



**LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION
OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY**

701 Ocean Street, #318-D
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
Phone Number: (831) 454-2055
Website: www.santacruzlafco.org
Email: info@santacruzlafco.org

REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

*******SPECIAL LOCATION*******

Wednesday, June 4, 2025 at 9:00 a.m.

(hybrid meeting may be attended remotely or in-person)

Attend Meeting by Internet: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84543003276>
(Password 452077)

Attend Meeting by Conference Call: **Dial 1-669-900-6833 or 1-253-215-8782**
(Webinar ID: 845 4300 3276)

Attend Meeting In-Person: **Watsonville City Chambers**
(275 Main Street, Top Floor, Watsonville, CA 95076)

HYBRID MEETING PROCESS

Santa Cruz LAFCO has established a hybrid meeting process in accordance with Assembly Bill 2449:

- a) Commission Quorum: State law indicates that a quorum must consist of Commissioners in person pursuant to AB 2449.
- b) Public Comments: For those wishing to make public comments remotely, identified individuals will be given up to three (3) minutes to speak. Staff will inform the individual when one minute is left and when their time is up. For those attending the meeting remotely, please click on the "Raise Hand" button under the "Reactions Tab" to raise your hand. For those joining via conference call, pressing *9 will raise your hand. The three (3) minute limit also applies to virtual public comments.
- c) Accommodations for Persons with Disabilities: Santa Cruz LAFCO does not discriminate on the basis of disability, and no person shall, by reason of a disability, be denied the benefits of its services, programs, or activities. If you are a person with a disability and wish to attend the meeting, but require special assistance in order to participate, please contact the staff at (831) 454-2055 at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting to make the appropriate arrangements. Persons with disabilities may also request a copy of the agenda in an alternative format.

1. ROLL CALL

2. EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S MESSAGE

The Executive Officer may make brief announcements in the form of a written report or verbal update, and may not require Commission action.

a. Hybrid Meeting Process

The Commission will receive an update on the hybrid meeting process.

Recommended Action: No action required; Informational item only.

3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

The Commission will consider approving the minutes from the May 7, 2025 Regular LAFCO Meeting.

Recommended Action: Approve the minutes as presented with any desired changes.

4. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

This is an opportunity for members of the public to address the Commission on items not on the agenda, provided that the subject matter is within the jurisdiction of the Commission and that no action may be taken on an off-agenda item(s) unless authorized by law.

5. PUBLIC HEARINGS

Public hearing items require expanded public notification per provisions in State law, directives of the Commission, or are those voluntarily placed by the Executive Officer to facilitate broader discussion.

a. Comprehensive Sanitation Service & Sphere Review

The Commission will consider the countywide report which analyzed the 10 sanitation districts in Santa Cruz County.

Recommended Action: Postpone consideration of the draft sanitation service and sphere review with action no later than September 3, 2025.

b. Service & Sphere Review for the Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District

The Commission will consider the adoption of a service and sphere review for the only cemetery district in Santa Cruz County.

Recommended Actions:

- 1) Find, pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines, that LAFCO determined that the service and sphere of influence review is not subject to the environmental impact evaluation process because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment and the activity is not subject to CEQA;
- 2) Determine, pursuant to Government Code Section 56425, that LAFCO is required to develop and determine a sphere of influence for the Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District, and review and update, as necessary;

- 3) Determine, pursuant to Government Code Section 56430, that LAFCO is required to conduct a service review before, or in conjunction with an action to establish or update a sphere of influence; and
- 4) Adopt the resolution (LAFCO No. 2025-08) approving the 2025 Service and Sphere Review for the Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District, with the following terms and conditions:
 - a. Amend the District's sphere of influence to include the unserved area of Prunedale located in Monterey County;
 - b. Provide a status update to the Commission on the District's website no later than February 4, 2026;
 - c. Coordinate with Monterey LAFCO to analyze the possible annexation of the unserved Prunedale community to either the Castroville or Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery Districts; and
 - d. Direct the Executive Officer to distribute a copy of the adopted service and sphere review to the Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District and any other interested or affected parties, including but not limited to Monterey LAFCO as the affected LAFCO.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

Other business items involve administrative, budgetary, legislative, or personnel matters and may or may not be subject to public hearings.

a. Fire-related Projects – Status Update

The Commission will receive an update on the ongoing reorganization efforts involving CSA 48 and other fire agencies.

