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Muir Beach Volunteer Firemen's Association  
19-B Seacape Drive  
Muir Beach, CA 94965

April 6, 2016

To the Board Members and District Manager of the Muir Beach Community Services District:

Gary Friedman, President  
Lynda Grose  
Peter Lambert

Victoria Hamilton-Rivers, Vice-President  
Paul Jeschke  
Bill Hansell, District Manager

The members of MBVFA Board of Directors would like to express our support for building a fire house for the MBVFD at the proposed site at the old upper water tank location. It is our understanding that all other viable locations have been assessed, and this site provides a multitude of benefits, while mitigating several risks as well. Please reference the attached letter from Steve Wynn, MBVFD Fire Chief, dated March 24, 2016, for a historical perspective on fire house site assessments to date.

The fire department is not in compliance in terms of equipment and truck storage, and the temporary storage the fire chief negotiated with the NPS is only valid for the next two years. It is our position that now is the time to move forward with project assessment and planning for the upper water tank location, and we request your support in doing so. The Fire Department has already received the backing of all local fire chiefs for the upper water tank location, including Jason Weber of the Marin County Fire Department, and Kenny Stevens of the Stinson Beach Fire Department.

The MBVFA is prepared to offer both manpower support in terms of planning, as well as financial support to the CSD (earmarked for the MBVFD) for both planning and building purposes. We request that the MBCSD give its approval for a member of the MBVFA, a member of the MBVFD, and the District Manager to go to the Marin County Planning offices to continue assessment of the location and open a dialog regarding requirements and specifications for the proposed fire house (size, setbacks, environmental concerns, required studies, etc.).

This project has been studied and/or discussed for over 20 years now, with minimal progress made due to many factors, some of more recent events being beyond the control of the community. The conclusion has not changed – the fire department needs to move. Now is the time for us all to move forward together.

Sincerely,

Michael Moore, MBVFA President and Retired Fire Chief  
Suzanne Bender-Van Spyk, Treasurer  
Barbara Piotter, Emergency Disaster Preparedness  
Frankanne Damato  
David Piel

Attachment: "Firehouse Recommendation to CSD Board 3.24.16 Steve Wynn.pdf"



March 24, 2016

TO: MBCSD Board members  
CC: District Manager, Bill Hansell  
Muir Beach community members  
FR: Steve Wynn, MBVFD Fire Chief  
RE: Recommendations for MBVFD Firehouse

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Dear MBCSD Board members,

Since there are several new members on the Board, I felt it would be helpful to give you some history and context regarding the development of the firehouse project to date and to clarify my positions and recommendations.

History of new MBVFD firehouse property search and determination for optimal location:

**1. Existing location at the Dairy.**

Retrofitting the Dairy was extensively studied and explored back in 2008. I have a large stack of documents and plans in my office that I am happy to bring to the next CSD meeting so that you can review them. In short, it would cost a fortune due to its historical status and its advanced state of decay. Additionally, that land is now, and will always be NPS land, so it doesn't make sense to invest CSD monies in a location that can never be truly owned by our own community.

Regardless of the cost, the fact is that we have simply outgrown the Dairy. For those of you who have not visited the firehouse, it is a dirty, rat infested (though admittedly charming) barn. During the winter, a stream of water runs across the main flooring. The upstairs is technically unusable due to structural issues. We have no exhaust removal system nor a place to wash our hands after working on a bloody vehicle or bicycle accident. These are both health and safety concerns for our firefighters.

We desperately need a functioning firehouse that is dry, warm, protected, not infested with rats, not in a flood/tsunami zone with exhaust removal equipment and a place to wash up. We need a building that is large enough to house all of our existing vehicles and equipment, along with community emergency supplies and radio communications equipment.

On March 25, 2014 we conducted a community-wide, multi-agency tsunami drill with the Marin County Office of Emergency Services. In the After-Action Report/Improvement Plan on June, 2014 the OES concluded that, **"MBVFD firehouse is unsuitable for an operation coordination headquarters." ... "MBVFD needs a proper fire station not within a flood zone"**.

