



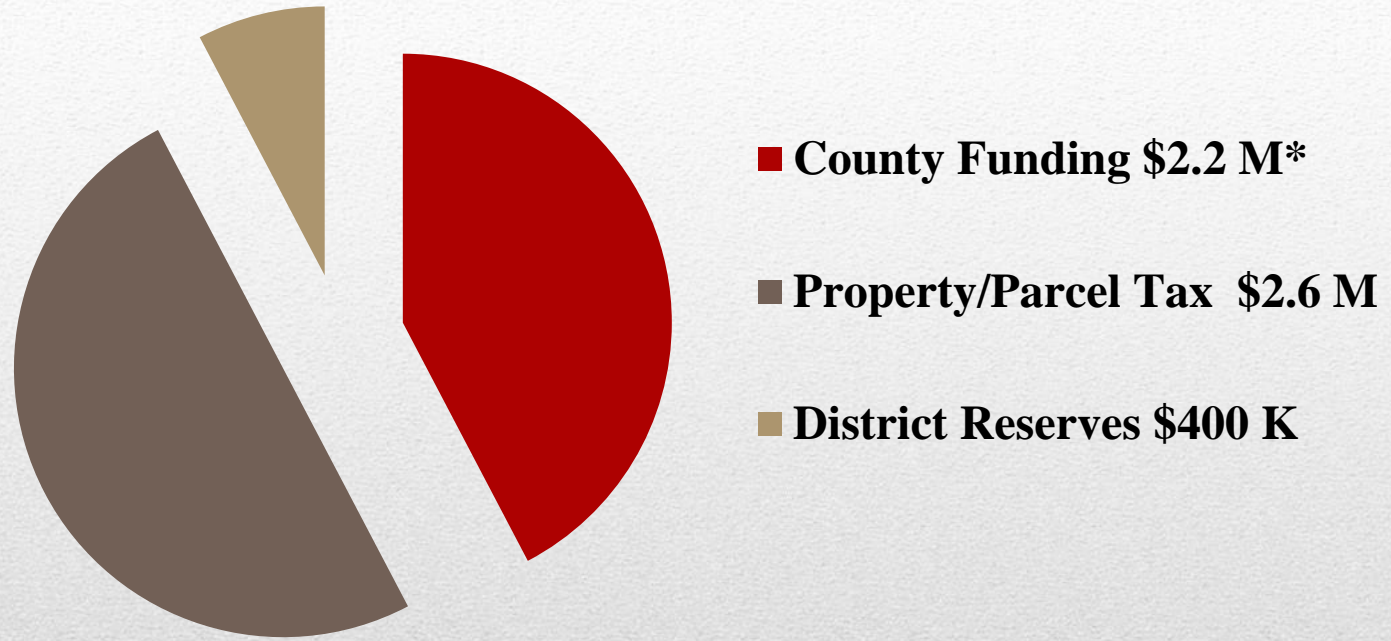
Then & Now

Brief Overview of Fire Service in Sonoma County
& SCFDA Role

- The Funding
- The Politics
- The SCFDA Future

Overview

1983 Fire Service Funding Sources \$5.2M ⁽¹⁾

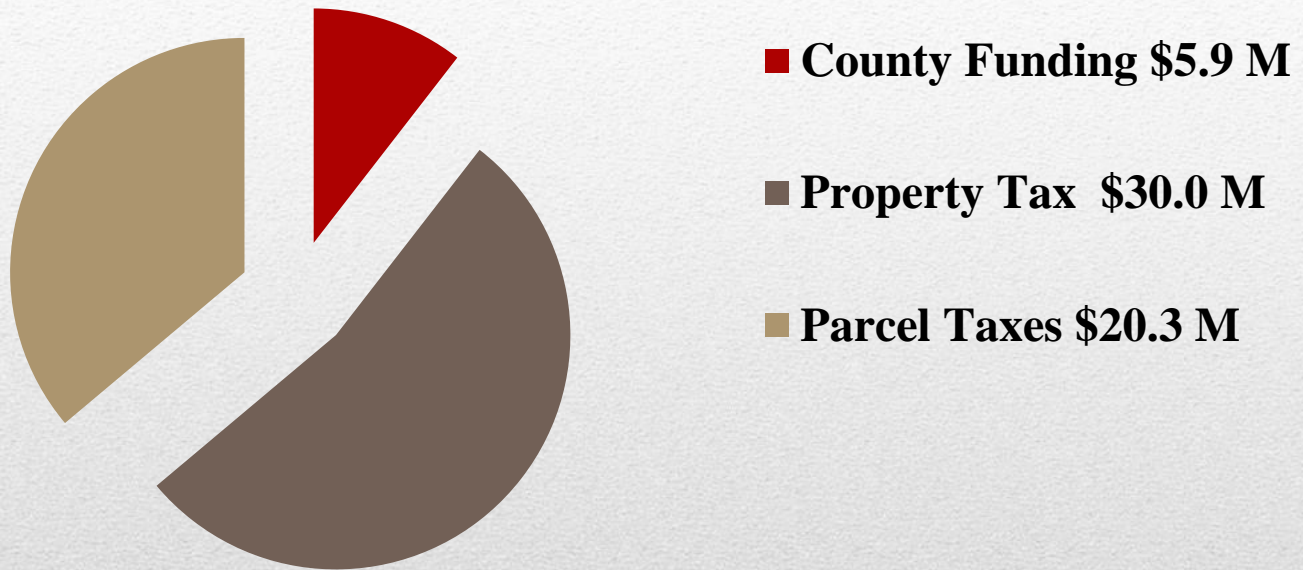


