

## **Recommended City Council Responses to Findings and Recommendations in Grand Jury Report “The Fire Next Time – Will We Be Ready?”**

### **GRAND JURY FINDINGS**

***Finding 1:** The City of San Diego needs to address the gaps in emergency and fire protection services.*

**Mayor’s Response:** The Mayor agrees with this finding. Since taking office the Fire-Rescue Department’s budget has been increased by approximately \$30.4 million or 19% from Fiscal Year 2006. This funding increase has been utilized to address previously existing gaps in service delivery by providing additional fire stations, emergency response and support vehicles, firefighting equipment, and fire fighter staffing. In addition, critical aerial firefighting and rescue capabilities were significantly enhanced by the acquisition and staffing of a second medium lift helicopter, Copter 2.

**IBA Recommendation: Join the Mayor’s response with the following supplemental information:**

In 2008, the Ad Hoc Fire Prevention and Recovery Committee was created to analyze data from the 2003 and 2007 wildfires in order to evaluate and bolster fire preparedness and response in the City of San Diego. Issues to be discussed and reviewed include response procedures, evacuation plan, allocation of resources and potential development code, budget and brush management changes. In response to a request by Council President Peters to outline “a list of alternative measures and relevant costs to implement the Fire-Rescue Department Station Master Plan to eliminate the City’s fire station and staffing deficits within the next ten years”, the IBA presented two reports (IBA 08-12: Preliminary Report on Fire Rescue Needs and Funding Plan and IBA 08-46: Report on San Diego Fire-Rescue Needs and Funding Plan) to the Committee for discussion.

***Finding 11:** Neither the County of San Diego nor any of the cities, including the City of San Diego, had a standard operating procedure for the operation of a mega-shelter.*

**Mayor’s Response:** The Mayor agrees with this finding.

**IBA Recommendation: Join the Mayor’s Response.**

### **GRAND JURY RECOMMENDATIONS**

***Recommendation 08-105:** Prepare a ballot measure to propose an increase in the Transient Occupancy Tax to be used solely for the purpose of improving fire protection levels including additional stations, engines, firefighters, training, equipment, etc. as outlined in the After Action Reports. We believe a 2.5% should be considered.*

**Mayor's Response:** The recommendation will not be implemented. As the report stated, the City Council placed a 2.5% increase in the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) on the ballot in both March and November of 2004 and both times it failed.

The region's fire professional and emergency managers provided exceptional service during 2007 Wildfires, while also exposing some of the shortcomings in the region and the City. To study and then address those shortcomings a Regional Fire Protection Committee was formed. This committee included representation by co-chairmen Supervisor Ron Roberts and Mayor Jerry Sanders as well as other local elected officials and Fire Chiefs from throughout the region. The committee focused on improving coordination between the existing fire agencies throughout the county as well as identifying a funding source, should one be deemed necessary by the committee. The Regional Fire Protection Committee recommended the County Board of Supervisors place a \$52 per parcel tax to fund fire protection improvements before voters. The County Board of Supervisors voted on August 6, 2008 to place the measure on the November 2008 ballot.

Should this ballot measure be successful, it is anticipated to generate approximately \$50 million annually. Half of the funds would create the San Diego Regional Fire Protection Agency and pay for reserve fire engines, water bombers and other regional equipment. The other half would be allocated to local fire agencies to bolster their local capabilities.

**IBA Recommendation: Join the Mayor's response with the following supplemental information:**

Should the ballot measure be unsuccessful, the City would need to revisit the identification of a long term funding solution to support the City's fire protection needs.

***Recommendation 08-106:*** *Reallocate existing funds and develop new revenue streams.*

**Mayor's Response:** The recommendation has already been implemented. Each year, the Mayor's Office presents a budget to the City Council for deliberation and debate prior to adoption. Over the past three budget proposals, general fund dollars have been reallocated to increase funding for the Fire-Rescue Department which includes increased apparatus and personnel.

Additionally, response 08-105 addresses the issue of new revenue streams.

**IBA Recommendation: Join the Mayor's response with the following supplemental information:**

The City has a structural budget deficit, in which ongoing expenditures consistently exceed ongoing revenues. The City continually seeks to reallocate existing funds to ensure the highest priorities are achieved, i.e. public safety. Additional reallocation of funds for public safety will impact the level of service currently performed by other departments, including the Library and Park and Recreation. The IBA has previously

recommended that the City explore the feasibility of new revenue streams including the assurance that existing fees for services are cost-recoverable.

***Recommendation 08-115:*** *Adopt an Emergency Care and Sheltering Plan for the City of San Diego which includes a plan for the establishment and operation of a mega-shelter, with particular application to the Qualcomm Stadium facility.*

**Mayor's Response:** This recommendation is being implemented. The City of San Diego became acutely aware during the October 2007 Wildfires that the planned resources for Care and Shelter Operations quickly became overwhelmed. To better serve our communities, City staff began discussions on additional planning efforts needed for future disasters to include those of a greater magnitude. Care and Sheltering Plans are being developed and implemented to increase coordination and response within the City that will complement the Operational Area Emergency Plan Annex G, Care and Shelter Operations. In addition, the City is developing an Appendix to Annex G to outline with specificity the requirements needed to manage an effective mega-shelter, to include site specific plans for Qualcomm Stadium.

**IBA Recommendation:** **Join the Mayor's response with the following supplemental information:**

These plans are expected to be presented to either the City Council or City Council Committee upon their completion.