

NEWS

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County earns top honors from statewide association

San Bernardino County has been recognized by a statewide local government organization as the best of the state's 58 counties in two key categories.

The California Association of Local Agency Formation Commissions honored San Bernardino County with the Government Leadership Award for this year's successful reorganization of the County Fire Department, and named Third District Supervisor Dennis Hansberger the state's Outstanding Commissioner.

Each California county has a Local Agency Formation Commission, which review proposals for new cities and other jurisdictions, as well as annexations and other boundary changes.

First District Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt presented the awards to Hansberger and Board of Supervisors Chairman Paul Biane today. Supervisor Mitzelfelt was on hand when the awards were announced by the association Thursday night in Los Angeles. Supervisors Hansberger and Biane sit on the county's Local Agency Formation Commission. Supervisor Mitzelfelt is the county's alternate commissioner.

"The association hands out a set number of awards each year, so it is quite an honor for one of the state's 58 counties to receive one much less two of these honors," Supervisor Mitzelfelt said. "The people of San Bernardino County should feel fortunate that their county is considered one of the best-run counties in the state by an organization of local government experts."

Supervisor Hansberger was honored for serving a combined 20 years on San Bernardino County's Local Agency Formation Commission during two key periods in the county's development – the 1970s, when spheres of influence were established for all of the county's cities and more than 150 special districts, and the past 12 years, when municipal service reviews and sphere updates were conducted for the jurisdictions established during his first terms.

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“During both terms, Supervisor Hansberger has been stalwart in attempting to achieve the best governmental service boundary possible for proposals presented to the commission,” San Bernardino County LAFCo Executive Director Kathleen Rollings-McDonald wrote in her nomination of Supervisor Hansberger for the award.

The Government Leadership Award for the County Fire reorganization is particularly satisfying to Mitzelfelt, who worked on the project both as a member of the Board of Supervisors and previously as the First District Chief of Staff.

As the county grew in various locations over the decades, separate fire protection entities were created to serve different populations to ensure that tax dollars generated by each community were used to serve each community. However, as the county entered the 21st century, some of these districts had become fiscally unstable, and studies commissioned by the county showed huge deficits looming in the future.

In one of the most complex projects ever undertaken by the county, the Fire Reorganization reduced 31 separate budgeting entities down to four manageable service zones, resulting in a more effective and efficient management arrangement for fire protection and emergency medical response services within San Bernardino County for its citizens as well as the three major transportation corridors for goods movement from Southern California ports.

Supervisor Mitzelfelt said today's awarding by the Board of Supervisors of a construction contract for a new fire station in Phelan is evidence of the county's commitment to securing the sustainability of the County Fire Department. The Phelan station is one of several new stations that have been built or are in the planning stages. The others include Angelus Oaks, Muscoy, Baker, Fontana, Needles, Hesperia, Ludlow and Goffs.