

SONOMA LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION

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Item 5.2

Staff Report

Meeting Date: March 1, 2023

Agenda No. Item 5.2

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

Environmental Determination: Not a project under CEQA

Staff Contacts: Mark Bramfitt

Analysis

Staff has completed a Public Review Draft of a Municipal Services Review for County Service Area 40 (Fire Services), reviewing the three active and one moribund Volunteer Fire Companies providing services in the southern portion of the Service Area.

The study has been made available as a Public Review Draft to the public, affected agencies, and interested parties.

Discussion

The purpose of a Municipal Services Review (MSR) is to evaluate whether local agencies are providing services in an effective and efficient manner, and to determine if there are opportunities for providing services through other arrangements. The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act delineates the categories of evaluation that must be included in an MSR (the Commission may also evaluate any other factors as it deems necessary).

An MSR can also inform the Commission regarding amendments to agency spheres of influence, which is defined as the probable service area of a local agency. Territory within a sphere of influence is eligible for annexation by the agency; territory outside the sphere is not.

This MSR **does not** propose sphere of influence amendments; a proposal from the Gold Ridge Fire Protection District for a reorganization involving these territories as well as additional areas of CSA 40 will be considered by the Commission at a later date.

Determinations of MSR

The evaluations of the volunteer fire companies reveals that they are fundamentally sound, but that they face challenges with regard to the capacity and financial ability to provide services. Any degradation of volunteer fire fighter ranks, and availability will pose challenges for these companies. The agencies also require continued funding to support their services.

The County envisions ceding responsibility for fire services to local agencies and has entered into an agreement with North Bay Fire, Inc. to provide support to the volunteer companies. The County has also authorized a financial agreement that would enable Gold Ridge Fire Protection District to annex almost the entire remaining territory of CSA 40.

With regard to adequately funding a regionally consolidated fire and emergency services agency in the region, staff has identified two sources of potential revenue:

- The County can cede some portion, or all of the revenue raised within CSA 40 in the region to a regionally-consolidated agency.

- A regionally consolidated agency could raise additional revenue by seeking voter approval for special taxation (parcel taxes).

Status of Proceedings

Staff published a Public Review Draft of the study, distributed it to affected agencies and interested parties and posted it to the Commission's website.

Recommendation

Staff is seeking review of the report by the Commission and has provided a draft resolution for consideration that adopts the determinations of the MSR.

Attachments

1. Municipal Service Review for South County Territory Of
County Service Area 40 – Fire Services, Public Review Draft
2. Draft Resolution