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ITEMS 3&4 PUBLIC SAFETY

Cmte 10/12

J. White

**STATEMENT of J.H. McQUISTON on
COMPUTATION of FALSE-ALARM FEE**

Honorable Chairman and Members of the Committee:

False alarms can cause trouble. But reasonably cost-accounting for a Fire Department false alarm will be very difficult.

I suggest caution, because:

1. California Constitution Articles 13C and 13D **restrict apportionment. A California government may not charge a Californian more than the actual cost of the service.**

But, a Fire Department *necessarily* has time *not engaged in emergencies*. That time may be spent just as easily at a location away from its base, like on a false-alarm call or a "bucket-run", because the dispatcher is in constant contact and may assign reasonable priority to service-calls.

And, taxes are billed and paid for fire services irrespective of whether the taxpayer ever calls for service.

Moreover, **the tax paid by every taxpayer is not equal for equal fire-service.** It is apportioned unequally.

Thus an accounting must necessarily include all of the above factors.

I believe the time and effort required for an equitable method of accounting is not cost-effective.

2. **There is a much-better approach: Within Article 13A as affected by Articles 13C and 13D is a vast reservoir of "uncollected taxes".**

Recent budgetary additions to City fees **pale in comparison to that vast reservoir.**

If the City taps this reservoir, all of the City's curtailed-services could be restored, plus getting funding for needs the City longs-for and cannot now afford.

But if another government bobbles by moving-first to capture the subject "vast reservoir", future City finances could be drastically-affected.

It is time for this Committee and the Budget & Finance Committee to get the Mayor, the CAO, and the City Attorney to move forward to get access to the "uncollected taxes".

Respectfully submitted,

c: Interested parties

J. H. McQuiston