

# SONOMA LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION

111 SANTA ROSA AVENUE, SUITE 240, SANTA ROSA, CA 95404

(707) 565-2577

[www.sonomalafco.org](http://www.sonomalafco.org)

## Staff Report

---

**Meeting Date:** April 5, 2023

**Agenda No.** Item 4.1

**Agenda Item Title:** File No. 2023-05: Municipal Service Review for South County Territory of County Service Area 40 (Fire Services) - Amendment

**Environmental Determination:** Not a project under CEQA

**Staff Contacts:** Mark Bramfitt

## Analysis

---

At its March 1, 2023, meeting, the Commission considered and approved the Municipal Services Review for the South County Territory of County Service Area 40 (Fire Services) (“CSA 40 MSR”). At the meeting, staff learned that the territory comprising Incident Response Plan area 81 (“Affected Territory”) was not included in the study.

The affected territory is comprised of seven parcels totaling approximately 144 acres: 127 acres in pasture under the California Land Conservation Act and 17 acres of flood control channel. The territory is contiguous to the Gold Ridge Fire Protection District (“Gold Ridge FPD”).

In order to include this territory in the CSA 40 MSR for consideration of a sphere amendment, staff has analyzed the territory pursuant to Section 56430 of the California Government Code and prepared the following statement of its determinations with respect to each of the following:

### Growth and Population Projections

Determinations:

- Although there continues to be modest population growth in the subject territories, an array of other factors drives increasing call volumes.
- These factors include an aging population, vehicular traffic volumes, and an increase in reliance on emergency medical services.
- Similarly, land use development is a negligible driver of call volume.

### Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities

Determinations:

- There are no LAFCO-designated disadvantaged unincorporated communities within the subject territory.

### Capacity and Adequacy of Public Facilities and Services

Determinations:

- The three volunteer fire companies providing service to the subject territories report no imminent challenges in maintaining staffing levels or availability. It should be noted that one volunteer company (San Antonio) has disbanded due to a lack of volunteers; that area is now covered by Willmar VFC and the Petaluma Fire Department.
- Potential staffing challenges that may arise in the future include:
  - A decline in active volunteer ranks
  - Declines in volunteer availability during particular shifts/times
- Improvements to stipend programs for volunteers may enable the volunteer companies to address staffing challenges without transitioning fully to career-professional staffing, which the companies and County cannot support financially.

- The facilities used in the subject territories are owned by a variety of private and non-profit entities. While minimally sufficient for housing vehicles and equipment, none feature quarters that can house staff. None of the three volunteer fire companies maintain a facility maintenance and improvement financial model.
- The equipment used by the volunteer fire companies is generally in good condition, but none of the three volunteer companies maintains a vehicle replacement financial model.

### Financial Ability to Provide Service

#### Determinations:

- The volunteer fire companies providing services in the subject territory require financial support to provide needed services. Historically, the County provided support services through a County-run Fire and Emergency Services Department, but now provides support through a contract with North Bay Fire, Inc.
- Sources for funding support services could include redirection of property taxes for fire services collected by the County; supplemental funding from the County, and collection of special taxes (parcel taxes) either through a voter-approval process or through reorganization of the territories into a District with an existing special tax levy.

### Governance and Accountability

#### Determinations:

- County Service Area 40 – Fire Services is a dependent district of the County of Sonoma.
- Although the County regularly responds to open meeting, noticing and other accountability inquiries, there have been no instances reported that are directly related to oversight of CSA 40.

### Opportunity for Shared Services

#### Determinations:

- Any proposed reorganizations of the southern CSA 40 territory, or continuation of the existing contractual service arrangement with North Bay Fire, Inc., are unlikely to generate significant cost savings.
- There are a variety of options for potentially reorganizing the subject territories.

## **Recommendation**

---

Staff requests the Commission review and consider the determinations and the draft amended resolution.

## Attachments

---

1. Draft Resolution