



# FIRE BOARD OF APPEALS APPOINTEES AND CANDIDATES

## MEMBER APPOINTMENTS AND TERM:

Pursuant to Appendix A of Chapter 15 of the Santa Barbara County Code of Ordinances, the members of the Santa Barbara County Fire Department's Board of Appeals are appointed by the Board of Supervisors and shall be qualified by experience and training to pass judgment on pertinent matters.

Members of the Board of Appeals demonstrate experience and training related to Chapters 10 and 15 of the Santa Barbara County Code of Ordinances, the California Fire and WUI Codes, the Fire Department's Development Standards, and Title IV, Minimum Fire Safe Regulations.

The members selected for Board of Appeals shall serve out the current term which ends on December 31, 2026.

## APPOINTEES AND CANDIDATES:

The following list is comprised of persons appointed by a Board of Supervisor or have expressed interest in serving on the Santa Barbara County Fire Department's Board of Appeals. Except for the current appointment, each candidate provided professional biographies demonstrating experience and/or qualifications to pass judgment on matters pertaining to Chapters 10 and 15 of the Santa Barbara County Code of Ordinances, the California Fire and WUI Codes, the Fire Department's Development Standards, and Title IV, Minimum Fire Safe Regulations.

The Board of Supervisors may choose their own appointees.

## CURRENT APPOINTEES:

### Stan Schwartz (Incumbent)

Current appointee, appointed by 2nd District Supervisor Laura Capps

## RECOMMENDED CANDIDATES:

### Massoud Abolhoda (Fire Department Nominee)

Massoud Abolhoda is a licensed Structural and Civil Engineer with more than three decades of experience in building safety, plan review, permitting operations, and civic technology. He served as Building Official for the City of Fremont from 1996 to 2009 and for the County of Santa Barbara from 2011 until his retirement in 2022.

Massoud holds a Master of Science in Structural Engineering and a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). His leadership and innovation have

been nationally recognized, including being named Building Official of the Year in 2008, receiving the Earthquake Engineering Research Institute (EERI) Award for Innovation in 2007, and leading the City of Fremont to achieve the first ISO Class 1 rating in the United States in 2006.

With extensive experience overseeing building and safety divisions, supervising plan review teams, and advancing seismic safety and regulatory modernization, Massoud brings a rare combination of technical depth and public-sector leadership. He now works with Civos, Inc., where he applies his experience to help jurisdictions modernize permitting, inspection, and plan review systems through practical, intuitive, and user-centered technology.

### **Steve Oaks (Fire Department Nominee)**

Steve Oaks began his career in the fire service on a Hotshot crew in 1982. He joined the Santa Barbara County Fire Department as a firefighter in 1987 and promoted through the ranks from Engineer, Captain, Battalion Chief, and Division Chief. He retired as the Santa Barbara County Fire Marshal and a Division Chief with experience in operational strategic planning, fire protection planning, project management, policy development, political problem solving, and team building. As the Fire Marshal for Santa Barbara County Steve was involved in the review and approval of many Fire Protection Plans, Community Wildfire Protection Plans, and Environmental Impact Reports for his fire protection district. He has experience in writing emergency incident evacuation plans and repopulation plans and coordinating actual evacuations with law enforcement as Liaison Officer on Santa Barbara County's local Incident Management Team.

Steve currently serves on NFPA Technical Committees for Wildland Fire Management (WFM-AAA) and Wildland and Rural Fire Protection (WRP-AAA). Additionally, he served at the State level as a member of the FireScope Operations Team. He held numerous National and State qualifications such as Incident Commander, Plans Section Chief, Operations Section Chief, Liaison Officer, Division/Group Supervisor, Strike Team Leader, Task Force Leader, Hazardous Materials Technician/Specialist, and California PC 830.37 Peace Officer/Investigator. Steve holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from UCSB and post-graduate work in Organizational Leadership from Cal Baptist University. He has been involved in fire protection planning as author, peer reviewer, and instructor/presenter. Steve is currently a private consultant specializing in finding fire protection solutions that work for regulators and developers alike.

### **Paul Van Leer (Fire Department Nominee)**

With over 40 years of experience managing ranches in fire-prone areas, Paul is highly regarded for expertise in vegetation fire prevention and land stewardship. Throughout a long career in agriculture, he has been deeply committed to protecting rangelands, neighboring properties, and the broader community from wildfire risk.

In addition to hands-on ranch management, Paul has served in numerous leadership roles, including Farm Bureau Board Member and President, Gaviota Coast Plan PAC Member, long-standing Chair of the County Agricultural Advisory Committee, and President of the Santa Barbara County Fire Safe Council since 2018. Through these roles, he has helped shape policies and initiatives that support agricultural resilience and wildfire preparedness across the region.

### **Ryan DiGuilio (Fire Department Nominee)**

Chief Ryan DiGuilio was appointed to the position of Fire Marshal on November 18, 2021. Chief DiGuilio oversees the Fire Prevention Bureau and Fire Investigations. A 20-year member of the Santa Barbara City Fire Department, Chief DiGuilio previously held the rank of Fire Inspector I, II, and acting Fire Marshal within the department. He also serves on a Critical Incident Management Team and has been deployed throughout the western United States for all types of natural and manmade disasters.

He graduated with a bachelor's degree in fire science from Purdue University. He holds a Prevention Officer and Fire Investigator Certification from the California State Fire Marshal's Office. A native of Ventura, and a 22-year resident of Santa Barbara, Chief DiGuilio enjoys all things outdoors with his family and friends.

### **James Austin (Fire Department Nominee – Alternate)**

James is the current Fire Marshal for the Santa Maria Fire Department and has served in that role since September of 2021. Prior to that James served as the Interim Fire Marshal for the City of Santa Barbara Fire Department and Fire Inspector I, II, and III/Investigator (Supervisor) for City of Santa Barbara Fire Department from 1999 until his appointment as the Fire Marshal for the Santa Maria Fire Department.

James earned a Bachelor of Science Degree, Public Administration from the University of La Verne in 2011, an Associate in Science Degree, Fire Technology from Allan Hancock College in 1997, an Associate in Science Degree, Environmental Hazardous Materials Technology from Allan Hancock College in May of 1998, and holds the following certificates as an IFCI Uniform Fire Code Inspector (Cert. #5038939-65), Fire Investigator I (Cert. #881545) and a California Firefighter I (Cert. #027868).