

October 23, 2020

Sonoma Local Agency Formation Commission/LAFCO
ATTN: Mark Bramfitt, General Manager
111 Santa Rosa Ave.
Suite 240
Santa Rosa, CA 95404

Dear Chair Loveless and Commission Members:

The Northern Sonoma County Fire Protection District (formally Geyserville Fire Protection District) and Cloverdale Fire Protection District have recently become aware of an action taken by LAFCO to establish an Ad Hoc Committee for the purpose of reviewing the parameters of future Spheres of Influence amendments. It is our understanding that this Ad Hoc Committee will essentially place all applications "on hold" pending the outcome of this review. The purpose of this letter is to formally request exemption for the Northern Sonoma County Fire Protection District from the Ad Hoc Committee process. The Northern Sonoma County Fire Protection District has been delayed from proceeding with processing an MSR and SOI for an extended period of time due to LAFCO processes and any further delay is unjustified. This exemption request is based on the background detailed as follows:

The Northern Sonoma County Fire Protection District has continually worked with LAFCO General Manager Mark Bramfitt for approximately four years to formalize a regionalization of Fire Services in the north County. These efforts actually preceded the County's current plan. The Cloverdale Fire Protection District is also an integral part of this regionalization. The progress to date includes a full Municipal Services Review (MSR) which GM Bramfitt has yet to complete and the establishment of the Sphere of Influence (SOI) for the North County areas of Geyserville, Cloverdale, CSA 40 – Sotoyome, CSA 40 – IRP 61 Geyserville, and CSA 40 – IRP 63 Healdsburg (Fitch Mountain). Again, as previously stated, these efforts have been ongoing for several years although your General Manager has been unable to complete the work necessary due to his workload being redirected to other priorities and Fire Districts. Please understand that while we don't cast any ill will on Mr. Bramfitt, it has become very unsettling that the two northern most Fire Districts that cover the largest area of fire protection responsibility continue to be relegated to the lowest priority in the County. Now we find ourselves, once again, facing unknown delays with the proposed formation of this Ad Hoc Committee.

While awaiting GM Bramfitt to complete work necessary to allow the North County regionalization to continue to move forward with future plans, the Elected Officials and staff of both Fire Districts have been working diligently to create a high level of fire protection focused on fiscal sustainability long term. They have taken steps to maintain costs and increase services through the signing of a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA). This JPA sets the framework for operational efficiencies, joint purchasing, personnel realignment, wildland management and emergency preparedness. It again reflects the model the County strives for. To add, these two Districts are moving forward for the protection of its constituency and further delays places that constituency in harm's way.

Our request for exemption is supported by (1) LAFCO's 73-page document entitled Fire Service Sphere of Influence Report and the Fire Services Working Group (FSWG) who have voiced no concerns relative to the north County's MSR or SOI proposal. The District has continually waited patiently for several

years, while other proposals have been moved ahead. Both our history and timeline will bear out these facts. To continue to stall the north County Fire Districts of their political rights and processes as well as the business and residents who deserve to see they receive equal opportunity for increased fire protection cannot be justified. During this time the 2017 Tubbs, 2017 Pocket, 2019 Kincade, and 2020 Walbridge have affected these areas whom have seen a decreased level of service primarily due to the lack of volunteer firefighters.

Our request is summarized as: (1) provide an exemption for Northern Sonoma County Fire Protection District to the Ad Hoc Committee process for SOI review, (2) direct LAFCO General Manager Bramfitt to complete the MSR for the two Districts within the next 60 days, (3) allow the SOI for Northern Sonoma County Fire Protection District to be agendized for LAFCO action within 30 days of its completion.

We look forward to your consideration and request this item be placed on your next agenda for approval.

SIGNED:



Robert Stewart, President
Board of Directors
Northern Sonoma County Fire Protection District
P.O. Box 217
Geyserville, CA 95441

COUNTERSIGNED IN SUPPORT THEREOF:



Carol Giovanatto-Pigoni, President
Board of Directors
Cloverdale Fire Protection District
451 South Cloverdale Blvd.
Cloverdale, CA 95425

cc: Supervisor James Gore
Supervisor Lynda Hopkins
Chairperson Ernie Loveless
LAFCO General Manager Mark Bramfitt