



TULARE COUNTY LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION

210 N. Church Street, Suite B, Visalia 93291 Phone: (559) 623-0450 FAX: (559) 733-6720

COMMISSIONERS:
Pete Vander Poel, Chair
Juliet Allen, V-Chair
Cameron Hamilton
Rudy Mendoza
Steve Worthley

LAFCO MEETING AGENDA
October 11, 2017 @ 2:00 P.M.
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS CHAMBERS
COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING
2800 West Burrel Avenue
Visalia CA 93291

ALTERNATES:
Mike Ennis
Carlton Jones
Dennis Mederos

EXECUTIVE OFFICER:
Ben Giuliani

- I. **Call to Order**
- II. **Approval of Minutes from August 30, 2017** **(Pages 01-02)**
- III. **Public Comment Period**

At this time, members of the public may comment on any item not appearing on the agenda and that is within the scope of matters considered by the Commission. Under state law, matters presented under this item cannot be discussed or acted upon by the LAFCO Commission at this time. So that all interested parties have an opportunity to speak, any person addressing the Commission may be limited at the discretion of the chair. At all times, please use the microphone and state your name and address for the record.

- IV. **New Action Items**
 - 1. **Case 1534-V-451 (Reimer) Protest Results** **(Pages 03-06)**
[Public Hearing].....Recommended Action: Adopt findings regarding protests

On August 30th, 2017, Tulare County LAFCO approved the reorganization including the annexation of 21.6 acres consisting of 7 parcels, 123-090-008, -009, -011, -012, -013, -014, and 123-100-004 to the City of Visalia and detachment of the same area from County Service Area #1. A protest hearing was held on October 2, 2017 and an addendum report will be provided before the October 4th Commission meeting. In accordance with GC§57075(b) and 57078(a), the Commission will adopt a resolution making a finding regarding the value of written protests filed and not withdrawn for an uninhabited change of organization.

- 2. **Cancellation of November 2017 Meeting** **(No Page)**
[No Public Hearing].....Recommended Action: Approval

There are no action items scheduled for the November 1, 2017 meeting if no action items from this meeting are continued. If the Commission elects to cancel the November 1, 2017 meeting, the next regularly scheduled meeting would be December 6, 2017.

NOTE: Persons wishing to speak on any of the agenda items who have made a political contribution of more than \$250 to any commissioner in the last twelve months must indicate this when speaking.

V. Executive Officer's Report

1. ESA 2017-01 (City of Porterville/East Porterville Group 3) (Pages 07-08)

Pursuant to Policy C-6, the Executive Officer approved an Extraterritorial Service Agreement (ESA) for the provision of municipal water service for existing development on 571 parcels in East Porterville.

2. Legislative Update (Pages 09-17)

Enclosed is the California Association Local Agency Formation Commissions (CALAFCO) legislative report.

3. Upcoming Projects (No Page)

The Executive Officer will provide a summary and tentative schedule of upcoming LAFCO projects.

VI. Correspondence

1. Little Hoover Commission Report (Page 19-26)

Enclosed is the report from the Little Hoover Commission's report on Special Districts

VII. Other Business

1. Commissioner Report (No Page)

2. Request from LAFCO for items to be set for future agendas

VIII. Setting Time and Place of Next Meeting

1. November 1, 2017 or December 6, 2017 @ 2:00 P.M. in the Board of Supervisors Chambers in the County Administration Building.

IX. Adjournment

TULARE COUNTY LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION

**2800 W. Burrel Ave., Visalia, CA 93291 – Tulare County Administrative Building
August 30, 2017 – Meeting Minutes**

Members Present: Vander Poel, Allen, Hamilton, Worthley
Members Absent: Mendoza
Alternates Present: Mederos
Alternates Absent: Jones, Ennis
Staff Present: Giuliani, Ingoldsby, & Kane recording
Counsel Present: Kuhn

I. Call to Order: Chair Vander Poel called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

II. Approval of the July 12, 2017 Meeting Minutes:

Upon motion by Commissioner Allen and seconded by Commissioner Worthley, the Commission unanimously approved the LAFCO minutes.

III. Public Comment Period: Chair Vander Poel opened the Public Comment Period at 2:02 p.m.

Christopher Owsley, property owner who had questions about Case 1534-V-451 as it pertains to his property.

Miguel Garcia, property owner who had questions about Case 1534-V-451 as it pertains to his property.

Questions were answered, Chair Vander Poel reminded all present that public comment specific to a case should be made when that particular case is presented.

IV. New Action Items:

1. Case 1533-V-450 (Sierra Village):

Staff Analyst Ingoldsby reported on the proposed City of Visalia reorganization (annexation to Visalia, detachment from CSA #1). It was explained that the annexation would serve the expansion needs of the Sierra Village Retirement Community. The subdivision would also result in the relocation and construction of a new storm drain basin, and ditch relocation.

Chair Vander Poel opened the public hearing.

Paul Bernal, City of Visalia spoke in support of the purposed recommendations.

Matt Ainley, Engineer with 4Creeks, Inc. spoke regarding the relocation of the Persian Ditch.

Chair Vander Poel closed the public hearing.

Upon motion by Commissioner Worthley and seconded by Commissioner Allen, the Commission unanimously approved the annexation as recommended.

2. Case 1534-V-451 (Reimer):

Staff Analyst Ingoldsby presented the proposed annexation of a portion of a County island to serve a 65-lot single family residential subdivision. Staff is also recommended inclusion of 3 additional parcels to the annexation area. Landowner consent had been received from all property owners of the original application; however, opposition response was received regarding the 3 additional parcels.

Chair Vander Poel opened the public hearing.

Paul Scheibel, City of Visalia, spoke in support of the annexation.

Diana Sullivan, Property Owner, spoke against the annexation.

Christopher Owsley, Neighboring Property Owner, spoke against being annexed (his property was not included in the original annexation or recommended additional parcels).

Chair Vander Poel closed the public hearing.

Upon motion by Commissioner Allen and seconded by Commissioner Worthley, the Commission unanimously approved the annexation as recommended and included a condition requiring the City to apply for the annexation of the remainder of the island.

3. Proposed Amended Policy C-5 (SOI):

EO Giuliani presented the proposed amendment, which was reviewed by the Commission at the last meeting.

Upon motion by Commissioner Worthley and seconded by Commissioner Allen, the Commission unanimously approved the policy amendment as recommended.

4. Cancellation of October 4, 2017 Meeting:

Due to the protest hearing scheduled on October 2, 2017, the October 4, 2017 LAFCO meeting was not cancelled.

V. Executive Officer's Report

1. **Legislative Update:** EO Giuliani highlighted the status of current legislative bills and the effects it will have on Tulare County LAFCO.

2. **Upcoming Projects:** EO Giuliani reported that the protest hearing for case 1534-V-451 will be scheduled. Applications from City of Tulare may be forthcoming.

VI. Correspondence: CALAFCO Quarterly July 2017, newsletter contained a reminder that CALAFCO Annual Conference will be held in San Diego from October 25-27, 2017

VII. Other Business:

1. Commissioner Report:

2. Request from LAFCO for items to be set for future agendas:

- Commissioner Worthley requested information regarding how other LAFCOs are addressing SGMA relating to water availability for city annexations.

VIII. Setting Time and Place of Next Meeting: The next Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) meeting is scheduled for **October 4, 2017 at 2:00 p.m.** in the Board of Supervisors Chambers in the County Administration Building.

