

Pacifica Chamber of Commerce Candidates Forum

Question #7:

Businesses and others continue to complain about high fire inspection fees, which exceed those in other communities. How would you address these concerns? Would you support continuing working with Daly City and Brisbane or, going out to other entities, like South San Francisco, or Cal Fire to provide fire administration and management? Given the fact that California has been on fire almost year around, do you feel it may be appropriate to put resources towards wild fire prevention and education?

Sue Beckmeyer:

I think a benchmark assessment should be done to compare Pacifica's fees for fire inspection, building permits, business licenses, and other fee-based services to determine if Pacifica's rates are appropriate within our region. Considering the cost of personnel and equipment, it may be prudent to investigate different partnership options for fire administration and management. I think it is in the interest of insurance companies to partner with the city and county to provide wild fire prevention and education to citizens of Pacifica.

Mary Bier:

This is the first time I have heard of this concern. I will research this topic and prepare a response for this moving forward. I never feel that outsourcing is helpful for a community. This has already happened and now it is time to work with our firefighters to support what they think is best. I feel it is very appropriate to put resources towards wildfire prevention and education.

Bridget Duffy:

I've spoken with our firefighters, they are an excellent team, I think we could be supporting them better.

Vickie Flores:

1. I know this issue has been going on for several years now. I know the sad explanation that was given for the increase in fees. I think it's time we brought more light to this issue and get our county and state officials involved. Changing the interpretation of an existing fire code that has been in place for many years just so you can get more money out of hard working people's hands should be illegal.
2. I would support going out to other entities to provide fire administration and management.
3. I don't think that putting more resources towards wild fire prevention and education is our issue. I think putting more resources around higher penalties for arsonist is what we should be looking at. Most of the fires in California have been started by an arsonist or accidentally. This is not to say that the people who started the fires accidentally were not educated enough about fire prevention. Also, we are still

seeing the effects our long drought. We have many dead trees that help these fires spread twice as fast. Climate change shows an increase in our wind. This is just a dangerous combination. We should put more resources into fire inspections to make sure that at least 100 feet of land is cleared around homes and businesses.

John Keener:

Inspection fees of all sorts are supposed to cover the cost of the inspection and no more. I would have to see evidence that overcharging for inspections is occurring. Then I would vote to adjust the fees.

Regarding going to other jurisdictions to save money, the potential savings would have to be demonstrated.

The Fire Department put on a wildfire prevention/education event on a Saturday several months ago, but attendance was disappointing.

Clearing some of the brush from the hills surrounding Pacifica would be very expensive. Where will the money come from to pay for it?

Mike O'Neill:

I support Pacifica being in a JPA for fire. I initiated the idea for the recent event for fire prevention sponsored by Pacifica. I believe next time we need to be more effective in publicity.

I think rather than withdrawing from the fire JPA we should look to expand it to other cities on the Peninsula. I am very concerned about the decision of 5 insurance companies to withdraw from writing insurance in Pacifica.

Adonica Shaw-Porter:

It is unfortunate that businesses have to deal with this issue, but because our residents are not willing to take on the higher tax rates to cut this expense down, it gets passed on to the businesses. I would be in support of the plan we are currently following until the money became available to sustain a new plan of action long-term. While I would be in favor of putting resources towards wildfire prevention and education, I don't believe the city has the money to pay for it.

