

**ALAMEDA COUNTY
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS'
PUBLIC PROTECTION COMMITTEE**

Thursday, February 27, 2025
10:00 a.m.

Supervisor Elisa Márquez, Chair
Supervisor Nate Miley

Location: Board of Supervisors Chambers
County Administration Building
1221 Oak Street, Suite 512
Oakland, CA 94612

Webinar: <https://zoom.us/j/99247500951>

SUMMARY/ACTION MINUTES

I. INFORMATIONAL ITEM: Presentation of the Alameda County Fire Department Strategic Business Plan
[Attachment](#)

Willie McDonald, Fire Chief, Alameda County Fire Department, presented the Alameda County Fire Department's Strategic Business Plan.

The Alameda County Fire Department's Strategic Business Plan was developed collaboratively with internal and external stakeholders to enhance service delivery, fiscal health, and organizational growth.

The development plan process began in 2022 using an interactive, collaborative approach in partnership with Local 55 Firefighters Union and CityGate consulting firm.

The Strategic Plan Committee included senior staff and union leaders; broader stakeholder engagement included the County Board of Supervisors, County Administrator, City Mayors & Councils (5 cities served), Fire advisory commissioners, City managers and Fire Department employees.

The Strategic Plan includes five (5) overarching goals: 1) Fiscal Sustainability; 2) Community-Aligned Organization; 3) Mission-Aligned Services & Resources; 4) Organizational Vitality & Viability; and 5) Improved Systems & Processes. The strategies developed to support these goals include Fiscal planning, Operational support and staffing capacity, openness to innovation and focus on employee health and wellness.

Deputy Chiefs/ and Administrative Directors guide each goal area and Program Managers select 1 to 2 objectives to work on annually, which includes developing action plans and incorporate objectives into work and budget plans.

The plan reflects significant internal and external collaboration and requested support for informational acceptance and future board adoption.

Purpose:

- Report progress
- Advocacy or Education**
- Request Public Protection Committee Recommendation or Position
- Other:

This item was informational only and required no Committee action.

II. **INFORMATIONAL ITEM: Update on Alameda County Fire Department Alternative Response Unit Program**

Attachment

Paige Bowie, Division Chief, Alameda County Fire Department, presented a PowerPoint presentation on the Fire Department Alternative Response Unit (ARU) Program.

The Alternative Response Unit (ARU) is a mental health crisis response pilot program in San Leandro, designed to divert certain 911 behavioral health calls from police and EMS to trained, unarmed professionals. It began official operations in November 2024, with a public launch in January 2025.

The Alternative Response Unit is a collaborative effort with San Leandro Police, Alameda County Fire, and the Human Services Department. Staffing for the ARU include 1 firefighter, 1 nurse practitioner and 2 community health workers who work 40 hours/week, Monday–Thursday, 10 hours/day, working out of Fire Station 10 in San Leandro.

Cardea Health provides 2 emergency shelter beds at Eddie’s Place.

The goal of the ARU is to reduce police response to behavioral health calls, while delivering appropriate, timely mental health interventions and decrease unnecessary ER visits.

Eligible calls for the ARU include suicidal thoughts, emotional distress, suspected psychosis or substance use, and mediation or behavioral health-related community disturbances. Ineligible calls include active medical emergencies, violence, weapons present, or suicide attempts in progress.

Program Performance for the first 3 Months

- 911 Calls Responded To: 350
- Follow-up Visits: 90
- On-view interventions (while patrolling): 50
- Average response time: 10 minutes
- Calls/Day: 8–9 (near capacity)
- Average on-scene time: 30 minutes

Fire Department oversees internal data/reporting.

- Cardea Health tracks shelter client data.
- Quarterly reports shared with City of San Leandro (49 metrics).

The ARU has outreached via social media, local agencies, and business groups. In addition there has been coordination with neighboring cities (Hayward, Fremont, Oakland) and Harvard's Government Performance Lab for best practices.

Challenges include the high demand for ARU services as they are already near max call volume. There is a need for 24/7 coverage, but funding is limited. The ARU program has shown strong early success in providing compassionate, targeted mental health crisis response, relieving pressure on traditional first responders, and addressing root causes with dignity and care.

Purpose:

- Report progress
- Advocacy or Education**
- Request Public Protection Committee Recommendation or Position
- Other:

This item was informational only and required no Committee action.

III. INFORMATIONAL ITEM: 2025 Santa Rita Jail Program Survey for Incarcerated Female

Population

Attachment

Sergeant Priscilla Silva, Programs Director for Reentry and Support Services at Santa Rita Jail, presented a PowerPoint presentation to update the Committee on initiatives to support the incarcerated female population through education, vocational training, and wellness programs.

A survey of incarcerated women was conducted in January 2025. The survey highlighted their interest in educational and vocational programs, emphasizing in-person learning over online methods. Key areas of interest included:

- Certifications in First Aid/CPR, ServSafe, OSHA, and workplace safety.
- Cosmetology, music production, and painting.
- Food preparation and culinary arts.
- Small business courses.
- Fitness, exercise, and mental health awareness.

Identified barriers to participation were short periods of incarceration, classification issues, and mental health challenges. SRJ collaborated with educational partners Five Keys and Chabot College, resulting in several new programs and partnerships including:

- Yoga, Meditation, Trauma Healing, and Art for Healing: Courses designed for stress reduction and emotional well-being.
- Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Personal and professional development.
- Project Music Heals Us: Partnered with Juilliard Music, offering songwriting and music performance workshops, successfully mixing classification groups without incidents.
- Aramark Food Certification and Management Courses: Providing food service certifications, internships, and job placements upon release.
- Freedom Braiders: Vocational training in hair braiding with business skills for economic independence and reduced recidivism.

These programs target mixed classifications, including minimum, medium, and maximum security inmates. The jail is proactively addressing barriers, providing necessary supplies, and ensuring classroom safety.

Participation rates are about 80-85% of the female population and strategies have been outlined for measuring success, including tracking attendance, participant feedback, post-release employment, and recidivism rates. Challenges identified include funding for supplies and expanding classroom capacity. The support of jail leadership and community stakeholders has been crucial to overcoming logistical and security challenges. Plans are underway to track long-term success and potentially reduce recidivism.

Purpose:

- Report progress
- Advocacy or Education**
- Request Public Protection Committee Recommendation or Position
- Other:

This item was informational only and required no Committee action.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.