IX. Adjournment: The Tulare County LAFCO meeting adjourned at 3:23 p.m.

**TULARE COUNTY LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION
PROTEST HEARING REPORT**

October 11, 2017

**LAFCO Case# 1534-V-451
City of Visalia Reorganization, Annexation No. 2017-01 (Reimer)**

- PROPOSAL:** The Commission approved a request submitted by the City of Visalia, adding APNs 123-090-011, -012, and -013 to annex certain territory to the City of Visalia and detach the same area from CSA #1 on August 30th, 2017 (Resolution 17-015).
- LOCATION:** The site is southeast of K Road and Burke Street. Commission proceedings were initiated by resolution of application by the City of Visalia. **(Figure 2)**
- DESCRIPTION:** The reorganization consists of about 21.6 acres including 7 parcels 123-090-008, -009, -011, -012, -013, -014, and 123-100-004.
- CONSENT:** The reorganization was determined to be uninhabited, meaning that there are fewer than 12 registered voters residing in the territory to be annexed, and consent was not received from all property owners. Therefore, the protest rules set forth in Government Code (GC) Sections 57075(b) and 57078(a) shall apply.
- PROTEST HEARING:** A protest hearing was held before the Executive Officer on October 2, 2017. Protests were received from landowners representing 22.61% of the land value within the protest area.
- In accordance with GC §57075(b)(2) the Commission must now adopt a resolution making a finding regarding the value of written protests filed and not withdrawn for an uninhabited change of organization and take one of the following actions:
- 1) Order the reorganization if written protests have been filed and not withdrawn by owners of land who own less than 50 percent of the total assessed value of land within the reorganization area.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Commission adopt the attached resolution, which finds that written protests have been filed and not withdrawn by owners of land who own less than 50 percent of the total assessed value of land within the affected territory and order the change in organization without an election.

FIGURES:

Figure 1 Resolution
Figure 2 Site Location Map

BEFORE THE LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION
OF THE
COUNTY OF TULARE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of the Protest Hearing for LAFCO)

Case No 1534-V-451 City of Visalia)

RESOLUTION NO. 17-XX

Reorganization, Annexation No. 2017-01)

(Reimer))

WHEREAS, this action is being taken pursuant to the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 (Government Code Sections 56000 et seq.); and,

WHEREAS, the Local Agency Formation Commission of County of Tulare adopted Resolution No. 17-015 on August 30, 2017, making determinations and approving the proposed reorganization described in Exhibit "A" attached hereto and by this reference incorporated herein; and

WHEREAS, the reorganization was determined to be uninhabited, meaning that there are less than 12 registered voters residing in the territory to be annexed. Therefore, the protest rules set forth in Government Code Sections 57075(b) and 57078(a) shall apply; and

WHEREAS, a public hearing on this reorganization was called for and held by the Executive Officer of this Commission on October 2, 2017 at the time and place for which notice was given; and

WHEREAS, written protests were filed and not withdrawn by land owners representing 22.61% of the total assessed value of land within the reorganization area; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Government Code section 57075(b)(2), if written protests have been filed and not withdrawn by owners of land who own less than 50% of the total assessed value of land within the affected territory, the Commission shall order the change of organization or reorganization.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, DETERMINED AND ORDERED as follows:

1. The change of organization referred to as LAFCO Case No. 1534-V-451, City of Visalia Reorganization, Annexation No. 2017-01 (Reimer), is hereby ordered.

The foregoing resolution was adopted upon motion of Commissioner _____ and seconded by Commissioner _____, at a regular meeting held on this 11th day of October, 2017, by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSTAIN:

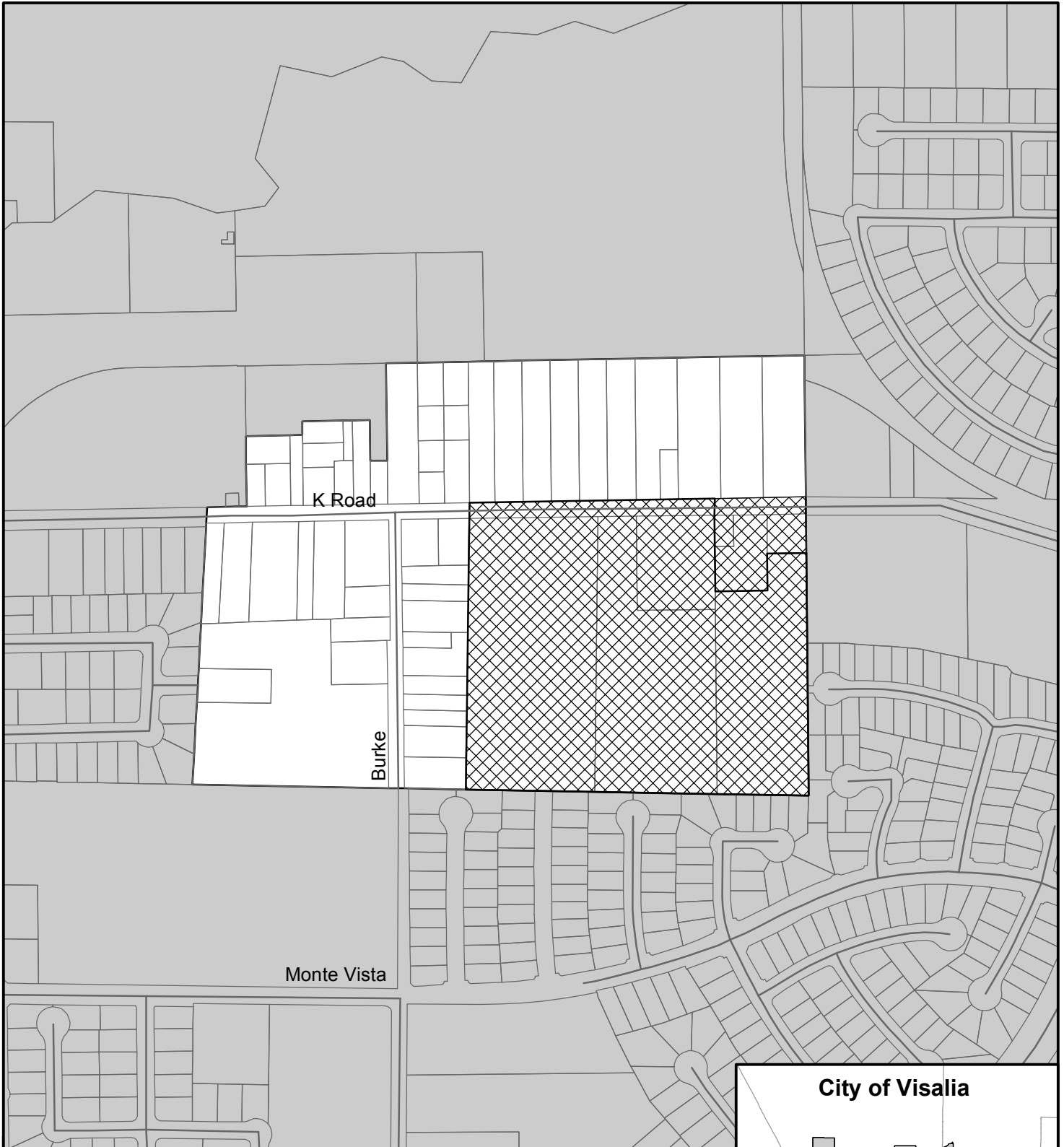
PRESENT:




ABSENT:

Benjamin Giuliani, Executive Officer

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LAFCO Case 1534-V-451

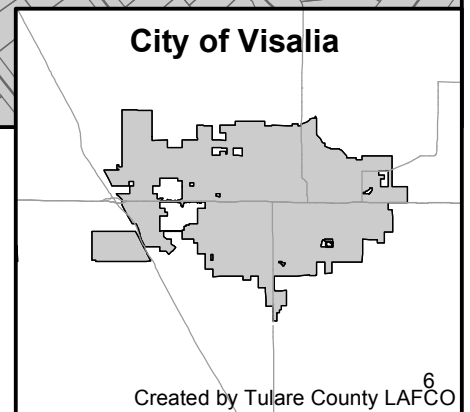


-  Approved Annexation Boundaries
-  Parcels
-  City of Visalia



0 500
Feet

Boundaries as of 7/27/17





**TULARE COUNTY
LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION**

210 N. Church St., Suite B, Visalia, CA 93291 Phone: (559) 623-0450 FAX: (559) 733-6720

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ALTERNATES:
*Mike Ennis
Dennis Mederos
Carlton Jones*

EXECUTIVE OFFICER:
Ben Giuliani

September 6, 2017

City of Porterville
291 N Main St
Porterville, CA 93257

Re: Extraterritorial Service Agreement No. 2017-01 (City of Porterville/East Porterville Group 3)