This year, I received permission from NPS to erect a temporary canvas garage at the Dairy for protecting Squad 660 from the elements. This agreement is for two years, after which, we will need to renegotiate with NPS or remove it.

## **2. Shoreline property purchase**

When the previous CSD Board first started looking at the property off of Shoreline as a potential firehouse location, I made it known that I felt this was *not* a good location primarily because it would put all of our firefighting and emergency assets in a tsunami and flood zone. If we were to be impacted with a tsunami or flood, there was a high probability that our emergency equipment would be unable to deploy. Despite these concerns, the property was purchased and the plans set in motion.

When we received the ruling from the Coastal Commission that we, in fact, would not be able to build in the Shoreline location, I submitted a letter to the CSD (May 29, 2014) recommending the community property adjacent to the Overlook on upper Seacape, listing the reasons below. At that time, the CSD Board acknowledged that:

- The old redwood water tank was failing, creating a health hazard and requiring removal.
- This location was a logical place for the new firehouse.

Cuco Alcala dismantled the water tank and I began moving forward with initial information- gathering efforts.

## **3. Overlook location as current, preferred location for new firehouse**

I recommended the upper Seacape location adjacent to the new water tank as a preferred location for the following reasons:

- The firehouse will be located out of a flood and/or tsunami zone.
- Superior radio connection/communication.
- Superior location to store community emergency preparedness supplies.
- Superior location as a command center to manage a community wide emergency.
- Easy access to Hwy 1
- Close proximity to helicopter LZ

Additional advantages that were not listed in the letter are:

- Property is already owned by CSD
- Property already has all the geologic and other relatable reports done due to the new water tank project built at the same site. (This will save thousands of dollars and time.)

Antonio Pares, an architect and a current volunteer on the fire department, was willing to do some preliminary drawings for free that would show the footprint and possible building style. Together, we met with and received approval from the surrounding neighbors for this proposed design and footprint.

Based on Antonio's drawings, we can accommodate a 3-bay firehouse with two stories in this location. This size structure would allow us to house both vehicles we currently own, all fire department equipment and tools, firefighter lockers, office space, meeting room, community emergency supplies, West Marin Disaster radio repeaters, Muir Beach LAN equipment and a water tender, which I am hoping to acquire in 2018 (for free) from Marin County Fire Dept.

This location could also accommodate a MERA repeater which will be a necessity with the impending MERA upgrade in 2018 that will put Muir Beach "in the dark" due to the different frequencies which will be used. For all these reasons, I strongly believe that the new firehouse should be located at the Overlook location and should be large enough to accommodate both existing needs and inevitable growth in the coming decades.

#### **4. Next steps and development considerations**

I can understand and totally support the necessity to recoup the monies spent on purchase of the previous Shoreline property and/or to trade that property for another parcel. However, this should not impact the plans to move forward with the plans for a firehouse at the Overlook.

Even if the Board approved this location today, we would still be *at least* a year away from breaking ground on a new firehouse taking into consideration the time it takes for planning, permits and fundraising. In order to start fundraising in earnest, we need to have approved plans and permits in place so that the community can begin to visualize and get behind the effort. For all of these reasons, I believe that the sooner we can move forward with the Overlook location, the better.

I have been immersed in this issue for the last six years so I wanted to share the benefit of my insights and perspectives. I feel strongly that, as your Fire Chief, it is my duty and responsibility to make my recommendations clear to the Board. I appreciate that no one wants to jump into anything without looking at all the possibilities. However, my hope is that this review will provide the background information and context for you all to feel confident moving forward without further delay.

I would like to request that you bring this issue up for a vote at the next CSD meeting to approve moving forward with plans and permits using VFA monies donated to CSD for this purpose to get started. This will also enable VFA to begin the fundraising plans and grant-writing process that will be necessary for its eventual construction.

Please let me know if you have any questions or would like a tour of the barn and/or Overlook location.

Sincere regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Steve Wynn".

Steve Wynn  
MBVFD Fire Chief