***County Funding was from Augmentation Funds replacing Prop 13 losses; funded from the State**

⁽¹⁾Source: County Summary of Prior FS Reviews, 12/2015

Show Me The Money - 1983

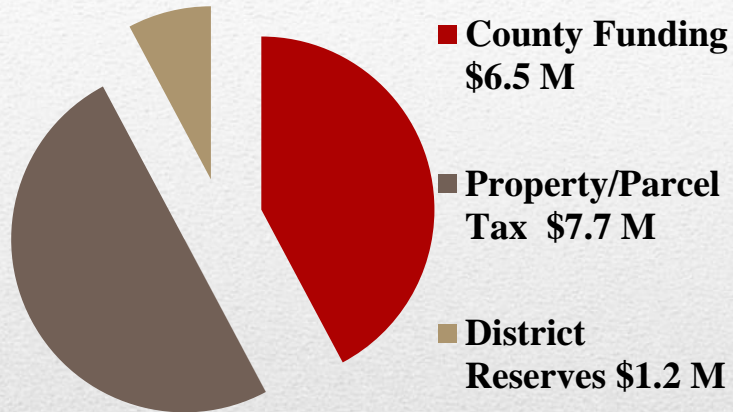
2021 Fire Service Funding Sources \$56.2 M ⁽¹⁾ Over 10x 1983 costs



