



## Board of Harbor Commissioners

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July 17, 2024

Ray Mueller  
Supervisor, District 3  
400 County Center  
Redwood City, CA 94063

Supervisor Mueller,

The San Mateo County Harbor District has a long and proud history of providing immediate on water search and rescue capabilities off the coast of San Mateo County.

The Harbor District is the only agency providing immediate on water search and rescue off the San Mateo County coast. The fishing fleet, recreational fleet, public, and other governmental agencies expect the Harbor District to be there when the call comes in, and for the most part, the District has responded, has saved multiple lives, has prevented an untold number of vessels from washing ashore.

However, this capability is in jeopardy. The Harbor District is not properly staffed or equipped to provide search and rescue capabilities on a full-time basis. The Harbor District can no longer cover the staff shortages using excessive overtime, nor can the District ask staff members to work multiple or extended shifts to the point of exhaustion to cover the coverage gaps. This has resulted in large blocks of time each week where the Harbor District cannot respond, cannot conduct search and rescue operations, or conduct a maritime assist of a vessel in distress.

To continue to provide the search and rescue capability on a regular and dependable basis, the District requires a minimum of six (6) additional Deputy Harbormasters and a properly designed search and rescue/maritime assist vessel designed for open ocean operations.

The Harbor District has met with the Sheriff's Office to discuss funding and the need for a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Coastal Search and Rescue. Initially, in discussing this issue with Undersheriff Hsiung, it was agreed a MOU to define roles and expectations, no funding commitment could be made. However, with an MOU with the Sheriff's Office, the Harbor District may qualify for Boating Safety Funding under the California Boating Safety and Enforcement Financial Aid Program. It is the intention of the District to apply for financial aid once a MOU is finalized.

The Harbor District is also negotiating a MOU with the Coastside Fire Protection District which defines roles, expectations, and training requirements, but similar to the Sheriff's Office, no funding is provided by the MOU.

To ensure immediate maritime search and rescue capabilities on the Coastside, as President of the Board of Harbor Commissioners, I am requesting San Mateo County identify funding (i.e. personal property tax on the value of a vessel/boat habitually moored or located in San Mateo County) and if appropriate, encourage CalFire and/or Sheriff's Office to assist the County in funding the Harbor District to provide Coastside maritime search and rescue.



Tom Mattusch, President  
San Mateo County Board of Harbor Commissioners