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County fire mulls possible move for Devore station

Jim Steinberg, The Sun

Posted: February 22, 2017, 11:45 PM



San Bernardino County Fire Captain John Flesher, tends to the station's replacement fire engine, at San Bernardino County Fire Station 2 in Devore Tuesday. The fire station lost their truck when it fell into a sinkhole on Interstate 15 through the Cajon Pass last week. JOHN VALENZUELA — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



The county reportedly may be planning to move San Bernardino County Fire Station 2 from Devore to north Fontana as new housing projects are slated that could bring more residents to that area. JOHN VALENZUELA — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

DEVORE >> **San Bernardino County Fire Department** officials are studying the possibility of relocating Station No. 2 from here to the Rosena Ranch housing development, which is about 3 miles away, officials confirmed Tuesday.

A factor in a possible move would be the need to expand the station to host more equipment during the fire season, said Tracey Martinez, the department's public information officer.

"The department is in an exploratory stage," Martinez said. Cost factors and service response issues are being examined, she said.

It might end up that Station No. 2 is kept and another location is built as well, Martinez said. There is no time frame for the decision.

Second district Supervisor Janice Rutherford earlier this week received “several emails and a Facebook message from Devore residents concerned about the fire station,” said Scott Vanhorne, Rutherford’s communications director.

Rosena Ranch is located north of Fontana and Rancho Cucamonga and south of the Cajon Pass. Station 2, at 1511 Devore Road, has two fire engines, a brush patrol engine and a three-person crew: captain, engineer and firefighter, Martinez said.

The Devore station also is home to the fire engine that tumbled over the edge of the southbound 15 Freeway in the Cajon Pass on Friday when storm water eroded the freeway shoulder. The engine’s crew escaped safely.

If a station move were to occur, it would take a couple of years, Martinez said.

Station 2 opened in March 2001. It covers the community of Devore, the 15/215 Freeway interchange, 15 Freeway north to Oak Hills, east to Palm Avenue and Kendall Drive, south to Sierra Avenue, including Rosena Ranch, and provides assistance with the community of Lytle Creek, Highway 138 from the 15 Freeway east to Summit Valley Road and west to Lone Pine Canyon Road, Martinez said.

<http://www.sbsun.com/government-and-politics/20170222/county-fire-mulls-possible-move-for-devore-station>

Upland should hold onto its water rights: Editorial

The Editorial Board, San Bernardino County Sun

Posted: February 22, 2017, 3:32 PM

The city of Upland is on the right track in moving to receive its fire protection from San Bernardino County.

And it’s also right to reject the notion of selling its water assets.

At Monday night’s City Council meeting, Interim City Manager Marty Thouvenell emphatically denied rumors circulating on social media that he had brought in a new legal firm to sell the city’s water rights.

“That’s probably the most ridiculous thing I’ve heard in the last year,” Thouvenell said. “Everybody should understand that this council and I will never recommend that we will sell water rights.”

We must note, though, this paragraph from a guest commentary by Thouvenell that the Daily Bulletin printed in August 2016:

“Other task force recommendations included potential changes in the way the water system and fire department are managed, up to and including outsourcing or merging operations with other agencies. That, too, is a tough decision, though as we’ve seen with our library operations and trash hauling — both of which are managed by private companies — it can be done.”

Apparently he’s had a change of heart since then, and now says it won’t be done in the case of water. That’s good.

The rumors began after Thouvenell dismissed the city attorney and his law firm, and hired new City Attorney Jim Markman, who specializes in water rights and water law. Markman, though, said he would be the wrong person to arrange a sale.

"I advised all of my clients, and I've been doing so since the first water case I was in, to gobble up the water rights, all of the infrastructure, all of the assets ... when you can because it'll never be cheap" he said.

He's right about that. One need only look at neighboring Claremont, which is waging an expensive and so-far losing battle to take over water rights and assets owned and managed by a private company. Claremont residents pay much more for water than do Uplanders.

The fire trucks and fire stations that Upland will hand over as part of its annexation to **San Bernardino County Fire** are depreciating assets. But as California history teaches, water and water rights in this state are assets that never stop appreciating. Upland is fortunate to have the groundwater and water rights it has. It should not let go of them.