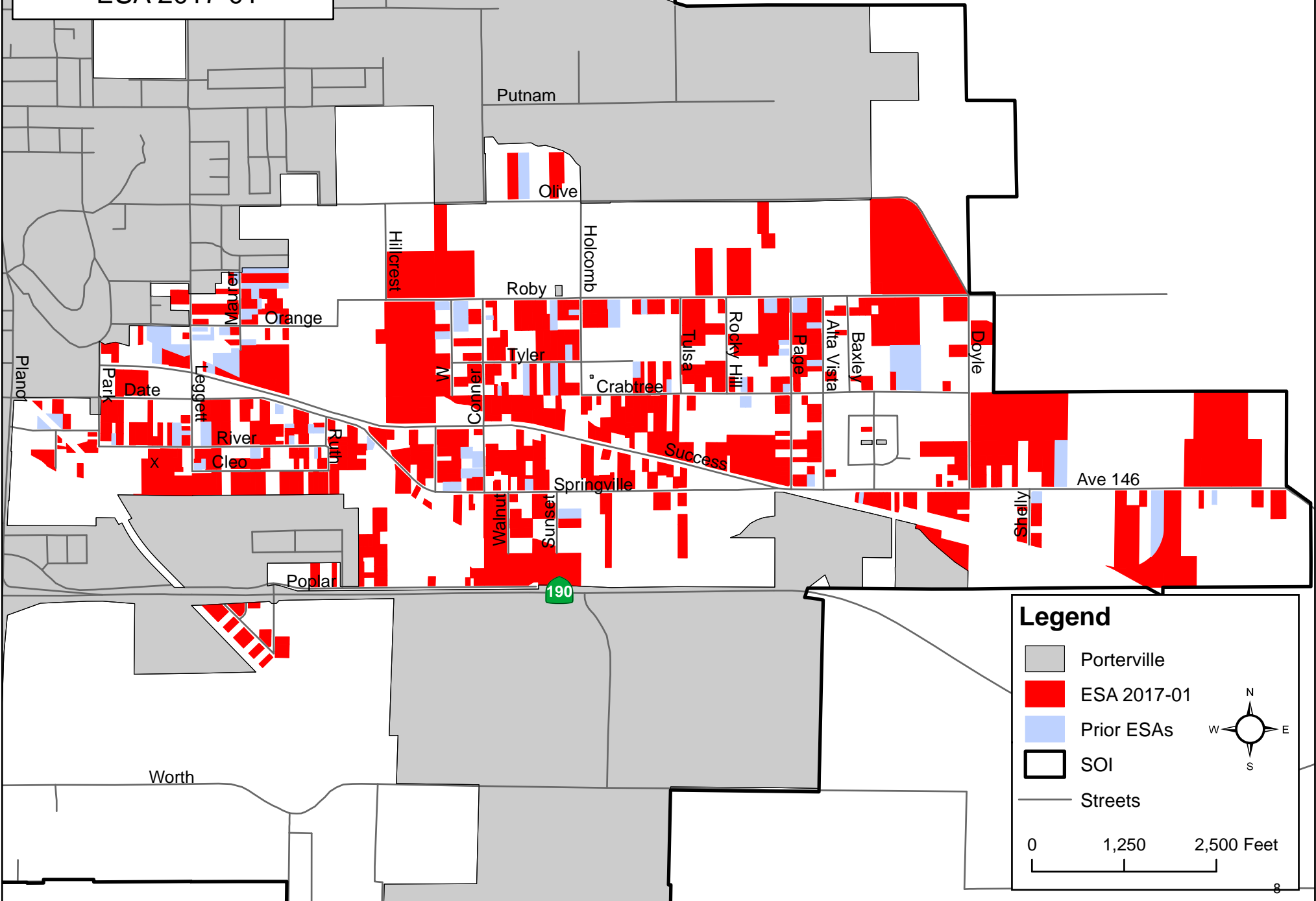
This is to inform you that your request for an Extraterritorial Service Agreement, submitted to the Tulare County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) on August 10th, 2017, (ESA No. 2017-01), is hereby approved by the Executive Officer. Approval of this agreement is in accordance with Government Code Section 56133 and Tulare County LAFCO Resolution 94-07. The agreement permits the City of Porterville to provide municipal water service for existing development on 571 parcels in East Porterville (list attached). This is a group of properties to be connected to the City water system as part of a Department of Water Resources, Tulare County and City of Porterville project to extend water services to East Porterville. All parcel owners have signed an Irrevocable Agreement for Annexation. Actual annexation is not planned at this time.

Should you have any questions, please contact me at 623-0450 or bgiuliani@tularecog.org.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Giuliani, Executive Officer
Tulare County LAFCO

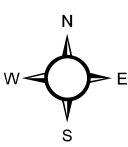
City of Porterville ESA 2017-01



Legend

- Porterville
- ESA 2017-01
- Prior ESAs
- SOI
- Streets

0 1,250 2,500 Feet



CALAFCO Daily Legislative Report

[AB 464](#) ([Gallagher R](#)) Local government reorganization.

Current Text: Chaptered: 7/10/2017 [Text](#)

Introduced: 2/13/2017

Last Amended: 3/14/2017

Status: 7/10/2017-Approved by the Governor. Chaptered by Secretary of State - Chapter 43, Statutes of 2017.

Summary:

Under the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000, current law requires that an applicant seeking a change of organization or reorganization submit a plan for providing services within the affected territory that includes, among other requirements, an enumeration and description of the services to be extended to the affected territory and an indication of when those services can feasibly be extended. This bill would specify that the plan is required to also include specific information regarding services currently provided to the affected territory, as applicable, and make related changes.

Position: Sponsor

Subject: Annexation Proceedings

CALAFCO Comments: This bill makes a fix to Gov. Code Sec. 56653 based on the court finding in the case of The City of Patterson v. Turlock Irrigation District. The court found that because the services were already being provided via an out of area service agreement, the application for annexation was deemed incomplete because it was not a new service to be provided. By making the fix in statute, any pending/future annexation for a territory that is already receiving services via an out of area service agreement will not be in jeopardy. As amended, corrections were made to: 56653(b)(3) reading "proposed" rather than "provided", and in Government Code Section 56857 an exemption added pursuant to Public Utilities Code Section 9608 for territory already receiving electrical service under a service area agreement approved by the Public Utilities Commission pursuant to Public Utilities Code Section 9608.

[AB 979](#) ([Lackey R](#)) Local agency formation commissions: district representation.

Current Text: Chaptered: 9/1/2017 [Text](#)

Introduced: 2/16/2017

Last Amended: 5/15/2017

Status: 9/1/2017-Approved by the Governor. Chaptered by Secretary of State - Chapter 203, Statutes of 2017.

Summary:

The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 provides for the selection of representatives of independent special districts on each local agency formation commission by an independent special district selection committee pursuant to a nomination and election process. This bill would additionally require the executive officer to call and hold a meeting of the special district selection committee upon the adoption of a resolution of intention by the committee relating to proceedings for representation of independent special districts upon the commission pursuant to specified law.

Position: Sponsor

Subject: CKH General Procedures

CALAFCO Comments: This bill is co-sponsored by CALAFCO and CSDA. As amended, the bill amends code Sec. 56332.5 to streamline the process of seating special districts on LAFCo by mirroring current statute 56332 (the process for electing special district representatives into the special district seats). Keeping the process voluntary, it allows for voting by mail whether or not the district wants to have special districts represented on LAFCo. Further, it will allow for the consolidation of that question with the independent special district selection committee appointment to a countywide redevelopment agency oversight board pursuant to Health and Safety Code 34179 (j)(3).

AB 1361 (Garcia, Eduardo D) Municipal water districts: water service: Indian tribes.

Current Text: Enrolled: 9/19/2017 [Text](#)

Introduced: 2/17/2017

Last Amended: 9/8/2017

Status: 9/26/2017-Enrolled and presented to the Governor at 3 p.m.

Summary:

The Municipal Water District Law of 1911 provides for the formation of municipal water districts and grants to those districts specified powers. Current law permits a district to acquire, control, distribute, store, spread, sink, treat, purify, recycle, recapture, and salvage any water for the beneficial use of the district, its inhabitants, or the owners of rights to water in the district. Current law, upon the request of certain Indian tribes and the satisfaction of certain conditions, requires a district to provide service of water at substantially the same terms applicable to the customers of the district to the Indian tribe's lands that are not within a district, as prescribed. This bill would authorize a district to apply to the applicable local agency formation commission to provide this service of water to Indian lands, as defined, that are not within the district.

