

From: Becky Steinbruner <ki6tkb@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 2, 2023 9:28 AM
To: Joe Serrano
Cc: Becky Steinbruner
Subject: Concerns Regarding Branciforte Fire District Special Benefit Assessment Ballot Procedure Supporting Merger With Scotts Valley Fire District

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Dear Santa Cruz County LAFCO Commissioners,

After attending a recent in-person Open House at the Branciforte Fire District Station on behalf of a friend affected by the proposed merger with Scotts Valley Fire District, I am very troubled that the Special Benefit Assessment ballots will be tabulated by the very consultants being paid to conduct the procedure, and that the procedure itself may not be legally-defensible.

I feel it is a conflict of interest on the part of the SCI Consultants to single-handedly tabulate the weighted-vote ballots and the tabulation and weighted vote calculations are not transparent or subject to a verifiable audit.

Furthermore, I was insulted by the public statement made loudly about me by SCI Consultant leader Mr. John Bliss at the Open House that "She is a complete fraud!" when I raised my concern regarding ballot tabulation conflict of interest, as well as the relevance of the legal cases *Concerned Citizens for Responsible Government vs. West Point Fire District* (2011) and *Town of Tiburon vs. Bonander* (2009) that could invalidate the entire process.

Many Branciforte Fire District property owners are concerned about the validity and transparency of this Special Benefit Assessment procedure that is being sold as a necessary means to keep the Branciforte Fire Station open once the merger with Scotts Valley Fire is complete.

Although your Commission is not making the decisions regarding this ballot procedure, LAFCO is supporting the costs of consultant Mr. Don Jarvis to assist with the merger process and also funding an analysis by AP Triton that will provide data on improved service and operations relevant to the merger. Therefore, I felt it important that your Commission be aware of the potential problems arising inherent.

I trust this late correspondence can be included in the May 3, 2023 meeting and would appreciate public discussion on the matter.

Thank you.
Sincerely,
Becky Steinbruner