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JERRY SANDERS
MAYOR

August 27, 2008

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SAN DIEGO- *Enick*
COUNTY GRAND JURY

Honorable Kenneth K. So
Presiding Judge, San Diego Superior Court
220 West Broadway, Presiding Department
San Diego, CA 92101

Subject: Response to San Diego County Grand Jury 2007-2008 report entitled "The Fire Next Time – Will We Be Ready?"

Pursuant to California Penal Code Section 933.05(a), (b), and (c), The City of San Diego provides the following responses to the findings and recommendations in the above-entitled Grand Jury Report:

PURPOSE of the INVESTIGATION

The purpose of the investigation was to review the results of the actions taken by authorities and personnel in charge of management and response to emergency disasters. From this review the County Grand Jury assessed what lessons were learned and made recommendations for: improving the ability of the community to respond to the threat of wildfires; and improving response efforts in emergencies. The report included recommendations which pertain both to the City of San Diego as well as the County of San Diego.

Response to Grand Jury Findings

Finding #01: The City of San Diego needs to address the gaps in emergency and fire protection services.

The Mayor agrees with this finding. Since taking office the Fire-Rescue Department's budget has been increased by approximately \$30.4 million or 19% from Fiscal Year 2006. This funding increase has been utilized to address previously existing gaps in service delivery by providing additional fire stations, emergency response and support vehicles, firefighting equipment, and fire fighter staffing. In addition, critical aerial firefighting and rescue capabilities were significantly enhanced by the acquisition and staffing of a second medium lift helicopter, Copter 2.

Finding #11: Neither the County of San Diego nor any of the cities, including the City of San Diego, had a standard operating procedure for the operation of a mega-shelter.

The Mayor agrees with this finding.

Response to Grand Jury Recommendations

08-105: Prepare a ballot measure to propose an increase in the Transient Occupancy Tax to be used solely for the purpose of improving fire protection levels including additional stations, engines, firefighters, training, equipment, etc. as outlined in the After Action Reports. We believe a 2.5% should be considered.

The recommendation will not be implemented. As the report stated, the City Council placed a 2.5% increase in the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) on the ballot in both March and November of 2004 and both times it failed.

The region's fire professional and emergency managers provided exceptional service during 2007 Wildfires, while also exposing some of the shortcomings in the region and the City. To study and then address those shortcomings a Regional Fire Protection Committee was formed. This committee included representation by co-chairmen Supervisor Ron Roberts and Mayor Jerry Sanders as well as other local elected officials and Fire Chiefs from throughout the region. The committee focused on improving coordination between the existing fire agencies throughout the county as well as identifying a funding source, should one be deemed necessary by the committee. The Regional Fire Protection Committee recommended the County Board of Supervisors place a \$52 per parcel tax to fund fire protection improvements before voters. The County Board of Supervisors voted on August 6, 2008 to place the measure on the November 2008 ballot.

Should this ballot measure be successful, it is anticipated to generate approximately \$50 million annually. Half of the funds would create the San Diego Regional Fire Protection Agency and pay for reserve fire engines, water bombers and other regional equipment. The other half would be allocated to local fire agencies to bolster their local capabilities.

08-106: Reallocate existing funds and develop new revenue streams.

The recommendation has already been implemented. Each year, the Mayor's Office presents a budget to the City Council for deliberation and debate prior to adoption. Over the past three budget proposals, general fund dollars have been reallocated to increase funding for the Fire-Rescue Department which includes increased apparatus and personnel.

Additionally, response 08-105 addresses the issue of new revenue streams.

08-115: Adopt an Emergency Care and Sheltering Plan for the City of San Diego which includes a plan for the establishment and operation of a mega-shelter, with particular application to the Qualcomm Stadium facility.

This recommendation is being implemented. The City of San Diego became acutely aware during the October 2007 Wildfires that the planned resources for Care and Shelter Operations quickly became overwhelmed. To better serve our communities, City staff began discussions on additional planning efforts needed for future disasters to include those of a greater magnitude. Care and Sheltering Plans are being developed and implemented to increase coordination and response within the City that will complement the Operational Area Emergency Plan Annex G, Care and Shelter Operations. In addition, the City is developing an Appendix to Annex G to outline with specificity the requirements needed to manage an effective mega-shelter, to include site specific plans for Qualcomm Stadium.

Please contact Jill Olen, Deputy Chief Operating Officer for Public Safety at (619) 236-7169 if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,



JERRY SANDERS
Mayor

cc: San Diego County Grand Jury
Chief Operating Officer
San Diego City Council
Deputy Chief, Community Services
Deputy Chief, Public Safety
Chief of San Diego Fire- Rescue
City Clerk
Administration Department Director