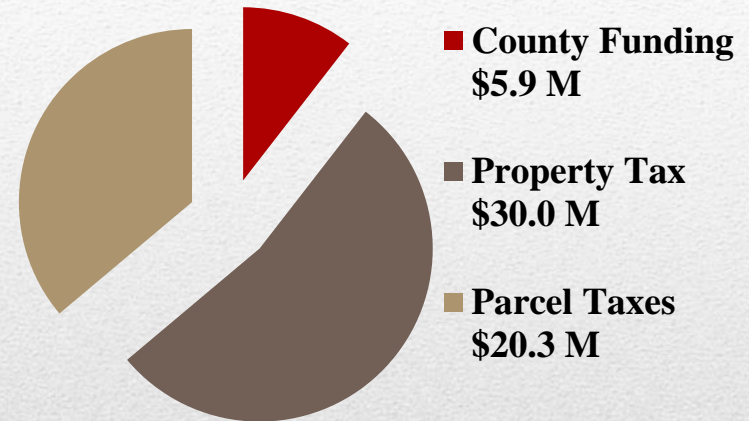
⁽¹⁾ Source: 21-22 Fire District Budgets

Show Me The Money - 2021

1983 Fire Service Funding Sources in 2021 \$ (\$15.5M)

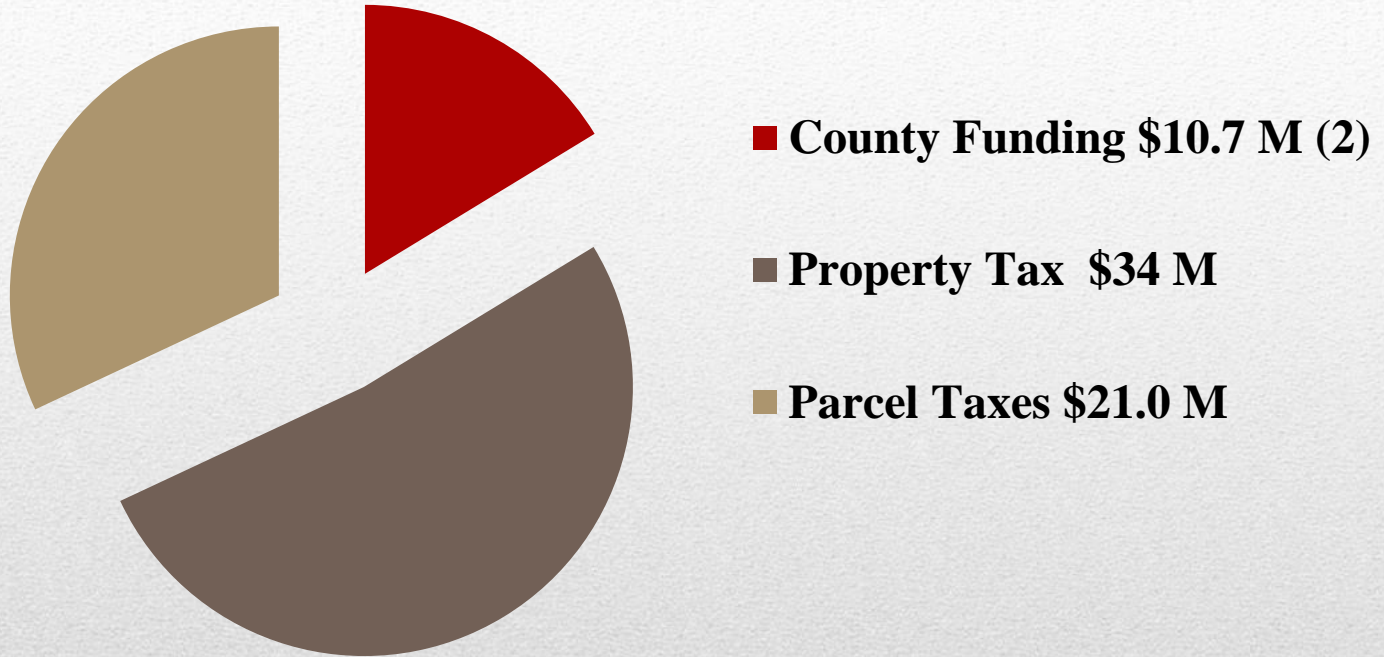


2021 Fire Service Funding Actual (\$56.2M)



Comparison 1983 in 2021 \$

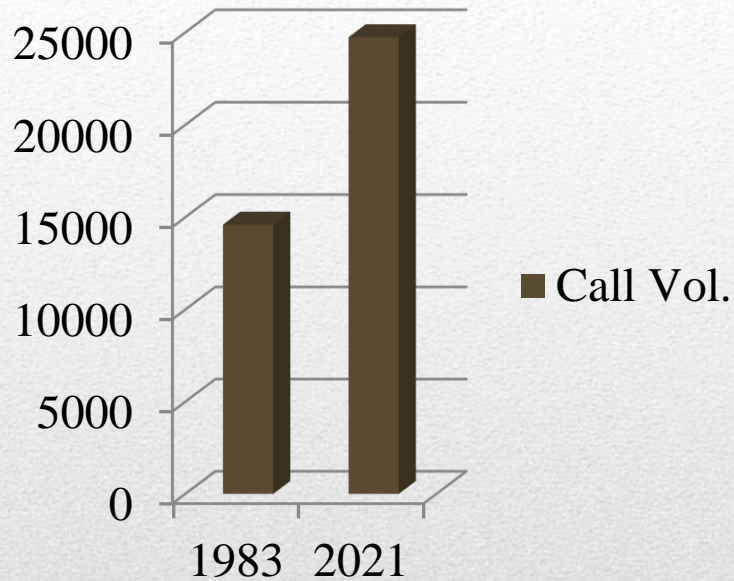
