



MEMORANDUM REPORT

Meeting Date: November 17, 2020

TO: Board of Commissioners of the Los Altos Hills County Fire District

FROM: J. Logan, General Manager

SUBJECT: Develop Policies and Guidelines for District Hydrant and Infrastructure Relocation, Replacements, and Additions

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive report for discussion and coordinate with the Santa Clara County Central Fire Protection District a process to develop policies and guidelines for Los Altos Hills County Fire District hydrant and hydrant infrastructure relocation, replacements, and additions with report back at a future Commission meeting.

BACKGROUND

Early development of the Los Altos Hills County Fire District (District) was focused on fire protection and dependency on access to water supplies for fire suppression. In the early 1950's, there were approximately three-hundred fifty homes, small ranches and private wells. Residents organized themselves into small mutual water associations for distribution of water. In 1955 the Purissima Hills Water District (PHWD) was incorporated.

In 1956 PHWD began work on installation of a water distribution system. At the same time, the Fire District sought to install hydrants in order to make water from PHWD's mains available for fire protection. PHWD and the County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors, on behalf of the Fire District, entered into an agreement on October 29, 1956, to allow the Fire District to attach fire hydrants to the PHWD's water mains. Under the terms of the 1956 Agreement, the Fire District owns the hydrants and is responsible for keeping the hydrants in good repair. "Hydrants" include "all connections, valves, pipes, and fittings." Further, the Agreement protects the PHWD from liability to Fire District by not giving "any representations or warranty as to the volume of water available in its system, or as to the pressures available in its system."

In August 1980 the PHWD and County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors, on behalf of the Fire District, entered into another agreement to formally "specify their respective rights and obligations in connection with the provision of those water-related services that are necessary for fire protection purpose." At this time, the Fire District owned approximately three-hundred-fifty (350) fire hydrant facilities connected to the PHWD's water distribution system. Since that time, an additional one-hundred ninety (190) hydrants have been installed by the Fire District and connected to the PHWD's water distribution system. The Agreement, which is still in effect today, requires the Fire District to ensure proper operation of the hydrants, including ensuring consistency with good water works and fire protection practices. The PHWD is not liable or responsible for failures in the operation, maintenance, testing, replacement or removal of hydrants, except when arising out the

fault or neglect of the PHWD. Hydrants include the connections, valves, pipes, and fittings appurtenant to the hydrants.¹

DISCUSSION

Under current management of the District's five-hundred and forty hydrants and infrastructure assets (bury, lateral, gate valve and cover, tee) that connect into the PHWD water systems, questions arise pertaining to:

1. Location, relocation, replacement or repair and addition of hydrants during construction of PHWD capital improvement projects
2. Annually, capital improvement projects for repairs or resurfacing roadways by Town of Los Altos Hills result in removal of hydrant infrastructure, most frequently, the gate valve and/or cover. During these projects, the District contracts with a construction contractor for replacement of the hydrants or infrastructure affected.
3. Damage by third parties to hydrant and infrastructure
4. Failure of hydrant or infrastructure due to end-of-life cycle or deterioration and resulting leaks and risk to the water system and residential properties
5. Opportunities for the District to improve water flow to the hydrant system and/or to enhance pipeline resiliency during capital improvement projects

The District lacks a studied approach for decision making that arises due to capital improvement projects, failures in the hydrant infrastructure or opportunities to improve water flow and pipeline resiliency.

With the assistance of Freyer & Lauretta Consulting Engineer services to the District, participation by the Santa Clara County Central Fire Protection District Deputy Fire Marshall Division water systems staff, PHWD staff, District staff and Commissioner representatives, the opportunity to address these issues is timely and necessary.

RECOMMENDATION

Receive report for discussion and coordinate with the Santa Clara County Central Fire Protection District a process to develop policies and guidelines for Los Altos Hills County Fire District hydrant and hydrant infrastructure relocation, replacements, and additions with report back at a future Commission meeting.

Attachments:

1. Agreement dated October 29, 1956 between Purissima Hills Water District and County of Santa Clara on Behalf of Los Altos Fire Protection District
2. Agreement dated August 12, 1980, between Purissima Hills Water District and County of Santa Clara on Behalf of Los Altos Fire Protection District
3. Fire Hydrant Assembly, STD.NO. PH-08

¹ May 15, 2020, Response to the April 26, 2020 Revised Confidential Draft Management Audit of the Los Altos Hills County Fire District.