

NCFPD approves pursuing JPA with healthcare district

Joe Naiman
Village News Correspondent

According to the North County Fire Protection District (NCFPD) board agenda for June 28, the recommendations to pursue a joint powers agreement with the Fallbrook Healthcare District, to implement resources from a

SAFER grant on a trial basis, and to approve a sole-source purchase of medical equipment were three separate items. According to NCFPD fire chief Steve Abbott, those three items which were all approved on 5-0 board votes are complementary with each other.

“It’s really all the same thing. It’s putting our folks where

they can do the most good,” Abbott said.

Actual language for a joint powers agreement (JPA) will return in the future both to the NCFPD board and to the Fallbrook Healthcare District board for ratification. “We’re simply moving forward with pursuing the JPA,” Abbott said of the June 28 action.

“I’m very excited,” Abbott said. “I think the secret of success of both the government sector and the NPO (non-profit organization) sector is going to be through collaborative efforts.”

A joint powers agreement would allow for joint implementation of programs or the construction of facilities. “There are a lot of interesting models out there,” Abbott said. “This is really almost a no-brainer. It’s really very exciting. We can see all kinds of opportunity to both streamline healthcare and improve access to it at the same time.”

The Federal Emergency Management Agency’s U.S. Fire Administration has an Assistance to Firefighters Grants program which includes Staffing for Adequate Firefighting and Emergency Response (SAFER) grants. The December 2014 closure of Fallbrook Hospital forced NCFPD ambulances to transport patients to other hospitals, which increases activity for NCFPD

responders and also increases the time the apparatus is not available for a subsequent call.

Last year NCFPD was awarded a \$1.1 million SAFER grant to cover the cost of two additional firefighter/paramedic positions for each shift over a two-year period, and when the NCFPD board approved the acceptance of the grant in September the board also directed fire department staff to proceed with implementing actions related to deployment and response configuration.

The reconfiguration moved one full-time employee to Station 6 in Rainbow, moved two full-time employees to Station 1 just east of Downtown Fallbrook, moved the Station 6 first response squad to Station 1, and converted one engine into a brush rig which will be based at Station 4 (Pala Mesa).

“I’m really very excited about the opportunity to adjust our deployment and do a better job to meet response time needs,” Abbott said. “That will significantly improve response time in the area.”

Last year’s opening of the new Station 5 in Bonsall, just north of State Route 76, has reduced the demand for response from Station 3 in the Olive Hill area. The Winterwarm area is the location of NCFPD’s Station 2.

“That’s another reason why

dividing our resources up a little differently makes sense,” Abbott said.

The Rainbow Volunteer Fire Department maintained its autonomy after the 1986 merger which brought the county service area covering fire protection in Rainbow into what became the North County Fire Protection District. The relocation of a full-time firefighter to Rainbow ensures that Station 6 will have a firefighter certified to drive a fire truck. “The challenge has been getting more than one and getting one who can drive the apparatus,” Abbott said.

A Fallbrook Healthcare District grant will fund \$29,839 of the \$43,440 for the sole-source purchases of a refurbished Physio-Control Lifepak 12-Lead EKG defibrillator which will be placed in Rainbow, a Zoll AutoPulse System Chest Compression Device which will increase the number of NCFPD ambulances with such resuscitation capability from three to four, and a Stryker Power Pro gurney which will become the fourth to be placed on a fire district ambulance.

“They’re trying to support emergency medical services,” Abbott said. “We were very thankful to them for that.”

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