2023 -24 Proposed FS Funding Sources \$65.7 M ⁽¹⁾



⁽¹⁾ Includes last year of REDCOM support

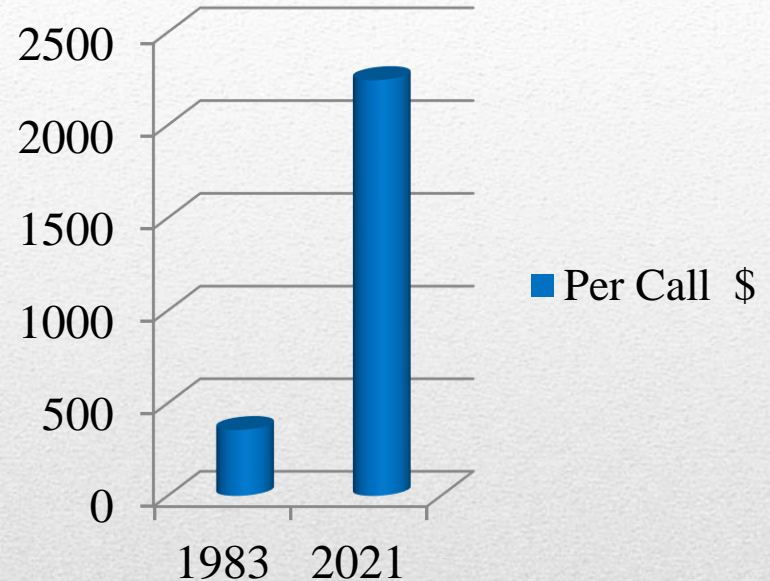
23-24 Proposed County Funding

Call Volume



Call volume has grown by a factor of 1.7 X 1983

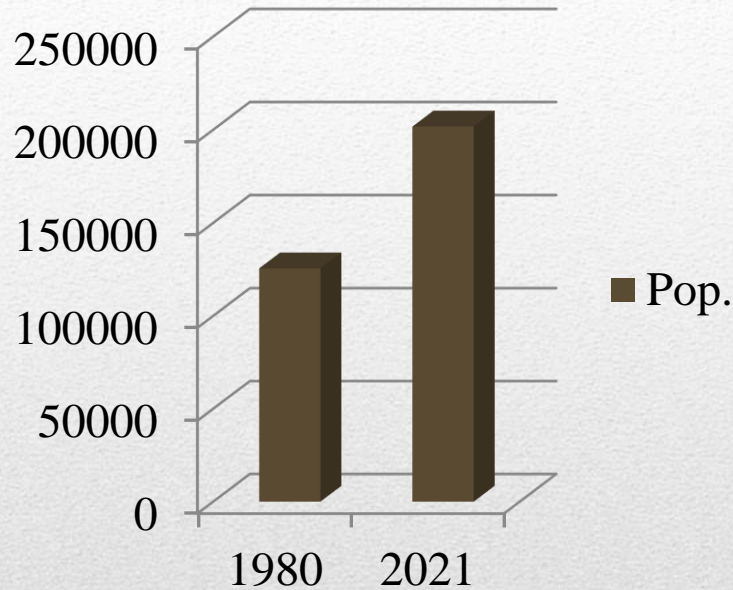
Cost per Call (\$)



