



The Jacob Journal

A Newsletter from Supervisor Dianne Jacob

June 2005

FUNDING IS KEY TO BETTER FIRE PROTECTION

Serving the Cities of:
El Cajon
La Mesa
Lemon Grove
Poway
Santee

Serving the communities of:
Agua Caliente
Allied Gardens
Alpine
Barrett
Blossom Valley
Bostonia
Boulevard
Campo
Canebrake
Casa de Oro
Crest
Cuyamaca
Dehesa
Del Cerro
Descanso
Dulzura
Eucalyptus Hills
Fernbrook
Flinn Springs
Granite Hills
Grantville
Guatay
Harbison Canyon
Jacumba
Jamul
Julian
Lake Morena
Lakeside
Mount Helix
Pine Hills
Pine Valley
Potrero
Ramona
Rancho San Diego
Rolando
San Carlos
San Pasqual
Santa Ysabel
Shelter Valley
Spring Valley
Tecate
Tierra del Sol
Vallecitos
Wynola

Serving the Indian Reservations of:
Barona
Campo
Cosmit
Cuyapaipe
Inaja
Jamul
La Posta
Manzanita
Mesa Grande
Santa Ysabel
Sycuan
Viejas

Jacob tax-shift proposal would spur consolidation without hurting schools

With a push from the San Diego County Fire Chiefs' Association and the Task Force on Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services, and a shove from an overwhelming majority of voters in rural communities, the consolidation of the 35 independent fire agencies serving unincorporated San Diego County is moving forward with greater momentum than ever before.

The Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), an independent State agency with the power to create and dissolve public agencies, is conducting what it calls a macro study, which will discuss possible models for a regional fire entity and examine the funding needs for those models.

Equally important as finding the model that best fits our region, is identifying a long-term funding mechanism to improve fire and emergency medical services for the region. That LAFCO is planning to put a price tag on each model it evaluates is helpful, but paying that eventual price tag will be a tremendous challenge. It's a challenge I've accepted and one that requires unity if it is to

succeed.

My funding proposal, approved by the Board of Supervisors, uses existing taxes and addresses an existing funding disparity between two of our most fundamental public services: education and fire protection.

On average, San Diego County taxpayers pay significantly more of their property

taxes to schools compared to other counties our size. The Board of Equalization reported that local taxpayers devoted 63 cents out of every dollar to schools, well above the 52 cent average. By shifting just three cents to fire agencies, we can create an on-going

source of revenue for fire protection.

Because the State guarantees funding for each student, the State would be obligated to pay for the shifted portion and local school funding would not be hurt.

As a past president of the California School Boards Association and a former teacher, protecting school funding is an absolutely imperative element of the plan, which is why the proposal includes a revenue neutrality requirement for schools to ensure fairness for all. While many debate whether the State will agree to the concept, I say we'll never know until we try.

Consolidation without increased funding would achieve little. Over the decades, funding for rural fire agencies has dwindled due to cost shifts by the State and the passage of Proposition 13.

At present, most rural fire agencies are

"...protecting school funding is an absolutely imperative element of the plan, which is why the proposal includes a revenue neutrality requirement for schools..."

- Dianne Jacob



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Fire Funding

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woefully underfunded. From incompatible radios to a dire lack of resources, to stark differences in insurance levels and response times among agencies, the inequities run deep and wide.

Fire doesn't recognize these inequities. It doesn't know when it crosses from a well-funded jurisdiction to a territory protected solely by volunteers. San Diegans who witnessed how quickly a tiny, rural spot fire raged into a regional inferno in October of 2003 understand why the safety of urban areas is linked to adequate protection in rural areas.

At present, some 40 percent of the unincorporated area is not covered by any formal fire agency. Considering that 70 to 80 percent of service calls in rural communities are medical

emergencies, an urban San Diegan who is injured on a road trip to Julian or a hiking trip in the Cuyamacas can only hope that emergency crews— all-volunteer in those areas— are on call to respond.

LAFCO's macro study, coupled with the funding concept I've proposed, represent tremendous progress toward strengthening fire protection in the region.

