



Ross Valley Fire Department

Serving Fairfax, Sleepy Hollow, San Anselmo, and Ross

September 10, 2026

The Honorable Judge Stephen P. Freccero
Marin County Superior Court
P.O. Box 4988
San Rafael, CA 94913-4988

Dear Judge Freccero:

Enclosed, please find the Department's response to the Marin County Civil Grand Jury Report "Better Service at Lower Cost - Optimizing Essential Services for the Future of Marin". The responses were approved by the Board of Directors at a regularly scheduled meeting on Wednesday, September 9, 2026.

The Department would like to clarify that the Ross Valley Fire Department (RVFD) is not a special district. RVFD is a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) that provides fire and emergency services to its four member agencies: the Town of San Anselmo, Town of Fairfax, Town of Ross, and Sleepy Hollow Fire Protection District.

If you have any questions regarding the responses, please do not hesitate to contact Fire Chief Dan Mahoney at dmahoney@rossvalleyfire.org.

Sincerely,

Lauren Houde
Administrative Assistant

Enclosures



RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT

REPORT TITLE: "Better Service at Lower Cost — Optimizing Essential Services for the Future of Marin"
RESPONDING AGENCY: Ross Valley Fire Department
REPORT DATE: June 11, 2026
RESPONSE BY: September 11, 2026

The following responses are from the Board of Directors of the Ross Valley Fire Department (RVFD) a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) ("RVFD" or "Authority") serving the Town of San Anselmo, Town of Fairfax, Town of Ross, and the Sleepy Hollow Fire Protection District.

GRAND JURY FINDINGS

- We agree with the findings numbered: None
- We disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: **F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6, F7**

GRAND JURY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendations numbered **R4, R6, R7, R9 (partially)** have been implemented.
- Recommendations numbered **R1, R2, R3, R5, R8, R9 (partially)** will not be implemented because they are not warranted or reasonable.

Date: 9/9/26 **Signed:** D. A. [Signature] (Fire Chief)

Number of pages attached: 4

RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY “FINDINGS”

F1. The current fragmented structure of special districts results in unnecessary duplication of administrative services and operational inefficiencies.

Response: Disagree Wholly

RVFD cannot speak on behalf of other agencies. However, the Authority was established to reduce the duplication of services and provide unified fire protection and emergency medical services on behalf of its four member agencies.

F2. Some districts perform competently but lack sufficient scale to support long-term strategic investment in infrastructure, technology, staffing, and resilience.

Response: Disagree Wholly

RVFD cannot speak to the financial status of other agencies. However, RVFD has maintained and continues to maintain adequate funding and reserve levels, including a fully planned capital replacement program in a cost-effective manner for its four member agencies.

F3. Smaller districts are disproportionately vulnerable to staffing disruptions and catastrophic events that could rapidly impair service delivery.

Response: Disagree Wholly

RVFD cannot speak on behalf of other agencies. However, RVFD's current staffing model positions the Authority to maintain staffing levels necessary to provide fire protection and emergency medical services.

F4. Although consolidation is a popular idea among many elected board members, current governance structures, absence of board member term limits, and fear of loss of political influence discourage boards and administrators from initiating consolidation even when they recognize its benefits.

Response: Disagree Wholly

RVFD is a Joint Powers Authority established to provide fire protection and emergency medical services while creating operational and cost efficiencies among its four member agencies.

F5. Service and pricing inequities currently exist across Marin and may increase if consolidation and functional collaboration do not accelerate.

Response: Disagree Wholly

RVFD cannot speak on behalf of other agencies. However, the RVFD Joint Powers Authority, established in 1982, continues to provide a cost-effective and efficient model for delivering equitable fire protection and emergency medical services across its four member agencies.

F6. Performance metrics for essential, mission-specific services exist but they are not readily available and standardized, which prevents meaningful public comparison of district effectiveness and undermines accountability.