Cost per call has grown by a factor of 6.2 X 1983

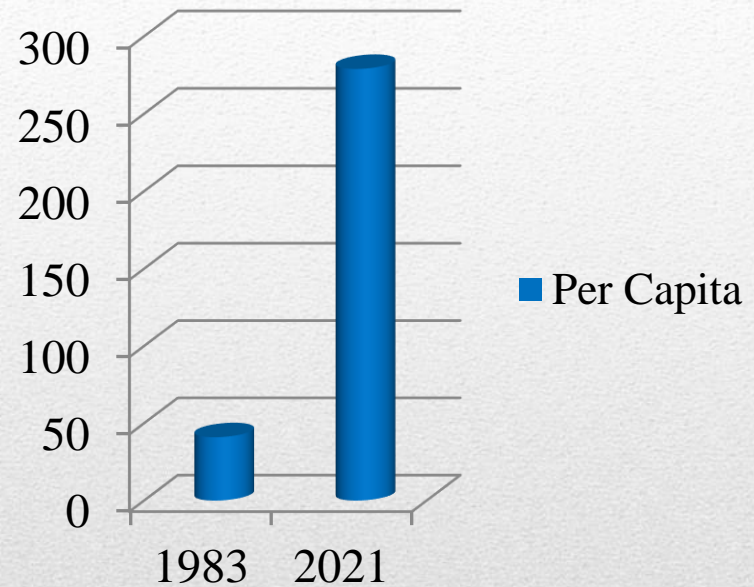
Increasing Use/High Cost

Population



Population has grown by a factor of 1.6 X 1983

Cost per Capita (\$)



Cost per person has grown by a factor of 6.5 X 1983

Growing Base/High Cost

- **The cost of fire service delivery has risen more than 10x when compared to 38 years ago**
- **The County contribution to funding, has fallen from 42% in 1983 to approximately 10% in 2021. Growing to a proposed 16% by 2023 – 2024. Dropping in FY 24/25**
- **A majority of the funding shift has been borne by users in form of parcel taxes**
- **Cost per call in 2021 is \$2,272 per call from the 1983; \$356.**
- **Cost per person has increased out of proportion to population increase reflecting high cost of FS today**
- **The only revenue source, other than taxes, is likely to be insurance reimbursements for ALS engines**

Takeaways

1983 Hughes, Heiss FS Study

- Focused on excessive cost, fragmentation, FS effectiveness
- Reviewed by *fire safety committee* appointed by BOS
- Indicated that few VFC's or Districts considered consolidation
- Identified areas for further evaluation to enhance cost-effectiveness of delivery
 - Integrated response implementation,
 - Capital replacements,
 - Organizational needs,
 - Service to the Geysers.

The Politics of FS – 80's

HH Recommendations

Single, countywide fire department not recommended

Use an integrated response system (saving \$550K annually) including central dispatch, auto aid, standard training

1. Est. clear BOS objectives relating to service delivery, service levels, resource allocation/utilization
2. Continue use of Cal Fire contract for central organization
3. **Contracts with Cities for neighboring areas poorly served**
4. **Consolidate dispatch**
5. Address resource allocation to Geysers/Sea Ranch

The BOS essentially implemented only #3,4

Endorsed by *fire services committee*

The Politics of FS – 80's

1984 HH report to study spheres of influence/boundaries

- **Notably only insignificant sphere changes were recommended due to:**
 - **Lack of property tax and County Augmentation funds, and**
 - **Resident belief in impact on response times (unfounded), and**
 - **Objection by VFC in areas to be annexed (feuds with neighboring districts lasting now 40 years old and counting)**
 - **Leaving current system inadequate to meet community needs**

The Politics of FS – 80's

- **Essentially the end of the 80's saw little overall change other than the development of central dispatch. Despite two studies and numerous recommendations to BOS and fire safety committee appointed by BOS**
- **In 1993 CSA #40 was established for County central control over VFC's, something NOT recommended in 1983 study.**
- **CSA 40 funding, 0.03 cents of each tax dollar paid and fees for building and planning permits**
- **Promise from the BOS to use tax monies where they are levied - promise broken, affecting Geyserville FD, shoring up others**
- **Cty. Fire Services Director noted that without other funding, services in VFC areas would decrease (stated to LAFCO)**

