



City of Millbrae
621 Magnolia Avenue, Millbrae, CA 94030

PAUL SETO
Mayor
DANIEL F. QUIGG
Vice Mayor
MARGE COLAPIETRO
Councilwoman
GINA PAPAN
Councilwoman
NADIA V. HOLOBER
Councilwoman

July 27, 2010

Honorable Clifford V. Cretan
Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice, 400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063

Dear Judge Cretan:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Millbrae City Council. This letter will serve as the City of Millbrae's formal response to the May 26, 2010 letter from the Superior Court transmitting the report from the Civil Grand Jury with regard to "City Fire Department Consolidations/Mergers." The Millbrae City Council reviewed and approved this response at its meeting on July 27, 2010.

The City of Millbrae appreciates the opportunity to respond to your report. The report is well organized and highlights the primary issues surrounding consolidation/merger efforts. The Grand Jury investigation focused on the four consolidations that have occurred in the county. Table 2 also defines the different relationships that can occur without necessarily having a full consolidation.

Discussions of mergers in San Mateo County have been occurring on and off for the past 20 years. The economic downturn certainly provides an incentive for municipalities and districts to pursue cost reduction measures, but fire service in this county has certainly pursued shared services opportunities, joint equipment purchases, consolidated dispatch services, and engaged in a public/private relationship with the ambulance provider.

The City of Millbrae has entered into at least four merger discussions with its neighboring agencies in the past. For one reason or another, whether it was the economic conditions, the political climate, or an outstanding issue that could not be resolved, these efforts did not come to fruition. Although the report recommends agencies such as Millbrae consider consolidation efforts, it is not as simple as it sounds. There are numerous issues, such as governance models, payroll, insurance, labor issues, parity, and station closures that create and contribute to the complexity. Each of those issues alone may have solutions, but taken together these issues make the process long and tedious.

Nevertheless, the City of Millbrae has continued its efforts to achieve shared fire service arrangements and potential consolidations. Currently, the City of Millbrae and the City of San Bruno share Fire Chief and Battalion Chief services for a credible amount of savings to each agency. Millbrae, San Bruno, Central County Fire, and San Mateo share a training staff between the four agencies that eliminates the need for each agency to dedicate a single resource to the training program. Millbrae, San Bruno, and Central County Fire are currently having an implementation analysis done by a consultant to confirm merger opportunities.

City Council/City Manager (650) 259-2334	City Clerk (650) 259-2334	Public Works/Engineering (650) 259-2339	Recreation (650) 259-2360	Police Department (650) 259-2300
Personnel (650) 259-2334	Finance/Water (650) 259-2350	Community Development (650) 259-2341	Building Division (650) 259-2330	Fire Department (650) 259-2400

In summary, the Grand Jury recommendations do have validity, but the report needs to recognize that consolidations/mergers are complex and require the alignment of economic, labor, and political factors. Our own experience leads us to believe that the provision of fire services on an independent agency basis over the long term is cost prohibitive. We do agree that a dispute resolution process needs to be in place, but that is no guarantee that there will not be conflict between agencies even in the best of times. The example of the San Carlos – Belmont quandary certainly demonstrates that these relationships are not easy and to unravel them leads to additional complexities.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to respond to your report; I trust you will find our comments helpful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Seto". The signature is stylized and cursive, with the first name "Paul" written in a larger, more prominent font than the last name "Seto".

Paul Seto
Mayor

cc: City Council
City Manager