Response: Disagree Wholly

RVFD completed a Standards of Coverage study in September 2019, conducted by Citygate Associates, to evaluate system performance, measure key performance indicators, and compare service delivery against industry best practices. The study provides valuable data to help inform policy and operational decisions. RVFD anticipates conducting an updated Standards of Coverage study in 2027.

F7. Without proactive reform, future consolidations are more likely to occur through crisis driven intervention, resulting in greater disruption and higher costs.

Response: Disagree Wholly

RVFD cannot speak on behalf of other agencies. However, as a four-member Joint Powers Authority, RVFD has demonstrated efficient and effective service delivery through a shared governance model since 1982.

RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY "RECOMMENDATIONS"

R1. By January 1, 2027, all special district boards should have conducted their first semi annual consolidation exploration meeting with similar districts and will have established a regular meeting schedule moving forward.

This recommendation has not been implemented and is not anticipated to be implemented in the future. RVFD is already a four-member Joint Powers Authority that provides fire protection and emergency medical services through a unified and efficient regional model.

R2. By October 1, 2026, the Board of Supervisors should direct the development of comprehensive, cost-efficient shared services (such as IT, legal, finance, HR/payroll, harmonized compensation/benefits package, insurance) for special districts to optimize expenses and secure a Marin-wide acceptable quality standard. First limited-service offerings are encouraged to be made available by January 1, 2027.

This recommendation has not been implemented and is not anticipated to be implemented. RVFD does not provide policy direction to the Marin County Board of Supervisors. However, RVFD will continue to participate in and cooperate with efforts that improve the efficiency and effectiveness of fire protection and emergency medical services.

R3. By January 31, 2027, with the assistance of the County, all districts should develop and publish on their website standardized, comparable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) with regard to service pricing, finance, staffing, operations, and customer satisfaction.

This recommendation has not been implemented and will not be in the future. RVFD completed a standards of coverage assessment in 2019 that remains valid and in alignment with industry best practices, including KPIs.

R4. By January 31, 2027, each district should publicly update findings and progress regarding consolidation opportunities, and share those findings with the Board of Supervisors and the public on a semi-annual basis.

This recommendation has already been implemented. RVFD is a Joint Powers Authority, not a special district, and already achieves operational and cost efficiencies through its consolidated regional service delivery model.

R5. By January 31, 2027, the Board of Supervisors should oversee compliance with R1–R4 and update the public on the districts’ performance.

This recommendation has not been implemented and is not anticipated to be implemented. RVFD does not provide policy direction to the Marin County Board of Supervisors.

R6. By October 1, 2026, in the process of implementing R1 and R2, districts should prioritize functional consolidation in operations, procurement, training, and administration as a precursor to formal consolidation.

This recommendation has already been implemented. RVFD is a Joint Powers Authority, not a special district, and already achieves operational and cost efficiencies through its consolidated regional service delivery model.

R7. By October 1, 2026, the district's board compensation, benefits, length of service, date of term end, and expenses related to board work should be clearly and prominently posted on each district's website and updated annually.

This recommendation has already been implemented regarding board compensation. The board members do not receive benefits; the Department does not track length of service; none but one member agency has term limits; and there are no expenses related to Board work.

R8. By June 1, 2027, special districts should adopt term limits of two consecutive four-year terms for all board members. Staggered implementation of term limits to avoid disruptions is encouraged.

This recommendation has not been implemented and will not be in the future. Appointments to the RVFD Board are made by the member agency and are subject to their individual Town, City or, District policies.

R9. By June 1, 2027, board compensation structures should be reviewed across districts and considered for adjustment. All components of board compensation should be posted on their website (see best practice example in Appendix B).

This recommendation has been partially implemented and other portions of this recommendation has not been implemented and will not be in the future. "RVFD already complies with parts of this recommendation, but will not implement other portions. RVFD already posts information about board compensation on our website, so that portion is already complied with. Board compensation will not be reviewed across other districts, since RVFD is not a special district. However, RVFD agrees with the spirit of this grand jury report that all discussions of board compensation will be held at open and public meetings where the public has a right to review and comment on any board compensation structure."