Past efforts to find additional long-term revenue for fire agencies have failed miserably. Tax measures have been routinely defeated by voters who believe their taxes are already high. Past attempts to consolidate have failed to win support from elected members of individual fire boards hesitant to let go of what they perceive as local control.

With the 2003 October fires

as an added impetus for real change, those who care about protecting lives and property from future fires now have a funding plan to rally behind. Knowing that the plan goes to great lengths to protect schools should give peace of mind to those who recognize that school facilities face the threat of fire too.

I'm willing to do my part to make Sacramento understand the necessity of additional funding for fire protection in San Diego County, the only large County in the state without some kind of regional firefighting entity. That sad fact must change.

My funding proposal could very well be the key that will improve fire and emergency medical services and make our region safer from fire.

Getting the facts about the new ambulance fee in Santee, Lakeside

People who live in the City of Santee and in and around the community of Lakeside who need, but can't afford, ambulance services should not fret about a new fee for transportation.

Currently, the service is provided through County Service Area 69, a special district created specifically for emergency medical transportation for residents and non-residents. Funding for the service comes from a tax approved by area voters, in addition to property taxes and transportation fees charged to non-residents. Unfortunately, the cost of providing the service is fast exceeding the current level of funding.

A new fee of \$575 should help the district stay afloat. The fee will be charged to the user's insurance company, Medi-Cal or Medicare. If a resident doesn't have insurance, Medi-Cal or Medicare, then the resident will be charged the fee.

There's no need to panic if you cannot afford the fee. If a resident cannot afford to pay, the fee will be waived.



A GIFT FROM PADRE PROS

Mountain Empire Little League is getting big league help from the San Diego Padres. Last month, the Padres announced that the organization will help renovate the league's field in Campo as part of its 2005 Little Padres Parks Program!

The club launched the program in 1996 to celebrate the 60th anniversary of pro baseball in San Diego. The goal is to refurbish or build diamonds where kids can play in clean, safe settings. All Little Padres Parks have grass infields with big-league landscaping, scoreboards, and signature palm trees in the outfield. That's great news for the 400 young athletes served by the Mountain Empire League.

Supervisor Jacob tips her cap to the Padres for helping create Mountain Empire's Field of Dreams!

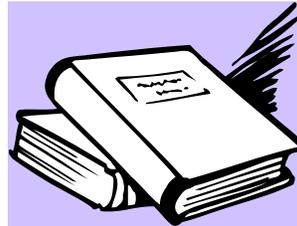


Greener Grass: Supervisor Jacob, Padre outfielder Dave Roberts and members of the Mountain Empire Little League celebrate a better field in the year ahead.

County seeking hikers and bikers for good, clean fun

If you're an avid hiker, biker or horseback rider, you understand the importance of safe and well-maintained trails. The County's Department of Parks and Recreation needs volunteers to patrol more than 300 miles of trails. Volunteers commit to one year of service— just eight hours per month. Responsibilities include ensuring the safety of trail users, responding to emergencies, and educating visitors about park programs. Training is provided.

To help care for the trails you love, become a Volunteer. For information call 858-694-3042.



Library News

The popular Casa de Oro branch of the San Diego County library is now open Saturdays instead of Mondays to better serve the weekend crowd. Saturday hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The library will also be open earlier on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Hours are now 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Tuesday and Thursday and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Wednesday.

Did you know the County library offers adult literacy classes? For more information about becoming a student call (858) 694-2108.

COFFEE AND CONVERSATION IN SPRING VALLEY

Got an idea that will improve or enhance public services in Spring Valley? Want to share comments or concerns? Supervisor Jacob invites you to an informal community coffee.

Friday, June 24, 2005 at 8:30 a.m.
Casa de Oro Travel
10630 Willie Baker Way, Spring Valley

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The Jacob Journal will be mailed to you on a regular basis by request only. If you like what you've read, fill out the form below and mail it back to us at 1600 Pacific Highway, San Diego, CA 92101 or fax it to us at (619) 696-7253. You can also sign up to receive the Jacob Journal on our website at www.diannejacob.com.

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We hope to hear from you soon!

June-05

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