



RON ROBERTS
SUPERVISOR, FOURTH DISTRICT
SAN DIEGO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

AGENDA ITEM

DATE: September 14, 2010

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TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT: KEEPING AN EYE OUT FOR FIRES: PARTNERING WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO TO PROVIDE EARLY DETECTION SOLUTIONS(DISTRICT: ALL)

SUMMARY:

Overview

For the past decade, this Board of Supervisors has worked to diligently and successfully improve our region's fire fighting capabilities and response. We pride ourselves on being forward thinkers and utilizing modern technology.

Spending more than \$185 million since 2003, San Diego County has come a long way. Before the 2003 wildfires, our region did not own a single fire fighting helicopter, did not have a mass notification system to notify residents of approaching danger and our regional emergency response agencies could not communicate with each other in an effective way because their radios were not cross-compatible.

Now, at the direction of Supervisor Horn and me, the County of San Diego owns two medium-lift helicopters which are available 365 days a year. Also, at the direction of Supervisor Cox and me, the County has implemented a mass notification system that can reach upwards of 750,000 residents in an hour. Our region's communication system also has vastly improved, with every local agency being on, or able to patch into, the same frequency. The County has spent millions of dollars on removing dead, dying and diseased trees throughout its jurisdiction, as well as buying new equipment and apparatus for the various fire districts. The County also has invested in fire prevention and disaster preparedness for the public and standardized training for first responders.

Employing modern technology for early fire detection is another key component to our region battling fires, large or small. Being a hi-tech hub, the County has many resources it can tap into, one being Calit2 at the University of California, San Diego. Through discussions and meetings between Calit2, CalFire, the San Diego County Fire Authority, me and others, it was determined that while we explore long term solutions

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to early detection, there are immediate improvements we can achieve.

Out of these discussions came the need to enhance the Calit2 High Performance Wireless Research and Education Network (HPWREN) early fire detection and remote monitoring system. Today's action will grant the funding necessary to purchase new cameras and meteorological weather stations that will be installed and deployed in the unincorporated area of the county. These additions will augment the current system in place, giving our county's first responders better and faster detection capabilities.

Recommendation(s)

SUPERVISOR ROBERTS

1. Allocate \$36,370 from the Neighborhood Reinvestment Budget unit (15665) to the Regents of the University of California, University of California, San Diego to purchase and install equipment to enhance the Calit2 High Performance Wireless Research and Education Network (HPWREN) early fire detection and remote monitoring system.
2. Authorize the Chief Financial Officer to execute a grant agreement with this organization establishing the terms for receipt of the funds described above, and to make minor amendments to the agreement that are consistent with the general purpose of the grant but do not increase the grant.
3. Find that the grant award described above has a public purpose. |

Fiscal Impact

The total combined cost of the proposed recommendations is \$36,370. Appropriations are available in the Neighborhood Reinvestment Budget unit (15665). This action will result in the addition of no staff years and no future costs.

Business Impact Statement

N/A

Advisory Board Statement

N/A

BACKGROUND:

For the past decade, this Board of Supervisors has worked to diligently and successfully improve our region's fire fighting capabilities and response. We pride ourselves on being forward thinkers and utilizing modern technology.

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On May 5, 2010, our Board received the Regional Fire Services Deployment Study which outlined our region's fire capabilities. This independent report featured many notable findings and recommendations. One finding in particular, that is not well known, is that our region commits \$517 million per year to fire and EMS services.

Spending more than \$185 million since 2003, San Diego County has come a long way. Before the 2003 wildfires, our region did not own a single fire fighting helicopter, did not have a mass notification system to notify residents of approaching danger and our regional emergency response agencies could not communicate with each other in an effective way because their radios were not cross-compatible.

Now, at the direction of Supervisor Horn and me, the County of San Diego owns two medium-lift helicopters which are available 365 days a year. Also, at the direction of Supervisor Cox and me, the County has implemented a mass notification system that can reach upwards of 750,000 residents in an hour. Our region's communication system also has vastly improved, with virtually every responding agency being on, or able to patch into, the same frequency.

