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Mutual aid fire defense plan sparks controversy

By Marianne Napoles

A proposed mutual aid agreement between two fire departments has fueled a debate over how long it would take the Carbon Canyon fire station to respond to the Olinda Village in Brea.

Brea says six minutes, but Chino Valley Fire District says eight to 10 minutes.

Olinda Village is located off Carbon Canyon Road, 3.6 miles southwest of the Carbon Canyon fire station in Chino Hills.

The draft mutual aid agreement was "sprung" on the Carbon Canyon Fire Safe Council by Olinda Village residents during the council's May 6 meeting.

The Olinda Village residents said they received it from Brea Fire Chief Alford Nero on April 15.

Fire board president Ray Marquez, who attends fire safe council meetings, said he had not seen the document.

The Olinda Village fire station, located in a small commercial center in the Olinda neighborhood, is slated for closure because Brea is facing a significant economic downturn, according to Brea city manager Tim O'Donnell.

The draft mutual aid agreement proposes an exchange of services between the City of Brea Fire Department and the Chino Valley Fire District's Carbon Canyon station in Chino Hills.

Olinda residents said Brea has established a four- to six-minute response time as a city standard in the general plan. That standard cannot be achieved by the Carbon Canyon fire station in Chino Hills, they said.

Former Chino Hills resident Duane Thompson, now a resident of Olinda Village, said he timed several trips from the Olinda station to the Chino Hills station in his vehicle with the aid of a camera and a stopwatch, and posted his video on YouTube (search Brea emergency response).

The driving time from the Olinda station to the Chino Hills station was 4 minutes and 54 sec-

onds with no traffic and good weather, he said. That did not include dispatch time and muster time, he pointed out.

"There is no way in hell Chino Valley Fire District can respond to Olinda Village or the Hollydale mobile home park in six minutes," Mr. Thompson said.

The concerns of the residents mounted when Mr. Marquez said the response time for the Carbon Canyon fire station in Chino Hills is eight to 10 minutes within its district (or zone).

"This is stunning to me," said Claire Schlotterbeck, a resident of Olinda Village who has been attending community meetings and Brea council meetings to oppose the fire station's closure.

Ms. Schlotterbeck said she wondered how the Chino Valley Fire District could provide service to Olinda Village in six minutes when it cannot provide service to its own people in six minutes.

Mr. O'Donnell told the Brea city council on May 5 that the Chino Valley Fire District can achieve an "under six-minute response time" to the Olinda neighborhood.

He also said a unit from the Carbon Canyon fire station in Chino Hills would be dispatched to Olinda Village simultaneously with a unit from Brea's Station 3 located on Kraemer Boulevard and Birch Street.

Brea Mayor John Beauman said Wednesday that the agreement is part of Brea's solution to provide the same level of safety to Olinda Village as the rest of the city.

He said the Chino Valley Fire District would be a first responder and would receive the same calls that Station 3 receives.

"Both stations would be first responders," he said.

In exchange, Brea would dispatch a ladder truck as far as the switchbacks, or S-curves, on Carbon Canyon Road upon request by Chino Valley Fire District, he said.

Operations chief Kirk Summers told the Champion the day after the fire safe council meeting that under the terms of the agreement, Brea must request the engine from the Carbon Canyon fire station in Chino Hills, and likewise, the Chino Valley Fire District must request the ladder truck.

He said the two agencies have been operating on a handshake agreement for a long time and the

mutual aid agreement is merely formalizing it.

"We're not going to provide Olinda Village with regular fire protection," said Chief Summers. "When the city of Brea needs our assistance on a structure fire, we will provide an engine to help them out."

The two seemingly contradictory interpretations about whether the assistance is automatic or by request troubled Mr. Marquez, who said he was on a mission to find out the facts.

"I'm hearing two stories between us and the city of Brea and I want to have one story," he said. "Brea is now part of the Fire Safe Council and when they ask me a question, I want to tell them the truth."

Mr. Marquez pulled an item on the consent calendar during Wednesday's fire board meeting regarding response times for the Carbon Canyon fire station, and asked for further information.

He said Fire Chief Paul Benson would speak with Brea Fire Chief Nero about the terms of the agreement.

Brea Mayor Beauman said he is in the process of reviewing the facts about response times with Chief Nero and Mr. O'Donnell.

"We're going to get on the same page," Mr. Marquez said.