<http://www.sbsun.com/opinion/20170222/upland-should-hold-onto-its-water-rights-editorial>

City mulls sales tax to keep fire district afloat

Paola Baker, *Desert Dispatch*

Posted: February 23, 2017, 12:01 AM

BARSTOW — Amidst ongoing financial issues with the Barstow Fire Protection District, the City Council decided to move forward in presenting a sales tax ballot measure expected to get the district back on track while keeping fire services under local control.

The possible solution was discussed during a BFPD sustainability workshop Tuesday. Annexation of the district's fire services to the **San Bernardino County Fire Department** was also presented, but city officials say the sales tax appears to be the best way to bring the fire district back to sustainability while maintaining local control.

Keeping fire services local was a key point during the workshop. Councilmembers, the Mayor, local firefighters and residents all spoke about the importance of having and keeping a locally-based, financially-stable fire district.

"I don't think any of us object that the county has a great fire department," Mayor Julie Hackbarth-McIntyre said. "But, in working with mayors in the High Desert (that have annexed into the county), I think they regret it and would still like local control."

BFPD Interim Chief Jamie Williams began the workshop with a brief presentation on the district's current status and financial standing. The district currently has six firefighters available per day and has been operating at a significant deficit since the 2013-2014 fiscal year. The deficit is only expected to grow as retirement costs increase, Williams said.

"The revenue does not support expenditures needed to sustain current level of service or provide for future growth," Williams said. "It does not allow for stability or sustainability at the rate we're at."

Other revenue options the council discussed included a parcel tax, consisting of \$148 dollars per parcel and estimated to generate an annual revenue of \$1.2 million, a 2 percent increase to the city's transient occupancy tax, and annexation to County Fire.

Both a quarter-cent increase and a half-cent increase in sales tax were presented. With a half-cent increase, the city could generate an estimated \$3.8 million, with residents paying an average of \$47 a year. Assistant city manager Cindy Prothro said the figures were drawn by comparing sales tax per capita with four other High Desert communities.

The measure would be a special purpose tax, requiring a two-thirds majority vote. While most council members appeared pleased with the proposal, council member Rich Harpole brought up concerns that the vote wouldn't allow all district residents to have their voice heard.

"The only people who would be allowed to vote would be the residents of the city who live within city limits, not district residents who live outside of them," Harpole said. "Which is why it's kind of important that we look at, and consider, annexation of those areas, because this is an important issue. If we were going to do it by a parcel tax they would have a vote. But from a sales tax perspective, they have zero voice on the issue and no ability to influence it."

Harpole later clarified his statements after Mayor Pro Tem Carmen Hernandez shared her opinion that discussing annexation "wasn't appropriate at this time" as it might prolong the council's ability to make further decisions on the standing of the fire district.

"I'm prepared to move forward on (the fire board's) recommendations at the earliest opportunity," Harpole said. "I just want to point out that many of our neighbors aren't going to have a voice in this decision, but they're going to be affected the same as the rest of us."

However, local resident Mike Hernandez said he didn't believe it was "wrong" to impose the tax on those residents, as they also use fire services.

"There's 50,000 people in this area but it's only subsidized by 22,000, which is the local city taxpayer," Hernandez said. "And if there's an accident on the freeway, or someone gets sick at home, the fire district responds."

Desert Ambulance Services owner Ed Muncy mentioned concerns about how moving fire services to the county may affect resources within the city.

"Whatever our city council can do, keep it in mind that if the fire district is taken over by the county, I'm really fearful that there would be a significant degradation in fire services in Barstow," Muncy said.

The fire board recommended city staff present the half-cent sales tax ballot measure at the next City Council and BFPD meeting, as well as a resolution to transition to the county-based SBCERA retirement pool. A \$900,000 loan agreement between the city and BFPD, with the funds to be used for the retirement transition, was also recommended.

All recommendations, except for an added recommendation by Hackbarth-McIntyre to make Williams the permanent fire chief, were approved with a unanimous vote.

"I'm aghast at the possibility of losing local control," council member Merrill Gracey said. "We need the autonomy and I'm not one to give it up."

The next meeting will be held on Mar. 6. The workshop's agenda and all supporting documents are available at www.barstowca.org.

