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**To:** [Scalia, Melissa@CALFIRE](mailto:Scalia_Melissa@CALFIRE); [Sanjay Khandelwal](#)  
**Cc:** [Carey Pico](#); [Becky Steinbruner](#)  
**Subject:** Please Follow Up Grand Jury Report with Recommendations to the Board of Supervisors  
**Date:** Sunday, March 5, 2023 10:22:08 AM

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**Warning:** this message is from an external user and should be treated with caution.

Dear Santa Cruz County Fire Department Advisory Commission,  
I have again reviewed the 2020-2021 Santa Cruz County Civil Grand Jury Report "The CZU Lightning Complex Fire...Learn or Burn? Board Oversight--An Obligation to Our Community":

[https://www.co.santa-cruz.ca.us/Portals/0/County/GrandJury/GJ2021\\_final/8\\_AfterCZU\\_Report.pdf](https://www.co.santa-cruz.ca.us/Portals/0/County/GrandJury/GJ2021_final/8_AfterCZU_Report.pdf)

Required Responses from the Board of Supervisors was, in my opinion, a profusion of words but completely inadequate: [https://www.co.santa-cruz.ca.us/Portals/0/County/GrandJury/GJ2021\\_final/8a\\_AfterCZU\\_BoS\\_Required\\_Response.pdf](https://www.co.santa-cruz.ca.us/Portals/0/County/GrandJury/GJ2021_final/8a_AfterCZU_BoS_Required_Response.pdf)

The Board Response repeatedly stated that by creating a new department, the Office of Response, Recovery and Resilience (OR3), every problem brought to light by the Grand Jury investigation was solved. I strongly disagree.

Therefore, I request your Commission send recommendations related below and that the Commission take agendized action on the Grand Jury investigation Findings and any follow-up actions the Board has taken subsequent to Responses.

I also ask that your Commission recommend the Board of Supervisors convene as the Board of Directors of Santa Cruz County Fire Department when making any and all decisions regarding County Fire Department business.

*Data Analysis (page 16)*

*F24: The annual report to the County Board of Supervisors and the County Administrative Office by County Fire/CAL FIRE does not provide data or analysis of resources, response times, code enforcement, inspection, or education. This information is necessary to show what gaps exist between current performance and community needs in order for informed budget decisions to be made. Without adequate background information, the Board of Supervisors is unable to hold CAL FIRE accountable for the specific responsibilities specified in their contract.[54]*

*Cal Fire: AGREE.[55]*

*BoS: DISAGREE – The County Fire/CAL FIRE Chief gave a State of the State presentation to the Board during Budget Hearings, which provided both data and analysis of resources, response times, code enforcement, inspection, and education. This is aligned with the budget process. This presentation is also given to the Fire Dept Advisory commission (FDAC), holds (sic) responsibility to provide oversight (sic) of these.[56]*

*R2. The Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors should require CAL FIRE and County Fire to provide quarterly and annual reports to the County General Services Department with specified data and success metrics for each of the contract requirements, beginning with the current fiscal year. [52]*

*BoS: HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED – CAL FIRE/County Fire will continue to work with the Santa Cruz County Director of General Services in weekly meetings, as well as the Fire Department Advisory Commission (FDAC) to determine a reasonable reporting structure and timeline for the reporting.[57] How will the BoS verify that performance delivered by Cal Fire under contract is data-driven?[58] [59]*

**The Budget Report link on the County Fire Dept. website is incomplete and fails to provide financial detail for the CSA 48 public taxpayers.** <https://www.co.santa-cruz.ca.us/VisionSantaCruz/Budget/DepartmentBudgets/tabid/8360/moduleId/20205/deptId/18/controller/Department/action/DeptDetail/Default.aspx>  
For example, there is no detail regarding the sources of over \$3 million in pass through funding to the County Fire Chiefs Association.

