

NEVADA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS RESPONSES TO

2024 Nevada County Civil Grand Jury Report

Report on responses to the 2023-2024 Grand Jury Report: FIRE! Challenges of a Small, Rural Fire District

DATED June 3, 2024

In accordance with California Penal Code § 933.05(b), the Nevada County Board of Supervisors is responding to the Nevada County Civil Grand Jury FY 2023/24 Report entitled *“FIRE! Challenges of a Small, Rural Fire District”*. The responses to findings and recommendations are based on examination of official County records, review of the responses by the County Executive Officer, County Counsel, and County staff.

A. RESPONSES TO FINDINGS

Finding 3: OHF’s lacks the finances to hire the staff it needs.
Agree.

The Ophir Hill Fire Protection District, a small special district whose Board of Directors are responsible for its fiscal assessment and overall stability, have agreed that the district lacks the funding to adequately staff the station with two personnel twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

Finding 4: OHF’s finances as a stand-alone district will not improve without increasing the annual tax assessment.

Partially Disagree.

The Ophir Hill Fire Protection District is a small special district whose Board of Directors are responsible for its fiscal assessment and overall stability including any evaluation of its tax assessment which is only one fiscal mechanism to generate revenue. The Board of Supervisors do not possess the jurisdictional authority to determine if an increase in tax assessment is the the only mechanism to improve the district’s finances. While taxation is a critical funding mechanism for special districts, other revenue opportunities available to the district may include, but are not limited to, administrative and operational efficiencies, state and federal grants, and other ongoing revenue generating mechanisms.

B. RESPONSES TO RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 3: If the OHF Board of Directors has not taken either of the actions in Recommendations 1 or 2 within 60 days, the Nevada County Board of Supervisors should immediately conduct an assessment of OHF operations to determine if the community continues to be at risk.

This recommendation will not be implemented.

The Ophir Hill Fire Protection District Board of Directors recently voted to join discussions to consider consolidating with Nevada County Consolidated Fire District, Penn Valley Fire Protection District, and Rough and Ready Fire Protection District. The County is assisting in the facilitation of discussion between fire authorities and consideration for consolidation of districts.

Recommendation 4: If the Board of Supervisors determines that the Ophir Hill community is at risk, it should ask Local Area Formation Commission to initiate consolidation of OHF with other districts:

This recommendation will not be implemented.

The Ophir Hill Fire Protection District Board of Directors recently voted to join discussions to consider consolidating with Nevada County Consolidated Fire District, Penn Valley Fire Protection District, and Rough and Ready Fire Protection District. The County is assisting in facilitating discussions between fire authorities to consider the consolidation of districts. In addition, staff for the Local Government Formation Commission (LAFCo) are participating in the discussions as applicable.