Position: Oppose

Subject: Water

CALAFCO Comments: As amended, this bill allows water districts to provide service to an Indian tribe's lands that are not within the district boundaries without going through the current statutory process of approval by the local agency formation commission (LAFCo). Amendments were taken by the author during the Senate Governance and Finance Committee hearing July 19 that include LAFCo's ability to apply certain terms and conditions to the application by the water agency and limits the land to be served to lands in trust. However, CALAFCO still has a number of concerns and will continue to work with the author and sponsor.

AB 1725 (Committee on Local Government) Local agency formation.

Current Text: Enrolled: 9/7/2017 [Text](#)

Introduced: 3/20/2017

Last Amended: 7/20/2017

Status: 9/12/2017-Enrolled and presented to the Governor at 2:30 p.m.

Summary:

The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 provides the exclusive authority and procedure for the initiation, conduct, and completion of changes of organization and reorganization for cities and districts, as specified. The act defines various terms for these purposes, including the term "contiguous," which the act defines as territory adjacent to territory within the local agency. This bill would instead define "contiguous" as territory that abuts or shares a common boundary with territory within a local agency.

Position: Sponsor

Subject: CKH General Procedures

CALAFCO Comments: This is the annual Omnibus bill. The bill makes only minor, non-substantive technical changes to CKH.

SB 37 (Roth D) Local government finance: property tax revenue allocations: vehicle license fee adjustments.

Current Text: Introduced: 12/5/2016 [Text](#)

Introduced: 12/5/2016

Status: 5/26/2017-Failed Deadline pursuant to Rule 61(a)(5). (Last location was APPR. SUSPENSE FILE on 5/25/2017)(May be acted upon Jan 2018)

Summary:

Beginning with the 2004–05 fiscal year and for each fiscal year thereafter, existing law requires that each city, county, and city and county receive additional property tax

revenues in the form of a vehicle license fee adjustment amount, as defined, from a Vehicle License Fee Property Tax Compensation Fund that exists in each county treasury. Current law requires that these additional allocations be funded from ad valorem property tax revenues otherwise required to be allocated to educational entities. This bill would modify these reduction and transfer provisions for a city incorporating after January 1, 2004, and on or before January 1, 2012, for the 2017–18 fiscal year and for each fiscal year thereafter, by providing for a vehicle license fee adjustment amount calculated on the basis of changes in assessed valuation.

Position: Support

Subject: Financial Viability of Agencies, Tax Allocation

CALAFCO Comments: This bill is identical to SB 817 (Roth, 2016), SB 25 (Roth, 2015) and SB 69 (Roth, 2014) with the exception of the chaptering out language included in the 2016 version (which addressed the companion bill AB 2277 (Melendez, 2016)). The bill calls for reinstatement of the VLF through ERAF for cities that incorporated between January 1, 2004 and January 1, 2012. There are no provisions for back payments for lost revenue, but the bill does reinstate future payments beginning in the 2017/18 year for cities that incorporated between 1-1-2004 and 1-1-2012.

SB 448 **(Wieckowski D) Local government: organization: districts.**

Current Text: Enrolled: 9/7/2017 [Text](#)

Introduced: 2/15/2017

Last Amended: 7/17/2017

Status: 9/11/2017-Enrolled and presented to the Governor at 4 p.m.

Summary:

Current law requires a report of an audit of a special district's accounts and records made by a certified public accountant or public accountant to be filed with the Controller and the county auditor of the county in which the special district is located within 12 months of the end of the fiscal year or years under examination. This bill would instead require special districts defined by a specified provision to file those audit reports with the Controller and special districts defined by another specified provision to file those audit reports with the Controller and with the local agency formation commission of either the county in which the special district is located or, if the special district is located in 2 or more counties, with each local agency formation commission within each county in which the district is located.

Position: Support

Subject: CKH General Procedures

CALAFCO Comments: As amended on July 17, this bill authorizes LAFCo to dissolve inactive districts (after determining they meet the criteria set forth in the statute) by holding one hearing, without conducting a special study and with the waiver of protest proceedings. The State Controller is required to notify LAFCo when a district is inactive. LAFCo then has 90 days to initiate dissolution, and another 90 days in which to hold the hearing to dissolve. Should the LAFCo determine the district does not meet the criteria, no dissolution occurs and LAFCo notifies the Controller the district is not inactive. Should the LAFCo determine the district does meet the criteria then it is ordered to be dissolved. The bill also requires a district to provide LAFCo with their audits at the same time they provide them to the Controller. All of our issues have been resolved with the current version and as a result our position has been changed from Oppose Unless Amended to Support.

AB 267 **(Waldron R) Community services districts.**

Current Text: Introduced: 2/1/2017 [Text](#)

Introduced: 2/1/2017

Status: 5/12/2017-Failed Deadline pursuant to Rule 61(a)(3). (Last location was PRINT on 2/1/2017)(May be acted upon Jan 2018)

Summary:

Current law provides for the organization and powers of community services districts,

including the continuation of any community services district, improvement district of a community services district, or zone of a community services district, that was in existence on January 1, 2006. This bill would make nonsubstantive changes to these provisions.

Position: Watch

CALAFCO Comments: According to the author's office this is a spot bill.

AB 548 **(Steinorth R) Omnitrans Transit District.**

Current Text: Amended: 4/4/2017 [Text](#)

Introduced: 2/14/2017

Last Amended: 4/4/2017

Status: 4/28/2017-Failed Deadline pursuant to Rule 61(a)(2). (Last location was TRANS. on 3/23/2017)(May be acted upon Jan 2018)

Summary:

Would create the Omnitrans Transit District in the County of San Bernardino. The bill would provide that the jurisdiction of the district would initially include the Cities of Chino, Chino Hills, Colton, Fontana, Grand Terrace, Highland, Loma Linda, Montclair, Ontario, Rancho Cucamonga, Redlands, Rialto, San Bernardino, Upland, and Yucaipa, and unspecified portions of the unincorporated areas of the County of San Bernardino. The bill would authorize other cities in the County of San Bernardino to subsequently join the district.

Position: None at this time

CALAFCO Comments: This bill, as amended, appears to dissolve the Omnitrans JPA and form a new independent special district to be known as the Omnitrans Transit District. The formation process does not include LAFCo. CALAFCO is reaching out to the author's office for more details.

AB 577 **(Caballero D) Disadvantaged communities.**

Current Text: Amended: 3/9/2017 [Text](#)

Introduced: 2/14/2017

Last Amended: 3/9/2017

Status: 4/28/2017-Failed Deadline pursuant to Rule 61(a)(2). (Last location was E.S. & T.M. on 2/27/2017)(May be acted upon Jan 2018)

Summary:

Current law defines a disadvantaged community as a community with an annual median household income that is less than 80% of the statewide annual median household income for various purposes, that include, but are not limited to, the Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014, eligibility for certain entities to apply for funds from the State Water Pollution Cleanup and Abatement Account, and authorization for a community revitalization and investment authority to carry out a community revitalization plan. This bill would expand the definition of a disadvantaged community to include a community with an annual per capita income that is less than 80% of the statewide annual per capita income.

Position: Watch

Subject: Disadvantaged Communities

CALAFCO Comments: Sponsored by the Environmental Justice Coalition for Water, this bill is intended to expand the definition of disadvantaged communities to include multi-family households. According to the author's office this will be a two-year bill. CALAFCO will retain a Watch position until any amendments are in print.

AB 645 **(Quirk D) Local government: organization: dissolution.**

Current Text: Introduced: 2/14/2017 [Text](#)

Introduced: 2/14/2017

Status: 5/12/2017-Failed Deadline pursuant to Rule 61(a)(3). (Last location was L. GOV. on 3/2/2017)(May be acted upon Jan 2018)

Summary:

Under current law, if a change of organization consists of a dissolution, the commission is required to order the dissolution subject to confirmation of voters if, among other things, the proposal was not initiated by the commission and if a subject agency has not objected to the proposal, the commission has found that, for an inhabited territory protests have been signed by either 25% of the number of landowners within the affected territory who own at least 25% of the assessed value of land within the territory or 25% of the voters entitled to vote as a result of residing or owning land within the affected territory. This bill would decrease that threshold to 10% of the number of landowners within the affected territory who own at least 25% of the assessed value of land within the territory or 10% of the voters entitled to vote as a result of residing or owning land within the affected territory.

