

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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California's Newest Fire Department Now in Service

San Mateo Consolidated Fire Department Celebrates Commencement of Operations

January 25, 2019 — Join nearly 140 firefighters as they are simultaneously sworn in to the newest fire agency in the state of California – the San Mateo Consolidated (SMC) Fire Department. The public is invited to the ceremony beginning 9 a.m. Saturday, February 2 at the College of San Mateo. State Senator Jerry Hill will issue the Oath of Office to all members of the new SMC Fire Department, which officially commenced operations on January 13, 2019.

SMC Fire was formed by the establishment of a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) and represents the merger of departments in San Mateo, Foster City and Belmont. It is the first JPA to commence operations in the State of California in nearly a decade. Years in the making, and after strategic negotiations with CalPERS, the work to establish SMC Fire will help pave the way for other agencies seeking to provide improved services through a JPA in California.

The SMC Fire Department has over 260 years of combined history providing emergency services in the three communities. The new department is staffed by 152 personnel that provide emergency services utilizing 10 engine companies and two ladder trucks from the existing nine fire stations. The consolidation allows SMC Fire to continue providing comprehensive emergency response services to all three cities in a more cost-effective way, while maintaining the high level of service the communities rely upon.

Background:

The efforts to explore collaboration began in 2010 when Foster City and San Mateo agreed to share duties of then Fire Chief Dan Belville. Over the next two years, the two cities expanded their partnership to include other key Command Staff positions. In 2013, under the leadership of Fire Chief Mike Keefe, the City of Belmont joined the partnership. At that time, the three cities agreed to share, jointly staff, and relocate the Foster City Ladder Truck to a centralized location that better served the three communities.

In 2015, newly appointed Fire Chief John Healy was directed by the three City Managers to study the viability of completing the merger of all fire protection services. The goal was to continue to provide the same high-quality emergency services in a more sustainable model.

Staff from the cities and fire departments explored available options and determined a JPA was the most viable option. The JPA was officially established on November 22, 2017. The path was not without significant obstacles.

To maintain the existing employees' pension benefits, State Senator Jerry Hill sponsored Senate Bill 24, which passed the legislature and was signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown.

Other obstacles included amending the San Mateo City Charter and gaining agreement from the three cities on a governance model, cost apportionment and negotiating new labor agreements with the work force. The final

and perhaps most challenging hurdle, to gain approval as a new public agency from CalPERS, which had not recognized a JPA in the State in nearly a decade. The successful outcome of SMC Fire Department's negotiations with CalPERS will now help pave the way for other agencies who wish to form a JPA to provide improved community services.

This 8-year endeavor could not have succeeded with the commitment of City Council members, City Managers, City staff, and Fire labor leaders.

Event Details:

Date: February 2, 2109

Time: 9 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. Please arrive early

Location: College of San Mateo

1700 West Hillsdale Blvd., in Parking Lot 12

Public guests attending are asked to park in Parking Lot 2

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