In 2008, at the recommendation of Supervisor Horn and me, our Board approved approximately \$3.2 million available in one-time dollars to lease two Bombardier CL-415 Superscooper™ fixed-wing amphibious aircraft for a three-month period. During this period, these highly effective planes dropped thousands of gallons of water on fires on Camp Pendleton, in the city of San Diego and elsewhere.

Earlier this year, I worked with San Diego Gas & Electric on an agreement to utilize its \$30 million dollar heavy-lift helicopter for fire fighting, should it be needed. As we found out during the recent Cowboy Fire, it was a welcomed addition. This helicopter, coupled with the regions other aerial support, helped keep the fire controlled while fire fighters on the ground advanced through the rough terrain.

On the prevention and preparedness side, our board has implemented some of the nation's strictest building codes for new developments. For years now, the County has required precautionary measures such as fire sprinklers inside of homes, closed eaves, limitations on type and location of vents leading inside of homes and adequate defensible space around structures. The County also has spent millions of dollars on removing dead, dying and diseased trees throughout its jurisdiction as well as buying new equipment and apparatus for the various fire districts.

At the direction of Supervisor Horn, disaster preparedness kits were mailed to every residence in the county, including the cities, helping families plan for disasters.

Through the consolidation process, which was initiated by Supervisor Jacob more than a decade ago, our first responders from the unincorporated area now go through unified medical evaluations and standardized training so they are all working together in the same way.

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Consolidation also has turned volunteer fire fighters into stipend paid fire fighters, resulting in better coverage for the unincorporated area year-round. This consolidation has resulted in a more unified, less fractured, more efficient fire agency.

Employing modern technology for early fire detection is another key component to our region battling fires, large or small. Being a hi-tech hub, the County has many resources it can tap into, one being Calit2 at the University of California, San Diego. Through discussions and meetings between Calit2, CalFire, the San Diego County Fire Authority, me and other fire officials, it was determined that while we explore long term solutions to early detection, immediate improvements also can be achieved.

Out of these discussions came the need to enhance the Calit2 High Performance Wireless Research and Education Network (HPWREN) early fire detection and remote monitoring system. The HPWREN is a cyberinfrastructure created by UCSD for wireless research, education and emergency first responder activities. The network is broadly deployed in San Diego County and existing assets include 20+ mountaintop cameras. Various meteorological stations have supported wildfire response since 2003. The network also has provided critical wireless connectivity to various Incident Command Posts and other firefighting assets such as fire stations/camps, the air-and helitak bases, and even experimental connectivity for the Cal Fire Air Attack 330's FLIR system.

Today's action will grant the funding necessary to purchase new cameras and meteorological weather stations to be installed and deployed in the unincorporated area of the county. This proposal involves adding assets to enhance the video and meteorological coverage used for the detection and monitoring of wildfires. Proposed FireSight meteorological stations also will augment the existing HPWREN pager "fire conditions" alert system, while setting a stage towards future more-parameterizable alerts. These additions will augment the current system in place, giving our county's first responders better and faster detection capabilities.

I urge your support.

Respectfully submitted,

RON ROBERTS
Supervisor, Fourth District

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AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET

REQUIRES FOUR VOTES: Yes No

WRITTEN DISCLOSURE PER COUNTY CHARTER SECTION 1000.1 REQUIRED
 Yes No

PREVIOUS RELEVANT BOARD ACTIONS:
N/A

BOARD POLICIES APPLICABLE:
N/A

BOARD POLICY STATEMENTS:
N/A

MANDATORY COMPLIANCE:
N/A

ORACLE AWARD NUMBER(S) AND CONTRACT AND/OR REQUISITION NUMBER(S):
N/A

ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT: Ron Roberts, Supervisor, Fourth District

OTHER CONCURRENCE(S): N/A

CONTACT PERSON(S):

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