

SONOMA LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION

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Staff Report

Meeting Date: April 2, 2025

Agenda No. Item No. 5.1

Agenda Item Title: Sonoma Valley Sanitation District
Direction to staff for conducting Municipal Service Review and
Sphere of Influence study to accommodate eventual
annexation of two parcels for new Sonoma Valley Fire District
facility

**Environmental
Determination:** Exempt Pursuant to Section 15306 of the State CEQA
Guidelines

Staff Contact: Mark Bramfitt

Analysis

Background

The Sonoma Valley Fire District has purchased two parcels on Arnold Drive in the unincorporated community of El Verano, with the intent to build a new fire station to replace the existing facility which is no longer fit for service. Sonoma Valley Fire has identified financial resources to begin the project, with the hope of beginning construction in about a year's time.

The parcels are within the Valley of the Moon Water District and are therefore eligible to receive water service from the District.

The parcels are not within the Sonoma Valley Sanitation District, nor are they within the District's sphere of influence. Further, the parcels are outside of the Urban Services Boundary established in the County's General Plan. Sonoma Valley Fire has been advised by Permit Sonoma that a Use Permit application incorporating a General Plan Amendment would address both zoning and design issues and the Urban Services Boundary.

The Commission does not have a reasonably current Municipal Services Review (MSR) for Sonoma Valley Sanitation, and an accompanying Sphere of Influence (SOI) study would be needed to amend the District's sphere, making the parcels eligible for annexation.

In cases where the Commission has not conducted an MSR in some time, the Commission has generally directed staff to conduct a study at Commission, rather than applicant cost.

Staff is seeking guidance from the Commission regarding what work process would be preferable to the Commission.

One option would be to use contracted consulting services to complete the study. Staff advises that this process will likely take six to nine months, with an expected cost of \$20,000 to \$30,000. There are sufficient funds in the professional services category of the budget to pay for such an endeavor. Staff also notes that recent experience with consultants selected to perform this kind of work has required significant staff time in reviewing and amending the MSR/SOI study document.

Another avenue would be to direct staff to conduct the requisite study work and development of the report. With the caveat that the mid-term workload of staff includes completion of three fire service agency reorganizations, and the expectation of a district formation proposal being filed with the commission shortly, staff believes they could complete a study in the same or less time than using contracted consultants.

Study Scope

Staff would like to note several matters regarding the scope of a study, with interest in direction from the Commission.

- The MSR would discuss governance options for the District. The District is currently governed by two County Supervisors and the Mayor of the City of Sonoma. That arrangement is subject to change based on changes in relative population between the City and the unincorporated areas of the District.
- Though it will be unlikely to be a recommendation, the study may describe how the District could become part of a new “Sonoma Valley Water Authority” that includes both municipal water systems (Valley of the Moon and City of Sonoma), and potentially the areas of the Valley that are subject to the existing Groundwater Sustainability Authority.
- Staff has noted that the portion of the Sonoma Developmental Center campus east of Arnold Drive is in the Sanitation District, the portion west of Arnold is not in the District or included in its sphere of influence. With no request to consider a change, staff is recommending that the study not consider a sphere of influence amendment at the Center at this time. The MSR portion of the study would be useful in supporting an additional sphere of influence study if that becomes indicated.

Staff is seeking direction from the Commission about how to proceed with this project and is prepared to begin execution based on that direction.