Recommended Action: Direct staff to continue working with the fire agencies and develop a governance options study for the Felton Fire Protection District.

b. LAFCO Meeting Schedule – Proposed Cancellation of August Meeting

The Commission will consider cancelling the August 6, 2025 LAFCO Meeting due to a staffing conflict.

Recommended Action: Cancel the August 6, 2025 LAFCO Meeting and reconvene at the September 3, 2025 LAFCO Meeting.

c. Educational Workshops Update

The Commission will receive an update on the various educational workshops being developed and/or hosted by Santa Cruz LAFCO.

Recommended Action: No action required; Informational item only.

7. WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE

LAFCO staff receive written correspondence and other materials on occasion that may or may not be related to a specific agenda item. Any correspondence presented to the Commission will also be made available to the general public. Any written correspondence distributed to the Commission less than 72 hours prior to the meeting will be made available for inspection at the hearing and posted on LAFCO's website.

8. PRESS ARTICLES

LAFCO staff monitors newspapers, publications, and other media outlets for any news affecting local cities, districts, and communities in Santa Cruz County. Articles are presented to the Commission on a periodic basis.

a. Press Articles during the Months of April and May

The Commission will receive an update on recent LAFCO-related news occurring around the county and throughout California.

Recommended Action: No action required; Informational item only.

9. COMMISSIONERS' BUSINESS

This is an opportunity for Commissioners to comment briefly on issues not listed on the agenda, provided that the subject matter is within the jurisdiction of the Commission. No discussion or action may occur or be taken, except to place the item on a future agenda if approved by a Commission majority. The public may address the Commission on these informational matters.

10. ADJOURNMENT

LAFCO's next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 6, 2025 or September 3, 2025 in the Council Chambers of the City of Watsonville at 9:00 a.m.

ADDITIONAL NOTICES:

Campaign Contributions

State law (Government Code Section 84308) requires that a LAFCO Commissioner disqualify themselves from voting on an application involving an "entitlement for use" (such as an annexation or sphere amendment) if, within the last twelve months, the Commissioner has received \$500 or more in campaign contributions from an applicant, any financially interested person who actively supports or opposes an application, or an agency (such as an attorney, engineer, or planning consultant) representing an applicant or interested participant. The law also requires any applicant or other participant in a LAFCO proceeding to disclose the amount and name of the recipient Commissioner on the official record of the proceeding. The Commission prefers that the disclosure be made on a standard form that is filed with LAFCO staff at least 24 hours before the LAFCO hearing begins. If this is not possible, a written or oral disclosure can be made at the beginning of the hearing. The law also prohibits an applicant or other participant from making a contribution of \$500 or more to a LAFCO Commissioner while a proceeding is pending or for 3 months afterward. Disclosure forms and further information can be obtained from the LAFCO office at Room #318-D, 701 Ocean Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060 (phone 831-454-2055).

Contributions and Expenditures Supporting and Opposing Proposals

Pursuant to Government Code Sections §56100.1, §56300(b), §56700.1, §59009, and §81000 et seq., and Santa Cruz LAFCO's Policies and Procedures for the Disclosures of Contributions and Expenditures in Support of and Opposition to proposals, any person or combination of persons who directly or indirectly contributes a total of \$1,000 or more or expends a total of \$1,000 or more in support of or opposition to a LAFCO Proposal must comply with the disclosure requirements of the Political Reform Act (Section 84250). These requirements contain provisions for making disclosures of contributions and expenditures at specified intervals. Additional information may be obtained at the Santa Cruz County Elections Department, 701 Ocean Street, Room 210, Santa Cruz, CA 95060 (phone 831-454-2060). More information on the scope of the required disclosures is available at the web site of the Fair Political Practices Commission: www.fppc.ca.gov. Questions regarding FPPC material, including FPPC forms, should be directed to the FPPC's advice line at 1-866-ASK-FPPC (1-866-275-3772).

Accommodating People with Disabilities

The Local Agency Formation Commission of Santa Cruz County does not discriminate on the basis of disability, and no person shall, by reason of a disability, be denied the benefits of its services, programs or activities. The Commission meetings are held in an accessible facility. If you wish to attend this meeting and will require special assistance in order to participate, please contact the LAFCO office at 831-454-2055 at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting to make arrangements. For TDD service, the California State Relay Service 1-800-735-2929 will provide a link between the caller and the LAFCO staff.

