



Solano Local Agency Formation Commission

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Staff Report

DATE: September 13, 2021

TO: Local Agency Formation Commission

FROM: Rich Seithel

SUBJECT: **60-day Commission Notification of Receipt of a Reorganization and Sphere of Influence (SOI) Resolution from Solano County concerning Cordelia Fire Protection District (FPD), Suisun FPD, and Vacaville FPD.**

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends the Commission:

- 1) **ACKNOWLEDGE** Solano County Resolution No. 2021-147 approving applying to the Local Agency Formation Commission for the reorganization of the Cordelia and Vacaville Fire Protection Districts and the Northwest portion of the Suisun Fire Protection District.
- 2) **CONSIDER** this as Mandatory Standard No. 1, “Consistency with Sphere of Influence (SOI) Boundaries, 60-day notice requirement.

Executive Summary:

Solano County’s Resolution #2021-147 (attachment A) approves an application to LAFCO to reorganize the Cordelia, Suisun, and Vacaville Fire Protection Districts. An area proposed for reorganization shall be within the affected agency’s Sphere of Influence. However, this application would necessarily result in SOI amendments because the existing SOIs are coterminous with each FPD.

LAFCO Mandatory Standard #1 specifies that Solano LAFCO retains the discretion as to whether SOI boundary amendments may be heard concurrently with reorganization proposals, thereby expediting the process. Furthermore, this Standard stipulates, “LAFCO staff shall advise the Commission at least 60 days in advance of request for such a concurrent hearing.” This Item is intended to satisfy this requirement.

RESOLUTION NO. 2021 - 147

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF SOLANO CONSTITUTING THE COUNTY'S RESOLUTION OF APPLICATION TO THE LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION OF SOLANO COUNTY FOR THE REORGANIZATION OF THE CORDELIA AND VACAVILLE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICTS, AND THE NORTHWEST PORTION OF THE SUISUN FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

WHEREAS, the Board of Supervisors of the County of Solano desires to initiate proceedings pursuant to the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 (CKH), commencing with Section 56000 of the California Government Code (GC), with the Local Agency Formation Commission of the County of Solano ("Solano LAFCO") for the reorganization of the Parties as specified herein; and

WHEREAS, Solano County is an affected local agency, defined as "any local agency that contains, or would contain, or whose sphere of influence contains or would contain, any territory for which a change of organization is proposed or ordered, either singularly or as part of a reorganization" pursuant to GC Section 56014; and

WHEREAS, Solano County as an affected local agency and the Board of Supervisors as the affected local agency Governing Board, may submit a proposal for a reorganization of the Parties specified herein pursuant to GC Section 56654; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Supervisors and local Fire Protection district Boards have had to take action to address operational staffing, equipment, and financial issues and change the fire service delivery model including East Vallejo Fire Protection District in 1995 and Dixon Fire Protection District in 2011; and

WHEREAS, numerous Grand Jury reports contain recommendations for improved fire district services in the county with a common theme calling for a more unified and effective system for fire protection services including a reduction in fragmented services caused by multiple fire districts with sometimes limited coordination of efforts; and

WHEREAS, on August 12, 2019, the Solano County LAFCo authorized the consultant Citygate Associates, LLC to complete a special study of the Cordelia Fire Protection District (FPD), Montezuma FPD, Suisun FPD, and Vacaville FPD, pursuant to GC Section 56378 to address the following issues: 1) standards of coverage, 2) needs assessment/deployment assessment, 3) response mapping, 4) auto and mutual aid frequency, 5) staffing model options, 6) governance options, 7) NFPA 1720 compliance, and 8) revenue enhancements; and

WHEREAS, the Citygate report entitled "Fire Districts Deployment and Fiscal/Governance Options Analysis" adopted by Solano LAFCO on December 14, 2020, identified the following three challenges:

1. Revenue limits and the increased cost of fire services.
 - Rural district post-Proposition 13 tax rates are not designed for modern

fire services or the increased emergency medical services demands.

2. Maintaining volunteer and part-time fire services.
 - Volunteer firefighting recruitment and retention is a California-wide and national strain, if not an outright crisis.
 - Dramatically increased legally mandated training requirements.
3. Geography of the coverage area in Solano County.
 - The large size of the rural road network hinders the two significant aspects of service delivery: *speed* of response (distance) and *weight* (distance from which assistance must travel); and

WHEREAS, the 2019 Citygate report specifically identified the following eight (8) key findings:

1. "In Citygate's opinion, all four districts have barely the minimum number of personnel to provide response services from a staffed fire station 24 hours per day, seven days per week, and adequate command and quality control for training, safety, and fiscal responsibilities." (Finding # 5 – page 87)
2. "The Districts and nearby cities are not using the closest available unit response to emergencies. To not do so inappropriately delays response times." (Finding #10 – page 88)
3. "As separate entities, the Districts are very exposed to single points of failure if they were to lose a few career personnel or highly responsive volunteers. They lack "strength in numbers" to be resilient and have redundancy." (Finding #13 – page 88)
4. "Given the current wildfire and building fire environment, Districts must fix their fragile personnel counts and 24-hour-per-day, seven day-per-week, in-station staffing. Incidents cannot wait for a minimal force to respond from home or business." (Finding #14 – page 88)
5. "Montezuma, Suisun, and Vacaville FPDs are fiscally viable at the moment but cannot likely afford more in-station staffing." (Finding #32 – page 91)
6. "The fiscal crisis in Cordelia FPD and the limited staffing funds in all the Districts presents an opportunity for all four districts to thoughtfully consider merging to create a platform for sustainable fire services over the long term." (Finding #33 – page 91)
7. "The most viable governance alternative for successful implementation is a merged or consolidated FPD, with the goal of a future Countywide FPD." (Finding #38 – page 92)
8. "Any alternative service delivery or governance model should include supplemental taxing authority to ensure adequate long-term funding"; and

WHEREAS, in response to the challenges and findings, Citygate offered six recommendations, including the following three key recommendations:

1. "The Districts should merge their command and volunteer staffs to improve key personnel resiliency and redundancy. Merging will also improve the cost-effectiveness of headquarters services." (Recommendation #1 page 88)
2. "The Districts and LAFCO should immediately engage in a collaborative dialogue relative to the long-term future delivery of rural fire services in Solano County and the potential advantages of one or more forms of a merger." (Recommendation #5 – page 92)
3. "Include supplemental special taxing authority with any alternative fire service delivery and governance model to ensure long-term fiscal sustainability. (Recommendation #6 – page 92)

WHEREAS, the Solano County LAFCO formed a Fire Ad Hoc Committee to meet with the four fire districts to discuss sustainability issues, encourage cross-district discussion, issue identification/resolution, and develop a path forward to an effective and sustainable fire service plan, and

WHEREAS, effective July 1, 2021, the Cordelia FPD and Vacaville FPD have contracted to provide shared staffing services and the Boards have agreed to the concept of reorganization of the fire protection district which shall be renamed the Solano Fire Protection District ("Reorganized District"); and

WHEREAS, the reorganization of the Cordelia FPD and the Vacaville FPD would create a single fire district with a non-contiguous boundary; and

WHEREAS, recent significant fire events including the LNU Lightning Complex, Wragg Fire, and the Atlas Fire highlight the fire prone nature of the western areas of unincorporated Solano County and adjacent wildlands, rangelands, and the urban-interface areas, comprised of the boundaries of the of Cordelia, Suisun, and Vacaville FPDs; and

WHEREAS, the northwest area of the Suisun FPD is the missing and adjacent fire risk segment to that would create a contiguous fire protection district along the fire prone western area of Solano County; and

WHEREAS, the reorganization of the Cordelia, Vacaville, and northwest portion of the Suisun FPD will form a district with a contiguous and logical boundary; and

WHEREAS, the reorganization of two or more fire protection districts create governance efficiencies through centralized leadership; and

WHEREAS, discussions remain ongoing with the Suisun FPD for a reorganization consisting of its service area and boundary; and

WHEREAS, Solano County finds the reorganization of fire protection districts is categorically exempt from CEQA, qualifying as a Class 20 Exemption pursuant to GC section 15320; and

WHEREAS, the County of Solano Board of Supervisors requests LAFCO review and consider its Application of Resolution for the reorganization of the Cordelia FPD, the Vacaville FPD, and the northwest portion of the Suisun FPD, and complete all necessary steps required of this process.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Solano County hereby:

APPROVES THE RESOLUTION OF APPLICATION

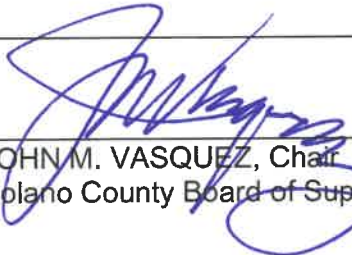
Approved and adopted the 22nd day of June 2021

I, the undersigned, hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution Number 2021-147 was duly adopted by the Board of Supervisors following a roll call vote:

AYES: SUPERVISORS Hannigan, Brown, Spring, Mashburn, and Chair Vasquez

NOES: SUPERVISORS None

EXCUSED: SUPERVISORS None



JOHN M. VASQUEZ, Chair
Solano County Board of Supervisors

ATTEST:
BIRGITTA E. CORSELLO, Clerk
Solano County Board of Supervisors

By: 
Alicia Draves, Chief Deputy Clerk