<http://www.desertdispatch.com/news/20170223/city-mulls-sales-tax-to-keep-fire-district-afloat>

Fatality on Hwy 18

Proliferation of Highway Incidents

Heidi Fron, Mountain News

Posted: February 23, 2017



A car on fire on State Highway 330 below Running Springs extinguished shortly before the storm on Feb. 17 created additional traffic delays. CALTRANS

A number of storm-related incidents, including a fatality on State Highway 18, plagued motorists both on the mountain and off.

The severe storm on Feb. 17, and continued rainfall over the weekend, caused problems from Cajon Pass on down to Forest Falls. Mudslides, flooding, a suicide and an attempted suicide, a fire engine tumbling over I-15 and a Hwy. 330 car fire were among the factors that brought traffic to a stop on nearly every major mountain highway.

At the southeast end of the mountain range, the drama began at 10 a.m. on Feb. 16 as a 300-meter section of a hillside in Forest Falls began to slide. According to Eric Sherwin, spokesman for the **San Bernardino County Fire Department**, four homes and fire station 99 were at risk in the path of the slide.

Residents in two homes evacuated voluntarily and the other two homes were vacant. Firefighters moved equipment out of the station. Road crews placed concrete barriers along Valley of the Falls Drive to divert mud and debris.

By mid—day on Feb. 17, County Fire was in position and recorded the spectacular landslide on video. It began to break off slowly, with earth and trees falling into the drainage below. The pace accelerated. From an area 300 yards wide, enormous chunks of soil, rocks, timber and snow plunged 1,000 feet down Slide Canyon.

Ultimately, Valley of the Falls Drive was not blocked; residents of Forest Falls were not trapped; and Highway 38 nearby was not affected.

Meanwhile, traffic slowed as a car on Highway 330 caught fire, beginning at 10:30 a.m. Friday and burning until Caltrans brought it under control at 12:24 p.m.

Teri Kasinga of Caltrans had issued a press release on Thursday, telling people to avoid travel during the storm and to wait until conditions have cleared. The San Bernardino National Forest issued a similar warning at 11 a.m. Friday, urging visitors to delay any planned trips into the forest until after the storm system passed.

Nonetheless, commuters and visitors clogged state and county roads within the mountains throughout Friday and the weekend.

The high winds and pelting rain that characterized the storm on Friday simmered down on Saturday, alternating between normal rainfall and drizzle. Those conditions, however, did not improve traffic on mountain roadways. Highway 18 was described as a parking lot most of the day due to one early-morning incident and a similar one in the evening.

Two separate vehicles that plunged down a steep hillside on Highway 18 on Feb. 18 are being investigated as a possible suicide and attempted suicide, the California Highway Patrol (CHP) announced in a press release.

The first vehicle was driven by Jennifer Mae Shipcott, 45, of Riverside. She apparently drove her white 2012 GMC Terrain southbound on Highway 18 and into a turnout at the 4,000-foot level. From there, she continued driving over the south curb edge, according to CHP. Her vehicle overturned several times and came to rest on its left side in the number two lane on the highway below.

CHP officers responded to the scene at approximately 9 a.m. and found that Shipcott sustained fatal injuries. Officer Bates is investigating the event as a possible suicide.

A separate incident occurred at the same location later that evening. Paul Albert Chuderski, 42, of Riverside, drove his black 2005 Nissan Titan off the road from the same turnout. Chuderski was identified as Shipcott's boyfriend. He survived the fall and was hospitalized. Officer Valdez is investigating Chuderski's incident as an attempted suicide.

While the CHP was dealing with the Highway 18 tragedies, County Fire and Caltrans were contending with a lane on Interstate 15 that failed on Saturday due to flooding in Cajon Pass.

When the lane collapsed, a county fire engine was on the spot. After sitting with only the left side wheels on pavement and the ride side wheels off, the engine gradually succumbed to the effects of gravity and fell over the side.

County Fire confirmed that all of the firefighters on board were able to exit the engine safely before it plummeted down the newly formed cliff.

Southbound traffic on the I-15 was closed on Highway 138 to Cleghorn Road, while Highway 138 itself was closed east and west of the freeway due to flooding. Closer to home, a portion of lower Highway 173 in Lake Arrowhead was closed due to a mud slide and flooding.

[\(Print Edition Only\)](#)