Position: Watch

Subject: CKH General Procedures, Disincorporation/dissolution, Special District Consolidations

CALAFCO Comments: According to the author's office this is a spot bill pending the outcome of the Alameda LAFCo special study on Eden Healthcare District. Update: The author's office indicates they will hold off moving this bill. CALAFCO will continue to Watch.

AB 892 (Waldron R) Municipal water districts: water service: Indian tribes.

Current Text: Amended: 3/23/2017 [Text](#)

Introduced: 2/16/2017

Last Amended: 3/23/2017

Status: 5/12/2017-Failed Deadline pursuant to Rule 61(a)(3). (Last location was L. GOV. on 3/23/2017)(May be acted upon Jan 2018)

Summary:

Current law, upon the request of certain Indian tribes and the satisfaction of certain conditions, requires a district to provide service of water at substantially the same terms applicable to the customers of the district to the Indian tribe's lands that are not within a district, as prescribed. This bill would authorize, rather than require, a district to provide this service of water. The bill would apply this authorization to all Indian tribes whose lands are owned by the tribe.

Position: Watch

Subject: Water

CALAFCO Comments: According to the author's office, this may very well become a two-year bill. The intent of the bill was to make it permissive for an Indian tribe to negotiate directly with a water provider to obtain water services. This would circumvent LAFCo. This bill expands on last year's bill by Gonzalez-Fletcher, AB 2470. The author's office has indicated the bill will not move forward in it's current version. They understand CALAFCO's concerns. CALAFCO will continue to monitor the bill for any amendments and will consider a position if/when amendments are in print.

AB 1479 (Bonta D) Public records: custodian of records: civil penalties.

Current Text: Enrolled: 9/13/2017 [Text](#)

Introduced: 2/17/2017

Last Amended: 9/1/2017

Status: 9/19/2017-Enrolled and presented to the Governor at 3 p.m.

Summary:

Would, until January 1, 2023, require public agencies to designate a person or persons, or office or offices to act as the agency's custodian of records who is responsible for responding to any request made pursuant to the California Public Records Act and any inquiry from the public about a decision by the agency to deny a request for records. The bill also would make other conforming changes. Because the bill would require local agencies to perform additional duties, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

Position: Oppose

Subject: Public Records Act

CALAFCO Comments: As amended this bill requires any public agency to designate a person/office to act as the agency's custodian of records who will be responsible for responding to all public records requests and to respond to an inquiries as to why the agency denied the request for records. Further the bill adds a failure to respond for records or an improperly assessed fee can be considered a civil penalty and allows the courts to issue fines ranging from \$1000 - \$5000.

AB 1728 (Committee on Local Government) Health care districts: board of directors.

Current Text: Chaptered: 9/23/2017 [Text](#)

Introduced: 3/22/2017

Status: 9/23/2017-Approved by the Governor. Chaptered by Secretary of State - Chapter 265, Statutes of 2017.

Summary:

Each health care district has a board of directors with specific duties and powers respecting the creation, administration, and maintenance of the district, including purchasing, receiving, having, taking, holding, leasing, using, and enjoying property. This bill would require the board of directors to adopt an annual budget in a public meeting, on or before September 1 of each year, that conforms to generally accepted accounting and budgeting procedures for special districts, establish and maintain an Internet Web site that lists contact information for the district, and adopt annual policies for providing assistance or grant funding, if the district provides assistance or grants.

Position: Support

Subject: Other

CALAFCO Comments: As introduced, this bill requires healthcare districts to adopt annual budgets, establish and maintain a website (and prescribes the required site content), and adopt policies for grant funding.

SB 206 (Committee on Governance and Finance) Validations.

Current Text: Chaptered: 7/10/2017 [Text](#)

Introduced: 2/1/2017

Status: 7/10/2017-Approved by the Governor. Chaptered by Secretary of State. Chapter 57, Statutes of 2017.

Summary:

This bill would enact the First Validating Act of 2017, which would validate the organization, boundaries, acts, proceedings, and bonds of the state and counties, cities, and specified districts, agencies, and entities. This bill contains other related provisions.

Position: Support

Subject: LAFCo Administration

CALAFCO Comments: One of three annual acts which validate the boundaries of all local agencies.

SB 207 (Committee on Governance and Finance) Validations.

Current Text: Chaptered: 7/10/2017 [Text](#)

Introduced: 2/1/2017

Status: 7/10/2017-Approved by the Governor. Chaptered by Secretary of State. Chapter 58, Statutes of 2017.

Summary:

This bill would enact the Second Validating Act of 2017, which would validate the organization, boundaries, acts, proceedings, and bonds of the state and counties, cities, and specified districts, agencies, and entities. This bill contains other related provisions.

Position: Support

Subject: LAFCo Administration

CALAFCO Comments: One of three annual acts which validate the boundaries of all local agencies.

SB 208 (Committee on Governance and Finance) Validations.

Current Text: Chaptered: 7/10/2017 [Text](#)

Introduced: 2/1/2017

Status: 7/10/2017-Approved by the Governor. Chaptered by Secretary of State. Chapter 59, Statutes of 2017.

Summary:

This bill would enact the Third Validating Act of 2017, which would validate the organization, boundaries, acts, proceedings, and bonds of the state and counties, cities, and specified districts, agencies, and entities.

Position: Support

Subject: LAFCo Administration

CALAFCO Comments: One of three annual acts which validate the boundaries of all local agencies.

SB 365 (Dodd D) Regional park and open-space districts: County of Solano.

Current Text: Chaptered: 9/1/2017 [Text](#)

Introduced: 2/14/2017

Last Amended: 7/13/2017

Status: 9/1/2017-Approved by the Governor. Chaptered by Secretary of State. Chapter 216, Statutes of 2017.

Summary:

Current law authorizes proceedings for the formation of a regional park and open-space or regional open-space district in specified counties in the state to be initiated by resolution of the county board of supervisors adopted after a noticed hearing, and specifies the contents of the resolution. This bill, in addition, would authorize the formation of a regional district in the County of Solano to be initiated by resolution of the county board of supervisors after a noticed hearing. The bill would specify the contents of the resolution, including a requirement that the resolution call an election, as prescribed.

Position: Oppose

Subject: LAFCo Administration

CALAFCO Comments: This bill calls for the formation of a regional park and open space district which will circumvent the LAFCo formation process.

SB 435 (Dodd D) Williamson Act: payments to local governments.

Current Text: Amended: 5/2/2017 [Text](#)

Introduced: 2/15/2017

Last Amended: 5/2/2017

Status: 5/25/2017-May 25 hearing: Held in committee and under submission.

Summary:

Would, under the Williamson act, reduce the amount per acre paid to a city, county, or city and county under these provisions to \$2.50 for prime agricultural land, \$0.50 for all other land devoted to open-space uses of statewide significance, and, for counties that have adopted farmland security zones, \$4 for land that is within, or within 3 miles of the sphere of influence of, each incorporated city.

Position: Support

Subject: Ag Preservation - Williamson

CALAFCO Comments: This bill renews partial subvention funding for the Williamson Act as a fiscal incentive to lift contract moratoria, implements solar use easements and Farmland Security Zone Contracts, and increases subvention funding for counties that adopt conservation planning strategies for agriculturally zoned property that further our state's sustainable community goals.

[SB 522](#) ([Glazer D](#)) West Contra Costa Healthcare District.

Current Text: Amended: 9/12/2017 [Text](#)

Introduced: 2/16/2017

Last Amended: 9/12/2017

Status: 9/15/2017-Withdrawn from committee. Re-referred to Com. on RLS.

Summary:

Current law provides for the formation of local health care districts and specifies district powers. Under existing law, the elective officers of a local hospital district consist of a board of hospital directors consisting of 5 members, each of whom is required to be a registered voter residing in the district and whose term shall be 4 years, except as specified. This bill would dissolve the existing elected board of directors of the West Contra Costa Healthcare District, effective January 1, 2019, and would require the Board of Supervisors of the County of Contra Costa, at its election, to either serve as the district board or appoint a district board, as specified.

Position: Watch

Subject: Special Districts Governance

[SB 623](#) ([Monning D](#)) Water quality: Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund.

