Good evening board and community,

My name is Theresa Vouchilas. I am an Engineer-Paramedic with Rodeo-Hercules Fire District and have been with the district for seven years. I am writing this letter because I love this community I serve and I love working in the area. I hear the community's questions about the benefits of annexation and I hope through my first hand experience I can explain why I am in favor of this annexation and why I believe it is a huge benefit to our public.

In my seven years here retention has always been an issue for this department. I am currently the only employee left from my academy of nine. Since the time I got hired in 2014 nine employees have left for other departments with more opportunities. More employees will continue to leave if this annexation does not happen. Having to constantly hire one employee at a time makes it impossible to have an academy. This leads to extra stress on crews having to do all day on the job training with new hires while still trying to run calls and complete other daily duties. Also there is no set standard or job sheets so the training varies from captain to captain. Not to mention the cost to outfit each new hire and pay for benefits for them to turn around and leave. Contra Costa County Fire is able to retain their employees due to more opportunities, specialty programs, standardized training with excellent training props, actual new hire academies, more opportunities to take time off of work to take classes and much more.

During my time here staffing has also been an issue. Not just with retention but injuries. RHFD currently has nine paramedics. Last year we only had three of the nine paramedics able to work for months due to injuries. At one point we dropped down to two paramedics due to a positive covid case. During that time of having two paramedics RHFD had to drop down to BLS. This resulted in EMTs having to run CPR calls and other critical calls. During this time the community was not able to receive the best care possible because EMTS are unable to start IVs and administer important life saving medications. Also only having three paramedics with two on duty a day led to the paramedics having to work four or five days straight. This leads to not only physical exhaustion but mental exhaustion as well. I also experienced a staffing issue when I dislocated my shoulder at work while on a call and we had no staffing to come in and cover me. I had to stay at work for 14 hours with a dislocated shoulder so we would not have to close a station down. This injury resulted in me needing surgery and placing me off work for eight months. Contra Costa County Fire has adequate staffing with rovers on duty so we would not have to work five days straight and we would be able to go home when injuries happen without worrying about closing a station. The annexation will provide resources and staffing for mental and physical longevity.

Another benefit to the annexation is the training division. With RHFD it is on the captain to take the information they remember and pass it down to their crew. Like previously stated training differs from captain to captain. RHFD also does not have succession planning or strong training to prepare you for promotional movement. We lack supplying our employees with the training to be successful at the next rank. Contra Costa County has developed engineer, captain and truck academies to supply their employees with the information needed to be

confident and successful as they promote through the ranks.

Other benefits to the annexation is that Contra Costa County Fire has a mechanic shop so when our apparatus have issues we can call the shop and get a new apparatus in service right away. RHFD uses a third party for maintenance so we have to pay two employees overtime to take an apparatus to the shop and bring it back. We would also save money having a shared fire chief and administration.

I have also heard a lot of comments about having volunteers. RHFD had a volunteer program and we had a difficult time retaining the volunteers. I once was a volunteer for another department. The fire service is not a priority to most volunteers. You can not make a living off being a volunteer firefighter. Often, I was unable to show up to calls because of my regular job. We even experience it here in town when running with Crockett-Carquinez fire. Sometimes they have to leave during the middle of a critical call because they have to go to work and sometimes we are left covering their calls because they do not have the personnel to respond to a call.

Lastly, I would like to thank all of you for your time. These are a few of the reasons why I am in favor of this annexation and why I think it will benefit the public. RHFD will continue to be a dead end department if this annexation does not happen. It will be a revolving door of employees coming and going. I personally would love to stay in the RHFD area if this annexation happens and continue to serve this community I love. I believe this annexation is important moving forward to be able to have standardized training, succession planning, employee retention and a unified front. We need to make a change to insure that an incident like Michelle drive never happens again in our lovely battalion 7. This change can start now. This change can start with you. I strongly hope you consider moving forward with this annexation.

Thank you,
Engineer Vouchilas