



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Department Name: County Executive
Department No.: 012
For Agenda Of: September 13, 2016
Placement: Departmental
Estimated Time: 1 hr
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: 4/5

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Department Mona Miyasato, County Executive Officer, 568-3400
Director(s) Bill Brown, Sheriff, 568-4290
Eric Peterson, Chief, Fire Department, 568-5500
Contact Info: Joseph Toney, Deputy County Executive Officer, 568-3400
SUBJECT: Sheriff/Fire Air Support Unit Update

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence: Human Resources

As to form: Yes

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Recommended Actions:

- a) Receive and file an update on the Santa Barbara County Sheriff/Fire Air Support Unit and Memorandum of Understanding between the Sheriff's Office and Fire Department; and
- b) Approve position resolution, attachment B, deleting one mechanic and one pilot in the Sheriff's Office and adding one mechanic and two pilots to the Fire Department; and retitle the classification of Sheriff's Helicopter Pilot to Air Support Pilot; and
- c) Approve Budget Revision Request 0004728; and
- d) Determine pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15378(b)(5) that the above action is not a project subject to CEQA review, because the action consists of organizational or administrative activities of governments that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment.

Summary Text:

The Santa Barbara County Sheriff/Fire Air Support Unit (ASU) is the elite public safety air program that covers law enforcement, fire protection, emergency medical services, and rescue missions. The joint program is located within the Sheriff's Office. The unit is designed based on the unique topography and demographic needs of the County covering diverse missions with a tightly integrated team under one

unified chain of command. The ASU's current Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), between the Sheriff and Fire Departments, was last updated in 2012. This report serves as an update to the Board on a revised MOU and improvements to the operations of the program. The Board Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Public Safety Aviation will no longer convene following this report and the Executive Command Group (the Sheriff, Fire Chief, and/or their designees) will meet on a quarterly basis to review ASU matters. A subsequent update will be provided to the Board on an annual basis.

Background:

The County's air program unit first started when the Board authorized the Sheriff to acquire two used military helicopters in 1995 and 1996. In 1997, the Board then authorized Fire to also acquire two used military helicopters. Having separate public safety air units created inefficiencies in coverage and lack of cohesion with chain of command. The first joint operations began in 2005 to share responsibility for search and rescue and to have a single location with cross training conducted. The program was combined under Sheriff in 2007 to improve the chain of command and operational efficiency. In 2009, there was a split but was rejoined in 2012 after the Ad Hoc Subcommittee's findings and recommendations.

On February 7, 2012, the Board of Supervisors accepted the Board Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Public Safety Aviation's Final Report and Recommendations for the air programs of the County. The Board directed that there be a joint fire and law enforcement aviation program within the Sheriff's Office based on an Operational Agreement between the Fire and Sheriff Departments; the joint aviation program was termed the Air Support Unit (ASU). This action was the final decision regarding the structure and organization of the program for aviation related missions. Since that time, the Ad Hoc Subcommittee has continued to meet as needed for updates and review of the program. The intention is to ensure the implementation of the joint program is in place, with eventual cessation of the Subcommittee.

As part of the Final Report, an operational Memorandum of Understanding was agreed to between Fire and Sheriff. The 2012 MOU has not been updated since the Ad Hoc Final Report. After four years of observations and in an effort to ensure the most efficient and effective operations are in place for the ASU, the two departments have revised and updated the MOU to provide for the most optimal and elite air program.

The updated MOU encompasses the following key improvements:

- **Two Pilots focused on Fire/EMS, with mutual aid availability:**

As part of the improvements, the Unit is requesting a fifth pilot that will be primarily functioning with Fire/Rescue/EMS missions. With an additional fifth pilot, the ASU will have the ability to meet the state mission by responding for mutual aid, either with water dropping capabilities or stand by hoist missions, for rescue during day or night operations. (Note: state missions are reimbursable.) This capability is also required for our own in-county vegetation response. The two ASU pilots that will have primary Fire/EMS function will have expertise in firefighting tactics, including day and night water dropping, crew transport, hoisting, water rescue, short haul and long line operations. These tactics require constant training and crew cohesion. The other three pilots have expertise in law missions, such as pursuit, surveillance, recon and search. All five pilots will be available to respond to any mission need as one ASU team.

Furthermore, having five pilots allows the ASU to staff an additional helicopter (upstaff) during extreme fire weather or Red Flag fire conditions in the Santa Barbara County front country. The unit will now have two helicopters staffed in the north county, per the MOU. Additionally, private funding can be utilized to upstaff a third helicopter with the additional pilots, which will save the cost of contracting Guardian Helicopter. Lastly, the fifth pilot will provide depth of bench, not only during fire season, but also to upstaff during mandatory training (Bell helicopter school), unexpected injury, illness, family emergencies or vacation time off.

- **One mechanic focused on Fire/EMS ship maintenance, and with mutual aid availability for the Unit:**

One mechanic will be employed by the Sheriff and one employed by the Fire Department and both will be available to provide maintenance work for the entire unit. Having the primary functional focus will help ensure that ships are airworthy for each type of mission. A comparison of similar Counties illustrates that Santa Barbara has the lowest ratio of mechanics to helicopters with 0.33 mechanics to 1 helicopter, whereas the average is 1.2 to 1¹. The proposed update will help balance the mechanical needs and ensure operational capability and safety within the current ASU structure.