Late Agenda Materials

Pursuant to Government Code Section 54957.5 public records that relate to open session agenda items that are distributed to a majority of the Commission less than seventy-two (72) hours prior to the meeting will be available to the public at Santa Cruz LAFCO offices at 701 Ocean Street, #318-D, Santa Cruz, CA 95060 during regular business hours. These records, when possible, will also be made available on the LAFCO website at www.santacruzlafco.org. To review written materials submitted after the agenda packet is published, contact staff at the LAFCO office or in the meeting room before or after the meeting.



LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

DRAFT MINUTES

LAFCO REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

Wednesday, May 7, 2025
Start Time - 9:00 a.m.

1. ROLL CALL

Chair Manu Koenig called the meeting of the Local Agency Formation Commission of Santa Cruz County (LAFCO) to order at 9:01 a.m. and welcomed everyone in attendance. He asked staff to conduct the roll call.

The following Commissioners were present:

- Commissioner Jim Anderson
- Commissioner Roger Anderson
- Commissioner Joe Clarke
- Commissioner Kimberly De Serpa
- Commissioner Manu Koenig (*Chair*)
- Commissioner Eduardo Montesino (*remotely*)
- Alternate Commissioner Lani Faulkner
- Alternate Commissioner John Hunt

Alternate Commissioners Kimberly De Serpa and Lani Faulkner will be voting members in the absence of **Commissioners Justin Cummings** (County) and **Rachél Lather** (Special Districts), respectively.

The following LAFCO staff members were present:

- LAFCO Analyst, Francisco Estrada
- Legal Counsel, Joshua Nelson
- Executive Officer, Joe Serrano

Chair Manu Koenig requested staff to present Agenda Item 6a: "Special Districts LAFCO Seats (Run-Off Election Results)" after Agenda Item No. 2: "Executive Officer's Message" in order to establish a quorum and allow new commissioners to vote on agenda items.

2. EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S MESSAGE

2a. Virtual Meeting Process

Executive Officer Joe Serrano indicated that the meeting was being conducted through a hybrid approach with Commissioners and staff attending in-person while members of the public have the option to attend virtually or in-person. Mr. Serrano noted that Commissioner Eduardo Montesino was attending the meeting remotely in accordance with AB 2449 and indicated that any commission action will require a roll call vote.

Mr. Serrano also provided an update on staff's participation at the recent 2025 annual CALAFCO Staff Workshop and invited commissioners to complete an online survey to provide feedback on CALAFCO.

Chair Manu Koenig moved on to the next agenda item.

6a. Special Districts LAFCO Seats (Run-Off Election Results)

Chair Manu Koenig requested staff to provide a presentation on the run-off election results for the special district regular and alternate member seats on LAFCO.

Executive Officer Joe Serrano informed the Commission that after completing a run-off election to determine the special district seats on LAFCO, Jim Anderson (Felton Fire Protection District) was elected to the regular member seat and Lani Faulkner (Central Fire District) was elected to the alternate member seat. Their four-year terms started on May 1, 2025. Mr. Serrano thanked **former Commissioner Ed Banks** for his dedication and service on the Commission. Mr. Serrano recommended the Commission certify the results of the 2025 special district run-off election.

Chair Manu Koenig congratulated the newly elected members to LAFCO and opened the floor to Commission comments or clarifying questions. **Commissioners Lani Faulkner** and **Jim Anderson** both expressed words of appreciation for their election.

Chair Manu Koenig requested public comments on the item. **Executive Officer Joe Serrano** noted no request to address the Commission on the item.

Chair Manu Koenig requested a motion approving staff recommendation. **Commissioner Roger Anderson** motioned for approval of staff recommendation and **Commissioner Kimberly De Serpa** seconded the motion.

Chair Manu Koenig called for a roll call vote on the motion: **Adopt the draft resolution (No. 2025-07) ratifying the results of the run-off election process.**

MOTION: Roger Anderson

SECOND: Kimberly De Serpa

FOR: Jim Anderson, Roger Anderson, Joe Clarke, Kimberly De Serpa, Lani Faulkner, Manu Koenig, and Eduardo Montesino.

AGAINST: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION PASSES: 7-0

3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Chair Manu Koenig requested public comments on the draft minutes. **Executive Officer Joe Serrano** noted no public comment on the item. **Chair Manu Koenig** closed public comments.