The Politics of FS – 90's

Citygate 2001: #1 Issue – Sufficient Funding

- **Each agency needs to develop:**
 - **Strategic plan**
 - **Policy re: reserve funds**
 - **Divide reserves into equipment and facilities**
 - **Develop standard performance measures**
 - **Apparatus replacement schedules**
 - **Conduct annual department review**
 - **County should establish standard response times for CSA 40**
 - **Strengthen cooperative training program**

The Politics of FS – 2000's

- **LAFCO 2005 Review noted consistent funding shortfalls across all Districts due to Prop 13, ERAF, etc.**
- **Issues raised red flags for following:**
 - **Bodega Bay high debt, lack of reserve funds, need to raise salaries to attract and retain staff**
 - **Cloverdale high growth rate**
 - **Forestville lack of reserves**
 - **Gold Ridge using reserves for salaries**
 - **Monte Rio with old stations and little reserves**
 - **RAFD staffing shortages due to insufficient funding**
 - **Rincon Valley without sufficient reserves**
 - **Russian River staffing shortages**
 - **Valley of the Moon lack of sufficient reserves**
 - **Windsor growth and lack of funding to keep pace**
- **Other County studies focused mostly on CSA 40 Standards/Plans**

The Politics of FS – 2000's

- **2014 BOS creates “fire ad hoc” with a “continuous subject matter” over more than 6 years in violation of Brown Act**
- **2014 volunteer fire service advisory committee**
- **2016 Fire Svs. Advisory Group chosen by BOS (2yr terms)**
- **FSAG creates committees with goal of developing standards of coverage, financial guidance, etc., but efforts not completed**
- **FSWG supersedes FSAG in 2017 with no SCFDA members initially**
- **Sales tax measure fails for various reasons including infighting, coercion by BOS, lack of transparency, no campaign, etc.**
- **40 Yr. old feuds still active and supported by FS & County**
- **County bails out some failing districts and refuses to support additional consolidation or districts not failing; but not thriving**

Current Politics

- **Some consolidation taken place to the benefit of those districts solely**
- **Taxes are being spent where levied (more or less)**
- **Additional cooperation within and between districts**
- **Those districts with County funding have thrived with significant positive cash flow**
- **The County is close to meeting their goal to rid themselves of CSA 40, regardless of consequences**

Progress Made

- **Districts are failing to thrive or simply failing w/o county funding**
- **Throughout this all, for close to 40 years, the SCFDA has failed to be a key player in the solutions**
- **For close to 40 years various disputes and personal feuds have characterized FS decisions supported by the County**
- **For close to 40 years we (FS and County) have failed to heed the warning of consultants in addressing FS issues**
- **For close to 40 years we have failed to develop and publicize a vision & strategic plan for the FS in the County**
- **Costs are now rising more quickly than can be accommodated and we are still failing to act – A sales tax will not succeed without an articulate strategic plan**

Progress Thwarted

\$1.95

POGO:

**WE HAVE MET
THE ENEMY
AND HE IS US**



Walt Kelly

Fire Service Needs

- **Vision – What does FS look like in 5 to 10 years**
- **Articulated countywide standards of coverage**
- **Strategic plan**
- **Support for doubling revenue through a sales tax – if that is the path forward**
- **A plan B is needed**
- **Ending 40 yr. old feuds/infighting**

Progress Needed

- **What recent actions/accomplishments can we point to?**
- **Do we, as a matter of policy, solicit community input, publish educational/informational material?**
- **Why do we not provide constructive criticism to each other?**
- **Share information? Establish standards?**
- **Should we assess our leadership model?**
- **Should we request added role in FSWG/tax measure?**
- **Your question _____?**

We cannot rely on the County – who sees no legal/ethical/moral requirement to support FS – to achieve our goals

SCFDA - Vision?



The Next Step?
