

VENTURA LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION

Hall of Administration
800 South Victoria Avenue, L#1850
Ventura, CA 93009
(805) 654-2576 Fax (805) 654-5106

September 10, 1999

Honorable Charles Campbell
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
Ventura County Hall of Justice
800 South Victor Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009



Dear Judge Campbell,

The following information is provided in response to recommendations of the 1998-99 Ventura County Grand Jury Report. Responses were requested as it relates to recommendations numbers 2, 5, 6, 7, and 8.

RECOMMENDATION NUMBER 2. A CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMISSION OR COMMITTEE SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED TO ACT AS AN INPUT TO LAFCO TO INCREASE THE LEVEL OF OBJECTIVITY FOR REORGANIZATION OF SPECIAL DISTRICTS. THIS GROUP COULD ALSO EXAMINE THE FAIRNESS OF THE SPECIAL DISTRICT PORTION OF THE BUDGET IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE AUDITOR-CONTROLLER.

All Counties in California have a Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) with the exception of the County of San Francisco. The authority for each LAFCO is derived from a body of State law which is commonly known as the Cortese/Knox local government Reorganization Act of 1985.

This act establishes that the Commission of LAFCO generally include members of the Board of Supervisors, City Council Members, and a representative from the Public. In 1994, this act was amended (Section 56453) to allow the voluntary inclusion of Special Districts as a part of the LAFCO Commission. Ventura LAFCO voluntarily included Special District representation on the Commission at that time.

With the ability to have membership on LAFCO, also came the authority for LAFCO to initiate studies and proceedings examining the efficiency of Special Districts (Section 56450).

Cortese/Knox also provided a procedure to allow LAFCO to appoint a Committee to review

these special district reorganization studies (Section 56461). This Committee shall be called the Special District Advisory Committee. Cortese/Knox further goes on to identify [Section 56486 (a)(b) and (c)] the make up of the Committee.

These members include members of the legislative body of the affected district or districts, in some instances members of the County Board of Supervisors, and a member of the LAFCO Commission charged with the responsibility of representing the public. This last member does not have to be the Public Member seated on LAFCO.

Other than the authority for this Special District Advisory Committee that is to serve in a limited function, LAFCO does not have specific authority to appoint citizen advisory committees to review the work and responsibilities which the State law provides to LAFCO.

The second part of this recommendation relates to the use of a citizens committee to look at the Special District portion of the budget. LAFCO's budget does not have a separate Special District portion.

Cortese/Knox (Section 56380) requires the total budget of LAFCO to be funded by the County. This county funding is augmented by fees collected to process applications. The Special Districts, at this time, do not provide any funding for LAFCO operations. Current legislation has been proposed to require cities and special districts to share in the funding of LAFCO, but this has yet to be implemented.

RECOMMENDATION NUMBER 5. ELIMINATE ALL SPECIAL ROAD DISTRICTS AND FOLD THE RESPONSIBILITY INTO THE COUNTY ROAD DEPARTMENT.

This recommendation appears to apply to dependent districts whose Board consists of the Board of Supervisors. Dependent Districts are generally those districts that are governed by the Board of Supervisors or City Councils.

Dependent Districts are represented on LAFCO by the inclusion of the Board of Supervisors or their respective City Councils. Only Independent Special Districts are charged with the responsibility to select members and be represented on LAFCO.

The County of Ventura has a number of Dependent Districts, governed by the Board of Supervisors, that provide for some form of road work in a limited fashion.

These include the following:

Ventura County Service Area Number 3. This area provides private road maintenance for Camp Chaffee Road.

Ventura County Service Area Number 4. This area provides street lighting, street sweeping, landscape maintenance and school crossing guard services in the Oak Park vicinity.

Ventura County Service Area Number 14. This area provides street lighting and street sweeping services for a number of locations within the unincorporated County.

These are the only districts which provide services relative to the County that are not a general part of the County Public Works Agency. This issue does not appear to LAFCO staff to merit a high priority.

RECOMMENDATION NUMBER 6: ELIMINATE COMMUNITY SERVICE DISTRICT NUMBER 4, BELL CANYON AND REPLACE WITH PRIVATE CONTRACTING.

Bell Canyon Community Services District was formed in 1984 from a portion of the Rancho Simi Parks and Recreation District. It currently performs only the function of rubbish services.

In addition, they possess latent powers to perform fire and police protection, local recreation, water distribution, street lighting, and sanitation services. Since 1994, all Independent Special Districts with latent powers must receive LAFCO approval to exercise those powers.

The recommendation calls for elimination of this district and to replace it with a private contractor. It is the understanding of LAFCO staff that the rubbish service is already provided through private contract. Simply eliminating the district to have the contract administered by another agency (probably the County of Ventura) should not be done without some detailed efficiency studies.

RECOMMENDATION NUMBER 7: EXAMINE THE CAMARILLO HEALTH CARE DISTRICT TO DETERMINE IF THE BENEFIT/COST ANALYSIS OF THIS DISTRICT TO OTHER HEALTH CARE SERVICES IN THE COUNTY OF VENTURA IS COMPARABLE.

The Camarillo Health Care District was formed in 1969. They provide a number of specialized health care programs including non-emergency transportation, adult day care, services to the homebound, health screening clinics, counseling, emergency response system, and nutritional guidance.

This Independent Special District is unique in Ventura County. Similar services are provided by profit, non-profit, and governmental agencies. No other known agency provides a similar breadth of services in Ventura County.

It would be very difficult to evaluate the efficiency of this district without very detailed and defined studies. LAFCO staffing levels at the present time do not allow for this intense type of study to be done.

This District is processing an application to expand its boundaries. This would be the appropriate time to study this question.

It is anticipated that LAFCO staff may be doing a review of all Special Districts during the current fiscal year if the approved staffing in this year's budget is available. The update study of these Special Districts was last done in 1988. The LAFCO Commission has yet to set priorities for the use of additional budgeted staff. It would be the recommendation of the LAFCO Executive Officer that this Special District update would be such a priority.

**RECOMMENDATION NUMBER 8: REEXAMINE THE VALIDITY OF
MAINTAINING THREE SEPARATE CEMETERY DISTRICTS, PARTICULARLY
IN LIGHT OF PIRU SPACE LIMITATIONS.**

There are currently three Independent Special Districts that function as cemeteries. These include the following:

Bardsdale Public Cemetery District was formed in 1914 and maintains that cemetery, provides burial services including those for indigents, provides graves, and sets markers.

Piru Cemetery District was formed in 1914 and provides the same services as above.

Simi Valley Public Cemetery District was formed in 1946 and provides the same services as previously noted.

It would be difficult to combine all three cemetery districts into one as Simi Valley is geographically remote. Another difficulty would be that they bring differing levels of revenue to this proposal which would result in one area subsidizing the services in another area.

It is Ventura LAFCO staff's understanding that the Piru Cemetery District is expected to have difficulties in the future due to the lack of grave sites to sell to provide revenues. Additional land is available to expand into but this would be a large up front expense. This district would warrant serious review in any study relating to a review of Special Districts. LAFCO has had discussions concerning a possible consolidation of the two Cemetery Districts in the Santa Clara Valley.

Should this district be dissolved it would fall upon the County of Ventura to become the successor agency.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment upon the recommendations provided by the 1998-1999 Ventura Grand Jury. Ventura LAFCO staff would be pleased to provide any additional information requested as it relates to these issues.


Arnold Dowdy
Executive Officer