

**THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF SANTA FE COUNTY**

Introduced by:
Commissioner Anna Hamilton and Commissioner Henry Roybal

RESOLUTION NO. 2022 - 087

**A RESOLUTION
IN SUPPORT OF THE VOLUNTEER COMPONENT OF THE SANTA FE COUNTY
FIRE DEPARTMENT TO ENSURE A SUSTAINABLE COMBINATION
FIRE DEPARTMENT**

WHEREAS, the first fire district to be created by the Board of County Commissioners (“Board”) of Santa Fe County (“County”) was the Pojoaque Fire District in 1959; and

WHEREAS, by 1982, there were 11 fire districts officially recognized in the County and a 12th was in the process of forming; and

WHEREAS, by 1997, there were 15 fire districts officially recognized and regionally distributed throughout the County; and

WHEREAS, for more than three decades, all fire protection and emergency medical services in Santa Fe County were provided by the regionally distributed volunteer districts; and

WHEREAS, Santa Fe County Fire Department (SFCFD) was formed in 1997 by combining the 15 volunteer fire districts and the former Office of the County Fire Marshal; and

WHEREAS, in February of 1997, the SFCFD was officially organized under the administration of a single fire chief with service areas further defined by region and district; and

WHEREAS, the County’s 14 fire districts were brought under the SFCFD for administrative oversight and paid firefighters were added to the County and divided into four geographic regions (northern, southern, eastern, western); and

WHEREAS, the combined SFCFD has functioned well with more than 300 volunteers and up to 100 paid staff, or an approximately 3-to-1 ratio of volunteer to paid firefighters; and

WHEREAS, the SFCFD has been served through the combined efforts of fire district volunteers and paid firefighters to deliver quality emergency services to the citizens of the County, including fire, EMS, rescue, and other emergencies 24 hours a day, 365 days per year; and

SFC CLERK RECORDED 10/26/2022

WHEREAS, currently, the number of volunteers responding to at least one call has declined to nearly 70, presenting staffing issues across the 14 districts; and

WHEREAS, the quality of life of the citizens of the County is enhanced by the invaluable knowledge and contribution to fire and medical services provided by volunteers; and

WHEREAS, Santa Fe County volunteers are trained to many of the same standards as paid members in firefighting, EMS, and other emergency response skills (e.g., extrication) and must successfully complete the Santa Fe County Volunteer Civil Service Exam, the Physical Agility Test, and the Santa Fe County Volunteer Fire Academy; and

WHEREAS, SFCFD protects approximately 1,900 square miles of unincorporated area, making it difficult for the County to service the area with purely paid staff, and therefore essential that the SFCFD remain a combined service with a dynamic, well-supported volunteer component; and

WHEREAS, the 14 existing districts, which are run and maintained by the district volunteers in concert with the Fire Chief of the Santa Fe County Fire Department (County Fire Chief) and command staff, service their defined regions such that the Fire Department's service can conform to the needs of each district and is enhanced by the local knowledge of the volunteers; and

WHEREAS, the County Fire Chief has important, recognized roles in overview and management of SFCFD funds; and

WHEREAS, by Ordinance 1997-11, all revenue sources characterized as public funds requires Board approval prior to expenditure, and the County Fire Chief, as representative of the Board, is responsible for reviewing and approving any expenditure requested by a District Chief, as well as reviewing such requests for compliance with all applicable statutes, ordinances, and rules and regulations; and

WHEREAS, the Fire District Bylaws, Article I, Section 6 (Resolution 2002-147) provide that the County Fire Chief acts in the capacity of fiscal administrator for all funds credited to the Fire Department and its Fire Districts; and

WHEREAS, impact fees that support fire operations are currently collected within and must be spent within each district; and

WHEREAS, by Ordinance 1997-11, each District Chief is responsible for the expenditure of funds allocated to the Fire District; and

WHEREAS, the Bylaws, Article I, Section 6 (Resolution 2002-147) require the District Chief of each Fire District to be accountable and responsible for the day-to-day operational management of the Fire District, and to be responsible for the expenditure of public funds allocated to the Fire District, in accordance with Santa Fe County Ordinance 1997-11; and

