

July 18, 2001

Honorable Rodney S. Melville
Presiding Judge, Santa Barbara Superior Court
312-C East Cook Street
Santa Maria, CA 93456-5369

Honorable Rodney S. Melville,

Carpinteria-Summerland Fire Protection District has received the May 22, 2001 Grand Jury Report *Independent Special Districts*. The Fire District wishes to thank the volunteers who serve on the Grand Jury for their time and their research.

The District's response to the finding and recommendation of the Grand Jury is as follows:

Finding 1: "The Carpinteria-Summerland Fire Protection District is in precarious financial condition and may not be able to continue as a going concern."

Response: The Fire District and the Board of Directors are well aware of serious financial stresses to the organization which began with the 1993 ERAF shift, (Educational Revenue Augmentation Fund).

Recommendation 1: "The District should seriously consider: (1) seeking additional sources of revenue, such as putting a special fire tax on the ballot, (2) seeking legislative solutions to improve tax revenues, or (3) consolidating with another fire protection district."

Response: (1) The viability of a special fire tax is presently under analysis by staff. Presenting a special tax to the voters requires an engineering study to support the tax, and a community outreach program to educate the affected groups. The District must ensure a high probability of success before undertaking a ballot measure. (2) The District has been actively seeking legislative solutions to the tax shift problem since ERAF was imposed. A bill presently under consideration and supported by the District is SB 92 (Torlakson) which would prohibit the continued application of the ERAF transfer provisions to fire districts. (3) The District Fire Chiefs have cooperated with the other county Fire Chief's for over eight years to plan the functional consolidation of a number of aspects of fire protection services. The District participates with the other fire agencies in several money-saving combined efforts including joint hiring, joint arson investigation team, joint haz-mat team, and joint purchasing. The District continues to investigate additional ways to improve service and increase efficiency through joint powers agreements and other combined efforts.

To summarize our response to the *Independent Special Districts* Grand Jury Report, the items in the recommendation corroborate the measures the District is taking to address the current financial challenges. The District appreciates the efforts of the Grand Jury members.

Sincerely,

Rick Bury
Fire Chief

cc: Grand Jury Foreperson
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101