

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** September 29, 2009

**TO:** Board of County Commissioners  
Interim County Manager, Frank W. Clifton

**FROM:** Gwen Harvey, Assistant County Manager  
Frank Montes de Oca, Director, Emergency Services  
Pam Jones, Director, Assets Management and Purchasing

**RE:** Fire/Rescue/EMS Phase One Assessment – Update

On September 24, 2009 the County suspended its RFP process for the Fire/Rescue - Phase One Assessment (RFP 5150). We are pushing the “re-start” button and striving to avenge ourselves of past mistakes and miscommunications. The RFP Review Committee has been duly constituted and asked to join County staff in the spirit of full disclosure, forgiveness, and moving on together.

We have proposed the Committee meet face to face on Thursday, October 8<sup>th</sup>, @ 7:00 PM in the 1<sup>st</sup> floor conference room of Emergency Services in the Meadowlands/Hillsborough.

Our purpose is to begin a joint review of the existing RFP for Phase One Assessment, RFP Addendum #1 and #2, additional questions Purchasing has been collecting from prospective bidders, and any questions/concerns any member of the Review Committee may have.

The plan is to bring forth any additional changes/clarifications to the existing RFP - and to present any changes, modifications, or clarifications (most probably incorporated into Addendum #3) to the Board of County Commissioners for final review and authorization prior to release.

At that point, the RFP process would be “unsuspended”, bidders would respond according to a new due date and the Review Committee would reconvene, review the competing responses to the RFP, and make its recommendation on a contract award to the BOCC.

**The members of the Review Committee are:**

**BOCC Representatives:**

Barry Jacobs  
Steve Yuhasz

**Fire/Rescue/EMS Members:**

- 1) Travis Crabtree, Carrboro FD
- 2) Linwood Futurelle - Orange Grove FD
- 3) Wayne Cheek - Orange Rural FD
- 4) Fred Stipe - South Orange Rescue Squad
- 5) Brian Matthews - OC Rescue Squad (*invited*)

**Alternates:**

- 1) Jeff Cabe - Orange Rural (alternate)
- 2) Kevin Brooks - Efland FD (alternate)
- 3) Dan Jones - Chapel Hill FD (alternate)
- 4) Syd Alexander - South Orange RS (alternate)
- 5) *TBD* - OC Rescue Squad (alternate)

(Alternates are welcome to attend all meetings - but are especially need to be present when the primary representative is unavailable to attend in order to ensure full participation.)

**Orange County Officials/Staff:**

- 6) Lindy Pendergrass - OC Sheriff
- 7) Frank Montes de Oca - OC Emergency Services
- 8) Pam Jones - OC Asset Management and Purchasing
- 9) David Cannell - Asset Management and Purchasing
- 10) Gwen Harvey - Assistant County Manager

The March 3, 2009 BOCC Agenda item is attached for review and reference.

At present, the Review Committee has no set deadlines for returning to the BOCC. We intend to take the time necessary to achieve collaboration and consensus. *Ideally*, a contract would be awarded and Phase One results could be *considered* within the context of the FY10-11 budget process.

All BOCC members are encouraged to share their thoughts and comments on the existing RFP with staff members on the Review Committee.

Please let me know if you have questions or concerns going forward.

**Attachment**

- 1) BOCC Agenda Item (March 3, 2009)

ORANGE COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

ACTION AGENDA ITEM ABSTRACT

Meeting Date: March 3, 2009

Action Agenda

Item No. 6-a

**SUBJECT:** Phase One: Assessment of the Fire/Rescue Services System in Orange County

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**DEPARTMENT:** Emergency Services

**PUBLIC HEARING:** (Y/N)

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**ATTACHMENT(S):**

Background Memo to the BOCC and County Manager

**INFORMATION CONTACT:**

F. Rojas Montes de Oca, Jr.  
Emergency Services, 245-6100  
Gwen Harvey, Assistant County Manager, 245-2307  
Pam Jones, Purchasing/Central Services, 245-2650

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**PURPOSE:**

To present a strategy for re-engaging a fire/rescue study and request BOCC authorization for an informal solicitation of competitive proposals from qualified organizations to conduct Phase One: Assessment of the Fire/Rescue Service System in Orange County.

**BACKGROUND:**

Since arriving in the spring of 2008, the new Emergency Services Director has been very aware and actively working with the Fire Chiefs and other County staff to develop a thoughtful and thorough approach for initiating a new fire/rescue study. **Attached is a memo offering an historical perspective on the last study and the reasons there is sustained interest.**

Conceptual outlines and updates on a new study were provided to the BOCC by the Director during September 2008. In November 2008 the Fire Chief's Council participated in a free and open discussion of what they felt a new fire/rescue study could encompass as well as related steps to ensure "history would not repeat itself". This session was facilitated by the Purchasing and Central Services Director and attended by the Emergency Services Director and Assistant County Manager. The Chiefs Council named three primary members (and three alternates) to serve on the project steering committee who will also serve as evaluators of responses to a new request for proposals.

Based upon this groundwork and further review with County management and Purchasing on procedural steps, Emergency Services in conjunction with the steering committee recommend the BOCC consider a modified strategy and approach for moving a new study forward.

