

City of Piedmont
Council Agenda Report

DATE: February 7, 2005

FROM: John C. Speakman – Fire Chief

SUBJECT: **Designating Piedmont Fire Department – As a Safe Haven for Abandoned Infants**

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a resolution authorizing the Piedmont Fire Department a designated location for surrendering infants.

BACKGROUND:

The Safely Surrendered Baby Law (SB 1368), also known as the Safe Haven or Newborn Abandonment Law, went into effect January 1, 2001 and authorizes the Alameda County Board of Supervisors to designate locations where newborns (less than 72 hours) may be confidentially surrendered, by a parent or guardian having lawful custody of the infant, without fear of criminal prosecution. The use of fire stations as drop off locations for newborns is part of a statewide effort to end tragic consequences of infant abandonment.

Until now, county protocol only allowed for Safe Haven surrender at Hospital Emergency Departments. However, in light of recent tragedies involving abandoned infants, the Alameda County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution on January 25, 2005, which approves all Alameda County fire stations as California Safe Havens. It is now up to each city within the county to pass a local resolution authorizing the fire stations within the individual city to become a designated location for surrendering newborns.

The Alameda County Social Services Agency in conjunction with the Alameda County Fire Chiefs Association and Senator Perata's staff have been working collaboratively to identify and coordinate the implementation of the program county-wide. This included development of standardized procedures, public education materials and outreach. The Alameda County Fire Chiefs Association has developed a guideline that outlines the steps to be taken by fire personnel at the stations when a newborn is surrendered to them (see attached). The county social services agency will provide the city the appropriate standardized signage (see attached) for the fire stations, the newborn safe surrender kits, and coordinate with city public information staff in developing a public awareness and media campaign.

Once the safe haven program is adopted and fully operational, infants will be able to be left with fire personnel at the fire station. These infants will be assessed and transported to the

appropriate receiving facility where custody will be transferred to appropriate hospital personnel. A medical questionnaire and information about the program will be provided to

the surrendering guardian. The city's responsibility will be to accept the child, provide any necessary medical intervention and arrange for immediate transfer to the appropriate hospital, providing the responsible surrendering person with the newborn medical questionnaire, fact sheet and a coded wrist bracelet.

The fiscal impact of the proposal is negligible, as the Safe Surrender kits and signage are given to the city by the county. There will be a small training/familiarization component that can be completed through the normal fire department training schedule.

It is recommended that the city council adopt a resolution establishing the Piedmont Fire Department as an approved location where newborns can be dropped off.