SFC CLERK RECORDED 10/26/2022

WHEREAS, the defined roles of the volunteer District Chiefs are recognized, so that the County Fire Chief and the volunteer District Chiefs can work appropriately and in concert for the benefit of the Fire Department and service to County residents.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Santa Fe County Board of County Commissioners reaffirms the requirement in Ordinance 1997-11, that no changes can be made to the 14 volunteer districts from their current configuration (their service areas, or how impact fees are collected and allocated) without justification presented directly to the Board and specific authorization by the Board.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of County Commissioners reaffirms the requirement in Ordinance 1997-11, that each of the 14 volunteer districts must be run by a volunteer District Chief.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of County Commissioners of Santa Fe County, hereby directs the County Manager and the County Fire Chief to implement the following, including proposing amendments to ordinances and resolutions as may be necessary:

1. While the County Fire Chief has authority to appoint volunteers as well as paid members to positions necessary to assure the successful operations of the SFCFD, Ordinance 1997-11 requires that the 14 volunteer districts be run by volunteer District Chiefs. Only where it is necessary for the protection of the health, welfare, and safety of the residents of the County, and for enforcement of codes and ordinances, such as the loss of a volunteer District Chief with no immediate volunteer replacement, should the County Fire Chief appoint paid staff to temporarily fill a District Chief position, and then only for as short a time period as possible, in accordance with Ordinance 1997-11. Should a paid acting District Chief need to serve in that position for more than 2 months, the County Fire Chief shall report this to the Board at the next regularly scheduled Board meeting.
2. In recognition of the fact that the service needs of the County cannot be met exclusively with paid staff, within six (6) months of the next County Fire Chief's hire date, he or she shall present to the Board of County Commissioners a volunteer staffing plan by District with milestones for the recruitment of volunteer firefighters. It is the expectation of the Board of County Commissioners that a minimum of 300 volunteers will be necessary to meet the service needs of the County. The performance of the County Fire Chief, paid SFCFD officer in charge of volunteer recruitment and retention, and the Deputy County Manager overseeing the SFCFD should be explicitly judged on progress in achieving the established goals, as documented in performance evaluations.
3. Consistent with Ordinance 1997-11, the County Fire Chief shall be responsible for cooperation with the District Chiefs and ensuring that paid fire department staff work collaboratively and cooperatively with the volunteer component of the SFCFD. The job performance review of the County Fire Chief should account for this aspect of the job.
4. In selection of the County Fire Chief, Deputy County Fire Chief, and any paid SFCFD officers with direct responsibility for volunteers (other than solely incident command),

two or more volunteer District Chiefs shall be included in the selection processes, including participation in interviews, development of interview questions, and recommendations concerning the final selection decisions.

5. Two or more volunteer District Chiefs shall likewise be involved in SFCFD strategic and tactical planning and development, including but not limited to periodic strategic planning, budget development, standard operating guidelines or procedures (SOGs or SOPs) development, periodic command staff meetings (limited, of course, by volunteer staff availability, as would be the case with any paid staff), training planning, and other fire department decisions as appropriate.
6. Nothing herein shall be construed as precluding the County Fire Chief or County Manager from making further or different recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners concerning the structure or staffing of the SFCFD.
7. The County Manager shall distribute a copy of this Resolution to the Deputy County Manager overseeing Public Safety, current Santa Fe County Fire Chief and/or Acting Fire Chief, all Assistant Chiefs, and each District Chief.

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED ON THIS 25th DAY OF OCTOBER, 2022.

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF SANTA FE COUNTY**

By: Anna T. Hamilton
Anna T. Hamilton, Chair



SFC CLERK RECORDED 10/26/2022

ATTESTATION:

Katharine E. Clark
Katharine E. Clark
Santa Fe County Clerk

Date: 10/25/2022

COUNTY OF SANTA FE)
STATE OF NEW MEXICO) ss

BCC RESOLUTIONS
PAGES: 4

Approved as to form:

I Hereby Certify That This Instrument Was Filed for Record On The 26TH Day Of October, 2022 at 09:28:06 AM And Was Duly Recorded as Instrument # 2000230 Of The Records Of Santa Fe County

Jeff Young
Jeff Young
Santa Fe County Attorney

Witness My Hand And Seal Of Office
Katharine E. Clark
Deputy Dusty Romero County Clerk, Santa Fe, NM