Chair Manu Koenig called for a motion. **Commissioner Jim Anderson** motioned for approval of the April 2nd Meeting Minutes and **Commissioner Lani Faulkner** seconded the motion.

Chair Manu Koenig called for a roll call vote on the approval of the draft minutes.

MOTION: Jim Anderson

SECOND: Lani Faulkner

FOR: Jim Anderson, Roger Anderson, Joe Clarke, Kimberly De Serpa, Lani Faulkner, Manu Koenig, and Eduardo Montesino.

AGAINST: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION PASSES: 7-0

Commissioner Roger Anderson asked a clarifying question on commissioners voting on the minutes if they were not present. **Legal Counsel Josh Nelson** clarified that they are allowed to vote on the draft minutes.

4. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Chair Manu Koenig requested public comments on any non-agenda items. **Executive Officer Joe Serrano** indicated that there was a request to address the Commission on the item.

Becky Steinbruner, a member of the public, provided comments on the recent Pajaro Valley Fire Protection District and Soquel Creek Water District board meetings, a meeting on water consolidation with private water systems, and the Watsonville Municipal Airport.

Chair Manu Koenig closed public comments and moved on to the next agenda item.

5. PUBLIC HEARINGS

5a. "Comprehensive Sanitation Service & Sphere Review"

Chair Manu Koenig requested staff to provide a presentation on the countywide report that analyzed the 10 sanitation districts in Santa Cruz County.

Executive Officer Joe Serrano explained to the Commission that due to the ongoing and extensive analysis still being conducted by both LAFCO staff and the County, more time is needed to accurately complete the report and recommended deferring action until the next regular meeting in June.

Chair Manu Koenig opened the floor to Commission comments or clarifying questions. There were no requests from the Commission.

Chair Manu Koenig requested public comments on the item. **Executive Officer Joe Serrano** noted a request to address the Commission on the item.

Becky Steinbruner, a member of the public, appreciated efforts by staff to ensure the accuracy of the report and considers current rates for CSA 20 to be high.

Chair Manu Koenig closed public comments and requested a motion approving staff recommendation. **Commissioner Jim Anderson** motioned for approval of staff recommendation and **Commissioner Kimberly De Serpa** seconded the motion.

Chair Manu Koenig called for a roll call vote on the motion: **Postpone action on the draft sanitation service and sphere review until the following month to allow for adequate review and preparation.**

MOTION: Jim Anderson

SECOND: Kimberly De Serpa

FOR: Jim Anderson, Roger Anderson, Joe Clarke, Kimberly De Serpa, Lani Faulkner, Manu Koenig, and Eduardo Montesino.

AGAINST: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION PASSES: 7-0

5b. "Final Budget for Fiscal Year 2025-26"

Chair Manu Koenig requested staff to provide a presentation on adoption of a final budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

Executive Officer Joe Serrano informed the Commission that although LAFCO raised allocation amounts for the first time in three years for the upcoming fiscal year, staff did not receive any concerns or comments from the funding agencies. Mr. Serrano recommended the Commission adopt the final budget for the 2025-26 fiscal year.

Chair Manu Koenig opened the floor to Commission comments or clarifying questions. **Commissioners Jim Anderson** and **Roger Anderson** provided comments and historical context on CalPERS payments. **Executive Officer Joe Serrano** explained the ten-year pay-off schedule currently being followed by Santa Cruz LAFCO.

Commissioner Lani Faulkner asked a clarifying question on determining CalPERS obligations. **Executive Officer Joe Serrano** agreed that there are many factors to consider when calculating CalPERS obligations.

Commissioner Kimberly De Serpa asked a clarifying question on abstaining to vote on the item. **Legal Counsel Joshua Nelson** noted that being a member of CalPERS does not preclude Commissioners from voting, although it is at their discretion. **Executive Officer Joe Serrano** agreed.

Chair Manu Koenig requested public comments on the item. **Executive Officer Joe Serrano** noted no request to address the Commission on the item. Chair Koenig closed public comments.

Chair Manu Koenig requested a motion approving staff recommendation. **Commissioner Jim Anderson** motioned for approval of staff recommendation and **Commissioner Roger Anderson** seconded the motion.

