



## FACT SHEET: SAUSALITO FIRE SERVICES CONSOLIDATION

*Identifying a stable, cost-effective and long-term solution for providing Sausalito residents with high-quality fire protection and emergency services.*



### **A History of Partnership**

Since 2004, the City of Sausalito has partnered with the Southern Marin Fire Protection District (SMFPD) to provide the residents and businesses of Sausalito with high-quality fire protection and emergency services.



Even before that, when the City of Sausalito operated its own fire department, the two agencies regularly cooperated in responding to major fires and other emergencies that neither one on their own had sufficient resources or personnel to handle.

Governed by a formal contract between the City and Fire Protection District, this partnership has proven to be highly effective in keeping Sausalito residents and businesses safe. Indeed, many residents today may not even be aware that their fire and emergency services are provided under the day-to-day supervision of the Fire Protection District.

Under this model, the SMFPD provides almost all management, operations and administrative services, including a fire chief and other key management and firefighting personnel, while the City of Sausalito owns and maintains its downtown fire station and equipment and employs 15 firefighters who are managed by the Fire Protection District.

### **A Need for Change**

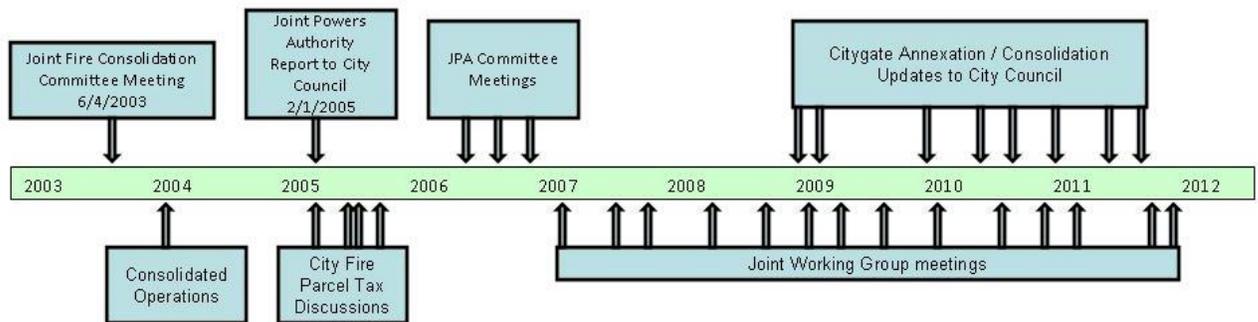
Despite the success of the current model, it has become outdated in the face of changing state and federal standards which require certain levels of firefighter staffing, training and supervision to ensure a safe and adequate response to fires and other emergencies.

In addition, the current contract no longer reflects the full scope and cost of services that the Fire Protection District provides to the residents and businesses of Sausalito, with an annual gap of almost \$395,000 between what the City pays and SMFPD's costs to provide the level of supervision even now provided for City fire and emergency services.

As a result, the City and the Fire Protection District began formally in 2006 to study more efficient and cost-effective ways to provide Sausalito with fire protection and emergency services that can better keep pace with changing firefighting standards and maintain the same high level of public safety which residents have come to expect.

## Creating a Sustainable Model

A Joint Working Group composed of staff and elected representatives from the City and Fire Protection District, following many months of careful research and analysis and working with union representatives and experts in municipal finance and consolidation, has identified three alternatives to the current agreement for providing the City of Sausalito with fire protection services.



### Alternative 1: Formal merger with SMFPD (preferred)

- SMFPD boundaries are expanded to include the City of Sausalito, with approval required by the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO).
- Sausalito voters elect members to the SMFPD, with appointment of two Sausalito residents as non-voting, advisory representatives to the SMFPD Board until the first election after the merger is complete.
- City retains ownership of downtown fire station.
- SMFPD employs all fire services personnel and manages all fire services operations.
- Voter approval for an annual \$90 parcel tax required to pay SMFPD for Sausalito fire services costs, with additional funding from existing City property tax revenue.

### Alternative 2: Full contract for service with SMFPD

- City contracts with SMFPD to provide all fire and emergency protection services.
- City retains ownership of downtown fire station.
- SMFPD employs all fire services personnel and manages all fire services operations.
- Voter approval for an annual parcel tax of up to \$250 to cover costs of full contract with SMFPD, with the city continuing to use part of its property tax and other General Fund revenue to support fire services.

### Alternative 3: Reinstate a Sausalito Fire Department

- Sausalito operates its own, standalone fire department.
- Voter approval for an annual parcel tax of up to \$400 to cover additional costs of operating a standalone fire department, with the City continuing to use part of its property tax and other General Fund revenue to support fire services.

### **Exploring Other Options**

In addition to consolidation with the SMFPD, the City of Sausalito has explored consolidation/merger efforts or studies involving the City of Mill Valley, the Tiburon Fire Protection District and the Marin County Fire Department to gauge their interest in providing fire protection services for Sausalito. Each of these agencies has declined to participate in any actual merger of fire services.

### **Next Steps**

The Joint Working Group, based on its research and analysis over more than five years, has concluded that formally merging with SMFPD (Alternative 1) represents the most practical and cost-effective approach to providing the City of Sausalito with fire protection services. Among the next steps in the public process are:

1. Conduct community forums to inform residents of Sausalito about the various options and the preferred approach (June/July 2011).
2. City and SMFPD formally agree on details of a merger and submit an application to LAFCO to approve expanding SMFPD's boundaries to include Sausalito (August 2011).
3. Public review and approval process before LAFCO, including public meetings and hearings (Fall 2011 to Winter 2012).
4. City of Sausalito places a ballot measure before voters to approve a parcel tax (June 2012).

### **Community Forums**

The City and SMFPD have scheduled a series of facilitated community forums to inform residents about these alternatives, answer questions, hear public comments and address any concerns.

The dates for the community forums are June 29 and July 6, 9, 14 and 18. The times and locations for these forums will be updated here in the coming weeks, and residents will receive public notification by mail in advance of the meetings.

### **More Information**

For more information, please visit *What's Current* on the City of Sausalito website at [www.ci.sausalito.ca.us](http://www.ci.sausalito.ca.us).

#### **About the Southern Marin Fire Protection District**

The Southern Marin Fire Protection District is a special district created in 1999 by the consolidation of the Alto-Richardson Bay Fire District and the Tamalpais Fire District. The agency is governed by an elected seven-member Board of Directors.

For more information, visit [www.southernmarinfire.org](http://www.southernmarinfire.org).