

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**



**FROM:** Supervisor Bob Buster  
Supervisor Jim Venable

**SUBMITTAL DATE:** July 14, 2004

**SUBJECT:** Board support for the appointment of a Riverside County Fire Chief.

**RECOMMENDED MOTION:** That the Board join with us to direct the Executive Office to develop a job description for the position of County Fire Chief (as so required in County Ordinance 787, Section 8) and bring that information back to the Board within 30 days. After the Board approves the job description, the position needs to be advertised for 30 days. A list of candidates should be brought to this Board for final review; interviews will then be conducted resulting in the selection and appointment of a County Fire Chief.

**BACKGROUND:** The recent removal of our Board appointed (M.O. 1/9/2001 Item. 2.13) Riverside County Fire Chief Tom Tisdale by the Director of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) without input and consultation with this Board sheds light on a serious and ongoing situation in our County. Riverside County has the largest "Schedule A" contract with CDF in the entire state. Together with our contract cities we send millions of dollars in "administrative charges" to CDF Sacramento annually yet we have no real say in who is appointed by the Director of CDF to oversee our County. That situation is no longer acceptable.

The County's current contract with CDF (Section 7. Administration) states: "The (CDF) Director will select and employ a State Forest Officer referred to as Unit Chief who shall under the supervision and direction of the Director have charge of the organization (County). The Local Agency (County) MAY appoint the Unit Chief as the Fire Chief."

(Continued)

Bob Buster, Supervisor  
First District

Jim Venable, Supervisor  
Third District

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Riverside County Ordinance 787, Section 8, states: "There is hereby established in the County of Riverside a County Fire Department which SHALL be under the jurisdiction of the County Fire Chief. The County Fire Chief SHALL be appointed by the Board of Supervisors." The ordinances of the County also enumerate at least 28 other references to the County Fire Chief and very specific responsibilities which range from "administering, interpreting and enforcing" the Uniform Fire Code to emergency management, weed abatement, planning and water issues. These are critical responsibilities that need to be overseen by someone of our choosing.

With urbanization and the great fire risk in these times of drought, Riverside County residents are holding their elected Board of Supervisors Member directly accountable for these critical services. Board Members cannot fulfill their public responsibility without having a County selected and appointed Fire Chief. Our Chief can be the liaison between the County and our CDF contract process. The correct way to find the best chief is to develop a job description and advertise for worthy candidates. The current CDF Unit Chief can certainly be invited to apply for that position. We would further recommend that the cost of our County Fire Chief be borne by reducing the administrative charge sent to CDF Headquarters.