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August 4, 2015

Board of Supervisors
800 S. Victoria Ave.
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SUBJECT: Direction to the CEO to study and report back to the Board on the possibility of making the vacated Fire Station 20 available to the Sheriff's Upper Ojai Search and Rescue Team

RECOMMENDATION:

Direct the CEO to coordinate with appropriate County agencies and report back to the Board regarding the possibility of making Fire Station 20 available to the Sheriff's Upper Ojai Search and Rescue Team after it is replaced with a new Fire Station.

DISCUSSION:

Ventura County Fire Station 20, located on Highway 150 in the unincorporated community of Upper Ojai, is currently in the process of being replaced with a new, larger station located elsewhere in Upper Ojai. The new station is expected to be constructed, and the old station vacated, in approximately two years. The current Station 20 property is 0.46 acres in size, and is zoned Rural Exclusive, "RE-1acre," a rural residential zone. The site is subject to natural methane emissions, which are actively mitigated by the Fire Department. These methane emissions, together with the institutional development of the site and the residential zoning, impose constraints on the re-purposing of the property.

Sheriff's Search and Rescue teams are all-volunteer teams that assist the Sheriff's Department and other emergency responders in various emergencies, including searching for lost hikers, rescues, responding to emergencies such as the La Conchita landslide, and assisting during major disasters. These volunteer teams meet and train together on a regular basis, maintain their own large cache of equipment, and conduct

training exercises with the Sheriff's Department and other Search and Rescue teams. The work that these teams perform is arduous, sometimes hazardous, and is invaluable to the citizens of and visitors to Ventura County. They are also available 24/7 for 365 days of the year and their efforts represent a major contribution to the well being of the citizens and visitors to Ventura County. A 2:00 AM phone call in the middle of a cold stormy night can bring Search and Rescue volunteers to some of the most difficult locations and situations in Ventura County.

The Sheriff's Upper Ojai Search and Rescue team is the oldest team in the county and serves a leadership role for teams throughout the region. Providing this team with a central location for equipment storage, team meetings, and training exercises would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of this venerable organization, and constitute a logical extension of the public safety use of the former fire station.

Obtaining a report from the CEO on making the station available to the Upper Ojai Search and Rescue team will enable our Board to appropriately evaluate this matter.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Steve Bennett".

Steve Bennett,
Supervisor, First District