**The FDAC needs to recommend to the Board of Supervisors that this information be posted on the County Fire Dept. website and be maintained to provide CSA 48 taxpayers accurate and current information while holding CalFire accountable for transparency.**

**The website also needs to include a link to the current contract between Santa Cruz County and CalFire for the services rendered to CSA 48 and Santa Cruz County Fire Department.**

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*After-Action Reports by Santa Cruz County Departments*

*The CZU Fire After Action Report Summary for Santa Cruz County Departments is currently in draft format. This report states successes and failures before, during and after the fire and recommended improvement actions. The summaries are from the EOC Operations, Medical/Health, Planning, Shelter and Care and Logistics Departments.[75] The draft is expected to be completed by the end of May but some improvements are already being implemented. [72]*

**The County Board of Supervisors needs to order an After Action Review for County Fire Dept. Volunteers to describe what happened and offer suggestions for improvements in planning for future disasters.**

**Response to Finding #4 related to this problem stated:**

**"County Fire resources were deployed in response to the incident and the County can request a local review of County resources deployed."**

**There simply must be an After-Action Review of the 2020 CZU Lightning Complex Fire with all Santa Cruz County Fire Department Volunteers and former Volunteers conducted immediately to support better emergency response planning and future operations.**

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*The BoS' interest and focus on fire risk must intensify. These discussions must elicit and rely on facts and data, as well as opinions and sentiments. The BoS is in the position to advocate for the community to hold Cal Fire accountable and to prepare for an uncertain and dangerous future.*

*Findings*

**F1. Residents are still concerned about response, evacuation, and future preparation in the aftermath of the CZU Lightning Complex Fire. They are understandably irate. The supervisors, elected to their positions by our community, fail to recognize that they are responsible to adequately address these concerns.**

**F2. There was a marked difference in content and depth of analysis between Cal Fire's Virtual Community Meeting presentation given to San Mateo County and the two given to Santa Cruz County. The discrepancy is disappointing and not acceptable.**

**F3. The Board of Supervisors did not adequately respond to their constituents' concerns and questions.**

**F4. The Board of Supervisors has not held Cal Fire accountable for their lack of analysis of their performance in the CZU Lightning Complex fire.**

F5. No provision exists in the current contract between the county and Cal Fire to develop after-action reports during the non-fire season.

**F6. The Board of Supervisors' responses to the Findings and Recommendations of the 2020 Ready? Aim? Fire! report show a lack of engagement with the material and a lack of understanding of their role as advocates for the county.**

F7. The adequacy of resources for firefighting in the future is questioned due to uncertainty of mutual aid assistance, deployment and management of volunteer companies, and availability of funding.

**Recommendations**

**R1. In the next 30 days the Board of Supervisors should conduct an investigation to challenge Cal Fire on their preparation for future fire events, Cal Fire's response to the CZU Complex Fire, and give satisfactory answers to all residents' questions and concerns as documented in this report. (F1, F2, F3)**

R2. In the next six months the Board of Supervisors should adopt a formal policy for handling and logging resident complaints and requests for information. (F1, F3)

R3. Within the next six months, the Board of Supervisors should require that Cal Fire produce timely after-action reports for all major incidents. (F1, F2, F4, F5)

R4. In the next 90 days the Board of Supervisors should direct staff to produce a lessons-learned document for the public summarizing their investigation of Cal Fire and an action plan detailing how preparation for future fire events and response will be improved. (F1, F2, F4, F5) **The CZU...Fire – Learn...or Burn?**

**R5. The Board of Supervisors should revisit its responses to the Grand Jury's 2020 Ready? Aim? Fire! Report, and rewrite their responses by December 31, 2021 in a document posted on their website to demonstrate hands-on engagement and better preparation for the next fire season. (F6)**

R6. Within six months the Board of Supervisors should direct staff to advocate for additional funding for fire preparation and prevention resources from the state of California. (F7)

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As a property owner in CSA 48, I feel that the Board of Supervisors has been dillect in their duties to oversee CalFire contracts that manage our County Fire Department. The Board of Supervisors, as the governing body of Santa Cruz County Fire Department, should legally adjourn the Board meetings and reconvene as the Board of Directors of Santa Cruz County Fire Department when making budget decisions and /or policy decisions. The Board does this for other similar agencies, such as the Flood Control District, but has never done this for matters involving Santa Cruz County Fire Department.

Therefore, I respectfully request that your Commission send a letter to the Board of Supervisors / Board of Directors of Santa Cruz County Fire, and advise them of the matters regarding the Grand Jury recommendations that have not been addressed, and to convene as a separate entity when making policy or financial decisions for County Fire Department business.

Having open public discussions regarding these matters, specifically the recent Grand Jury investigation findings, will support government transparency and improve public safety policy and operations for the not only CSA 48 constituents, but the entire County.

Please acknowledge receipt of this message and include it as Correspondence on the March 15, 2023 FDAC agenda. I request that the Commission take agendized action on the Grand Jury investigation Findings and any follow-up actions the Board has taken subsequent to Responses.