The suggested strategy divides an overall comprehensive study of the fire/rescue service system in Orange County into three separate, sequential phases designed to provide clear and defensible answers to three basic questions: (1) Where are we now? (2) Where do we want to go? (3) How do we get there? A successful study will adhere to the principles and priorities articulated by the BOCC and the Fire Chiefs Council. It will:

- Initiate an actionable strategic plan
- Involve critical stakeholders
- Include Northern Chatham and Southern Orange
- Employ recognized industry standards
- Factor six-mile districts
- Address fire insurance ratings
- Critique economies of scale and/or shared use – staffing; facilities, equipment
- Examine efficiencies and services enhancements
- Calculate long term sustainability and fire district financing
- Strengthen support and connections; i.e., fire inspections and prevention.

*County staff believes the suggested strategy would enable all stakeholders to coalesce around the following set of commitments:*

- Commitment to a clear purpose
- Commitment to established priorities
- Commitment to a factual study tied to industry norms and professional standards
- Commitment to openness and objectivity in choosing a highly qualified consultant
- Commitment to continuous communication and collaboration between the consultant and County/Fire Chiefs
- Commitment to instilling and maintaining trust and transparency throughout all phases and through public participation

#### **Phase One: “Where are we now?”**

Phase One is a thorough review of the current status of fire/rescue services in Orange County, examining organizational structures, staffing, resources, operating and capital budgets, and current service delivery profiles.

The resulting data would be analyzed compared to Federal and state laws and regulations that apply to fire and rescue operations, such as:

- Fire Prevention and Protection Act, 1997
- State Public Fire Safety Guidelines
- National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1710 and 1720 pertinent to the organization and deployment of fire suppression operations, emergency medical operations, and special operations to the public by career and volunteer fire and EMS departments

Data collected will parallel to the greatest extent practicable that necessary for any fire/rescue organization choosing to work towards achieving national accreditation. The approved final work product from Phase One would become the baseline for determining Phases Two and Three.

County staff further recommends the Phase One final work product be presented to the public through one or more input and feedback sessions using an external facilitator. Findings from the feedback sessions would assist the steering committee in developing the formal RFP for Phase Two. The BOCC would approve the contract award for Phase Two. Phase One should take approximately 3-6 months from contract execution and cost an estimated \$20,000-\$25,000. The expert facilitation of public sessions is estimated at \$5000-\$7500.

**Phase Two: “Where do we want to go?”**

Phase Two is an environmental analysis focusing on fire/rescue services delivery in a modern and increasingly urban community with changes anticipated in population, demographics, urban development, the transportation network and other factors over the next five to ten years. The consultant would be directed to return with projections and scenarios for providing the most appropriate level of services within Orange County, identifying the risk factors, trigger points, and resource requirements involved in decision making. Phase Two may take approximately 3-6 months from contract execution and cost an estimated \$25,000-\$35,000.

**Phase Three: “How do we get there?”**

Phase Three is the development of a collaborative and detailed action plan built upon community values, best industry practices, risk management, and fiscal responsibility. The completed report would provide a strategy and financial roadmap for delivering a defined and acceptable level of fire/rescue services throughout the County. The ultimate “vision” on level of service and ability to pay is a decision to be made by the appointed and elected leadership based on sound information and public participation. The BOCC is responsible for setting the annual fire district tax rates and authorizing the annual budget for Emergency Services with related revenue from fire inspection fees. Phase Three may take approximately 6-8 months from contract execution and cost an estimated \$35,000-\$45,000.

**Initiating Phase One**

County staff and Fire Chiefs Council representatives believe an informal solicitation should be made to receive competitive proposals from a small group of pertinent professional associations with the demonstrated knowledge and experience to conduct a Phase One assessment.

Four highly specialized and nationally recognized expert organizations with strong skills in research, publication, training, and technical consultation in the industry have been identified and expressed an interest in submitting a competitive proposal.

- 1) International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC)
- 2) International City and County Manager’s Association (ICMA) Public Safety Services
- 3) Oklahoma State University (Fire and Emergency Management Administration)
- 4) Texas A & M University (Emergency Services Training Institute)

Emergency Services and County management will work with Purchasing/Central Services and Legal to issue a legal and proper informal solicitation letter to the four organizations and conduct an appropriate interview and evaluative process. The steering committee will consider the knowledge, resources and reputation of the respondents; quality and depth of credentials/experience; demonstrated understanding and approach to Orange County interests and concerns; and availability and overall cost to perform the necessary tasks.

It is stressed that the County does not want a ready-made template. The successful organization will bring a custom approach in response to a unique environment and local needs.

The steering committee will recommend a contract award to the BOCC for approval. If the BOCC authorizes the proposed strategy, the steering committee could be prepared to make a recommendation by the second meeting in April 2009.

Phase One Phases Two and Three are believed to be better suited to the more traditional Request for Proposal (RFP) process whereby the County advertises nationally for private, for-profit vendors with expertise and experience in performing similar government studies. The technical consultant chosen to conduct the Phase One assessment will also be able to give advice on the probable costs and magnitude of time required for the next consultant to execute Phase Two and Phase Three.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

Funds in the total amount of \$50,000 are currently available within the Emergency Services Department budget to re-engage a study. Funds not expended for Phase One will be carried forward to support Phase Two and Three as necessary. The total estimated price tag for all phases is \$112,000 over a projected period of 32 months (spring 2009 – fall 2012).

**RECOMMENDATION(S):** The Manager recommends the Board

1. Approve the suggested approach for re-engaging in a comprehensive Fire/Rescue study in three phases – Phase One: Where are we now? Phase Two: Where do we want to go? Phase Three: How do we get there?
2. Authorize the County to conduct an informal solicitation of the four qualified technical/research organizations in the fire/rescue profession to submit competitive proposals to perform Phase One: Assessment of the Fire/Rescue Services System in Orange County