Current Text: Amended: 8/21/2017 [Text](#)

Introduced: 2/17/2017

Last Amended: 8/21/2017

Status: 9/1/2017-From committee: Without recommendation. (Ayes 11. Noes 0.) (September 1) Re-referred to Com. on RLS.

Summary:

Would establish the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund in the State Treasury and would provide that moneys in the fund are continuously appropriated to the State Water Resources Control Board. The bill would require the board to administer the fund to secure access to safe drinking water for all Californians, while also ensuring the long-term sustainability of drinking water service and infrastructure. The bill would authorize the state board to provide for the deposit into the fund of federal contributions, voluntary contributions, gifts, grants, bequests, and settlements from parties responsible for contamination of drinking water supplies.

Position: None at this time

Subject: Water

[SB 634](#) ([Wilk R](#)) Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency.

Current Text: Enrolled: 9/19/2017 [Text](#)

Introduced: 2/17/2017

Last Amended: 9/8/2017

Status: 9/21/2017-Enrolled and presented to the Governor at 5:30 p.m.

Summary:

Current law, the Castaic Lake Water Agency Law, created the Castaic Lake Water Agency and authorizes the agency to acquire water and water rights, including water from the State Water Project, and to provide, sell, and deliver water at wholesale for municipal, industrial, domestic, and other purposes. This bill would repeal the Castaic Lake Water Agency Law.

Position: Neutral

Subject: Special District Consolidations

CALAFCO Comments: As amended, this bill consolidates two independent water districts in Los Angeles. The bill was amended to include LAFCo in the process via an application for binding conditions. As statute does not allow the local LAFCo to deny the application when both district boards have adopted resolutions of support, the amendments of May 26 address all of CALAFCO's concerns. As a result CALAFCO has removed our opposition and now is neutral on the bill.

[SB 693](#) ([Mendoza D](#)) Lower San Gabriel River Recreation and Park District.

Current Text: Enrolled: 9/15/2017 [Text](#)

Introduced: 2/17/2017

Last Amended: 7/3/2017

Status: 9/19/2017-Enrolled and presented to the Governor at 4 p.m.

Summary:

Would specifically authorize the establishment of the Lower San Gabriel River Recreation and Park District, by petition or resolution submitted to the Los Angeles County Local Agency Formation Commission before January 1, 2020, subject to specified existing laws governing recreation and park districts, including their formation, except as provided. The bill would authorize specified city councils and the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to appoint members to, and the executive officer of the conservancy to serve as a member on, the initial board of directors of the district.

Position: Watch

Subject: LAFCo Administration

CALAFCO Comments: This bill forms the Lower San Gabriel River Recreation and Park District while leaving a majority of the LAFCo process intact. CALAFCO will keep watching to ensure it stays that way.

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Executive Summary

Special districts, the workhorses of public service delivery created by the California Legislature during the earliest days of statehood, represent the most common form of local government. They have prevailed through endless upheaval as California morphed from a state of rural open spaces into one of the world's most powerful economic engines and home to nearly 40 million people. Today special districts generate some \$21 billion in annual revenues and employ more than 90,000 local government workers.¹

In 2016 and 2017, the Little Hoover Commission reviewed and analyzed California's 2,071 independent special districts and the State of California's role and responsibility in overseeing them.² The Legislature not only created special districts and enacted the practice acts by which they are governed, but it retained the power to create new districts and also to dissolve them. In the early 1960s, the Legislature had the foresight to develop a local oversight mechanism, Local Agency Formation Commissions (LAFCOs) tasked with bringing more rational planning practices and reining in inappropriate growth by considering local government boundary decisions. LAFCOs have the authority to initiate dissolutions and consolidations of special districts, although ultimately local voters have the final say. The process is slow -- intentionally slow according to some --and occasionally frustrated parties attempt to bypass the local process by taking issues directly to the Legislature. This tension, in part, prompted the Commission to update its 2000 review of special districts to consider whether the local oversight process works as intended or whether a different process or a greater role for the Legislature would be more effective.

The Commission's review broke new ground, but also revisited issues first identified in its May 2000 report, *Special Districts: Relics of the Past or Resources for the Future?* The 2000 report declared that California's expansive special district sector often amounted to a poorly overseen and largely invisible governing sector serving residents who know little about who runs them or

what they pay in taxes to sustain them. The Commission nearly two decades ago questioned the soundness of special districts' financial management and asked if their numbers might be pared back through consolidations. Yet Commissioners also acknowledged in their 2000 analysis that special districts provide Californians valuable services and are "physically closest to their communities." The Commission concluded that despite its range of criticisms, special districts should remain, in the end, local institutions best served by local decision-making.

In its newest review the Commission heard from some who still contend that special districts are ripe for consolidation and represent convoluted, dispersed, under-the-radar government. Frustrated with the local oversight process, various local special district issues percolated up into bills in the 2015-16 legislative session as the Commission began its study, potentially signifying that the current system of oversight fails to work as well as intended.

In this review, the Commission found special districts themselves could do a better job of telling their own story to overcome the stigma that they function as hidden government. During an advisory committee meeting, Chair Pedro Nava encouraged special districts to "tell your story." There are very few government entities in a position to let people know that they work directly for the public and that the taxes and fees they collect fund local services, he said.

In testimony, the Commission also learned that despite the perception that special districts continue to proliferate in California, the number of special districts has declined 5 percent since 1997, while the number nationally increased by 10 percent.³ Thirty-three states have more special districts per capita than California. Despite frequent calls for dissolving or consolidating these local governments, special districts seem to have pluses that render them tolerable to those they govern and able to forestall movements to purge them or fold their work into city and county governments.

The Commission's 2016-2017 review delved into four primary arenas concerning special districts:

- Oversight of special districts, specifically, opportunities to bolster the effectiveness of Local Agency Formation Commissions (LAFCOs).
- The continued need for districts to improve transparency and public engagement.
- The frequently-controversial evolution of California's healthcare special districts, which in the 1940s and 1950s built a far-ranging system of hospitals that are mostly now gone due to a tremendous transformation in healthcare from hospitalization to preventive care.
- The urgency of climate change adaptation in California and the front-line roles that special districts, particularly water, wastewater treatment and flood control districts, play in preparing their communities and defending them from harm.

Toward Higher-Quality Local Control

As in 2000, the Commission held fast to the concept that special districts are essentially local institutions. Whether their individual endeavors are praised or panned, special districts seemingly reflect the wishes of local voters. They also reflect the politics of LAFCOs, unique oversight bodies in each county with authority to judge their performances and recommend whether they should continue to exist. The Commission again determined that LAFCOs should be the leading voice on the status of special districts in California – and that they need more tools to do the job well.

Commissioners perplexed by the seemingly slow progress in dissolutions and consolidations at one point during the study asked if a lack of money prevented LAFCOs and special districts from initiating consolidations or conducting the mandated Municipal Service Reviews that can identify opportunities for improved efficiency in service delivery. A chorus of stakeholders suggested a small, one-time infusion of grant funding, tied to specified outcomes to ultimately improve efficiency and save taxpayer dollars, was indeed warranted. They also called for various statutory changes that could bolster the effectiveness of LAFCOs.

Clearly, special districts can be improved. Given the routine front-line services they provide, the historic climate challenges these districts face in keeping California stable, as well as the need to provide the best possible healthcare to millions of residents, LAFCOs and the state have obligations to see that they succeed. To that end, the Commission offers 20 recommendations to guide the Legislature and Governor going forward. The first eight of those recommendations address the basic structure and governing issues revolving around special districts:

Recommendation 1: The Legislature and the Governor should curtail a growing practice of enacting bills to override LAFCO deliberative processes and decide local issues regarding special district boundaries and operations.

The Legislature and Governor have reason to be frustrated with slow and deliberative LAFCO processes. But these are local institutions of city, county and special district members often better attuned to local politics than those in the State Capitol. Exemptions where the Legislature gets involved should be few, and in special cases where the local governing elites are so intransigent or negligent – or so beholden to entrenched power structures – that some higher form of political authority is necessary.

Recommendation 2: The Legislature should provide one-time grant funding to pay for specified LAFCO activities, to incentivize LAFCOs or smaller special districts to develop and implement dissolution or consolidation plans with timelines for expected outcomes. Funding should be tied to process completion and results, including enforcement authority for corrective action and consolidation.

