

LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION FOR SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY

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DATE: SEPTEMBER 10, 2013
FROM: KATHLEEN ROLLINGS-McDONALD, Executive Officer
TO: LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION



SUBJECT: Agenda Item #8 – Consideration of Response to San Bernardino County Grand Jury Report Related to the Newberry Community Services District

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Commission approve the response to the San Bernardino County Grand Jury Report related to the Newberry Springs Community Services District as follows:

1. Concur with the 2012-13 Grand Jury Final Report Recommendation #15 and determine the option for addressing the information needs identified – Option #1 or Option #2 – as outlined in this report; and,
2. Authorize the Executive Officer to submit the response to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court outlining the Option chosen to address the recommendation by the deadline of September 28, 2013.

BACKGROUND:

At the August 21, 2013 hearing the Commission reviewed the staff report related to the mandatory response to the 2012-13 Grand Jury Final Report (copy included as Attachment #1) related to the Newberry Community Services District. Recommendation #15 relates to LAFCO and reads as follows (the italics have been provided by LAFCO staff):

“Review suggestions made in its 2009 report (*Service Review for the Communities of Daggett, Yermo and Newberry Springs*) and include more robust analysis of governance and reorganization options for the next Service Review of the District, scheduled for 2014.”

The reorganization options identified in this 2009 report included, among others, is the consolidation of the three CSDs into a single agency, which the staff recommendation supported through a consolidated sphere of influence. The staff's rationale was identified as being that the three CSDs were experiencing governance issues (compliance with audit requirements, budget compliance, etc.) to varying degrees and the consolidation would pool resources to allow for the hiring of professional staff to move them toward compliance. The August staff report provided two options for consideration to respond to the Grand Jury:

OPTION #1 Concur with Recommendation #15 and direct staff to provide a more detailed analysis of the potential consolidation of the District during the second cycle review, anticipated to be 2014 but could be later in time; or,

OPTION #2 Concur with Recommendation #15 and because of the severity of the issues identified direct staff to undertake an off-cycle review of the Newberry Community Services District, as well as the Yermo and Daggett Community Services Districts, to provide a more detailed financial and operational analysis for governance options. The only issue with undertaking this option would be funding since the revenues for service reviews must come from the Commission's mandatory apportionment process, as no fees can be charged for the process.

The key issue of concern for LAFCO staff was the estimated cost of in conducting this special study. At the August meeting staff was directed to see if there were mechanisms to reduce the cost of Option #2, then estimated to be between \$15,000 and \$20,000. Staff has reviewed the cost estimate and identified that in order to provide the necessary information on the actual cost and structure of any governance changes (such as a preparation of a financial and governance analysis including documentation of a future board of directors, etc.), the necessary outreach to the residents and property owners in the area, and the costs of hearings before the Commission, staff believes that \$15,000 is needed. Some of the direct costs associated with the estimates anticipated at this time include:

- Notice to all landowners and registered voters of at least a single community meeting, if not more, and the Commission's consideration. In 2009 the cost for conducting a community meeting and providing individual notice had a direct cost of \$2,144. In addition there would be a charge from the Registrar of Voters to provide the mailing list currently estimated at \$240 per district. The total cost for two mailings would be \$4,768.
- Legal advertising in the Desert Dispatch, the newspaper of general circulation in the area, for the prior service review was \$810. The estimate for legal advertising would be \$1,620 (one community meeting and Commission hearing).
- Travel and salary costs for staff to meet with the staff of each of the districts and possibly needing to develop the information to complete the study \$3,000.

The total of the estimated direct costs are \$9,388. The indirect costs of LAFCO staff, at all levels, to provide the report needed and the presentation to the Commission would consume the remaining \$5,612, for a total cost of \$15,000.

At the July hearing staff identified in the unaudited financial report for Fiscal Year 2012-13 the potential of an additional carryover of \$37,692. Since that time, the final year-end financial reports have been received and this figure has been verified; therefore, there is some additional funding available for this study. LAFCO staff would recommend that if there is an interest in moving forward with a special study of governance options for the three communities, that the cost be divided between LAFCO (\$10,000) and the First District (\$5,000). The First District funding identified in this proposal is for financial assistance to LAFCO staff in gathering and disseminating information on governance options for the three communities. Staff believes that it is extremely important that governance issues be reviewed and discussed within the communities as this will be the last major area of potential developable lands in the I-15 and I-40 corridors for the future, being the gateway to the Mojave Preserve and other federally held lands.

Based upon the Commission's determination of option, staff will prepare the letter response to the presiding judge of the Superior Court and submit by the September 28, 2013 deadline. Should the Commission have any questions, staff will be happy to answer them prior to or at the hearing.

KRM

Attachment – [August 12, 2013 Staff Report](#)