- **Maintenance Committed Fund Balance established with a cost share amongst the departments and any unused funds will remain in Fund Balance for future maintenance needs:**

A committed fund balance will be established for the ASU within the General Fund. The committed fund will meet the need to set aside funds for the purpose of meeting major maintenance and/or repair requirements for the shared fleet. The goal of setting aside budgeted, unspent joint program funds, is to reduce or eliminate budget fluctuations that occur as a result of the timing of unforeseen but necessary major fleet maintenance and repairs. This fiscal approach promotes a more stable and predictable annual budget for the ASU fleet maintenance and maximizes efficiency in long-term planning for the program. The two departments will meet on a quarterly basis to review expenditures of the unit. The maintenance agreement is an Addendum to the MOU with overall costs being split 60% Sheriff and 40% Fire for cost sharing.

- **Increased training within the unit:**

The unit will be increasing its training to meet industry standards on a couple of different levels. First being that the pilots will be attending a flight safety training that is only conducted in Texas by Bell the manufacture of the County's helicopters, and is held annually. This training puts the pilots through various emergency procedures both simulation and live flying. All other public service agencies utilize this training or something that is specific to their aircraft, and all pilots are recommended to attend every year. This training runs approximately \$20,000 for each pilot annually. Secondly, within the ASU there are built in sticker guidelines for the ASU pilots and crews to maintain, which will require continued education through training to maintain their proficiencies. .

- **Safety management system in place and maintained, with after-action reviews after every call:**

A well-recognized safety management system will be put in place and maintained. The new Safety Management System will be detailed in a new and forthcoming operations manual. A program (PRISM) has been purchased that requires all of the ASU pilots to enter a Flight Risk Assessment

¹ Comparison of agencies with Fire helicopter programs: Sacramento Metro Fire, City of San Diego, Ventura County, Cal Fire, USFS, Orange County, Kern County, LA County, LA City.

Tool (FRAT) before every flight. This tool will ensure that all safety precautions are being taken and analyzed prior to every flight, and that all resources have been utilized to mitigate any issues that may arise. This program will also allow the unit to track all training in one common place and give management an effective way to oversee all training records.

- **Fire Battalion Chief will be second in command as the ASU Executive Officer:**
The chain of command will include the Fire Battalion Chief (BC) as second in command to ensure continuity of the unit and shared leadership. The BC will also be the Safety Officer and ensure that all staff are meeting expectations for safety, training, currency, certifications, and ethical standards. Furthermore, the BC and Lieutenant will provide mutual input for review and support of staff
- **New uniform exclusive to the unit:**
The Sheriff will provide a new and exclusive uniform for the ASU members to clearly identify them. The uniforms will be distinct from the standard Sheriff or Fire uniforms. The uniforms will help emphasize the team dynamic as well as clearly identify the members of this elite program.

The changes highlighted above will improve the program’s operations and provide for the highest quality public safety through air tactical missions. Both the Sheriff and Fire Chief have worked diligently to identify areas for improvement and to mutually agree to necessary upgrades. Following the adoption of the recommended actions, the Ad Hoc Subcommittee will cease to convene and the Executive Command Group (the Sheriff, Fire Chief, and/or their designees) will meet on a quarterly basis to review ASU matters. The Executive Command Group will provide an annual ASU update to the Board.

Performance Measure:

NA

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Budgeted: Yes, with adjustments

Fiscal Analysis:

<u>Funding Sources</u>	<u>Current FY 2016-17 Cost:</u>	<u>Modified Cost Structure:</u>	<u>Variance</u>
General Fund	\$ 1,653,598.00	\$ 1,653,598.00	\$ -
Fire District	1,243,530.00	1,462,140.00	218,610.00
Other Sources	55,000.00	126,904.00	71,904.00
State			-
Federal			-
Total	\$ 2,952,128.00	\$ 3,242,642.00	\$ 290,514.00

Narrative:

The FY 2016-17 Adopted budget for the ASU program is \$2,952,000 total between the two departments. The proposed modifications to the ASU will increase the ongoing costs by \$290,000. The primary causes of the increase are due to the addition of a pilot (\$202,000) and an increase in training costs (\$51,000). There will be cost recovery of an unknown magnitude due to fulfillment of State and Federal Mutual Aid requests.

Staffing Impacts:

Legal Positions:

1.0

FTEs:

1.0

One (1.0) additional FTE, Pilot, will be added to the ASU.

Special Instructions:

Please return one copy of each of the approved and signed position resolutions to Stefan Brewer in Human Resources.

Attachments:

- a) Memorandum of Understanding
- b) Position Resolution
- c) Budget Revision 0004728
- d) Budget Summary
- e) Organizational Chart

Authored by:

Joseph D. Toney, Deputy County Executive Officer, 568-3400

Bernard Melekian, Undersheriff, 568-4290

Rob Heckman, Deputy Fire Chief, 568-5501

cc:

Bill Brown, Sheriff

Eric Peterson, Fire Chief