The Commission rarely recommends additional funding as a solution. However, a small one-time infusion of \$1 million to \$3 million in grant funding potentially could save California taxpayers additional money if it leads to streamlined local government and improved efficiency in service delivery. This funding could provide an incentive for LAFCOs or smaller districts to start a dissolution or consolidation process. Participants in the Commission's public process suggested the Strategic Growth Council or Department of Conservation could administer this one-time funding.

Recommendation 3: The Legislature should enact and the Governor should sign SB 448 (Wieckowski) which would provide LAFCOs the statutory authority to conduct reviews of inactive districts and to dissolve them without the action being subject to protest and a costly election process.

There has been no formal review to determine the number of inactive special districts – those that hold no meetings and conduct no public business. Rough estimates gauge the number to be in the dozens. Simplifying the LAFCOs' legal dissolution process would represent a significant step toward trimming district rolls in California. The Commission supports SB 448 and encourages the Legislature to enact the measure and for the Governor to sign the bill.

Recommendation 4: The Governor should sign AB 979 (Lackey), co-sponsored by the California Special Districts Association and the California Association of Local Agency Formation Commissions. The bill would strengthen LAFCOs by easing a process to add special district representatives to the 28 county LAFCOs where districts have no voice.

The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Reorganization Act of 2000 (AB 2838, Hertzberg) provided the option to add two special district members to county LAFCOs to broaden local governing perspectives. Nearly two decades later, 30 counties have special district representatives on their LAFCOs alongside city council members and county supervisors. This change provides LAFCOs a more diverse decision-making foundation and stronger finances. But 28 counties, mostly in rural California have not added special district representatives to their LAFCO governing boards, citing scarce resources. Presently, a majority of a county's special districts must pass individual resolutions within one year supporting a change. This has repeatedly proved itself a formidable obstacle to broadening the outlook of local LAFCOs. AB 979 (Lackey) would allow a simple one-time election process where districts could easily – and simultaneously – decide the question.

Recommendation 5: The Legislature should adopt legislation to give LAFCO members fixed terms, to ease political pressures in controversial votes and enhance the independence of LAFCOs.

The California Association of Local Agency Formation Commissions (CALAFCO) testified on August 25, 2016, that

individual LAFCO members are expected to exercise their independent judgment on LAFCO issues rather than simply represent the interests of their appointing authority. But this is easier said than done when representatives serve on an at-will basis. The CALAFCO hearing witness said unpopular votes have resulted in LAFCO board members being removed from their positions. Fixed terms would allow voting members to more freely exercise the appropriate independence in decision-making.

Recommendation 6: The Legislature should convene an advisory committee to review the protest process for consolidations and dissolutions of special districts and to develop legislation to simplify and create consistency in the process.

Complicated and inconsistent processes potentially impact a LAFCO's ability to initiate a dissolution or consolidation of a district. If 10 percent of district constituents protest a LAFCO's proposed special district consolidation, a public vote is required. If a special district initiates the consolidation, then a public vote is required if 25 percent of the affected constituents protest. Additionally, the LAFCO must pay for all costs for studies and elections if it initiates a consolidation proposal, whereas the district pays these costs if it proposes or requests the consolidation. Various participants in the Commission's public process cautioned against setting yet another arbitrary threshold and advised the issue warranted further study before proposing legislative changes. They called for more consistency in the process.

Recommendation 7: The Legislature should require every special district to have a published policy for reserve funds, including the size and purpose of reserves and how they are invested.

The Commission heard a great deal about the need for adequate reserves, particularly from special districts with large infrastructure investments. The Commission also heard concerns that reserves were too large. To better articulate the need for and the size of reserves, special districts should adopt policies for reserve funds and make these policies easily available to the public.

Recommendation 8: The State Controller's Office should standardize definitions of special district financial reserves for state reporting purposes.

Presently, it is difficult to assess actual reserve levels held by districts that define their numbers one way and the State Controller's Office which defines them another way. The State Controller's Office is working to standardize numbers following a year-long consultation with a task force of cities, counties and special districts. To improve transparency on reserves, a subject that still eludes effective public scrutiny, they should push this project to the finish line as a high priority.

Improving Transparency and Public Involvement

Because there are thousands of special districts in California, performing tasks as varied as managing water supply to managing rural cemeteries, the public has little practical ability to ascertain the functionality of special districts, including the scope of services these local districts provide, their funding sources, the use of such funds and their governance structure. Although publicly elected boards manage independent special districts, constituents lack adequate resources to identify their local districts much less the board members who collect and spend their money.

The Commission saw a number of opportunities for special districts to do a better job communicating with the public, primarily through improvements to district websites and more clearly articulating financing policies, including adopting and making publicly available fund reserve policies. Existing law requires special districts with a website to post meeting agendas and to post or provide links to compensation reports and financial transaction reports that are required to be submitted to the State Controller's Office. The State Controller's Office – despite having a software platform from the late 1990s – attempts to make all the information it receives as accessible as possible.

Many special districts already utilize their websites to effectively communicate with their constituents and voluntarily follow the nonprofit Special District Leadership Foundation's transparency guidelines and receive the foundation's District Transparency Certificate of Excellence. But often, these districts are the exception and not the rule. The Commission makes three recommendations to improve special district transparency and to better engage the public served by the districts:

Recommendation 9: The Legislature should require that every special district have a website.

Key components should include:

- ***Name, location, contact information***
- ***Services provided***
- ***Governance structure of the district, including election information and the process for constituents to run for board positions***
- ***Compensation details – total staff compensation, including salary, pensions and benefits, or a link to this information on the State Controller's website***
- ***Budget (including annual revenues and the sources of such revenues, including without limitation, fees, property taxes and other assessments, bond debt, expenditures and reserve amounts)***
- ***Reserve fund policy***
- ***Geographic area served***
- ***Most recent Municipal Service Review***
- ***Most recent annual financial report provided to the State Controller's Office, or a link to this information on the State Controller's website***
- ***Link to the Local Agency Formation Commission and any state agency providing oversight***

Exemptions should be considered for districts that fall under a determined size based on revenue and/or number of employees. For districts in geographic locations without reliable Internet access, this same information should be available at the local library or other public building open and accessible to the public, until reliable Internet access becomes available statewide.

Building on this recommendation, every LAFCO should have a website that includes a list and links to all of the public agencies within each county service area and a copy of all of the most current Municipal Service Reviews. Many LAFCOs currently provide this information and some go further by providing data on revenues from property taxes

and user fees, debt service and fund balance changes for all the local governments within the service area. At a minimum, a link to each agency would enable the public to better understand the local oversight authority of LAFCOs and who to contact when a problem arises.

Recommendation 10: The State Controller’s Office should disaggregate information provided by independent special districts from dependent districts, nonprofits and joint powers authorities.

Over the course of this study, the Commission utilized data available on the State Controller’s website to attempt to draw general conclusions about independent special districts, such as overall revenues, number of employees and employee compensation. Presently, it is difficult to do this without assistance as information for independent districts is mixed with various other entities.

Recommendation 11: The California Special Districts Association, working with experts in public outreach and engagement, should develop best practices for independent special district outreach to the public on opportunities to serve on boards.

The Commission heard anecdotally that the public does not understand special district governance, does not often participate or attend special district board meetings and often does not know enough about candidates running to fill board positions. Often, the public fails to cast a vote for down-ballot races. Two county registrars provided the Commission information that showed in many instances those who voted for federal or statewide offices did not vote for local government officials at the same rate, whether they were city council positions, special district positions or local school or community college district positions.

What is the Role for Healthcare Districts?

The Commission found in its review that special districts were as diverse as the services provided and the millions of Californians served. To gain deeper insight on one type of local government service provider, the Commission took a closer look at an often-controversial group: healthcare districts that no longer operate hospitals. These entities struggle to explain their relevance within the rapidly evolving healthcare industry,

which emphasizes preventative care over hospitalization. Amid uncertainty about the future of the Affordable Care Act, many of these districts claim they are carving out new roles in preventative care. Yet the Legislature, local grand juries, LAFCOs and healthcare analysts continue to question their relevance and need to exist. Presently, just 37 of 79 California healthcare districts operate 39 hospitals, mostly in rural areas with few competitors or other alternatives – and few suggest the need to dissolve those districts.

