

## **Proposal Two: Sonoma County Fire District/County Service Area 40 Santa Rosa Islands**

### **Proposal Outline:**

The County and Sonoma County Fire District have informally requested that the Commission consider a Sphere of Influence amendment and subsequent reorganization involving approximately thirty unincorporated islands within the City of Santa Rosa which are part of County Service Area 40.

The islands, which vary in number of parcels and land area, are served directly by the City of Santa Rosa. The County provides funding for the service on a contractual basis. With the County seeking to dissolve CSA 40, the disposition of these islands is expected to be the final hurdle for that effort.

(The other fifteen or so islands are within the Sonoma County Fire District, and services are managed under an agreement with the City that also covers some mutual aid activity.)

While there are challenges to placing these islands into Sonoma County Fire's sphere of influence in anticipation of a reorganization, potential alternatives are equally problematic or more so.

### **Status of LAFCO Work Product:**

Staff believes that a combined MSR and sphere of influence review for these areas could be quite simple to prepare given the limited circumstances for the area.

Staff notes that Sonoma County Fire District would be required to prepare a Plan for Service for the territory to support a reorganization proposal; that too could be relatively pro forma.

### **Staff Analysis: SOI Criteria**

Staff notes that the proposal is a poor operational fit - ideally the islands would be annexed to the City of Santa Rosa, which is the entity directly providing fire and emergency medical services.

Sonoma County Fire District is not particularly enthusiastic about taking on this territory as they would merely be administering ongoing financial transfers, and landowners in the islands may begrudge paying Sonoma County Fire's voter-approved special (parcel) taxes. Therefore, staff considers the proposal as a poor fit for the Agency Preference criterion.

The proposal largely meets the remaining four criteria for evaluating sphere of influence amendments.

### **Other Options**

The ideal circumstance would see these islands, as well as the fifteen or so that are already within Sonoma County Fire, annexed to the City. Annexation of the islands to the City would avoid the necessity for a contractual arrangements between any of the parties.

The islands are within the City's sphere of influence, so are eligible for annexation. Should the City apply to LAFCO, a provision in law indicates that LAFCO must approve the reorganization, and further that there is no Protest Proceeding.

The City has for many years avoided taking this step, and although there have been recent discussions about the disposition of the islands, it must be considered that annexation to the City is highly unlikely.

Another option would be to maintain the current contractual arrangement between the County and the City; this option would preclude the County from seeking dissolution of CSA 40, and continues the administrative burden of managing the ongoing contract.

### **Options for Commission Guidance**

Staff is seeking Commission guidance regarding further work on this proposal, nominally with regard to prioritizing staff work. Options include, but are not limited to:

- Directing staff to complete a Municipal Service Review and Sphere of Influence Study for the Santa Rosa unincorporated island areas.
- Working with Sonoma County Fire District to process a subsequent reorganization proposal.
- Avoiding any work on this matter in the absence of an agreement between the affected parties (the County, the City of Santa Rosa, and if necessary, the Sonoma County Fire District).