To: RHFD Board of Directors & Community Members

As an employee of the Fire District, I fully endorse the annexation between RHFD and the Contra Costa Fire Protection District (Confire).

Currently, RHFD has several areas that are deficient or redundant, as outlined in the AP Triton Feasibility Study. Consolidating the two district's resources, administration, personnel, equipment, training and services is operationally beneficial, fiscally responsible, and provides the community more for its tax dollars.

Some of the fiscal redundancy RHFD assumes annually include: a full time Chief, administrative staff, vehicle maintenance, IT support, and EMS training. These redundant services cost tax payers over a million dollars per year. All these functions can be handled and shared with the 13 towns and cities within Confire at a fraction of the cost, and with better service.

While RHFD has always "made it work" with the resources and finances we have, NFPA Standards and the Triton Study clearly outline that there are deficiencies and areas for improvement that we cannot undertake with our current fiscal and operational limitations. We need to move away from the "local control" mantra in lieu of one of "regional operational capabilities". Confire can provide us this essential component. What has local control given us? Closing the Rodeo station for 2 years, significant attrition, financial loses, redundant services/management, and inadequate resources.

These are some examples of RHFD's operational insufficiencies: No Hazmat, No RN for EMS program management, No Fire Investigators, Insufficient Prevention/Inspection staff, No Water Rescue, No IT department, No training staff, and too few Battalion Chiefs. All of these are either paid as contracts, or done by Confire for us as a gesture of good faith.

With only one Battalion Chief, RHFD lacks an appropriate command structure. A department our size requires at least 3 BC's. This leaves two shifts per week without adequate supervision while on duty. Confire has numerous BC's, providing a depth of coverage RHFD is financially incapable of providing.

Being a small department with limited opportunities for advancement and career options, RHFD has had nine of the last nineteen hires leave for larger departments with better career opportunities. This constitutes attrition of 47% in just the last seven years, not including retirements. Hiring and training new employees is very costly, and to endure such extensive attrition impacts our operations and finances significantly.

The culpability of our current situation lies on the shoulders of the District's Fire Boards in decades past that opted for "local control" over "regional operational capability", blinding them to the fiscal redundancies, operational requirements, career needs of firefighters, and improved service to the citizens they represent. Confire's depth of personnel, resources, administration, equipment and training, plus cost savings is unequivocally superior to RHFD's current fire service delivery model.

Accordingly, I would like to ask for your support to please approve the annexation between RHFD and Contra Costa County Fire.

Respectfully Yours,

Robert Gelhaus
RHFD Engineer/Paramedic