

SONOMA LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION

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Staff Report

Meeting Date: September 3, 2025

Agenda No: Item No. 5.2

Agenda Item Title: Commission Approval to Pay 2025/2026 CALAFCO Dues

Proposal: Due to the organizational condition of the California Association of LAFCOs, staff is seeking approval from the Commission to remain members of the Association by paying 2025/2026 dues.

Environmental
Determination: Not a project under CEQA

Staff Contact: Mark Bramfitt

Analysis

Background

The California Association of LAFCOs (CALAFCO) has had a tumultuous first half of 2025, with the departure of a half dozen LAFCOs and the resignation of the Executive Director. Staff was aware of the potential departures of up to a dozen other Commissions as the tumult reached its peak.

Staff believe that the legislative affairs services provided by CALAFCO and a host of improvements being addressed by interim staff and the CALAFCO board warrant remaining a member through the 2025/2026 cycle. (Our budget as always accounted for the dues expense.)

Summary of CALAFCO Issues

Governance: The CALAFCO board has been beset by conflict and poor leadership, and there have been contentious battles over the election of the chair and vice chair. With the departure of LAFCOs (notably in the Southern Region) and other turnover, the board has a half-dozen vacant seats.

Management: The previous Executive Director of CALAFCO proved to be a poor fit for the organization and subsequently resigned.

Education Programs: Over the course of the past several years CALAFCO fully abandoned education programming directed at LAFCO staff and Commissioners. Many LAFCOs have had significant staff turnover in that time period, so the lack of these programs was a clear deficiency.

Legislative Standing: The departure of a half-dozen LAFCOs, including a prominent group from the Southern Region (Los Angeles, San Diego, San Bernardino and Orange) leads many to the conclusion that CALAFCO will lose some standing in legislative affairs activities in Sacramento.

Volunteer Resources: The Commission departures will decrease the available pool of LAFCO staff volunteers who support all but the executive activities of the organization.

Finances: The loss of dues from the departure of six LAFCOs will be managed through the use of reserves for 2025/2026, but the longer-term implications if these LAFCOs do not rejoin are clearly the possibility of higher dues or reduced services (or both) going forward.

Summary of CALAFCO Improvement Efforts

ED and Staffing: CALAFCO has retained the services, under contract, of former ED Pamela Miller, and has recently hired an Interim Executive Director, Michelle McIntyre, formerly the Executive Officer of Placer LAFCO. (The intent is to “get the organization back on its feet” before conducting a search for a new Executive Director.)

Legislative Affairs: The Legislative Committee has been active and engaged during the current legislative session and now has the support of a consultant/lobbyist firm. CALAFCO is devoting approximately \$40,000 to the contract.

Education Programs: “CALAFCO U” has been reinvigorated and has three educational programs scheduled.

Outreach: Former ED Pamela Miller has conducted four regional workshops to solicit input from LAFCO staff on organizational issues. An on-line survey was also conducted seeking feedback from both staff and commissioners. Preliminary findings from this work prompted a set of CALAFCO policy changes and bylaw revisions that will be considered at the organizations conference/business meeting in San Diego in October.

Governance: One proposed bylaw change for the organization is to allow Executive Officers to run for board positions. CALAFCO currently has four designated Executive Officers (one from each region), with one acting as the Executive Officer of the organization. These positions were advisory, supporting both the ED and the board.

Southern Region

The four departing members from the Southern Region are considering forming a regional association and have each committed \$10,000 for 2025/2026 to this effort. It is anticipated that they will initially focus on securing legislative affairs services. In response to a query from Sonoma staff, the group indicated that they were not open to membership from outside the region at this time.

Staff Recommendation

Staff believes that the critical service provided by CALAFCO, legislative affairs, has if anything improved recently with the addition of consultant support. Further, staff believes that legislative affairs services could only be secured cost effectively through a regional group of LAFCOs.

The staff at LAFCOs that have departed generally indicate a willingness to consider rejoining CALAFCO, though the sentiment of their respective commissions is unknown.

Staff recommend that the Commission authorize payment of the 2025/2026 CALAFCO dues, keeping a keen eye on further developments to improve the viability of the association, with a reevaluation of membership taken in the second quarter of 2026.

Recommendation

Staff recommend that the Commission approve continued membership in CALAFCO for 2025/2026.

Alternate Recommendation

The Commission could consider letting CALAFCO membership lapse, directing staff to seek out alternate resources for legislative affairs services or membership in newly forming regional associations of LAFCOs if they develop.