

Draft Resolution

111 Santa Rosa Ave. Ste. 240
Santa Rosa, CA 95404

April 5, 2023

Resolution of the Local Agency Formation Commission of the County of Sonoma, State of California, Making Findings and Determinations Related to Information Contained in the Sphere of Influence Study for County Service Area 40 – Fire Services, a Dependent District of the County of Sonoma, Determining Exemption from the California Environmental Quality Act, Adopting the Determinations of the Sphere of Influence Study, and Amending the District’s Sphere of Influence

RESOLVED, that the Local Agency Formation Commission of the County of Sonoma (“the Commission”) hereby finds and determines as follows:

1. Procedural History

1.1 County Service Area 40 – Fire Services, a subsidiary district of the County of Sonoma (“the Subject Agency” and “District”) requested that the Commission prepare a Sphere of Influence Study (“SOI Study”) of the District pursuant to the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000, Government Code section 56000 et seq. (“the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act”).

1.2 The Executive Officer considered the request and prepared, a Sphere of Influence Study (“SOI Study”).

1.3 The Executive Officer determined that the Commission would comply with California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) and the State CEQA Guidelines by acting as the lead agency in its consideration of the SOI Study. The Executive Officer further determined that the SOI Study is exempt pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15306, 15262 and 15061(b)(3).

1.4 Following the preparation of the SOI Study, the Executive Officer set the matter for consideration by the Commission and provided notice thereof as provided in the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act.

1.5 The Executive Officer considered written comments received on the SOI Study and prepared a staff report (“the Executive Officer’s Report”) which included a recommendation for the SOI Study. The Executive Officer furnished copies of the Executive Officer’s Report to all persons entitled to copies under the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act.

1.6 The Commission conducted a noticed public hearing to consider the SOI Study and Sphere of Influence Amendments on April 5, 2023. At the hearing, the Commission heard and received all relevant oral and written testimony and evidence presented or filed and considered the Executive Officer's Report and the SOI Study. All interested persons were given the opportunity to hear and be heard. At the conclusion of public testimony, the Commission closed the public hearing and adopted the determinations in the SOI Study.

1.7 The Commission has reviewed and considered this resolution and hereby finds that it accurately sets forth the intentions of the Commission regarding the determinations of the SOI Study.

2. CEQA Compliance

2.1 The Commission concurs with the Executive Officer and finds and determines that preparation of a Sphere of Influence Study consists largely of the collection of data and research through reports and/or interviews with those knowledgeable about the Agency studied, resulting in conclusions and non-binding recommendations. Pursuant to Sections 15306, 15262, and 15061(b)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines, the study is exempt from CEQA.

2.2 The Commission has considered the potential environmental effects of the SOI Study prior to reaching its decision. The Commission finds that, in doing so, it has fully discharged its responsibilities under CEQA.

3. Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act Compliance – Sphere of Influence Study

3.1 The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act directs LAFCOs to review and update Agency Spheres of influence, as necessary, every five years and further to conduct municipal service reviews prior to, or in conjunction with such updates. With regard to the Agency's Request, the Commission makes the following determinations:

3.2 Present and Planned Land Uses

Due to the rural and remote nature of the studied territories, projected development growth will be minimal, and will therefore not drive a need for increased services provision.

3.3 Present and Probable Need for Public Facilities And Services

While population growth in the studied territories is not dramatically increasing, calls for fire and EMS services have been growing due to an aging population and increased calls for medical support.

The studied areas receive advanced life support/ambulance services from neighboring agencies, with fairly long response times due to geographic distances. The volunteer companies will continue to be challenged to provide emergency medical services at the Basic level.

If volunteer programs lose viability, portions of the studied territories will likely have to rely on support from neighboring agencies, as there will be few opportunities to shift to a paid staffing model due to funding limitations.

3.4 Present Capacity Adequacy of Public Services

Volunteer Fire Companies (as well as Fire Protection Districts that rely on a volunteer staffing model in whole or in part) will continue to face staffing level and availability challenges.

The fact that two of the Volunteer Fire Company service areas covered by this study have inactive operations (San Antonio and Bloomfield) are indicative of this troubling trend.

If VFCs become increasingly unable to respond to service calls, neighboring agencies (Fire Protection and Community Service Districts) and/or volunteer companies will be increasingly called upon to provide services, potentially reducing their ability to meet service needs within their territories.

3.5 Social or Economic Communities of Interest

In many cases the Volunteer Fire Companies represent the sole quasi-governmental agency for their respective territories.

Any service model that retains a local, volunteer-based service model, even if operationally supported by neighboring agencies, can continue to provide the benefits of the current volunteer companies.

3.6 Present and Probable Need for Services to Disadvantaged Communities

Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities (“DUCs”) are defined in the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act, which grants LAFCOs some authority regarding geographical parameters. The territory studied is not currently designated as a DUC.

3.7 Sphere of Influence Amendments

Amending the sphere of influence for County Service Area 40 – Fire Services can be supported by this study.

The Commission can choose from the proposed options.

4 Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act Compliance – Sphere of Influence Amendment(s)

The Commission amends the sphere of influence of County Service Area 40 – Fire Services in the following manner:

(Insert Description of amendments)

NOW, THEREFORE, based on the foregoing findings and determinations and the record of these proceedings, and pursuant to the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act, the Commission hereby declares and orders as follows:

1. The foregoing findings and determinations are true and correct, are supported by substantial evidence in the record, and are adopted as hereinabove set forth.
2. The Commission has reviewed and considered the information contained in the final SOI Study for County Service Area 40 – Fire Services, a dependent District of the County of Sonoma.
3. The Commission adopts the determinations made in the SOI Study.

The Clerk of the Commission is designated as the custodian of the documents and other materials that constitute the record of the proceedings upon which the Commission’s decision herein is based. These documents may be found at the office of the Clerk of the Commission, 111 Santa Rosa Ave., Ste. 240, Santa Rosa, CA, 95404.

THE FOREGOING RESOLUTION was introduced at a regular meeting of the Commission on the 5th day of April 2023 and ordered adopted by the following vote:

Commissioners:

AYES:
NOES:
ABSENT:

WHEREUPON, the Chair declared the foregoing resolution adopted and

SO ORDERED.

Mark Bramfitt, Executive Officer

The within instrument is a true and correct copy of the original on file in this office.

ATTEST:

BY: _____
Clerk