



NEWS



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Forward spread of wildfire above Highland stopped, Highway 330 remains closed

Gail Wesson and Doug Saunders, The Press-Enterprise

Posted: July 12, 2017, 3:58 PM



Firefighters battled a 33-acre fire Wednesday burning about one mile north of Highland Avenue on the west side of Highway 330, prompting a road closure between Highland and Running Springs.

The blaze — dubbed the Hidden fire — spread north uphill scorching the foothills above Highland, burning grass and chaparral, and sending a plume of smoke into the air visible for miles.

There are no homes in the area and one firefighter sustained a heat related injury, according to authorities.

Fire officials said the fire was 20 percent contained at 6 p.m.

The fire was initially reported at 3:23 p.m. at the bottom of the 330 near Boulder Avenue, south of the Walmart Supercenter on East Highland Avenue in Highland, according to fire officials on scene.

San Bernardino County fire hand crews hiked the charred hillside in 95 degree temperatures to cut lines around the blaze.

Five helicopters and two air tankers dropped water and fire retardant and more than 200 personnel were fighting the fire.

Caltrans tweeted that the 330 would remain closed overnight. It is unclear when it will reopen.

The Forest Service recommended that motorists trying to reach Lake Arrowhead, Running Springs and Green Valley Lake use Highway 18 and those headed to Big Bear Valley use either the 18 from Lucerne Valley or Highway 38 through Redlands and Mentone.

The fire is described as burning just north of the last month's Mart fire.

Last month, the Mart fire erupted June 27 in Highland causing mandatory evacuations in the city, closure of a section of the 330 and burning more than 670 acres before it was contained.

Arson investigators were on scene to determine what sparked the blaze.

Firefighters from San Bernardino National Forest, Cal Fire, **San Bernardino County Fire** and San Manuel Fire Department along with the California Highway Patrol, San Bernardino Police and the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department worked together during the firefighting efforts.

This story is developing. Check back for updates.

<http://www.pe.com/2017/07/12/rapidly-spreading-wildfire-closes-highway-330-above-highland/>

Crews make quick progress on 'Hidden Fire' Wednesday

Daily Press

Posted: July 12, 2017, 6:48 PM

HIGHLAND — Firefighters quickly got a handle on a fast-moving blaze that erupted here Wednesday afternoon.

Called the "Hidden Fire", the blaze erupted on the west side of Highway 330, one mile north of Highland Avenue, at around 3:30 p.m. Wednesday.

The fire quickly grew and spread, burning through 15 acres by 3:43 p.m., according to a tweet from the San Bernardino National Forest Service.

But fire crews were able to stop the flames from further spread, with the National Forest Service reporting that the "forward rate of spread" was stopped just before 5 p.m.

As of 6 p.m. firefighters were holding the blaze at 33 acres with 20 percent containment. Over 200 personnel from **San Bernardino County Fire Department**, CalFire, National Forest Service, and the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department have responded, fire officials said.

Highway 330 was shut down shortly after the blaze erupted. It remains closed as of Wednesday evening from the Interstate 210 interchange to Live Oak Drive, south of Running Springs. Motorists are urged to use Highway 18 or Highway 38 as alternate routes.

Visit <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov> for more information on the Hidden Fire.

<http://www.hesperianstar.com/news/20170712/crews-make-quick-progress-on-hidden-fire-wednesday>

Man shot to death in Victorville; investigation underway

ABC7 News

Posted: July 12, 2017, 8:28 AM



Crime scene tape ropes off the scene of a shooting in Victorville on Wednesday, July 12, 2017.

VICTORVILLE, Calif. (KABC) –

A homicide investigation was underway after a man was shot to death in Victorville.

San Bernardino County Fire Department officials responded to the 12800 block of Boulder Creek Road around 12:30 a.m. Wednesday.

A man was found suffering from a gunshot wound to the stomach. He was transported to a hospital but succumbed to his injuries.

In addition to the scene on Boulder Creek Road, San Bernardino County sheriff's officials said detectives were also investigating a second scene on nearby Soft Cloud Way. It was not immediately clear how the two scenes were connected.

The investigation was ongoing.

<http://abc7.com/news/man-shot-to-death-in-victorville;-investigation-underway/2209022/>

Upland gets OK to disband fire department, annex to San Bernardino County Fire Department

Liset Márquez, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

Posted: July 12, 2017, 10:33 AM



LAFCO staffer Michael Tuerpe, center, organizes protest forms as registered voters and landowners in Upland and San Antonio Heights attend a protest hearing with the Local Agency Formation Commission for San Bernardino County, about the annexation of the Upland Fire Department to San Bernardino County Fire, at Upland City Hall in Upland, CA., Tuesday, July 11, 2017. (Staff photo by Jennifer Cappuccio Maher/Inland Valley Daily Bulletin/SCNG)

UPLAND >> After more than 100 years, Upland's Fire Department will cease to exist by the end of next week.

The Fire Department will be annexed to the **San Bernardino County Fire Department** after the number of protests filed with the Local Agency Formation Commission failed to meet the threshold to stop the reorganization.

