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Porter Named Assistant Fire Chief

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County Fire Division Chief Tim Porter has been promoted to assistant chief, County Fire Chief Mark Hartwig has announced.

Porter will be assigned to Division 11 (Training, Safety & Special Operations). This division maintains the training and certification for all of County Fire's personnel and has established new certification levels in wildland training and implements all mandated state and federal training.

"We have some of the most talented and skilled individuals in their respective fields working in Division 11, all of whom I am proud to be given the opportunity to lead. I look forward to strengthening the state-of-the-art programs and training services at **San Bernardino County Fire**," Porter said.

Porter has more than 25 years of fire service experience, beginning in 1991, with the Victorville Fire Department. He was brought over to San Bernardino County Fire as a captain in July 2008 after the city of Victorville transitioned to a service contract for county-provided fire protection.

He was promoted to battalion chief in March 2015, serving Division 3 (High Desert Division). In October 2016 he promoted to division chief of administration and was assigned to department headquarters. As division chief of administration, Porter oversaw support services including warehouse operations, vehicle services, fleet management, bid transfers, management of the hiring/testing recruitment proves, and special projects.

In leading Division 11, Porter will oversee all training and safety operations, manage the department's emergency medical services, all aspects of wildland firefighting which include the professional hand crew and inmate hand crew programs, and the heavy equipment program (including the dozers).

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

LAFCO votes to disband Upland fire despite San Antonio Heights opposition

Liset Marquez, Daily Bulletin

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SAN BERNARDINO >> Despite heavy opposition from San Antonio Heights residents, the agency that oversees annexations in San Bernardino County unanimously voted to include the unincorporated community in a proposal to disband the Upland Fire Department.

The annexation proposal would annex the Upland Fire Department and transfer fire station properties, employees, assets, obligations, as well as liabilities into **San Bernardino County Fire** and its Valley Service Zone.

At the recommendation of Local Agency Formation Commission staff, the unincorporated community of San Antonio Heights will now be included in the Service Zone FP-5. That would mean property owners in San Antonio Heights — along with Upland landowners — would have to pay an annual \$150 parcel tax, which may increase 3 percent annually.

“In evaluating the services to be delivered through this change of organization, LAFCO staff determined that the San Antonio Heights community will also benefit from this change because of the increased staffing levels at the existing County Fire station in their community,” LAFCO Executive Director Kathleen Rollings-McDonald said at Thursday’s hearing.

But she acknowledged any discussion surrounding annexation, involving Upland and San Antonio Heights, brings out a great deal of “consternation.” She assured those in attendance that this proposal is in no way the first move to annexing San Antonio Heights to Upland.

Numerous times Rollings-McDonald said including the unincorporated community in the fire plan is about equity. Currently, Station 12 in San Antonio Heights is staffed by a two-man crew from San Bernardino County Fire, while the amended proposal would allow for three firefighters at the station, she said.

Questions were raised about how this move would impact the level of service at Station 12, especially during the winter months when calls for service to Mount Baldy increase. San Bernardino County Fire Chief Mark Hartwig disagreed, citing the addition of another firefighter at Station 12 as well as access to mutual aid with the Upland stations.

Several speakers from San Antonio Heights also sharply criticized LAFCO for failing to hold meetings within its community or inviting them to the Upland meetings, where the City Council — trying to resolve an impending financial crisis — has been discussing the issue for months.

San Antonio Heights resident John Goss said he wasn’t aware of the amendment until March 1.

“We’re not the city of Upland. We’re not in trouble, we don’t have financial problems,” Goss said.

But, in fact, they do, Rollings-McDonald said. Station 12 has a \$1.3 million operating budget, but County Fire only receives \$935,000 from property taxes, leaving it with a \$364,772 annual deficit.

The move to impose a \$150 property tax on landowners in San Antonio Heights is expected to generate just under \$300,000 annually.

Commissioners had the option to remove San Antonio Heights from the service zone and not impose the tax, however, Rollings-McDonald said the question would still remain how to resolve that community's annual shortfall.

"The costs of the services have to be rendered," said Robert Lovingood, commissioner and chairman of the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors.

LAFCO Commissioner Jim Bagley, a public member, told residents if San Bernardino County Fire came to the agency with its own proposal to collect property taxes, he believed the figure would exceed the \$150 annual property tax being proposed.

"This is a basic, real fundamental economic fiscal reality that we need to address," Bagley said.

LAFCO acknowledged this process is moving unlike other annexation processes. Thursday's hearing began with the commission's unanimous decision to expand the sphere of influence for the San Bernardino County Fire Protection District to include Upland.

Under normal circumstances, the sphere would be established, discussions would take place and then the annexation would follow,

"It is well documented that without this change the city of Upland would be in even more serious financial distress," Rollings-McDonald said.

For that reason, LAFCO is processing them concurrently, she said.

Upland Deputy City Manager Jeannette Vagnozzi said the city's financial concerns go back as far back as 14 years, when Upland looked at alternatives to pay for public safety.

In recent years, the city has taken steps to reduce staffing to balance ongoing expenses and revenues, as well as taking other measures to reduce costs, Vagnozzi said.

The City Council believes annexation is the best alternative for Upland, although it doesn't solve all of the city's financial issues, Vagnozzi said.

It moves a city — with infrastructure that is crumbling and failing, as Vagnozzi put it — toward financial stability.

"If we don't make a change now, we won't be able to fully fund our budget in 2018," Vagnozzi said.

The alternative would be reduced service, closing a station and laying off employees.

"There is no reason to make our community less safe if we have alternatives that can provide people with better service and assist us with our financial goals at the same time," she told commissioners.

LAFCO will begin to send out notices to start a 30-day protest period. Anything above 50 percent protest from the number of registered voters or parcel owners can terminate the process, while anything between 25 and 49 percent would trigger an election.

If registered protests come in from fewer than 25 percent, Rollings-McDonald said the proposal would be approved.

<http://www.dailybulletin.com/government-and-politics/20170323/lafco-votes-to-disband-upland-fire-despite-san-antonio-heights-opposition>