Jul 22, 2021

Dear Rodeo-Hercules Board of Directors,

As a 21 year veteran of Rodeo Hercules Fire District, the purpose of this letter is to request the Board of Directors to look closely at the A.P. Triton report findings, and take into consideration the opinions and first hand knowledge of the Captain's, Engineer's, and Firefighter's of the district as well.

Rodeo-Hercules is a small district, responsible for all hazard, but what it lacks is the resources to handle most hazards. For example, part of our responsibility is the San Pablo Bay, however if any incident occurs, we lack not only the resources, but the training to safely respond. We have to look to other agencies to send in resources, such as the U.S. Coast Guard and neighboring departments who have personnel trained to respond to water rescue. If we had the resources and training, we could mitigate the emergency ourselves. Recently, Alameda City Fire experienced a drowning, had someone been trained with the proper resource, the victim would be alive today. We want to avoid this travesty. No citizen should die in our district as the fire department watches helplessly from the shore as we wait for aid from another department.
If the annexation occurs, the citizens of Rodeo-Hercules can count on the multitude of rescue equipment and training provided by Contra Costa Fire, in turn, more lives will be saved.

Rodeo-Hercules lacks administration and command structure. The fallout is that the Captain, Engineers, and Firefighters absorb the responsibilities that are not being handled, which in turn, takes away from the daily operations and community outreach. We cannot begin to count the hours spent on these extra required assignments. Currently, there is no solution, with no plans to increase administration. The annexation will allow our personnel to concentrate on daily operations, training, public education, etc. and provide the desired leadership that creates a stronger department.

Firefighter retention is the #1 problem. Since the reform of the firefighter retirement system, firefighters have to work additional years. The next generation of firefighters are not looking to make a higher salary, but are looking for the opportunity to differentiate their professional experiences, whether it's on a truck company, boat, or even hazmat. Our small department can not offer the diversity that is craved by the next generation. Over the last ten years, more fighterers have come and go, at the financial burden of our district. Tax payers shell out thousands and thousands of dollars for each new recruit, only to have it wasted when he/she leaves for another department within a couple years. We are concerned that if the annexation fails, the fallout will be that a large number of well qualified and trained personnel will look towards outside organizations for better opportunities and administration support.

Rodeo-Hercules Fire District has a small work force, only 18 active personnel, 6 each shift. The problem is, if one person goes out, then the department must back fill his/her position. This is

taxing on personnel, both physically and emotionally. 2020 was a catastrophic year with injuries,personal leave, and COVID. Each individual set aside vacation plans, worked extra hours and sacrificed time spent with his/her family. By September and October we reached a critical level with paramedic staffing. The remaining paramedics on shift were working at least one extra day per week, even working through the hourly limit to maintain our paramedics at each station, this also includes them being mandated. At one given point, we had only two paramedics available, and unfortunately reduced the staffing level to BLS. The consequences of this was a compromised level of emergency service to the community, something we can all agree should never happen.

There are a multitude of positive reasons to allow the annexation of the Rodeo-Hercules Fire Department, many of which are suggested in this letter. We will have the opportunity to provide and hire qualified and highly trained firefighters, utilize a variety of equipment that ensures a successful response no matter the hazard, and most important a strong administration and leadership. All interests aside, the safe and efficient protection of the community is by far most important. We feel that Contra Costa Fire will provide everything we need to mitigate all hazards with the utmost safety of the personnel, community and environment.

Respectfully
Captain Skye Johnson
Rodeo-Hercules Fire