With the approval, the city's fire station properties, employees, assets, obligations, as well as liabilities, will be transferred to San Bernardino County Fire July 22.

Emotions ran high at Tuesday's protest hearing as more than 200 packed council chambers at Upland City Hall. It was their last chance to register their opposition to the proposal. The commission, also known as LAFCO, oversees annexations in San Bernardino County.

For more than an hour, a mostly angry crowd criticized Upland and LAFCO while three staff members from the commission tallied the protests at the front of the room.

In the end — despite a 30-day extended protest period — only 11.9 percent of registered voters and 13.2 percent of landowners voted against the annexation. The raw count was well short of the more than 50 percent needed in either category to terminate the process, said Kathleen Rollings-McDonald, executive director of LAFCO.

The point of contention for many at Tuesday's hearing came from San Antonio Heights residents who felt they were never properly notified during the process. Others were upset that residents were never given the opportunity to vote on the special tax in a general election.

“We’re going to take as much legal action as we possibly can,” said Ken Petschow, president of the San Antonio Heights Association. “We’ll get an injunction, we will come after you.”

The annexation was initiated by Upland as a financial move to help the cash-strapped city, which was spending about \$12 million annually on fire services, with costs expected to escalate in the next five years.

Upland and San Bernardino County Fire initially adopted resolutions in December, which requested that LAFCO begin the transfer process.

During a hearing in March, the plan was amended to include the unincorporated community of San Antonio Heights. 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, without taking it to a general election vote.

Despite public sentiment opposing the annexation, the proposal won the support of Upland firefighters. Upland Professional Firefighters has said its members may not be able to adequately safeguard the community if the transfer did not occur.

Shortly after being incorporated into the proposal, residents from San Antonio Heights launched a grass-roots campaign to mount the necessary support to stop the annexation, recruiting volunteers to collect protest forms.

Bob Cable, president of Cable Airport, helped collect the forms by using his office as a drop-off location. Cable told Rollings-McDonald Tuesday night that by the time he found out about the annexation, Upland had already passed a resolution initiating the process.

“What this had done for me, personally, is make 20 years’ worth trusting the county and my local city a total waste of time,” he said. “When LAFCO sets the rules there is no justice, only a system that is unreasonable and requiring more signatures than the total turnout of voters in the city of Upland in the last election.”

The protest period also led to some lawsuits. LAFCO initiated the 30-day protest period May 12 and it was set to conclude June 14.

In June, a San Antonio Heights resident and attorney alleged the notification process for protests discriminated against women. In response, LAFCO extended the period to July 11.

Then, on July 7, the San Antonio Heights Association filed a motion for a temporary restraining order in an attempt to halt the process. The association, Upland and LAFCO were in San Bernardino Superior Court Monday, a day before the hearing. The motion was eventually withdrawn by the association’s attorney, but all parties involved agreed to a July 28 hearing to discuss the merits of preliminary injunction.

On Tuesday, Petschow said he questioned the proposal the minute he saw it but wanted to keep an open mind about the process. After some research, he “realized it was a gigantic scam.”

Petschow’s comments drew immediate applause from the crowd.

Although his time had expired, Petschow continued to speak — off microphone — to the crowd.

Ultimately, Police Chief Brian Johnson approached Petschow and motioned him to walk away as the crowd booed and others chanted “U-S-A” and “recall.” Petschow obliged but not before putting his wrists up to Johnson as if to mimic being handcuffed.

Longtime San Antonio Heights resident Sharon Frasco-Williams was among the speakers who said they were against the annexation because the public wasn’t given the privilege to vote on a special tax.

“This is our God-given right, it says so in the constitution,” Frasco-Williams said. “Apparently in Upland that doesn’t apply.”

Like many of the speakers, Frasco-Williams said she will consider moving out because she believes property values will go down.

Terry Lynn Whitfield, a San Antonio Heights homeowner since 1985, asked what additional fire services she will receive with the new special tax. Whitfield said her home is located above 25th Street and near the San Antonio Dam. She was also worried about how response times in her community would be impacted.

Rollings-McDonald said Station No. 12 in San Antonio Heights will be staffed with a three-man crew, making it eligible to receive mutual aid from both fire and emergency medical response. Currently, the station has a two-man crew and receives mutual aid for fire purposes but not for emergency medical response, she said.

The ability to receive emergency medical response will be a benefit to residents in San Antonio Heights, Rollings-McDonald told Whitfield.

Rollings-McDonald said the next step of the annexation will be to issue a certificate of completion, which she expects will occur by Friday. The transition between fire departments will occur July 22.

The San Bernardino County Auditor-Controller/Treasurer/Tax Collector’s deadline to apply the special tax on the 2017-18 tax roll is Aug. 10. Residents and landowners can expect to see the tax applied to their bill in October.

<http://www.dailybulletin.com/government-and-politics/20170712/upland-gets-ok-to-disband-fire-department-annex-to-san-bernardino-county-fire-department>

Hesperia hiker rescued from Deep Creek Hot Springs Wednesday

Daily Press

Posted: July 12, 2017, 4:58 PM



APPLE VALLEY — A rescue team successfully extracted a stranded hiker near the Deep Creek Hot Springs area early Wednesday, authorities said.

