

Requesting an Investigation into the Los Angeles County Fire Department

Foundation

In 2016, the Los Angeles County Fire Department Foundation (Fire Foundation) was created as a charity organization to raise money and accept donations to support the Los Angeles County Fire Department. The Fire Foundation is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that is independent of the County of Los Angeles (County) and operates separately from the Los Angeles County Fire Department (Department) with its own Board of Directors and budgetary structure. Their slogan states that they were formed to “turn your donations into equipment and education that saves lives.”

Last week, the Board of Supervisors was made aware that the Fire Foundation is currently listed as having “delinquent” status by the California Department of Justice (DOJ) since May, 2022. According to the California DOJ website, this delinquent status is because of failure to properly submit a required form and payment. It is unclear why the Board of Supervisors was not aware of this delinquent status until now, and it is unclear what implications this has on past and future donations made to the Fire

MOTION

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Foundation. This revelation also brings up questions about the donations that have been raised in the past and how they have been spent.

Transparency and accountability are essential in government. Even though the Fire Foundation is not run by the Board of Supervisors or the County, they are associated with the County and have played a crucial and very public role in the past by supporting the Department and hosting award ceremonies and events to honor members of the Fire Department. The Board needs to understand what implications this delinquent status has on the Foundation and the Department and should also take this opportunity to audit their revenue and expenditures since being established in 2016.

The Board of Supervisors has the authority under Government Code section 25170 to issue subpoenas to any person to be examined or to produce books, papers and documents in their possession relating to the affairs or interest of the County. In addition, under Government Code section 53060.4, the legislative body of the County may delegate to a department head its authority to issue subpoenas in order to enforce any local law or ordinance.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Office of the County Counsel to investigate the Los Angeles County Fire Department Foundation (Fire Foundation) and provide a report back in writing in 15 days with a legal analysis of the following:

- 1) How the Fire Foundation received delinquent status from the California Department of Justice;
- 2) What delinquent status means for the past, present, and future operations of the Fire Foundation;

3) How and why this status was not revealed to the Board of Supervisors until November 2023; and

4) If any deliberate or unintentional wrongdoing has occurred.

I, FURTHER, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors (Board) direct the Auditor Controller to conduct an investigative audit of the Los Angeles County Fire Department Foundation (Foundation) revenues and expenditures since the inception of the Los Angeles County Fire Department's affiliation agreement with the Foundation on May 17, 2016. The Board delegates its authority to the Auditor Controller, in consultation with County Counsel, to issue and enforce subpoenas for records and witness testimony to support a full and thorough audit.

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JH:kc