

The recommendation has not yet been implemented but the Board is working to adopt Board Policies that include this recommendation.

R-11: That the Board make a consistent effort to interact informally/socially with the firefighters in order to improve morale and trust. (F-11, F-14, F-15, F-20, F-21)

The recommendation has been implemented.

R-12: That the 2022-2023 Civil Grand Jury continue this investigation to follow-up on the above Recommendations and report on further developments, including the hiring of a new Chief. (F-1 through F21)

The recommendation requires further analysis as it is not within the purview of the Fire District Board to comment.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William Gabe", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

William Gabe
Chair of the Board of Directors
Lakeport Fire Protection District