Avery McLemore, 51, of Hesperia, was hiking on the trail from the hot springs to the parking lot at Bowen Ranch at around 8:30 a.m. when he began to have medical problems, according to a statement from San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department.

Authorities said units from both the Sheriff's Department and **San Bernardino County Fire Department** responded to search for and assist McLemore. Sheriff's helicopter 40King 5 located McLemore on a steep trail, where authorities determined a hoist rescue was needed due to the terrain.

"McLemore was suffering from heat and respiratory problems and was unable to hike out on his own," authorities said. "McLemore was placed into a rescue harness and hoisted into the helicopter."

He was transported to the parking lot at Bowen Ranch, where he was treated by County Fire and AMR paramedics before being taken to a local hospital for treatment.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20170712/hesperia-hiker-rescued-from-deep-creek-hot-springs-wednesday>

In Victorville, half-percent sales tax backed to reverse public safety funding woes

Officials appear to be broaching the tax cautiously, seemingly aware of the slim margin of error in presenting it to voters.

Shea Johnson, Daily Press

Posted: July 12, 2017, 5:57 PM



A San Bernardino County firefighter works to clean up after a blaze at the Rodeway Inn on La Paz Drive in Victorville in January. Nine new firefighters could be added, city officials say, with passage of a half-percent sales tax. [File photo: Daily Press]

VICTORVILLE — Faced with rising contract costs and inadequate revenues, city officials unanimously backed a proposed half-percent sales tax Tuesday evening to resolve the expected shortfall in long-term public safety funding.

If passed, the special tax — which appears likely to go to voters in a November special election — is projected to generate roughly \$10 million yearly in restricted general fund dollars to bolster fire and police services based on the city’s current sales tax figures, according to City Manager Doug Robertson.

Robertson said the significant revenue boost could mean opening **San Bernardino County Fire Station 315**, which was built in 2008 on Eucalyptus Street but never fully staffed, adding nine firefighters and at least 10 Sheriff’s deputies, all the while setting some extra money aside.

The Council voted 4-0 to direct staff to prepare the resolution, which must be submitted to county election officials by Aug. 11. The tax, which would add to the city’s current 7.75 percent sales tax rate, would require a two-thirds majority by voters to pass.

“To me, it’s the most sensible way to create the revenues we need,” Councilman Jim Kennedy said.

Momentum for the sales tax emerged quickly during Tuesday’s special meeting — one of two options presented to the dais. The other, a parcel tax, was universally scrapped behind the thinking that burdening only property owners was unfair. Additionally, a sales tax would ensure that the steady stream of out-of-town motorists traveling Interstate 15 also would contribute, officials said.

Food and medicine would not be subject to the tax, according to Robertson.

Officials appear to be broaching the tax cautiously, seemingly aware of the slim margin of error in presenting it to voters. On one hand, regional voters already embraced Measure I, the county’s half-cent sales tax for transportation projects, in 1989 and overwhelmingly again in 2004.

But voters in Victorville, Mayor Pro Tem Jim Cox noted, would need to be assured that money collected by the public safety tax would be spent only on public safety.

“I’m of the opinion based on what I’ve been told,” he said, “if we don’t give the public that assurance, it’s destined to fail.”

Robertson said legally the city could not spend the tax revenue anywhere other than for services provided by San Bernardino County Fire or the Sheriff’s Department. The actual allocation each year would be decided during routine budget sessions, he said.

Cox also urged fellow Council members to leave no questions unasked as city staff work to develop the required analysis and documentation for the tax resolution, as a splintered Council — “because we all have a constituency” — could pose a threat to the tax’s passage.

An unanimous vote Tuesday — with Councilman Eric Negrete forced to leave the meeting early for apparent personal reasons — would appear to show, at least early on, signs of that united front.

Tax conversations come as an off-shoot of talks that have taken place over the past six months about the city’s contract with County Fire. Officials are examining options for its fire services, although this was not addressed Tuesday.

Officials have said — even amid modest growth — that city revenue ultimately won’t be able to catch up to rising costs in both its fire and police contracts nor to address several needed equipment upgrades in the queue.

For context, the County Fire contract represents roughly 90 percent of projected property tax revenue — a share the city has warned is “unsustainable” — and the Sheriff’s contract will have increased by 300 percent between 2001 and 2020.

“If we don’t see an increase in some sort of tax, what’s going to happen is,” Negrete said, “our revenues ... cannot keep up with all of the things that we have to pay for.”

Anticipated population growth is also a major consideration, he added.

If the tax measure is shot down, Kennedy said the city would be forced to annex into County Fire’s Service Zone FP-5, which would improve services but also be accompanied by a \$153 special tax on nearly 38,000 parcels in the city.

The city isn’t alone in scrambling to ensure the long-term health of its public safety services; in April, the Barstow City Council took the last step needed to place a sales tax measure on the November ballot in an effort to keep solvent its city Fire Department.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20170712/in-victorville-half-percent-sales-tax-backed-to-reverse-public-safety-funding-woes>