Chair Manu Koenig called for a roll call vote on the motion: **1) Adopt the draft resolution (No. 2025-06) approving the final budget for Fiscal Year 2025-26; and authorize staff to request the Auditor-Controller's Office to distribute the final budget and apportionment amounts to the funding agencies by July 2025.**

MOTION: Roger Anderson

SECOND: Jim Anderson

FOR: Jim Anderson, Roger Anderson, Joe Clarke, Kimberly De Serpa, Lani Faulkner, Manu Koenig, and Eduardo Montesino.

AGAINST: None

ABSTAIN: Lani Faulkner

MOTION PASSES: 6-0-1

6. OTHER BUSINESS

6b. Fire Consolidation Feasibility Study – Memorandum of Understanding

Chair Manu Koenig requested staff to provide a presentation on consideration to partner with the City of Santa Cruz, Central Fire District, and the Scotts Valley Fire Protection District to explore the benefits and drawbacks of potential consolidation or changes of organization.

Executive Officer Joe Serrano explained to the Commission that more and more consolidations are being considered as viable options for special districts throughout the state. In Santa Cruz County, staff has been actively participating in a working group to explore options for shared services or potential changes of organization to improve the delivery of fire protection services for the constituents of each agency. Staff is recommending approval of the draft MOU to authorize the continued participation in the working group. Mr. Serrano did mention that all parties will provide some level of funding to support a proposed feasibility study.

Chair Manu Koenig opened the floor to Commission comments or clarifying questions. **Commissioner Lani Faulkner** had a clarifying question on the term "consolidation." **Executive Officer Joe Serrano** provided the state law definition and noted that the feasibility study would analyze all potential changes of organization options. Ms. Faulkner had a follow-up question on the cost for the feasibility study. Mr. Serrano expects the study to cost around \$60,000. Ms. Faulkner asked about the Standard of Care Study undertaken by the City of Santa Cruz. Mr. Serrano explained the purpose of the Standard of Care Study and explained how working with AP Triton helped propel the ongoing CSA 48 reorganization discussions. Ms. Faulkner wondered if there may be overlap between the studies. Mr. Serrano clarified that this would be a separate study with its own process to select a consultant to lead it.

Commissioner Jim Anderson explained his experience with the Aptos/La Selva and Central Fire District feasibility studies that eventually led to a consolidation in 2021.

Commissioner Roger Anderson asked about the sharing of costs, existing staff resources, and a general timeline with the possibility of regular updates to the Commission. **Executive Officer Joe Serrano** explained how the costs will be shared, mentioned that the Commission has discretion to determine how much to provide for the study, and assured the Commission that staff can meet the proposed timeline and provide ongoing status updates to the Commission.

Chair Manu Koenig asked a clarifying question regarding the financial obligations from approving the MOU. **Executive Officer Joe Serrano** clarified that approving the MOU does not commit LAFCO to the project financially. **Commissioner Jim Anderson** noted that LAFCO approved a \$15,000 request from the City of Capitola for a study to analyze its sphere of influence.

Chair Manu Koenig requested public comments on the item. **Executive Officer Joe Serrano** indicated that there was a request to address the Commission on the item.

Becky Steinbruner, a member of the public, commented on working with AP Triton, inquired about Don Jarvis' role in the study, spoke on current shared services between Central Fire District and Scotts Valley Fire Protection District, and looks forward to the upcoming fire-related reports.

Chair Manu Koenig closed public comments and requested a motion approving staff recommendation. **Commissioner Kimberly De Serpa** motioned for approval of staff recommendation and **Commissioner Joe Clarke** seconded the motion.

Chair Manu Koenig called for a voice vote on the motion: **Approve the draft memorandum of understanding.**

MOTION: Kimberly De Serpa

SECOND: Joe Clarke

FOR: Jim Anderson, Roger Anderson, Joe Clarke, Kimberly De Serpa, Lani Faulkner, Manu Koenig, and Eduardo Montesino.

AGAINST: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION PASSES: 7-0

6c. Legislative Update

Chair Manu Koenig requested staff to provide a status update on the current legislative session and activities involving legislation of LAFCO interest.

LAFCO Analyst Francisco Estrada stated that staff, with assistance from CALAFCO, has been monitoring and tracking state bills that are LAFCO-related. Mr. Estrada noted that the Commission will have time to consider taking a position on any tracked bill affecting Santa Cruz LAFCO.

Chair Manu Koenig opened the floor to Commission comments or clarifying questions. **Commissioner Roger Anderson** asked about the status of CALAFCO's Legislative Committee. **Executive Officer Joe Serrano** confirmed that the committee is again monitoring proposed state legislation.