Controversy tends to afflict districts in former rural areas that became suburbanized in recent decades and grew into competitive healthcare markets. The 2015-16 legislative session included a rash of legislation that considered whether to force district dissolutions or modify district boundaries – even though those decisions are the responsibility of LAFCOs. Nonetheless, most healthcare districts officials continue to maintain they are more flexible than counties in defining priorities and are pioneering a new era of preventative care under the umbrella of “wellness.” Officials say their districts are misunderstood by critics who lack understanding about how much the healthcare landscape is changing. They also say that local voters generally support their local missions and how they allocate their share of property taxes in the community.

As part of its special districts review, the Commission convened a two-hour advisory committee with experts to shed light on healthcare districts. During the course of the Commission’s study, the Association of Healthcare Districts convened a workgroup to develop recommendations, in part, in response to legislative scrutiny. These recommendations were considered and discussed during the November advisory committee meeting. Participants analyzed whether counties or healthcare districts are best positioned as local and regional healthcare providers and discussed the role of LAFCOs in consolidating, dissolving or steering healthcare districts toward more relevant roles. During the meeting Commissioners also pushed districts to share and adopt best practices and define better metrics to measure what they are accomplishing with their shares of local property taxes. Three Commission recommendations arose from the discussion as well as numerous interviews with experts during the study:

Recommendation 12: The Legislature should update the 1945 legislative “practice acts” that enabled voters to create local hospital districts, renamed healthcare districts in the early 1990s.

Experts widely agree that statutory language in the acts no longer reflects the evolution of healthcare during the past seventy years, particularly the shift from hospital-based healthcare to modern preventive care models.

Recommendation 13: The Legislature, which has been increasingly inclined to override local LAFCO processes and authority to press changes on healthcare districts, should defer these decisions to LAFCOs.

LAFCOs have shown successes in shaping the healthcare district landscape and should be the primary driver of change. Given the controversies over healthcare districts, the California Association of Local Agency Formation Commissions and LAFCOs should be at the forefront of studying the relevance of healthcare districts, potential consolidations and dissolutions of districts. To repeat a theme of Recommendation 1, the Legislature should retain its authority to dissolve healthcare districts or modify boundaries, but this authority should be limited to cases in which local political elites are so intransigent or negligent – or so beholden to local power structures – that some form of higher political authority is deemed necessary.

Recommendation 14: The Association of California Healthcare Districts and its member districts should step up efforts to define and share best practices among themselves.

A Commission advisory committee meeting discussion clearly showed that not enough thought or interest has been assigned to sharing what works best in rural, suburban and urban areas among members. The association should formally survey its members and collectively define their leading best practices and models for healthcare, as well as guidelines to improve the impacts of grantmaking in communities.

Front-line Roles for Climate Change Adaptation

At the Commission’s August 25, 2016, hearing, Chair Pedro Nava asked a simple question of special district attendees vigorously defending their need for robust reserve funds:

How are they assessing future climate change impacts when amassing reserves for long-range infrastructure spending? That question, rooted in the Commission’s 2014 climate adaptation report *Governing California Through Climate Change*, became the genesis of a deeper exploration of awareness of and preparations for climate change among special districts. In an October 27, 2016, hearing focused on special districts efforts to adapt to climate change, the Commission learned that:

- Special districts, even while vastly outnumbering cities and counties in California, have generally not participated at the levels of cities and counties in the state’s emerging climate adaptation information gathering and strategizing. Often that is because they lack land-use authority. Nonetheless, it is critical that their experienced voices be at the table.
- Many larger infrastructure-intensive water, wastewater and flood control districts stand at the forefront nationally in preparing for the varying, changing precipitation patterns – too much or too little water – at the heart of anticipated climate change impacts.

The Commission found it encouraging that many special districts are reducing the need for imported water by diversifying supplies and producing vastly more recycled water. Districts also are steering more stormwater runoff in wet years into groundwater recharge basins for use in dry years. The actions that all agencies must eventually take are already being done by some. The Commission agreed that these leading-edge actions and infrastructure spending strategies represent models for other districts to follow. Accordingly, the Commission makes six recommendations focused on climate change adaptation:

Recommendation 15: The Legislature should place a requirement that special districts with infrastructure subject to the effects of climate change should formally consider long-term needs for adaptation in capital infrastructure plans, master plans and other relevant documents.

Most special districts, especially the legions of small districts throughout California, have their hands full meeting their daily responsibilities. Many have few resources and little staff time to consider long-range issues, particularly those with the heavy uncertainty of

climate change adaptation. Making climate change a consideration in developing capital infrastructure plans and other relevant planning documents would formally and legally elevate issues of adaptation and mitigation, especially for districts where immediate concerns make it too easy to disregard the future.

Recommendation 16: The California Special Districts Association (CSDA), in conjunction with its member districts, should document and share climate adaptation experiences with the Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resilience Program’s adaptation information clearinghouse being established within the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research (OPR). Similarly, CSDA and member districts should step up engagement in the state’s current Fourth Assessment of climate threats, a state research project designed to support the implementation of local adaptation activities. The CSDA also should promote climate adaptation information sharing among its members to help districts with fewer resources plan for climate impacts and take actions.

The OPR clearinghouse promises to be the definitive source of climate adaptation planning information for local governments throughout California. At the Commission’s October 27, 2016, hearing, an OPR representative invited more district participation in state climate adaptation processes. It is critical that special districts and their associations assume a larger participatory role – both within state government and among their memberships – to expand the knowledge base for local governments statewide.

Recommendation 17: The state should conduct a study – by either a university or an appropriate state department – to assess the effect of requiring real estate transactions to trigger an inspection of sewer lines on the property and require repairs if broken.

The responsibility to safeguard California and adequately adapt to climate change impacts falls on every resident of California. This begins at home with maintenance and upgrading of aging sewer laterals. Requiring inspections and repairs during individual property transactions is an optimum way to slowly rebuild a region’s collective wastewater infrastructure in the face of climate change. At the community level, repairs will help prevent excess stormwater during major climate events from overwhelming wastewater systems and triggering sewage

spills into public waterways. The Oakland-based East Bay Municipal Utility District has instituted an ordinance that requires property owners to have their private sewer laterals inspected if they buy or sell a property, build or remodel or increase the size of their water meter. If the lateral is found to be leaking or damaged, it must be repaired or replaced. The state should consider implementing this policy statewide.

Recommendation 18: State regulatory agencies should explore the beginnings of a new regulatory framework that incorporates adaptable baselines when defining a status quo as climate impacts mount.

With climate change what has happened historically will often be of little help in guiding regulatory actions. State regulations designed to preserve geographical or natural conditions that are no longer possible or no longer exist already are creating problems for special districts. Wastewater agencies, for example, face conflicting regulations as they divert more wastewater flows to water recycling for human needs and less to streams historically home to wildlife that may or may not continue to live there as the climate changes. While it is not easy for regulators to work with moving targets or baselines, climate change is an entirely new kind of status quo that requires an entirely new approach to regulation.

Recommendation 19: The California Special Districts Association, and special districts, as some of the closest-to-the-ground local governments in California, should step up public engagement on climate adaptation, and inform and support people and businesses to take actions that increase their individual and community-wide defenses.

Special districts are uniquely suited to communicate with and help prepare millions of Californians for the impacts of climate change. Nearly all have public affairs representatives increasingly skilled at reaching residents through newsletters, social media and public forums. District staff grapple constantly with new ways to increase their visibility. Many will find they can build powerful new levels of public trust by helping to prepare their communities for the uncertainty ahead.

Recommendation 20: The California Special Districts Association and special districts should lead efforts to seek and form regional partnerships to maximize climate adaptation resources and benefits.

Water, wastewater and flood control districts are already bringing numerous agencies to the table to pool money, brainpower and resources for big regional projects. The East Bay Municipal Utility District has arrangements with many Bay Area and Central Valley water agencies to identify and steer water to where it is most needed for routine demands and emergencies alike. The Metropolitan Water District and Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County also increasingly pool their joint resources to steer more recycled water to groundwater recharge basins for dry years. Likewise, the Santa Clara Valley Water district and other state and federal agencies are collectively planning and funding 18 miles of levees to protect the region from sea level rise. These partnerships among special districts and other government agencies clearly hint at what will be increasingly necessary as climate impacts begin to mount.