Chair Manu Koenig requested public comments on the item. **Executive Officer Joe Serrano** indicated that there was a request to address the Commission on the item.

Becky Steinbruner, a member of the public, commented on SB 5 and the Williams Act and recommended a legislative newsletter to follow.

Chair Manu Koenig closed public comments and moved to the next item since no Commission action was required.

6d. Comprehensive Quarterly Report – Third Quarter (FY 2024-25)

Chair Manu Koenig requested staff to provide an update on active proposals, upcoming service reviews, latest budgetary performance, and other staff activities.

LAFCO Analyst Francisco Estrada noted that this report is meant to keep the Commission informed about all LAFCO-related activities, including the status of active proposals, the schedule of upcoming service reviews, the current financial performance of LAFCO's adopted budget, and other projects. Mr. Estrada covered these areas, highlighted meetings held and indicated that the Commission's budget is doing well with approximately 51% of the anticipated expenses having been spent.

Chair Manu Koenig opened the floor for Commission comments or clarifying questions. **Commissioner Lani Faulkner** noted that she also attended the California Special Districts Association meeting held in La Selva Beach.

Chair Manu Koenig moved to the next item since no Commission action was required.

7. WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE

Chair Manu Koenig inquired whether there was any written correspondence submitted to LAFCO. **Executive Officer Joe Serrano** provided the Commission with an update on a resignation letter submitted by Don Jarvis, LAFCO's fire consultant.

Chair Manu Koenig requested public comments on the item. **Executive Officer Joe Serrano** noted a request to address the Commission on the item.

Becky Steinbruner, a member of the public, provided comments on the resignation of Don Jarvis as LAFCO's fire consultant. **Executive Officer Joe Serrano** assured the public that staff is capable of completing all current fire-related projects.

Chair Manu Koenig moved to the next item since no Commission action was required.

8. PRESS ARTICLES

Chair Manu Koenig requested staff to provide a presentation on the press articles. **Executive Officer Joe Serrano** indicated that this item highlights LAFCO-related articles recently circulated in local newspapers.

Chair Manu Koenig moved to the next item since no Commission action was required.

9. COMMISSIONERS' BUSINESS

Chair Manu Koenig inquired whether any Commissioner would like to share any information. **Executive Officer Joe Serrano** indicated that there was a request address the Commission on this item.

Commissioner Lani Faulkner shared information on recent meetings she attended. **Executive Officer Joe Serrano** also welcomed Mayor Joe Clarke to the LAFCO Commission.

Chair Manu Koenig moved to the next item since no Commission action was required.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Manu Koenig adjourned the Regular Commission Meeting at 10:00 a.m. for the next regular LAFCO meeting scheduled for Wednesday, June 4, 2025 at 9:00 a.m. in the Council Chambers of the City of Watsonville.

MANU KOENIG, CHAIRPERSON

Attest:

FRANCISCO ESTRADA, LAFCO ANALYST



Santa Cruz Local Agency Formation Commission

Date: June 4, 2025
To: LAFCO Commissioners
From: Joe Serrano, Executive Officer
Subject: **Comprehensive Sanitation Service & Sphere Review**

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION

LAFCO periodically performs municipal service reviews and sphere of influence updates for each agency subject to LAFCO's boundary regulations. The analysis of the 10 sanitation districts in Santa Cruz County was scheduled to be presented in May but was continued to June. **Figure A** on page 2 shows the jurisdictional boundary of each sewer agency. Prior to the distribution of the agenda packet, LAFCO received a request from the County for additional time to verify the financial sections of the report.

It is recommended the Commission postpone consideration of the draft sanitation service and sphere review with action no later than September 3, 2025.

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

The draft sanitation service and sphere review, which analyzed the 10 sewer agencies in Santa Cruz County, was initially scheduled to be presented to the Commission on May 7th¹; however, County staff raised questions about LAFCO's calculations in reviewing the financial health of the eight sewer agencies operated by the County. As a result, the Commission moved the item to the June 4th LAFCO Meeting. Due to the County's ongoing budget preparations for the upcoming fiscal year, their staff time has been limited. County staff has asked for an additional time extension to review and provide comments on the countywide sewer report. Therefore, staff is recommending that the Commission postpone action on the draft sanitation service and sphere review to no later than September 3, 2025.

Respectfully Submitted,

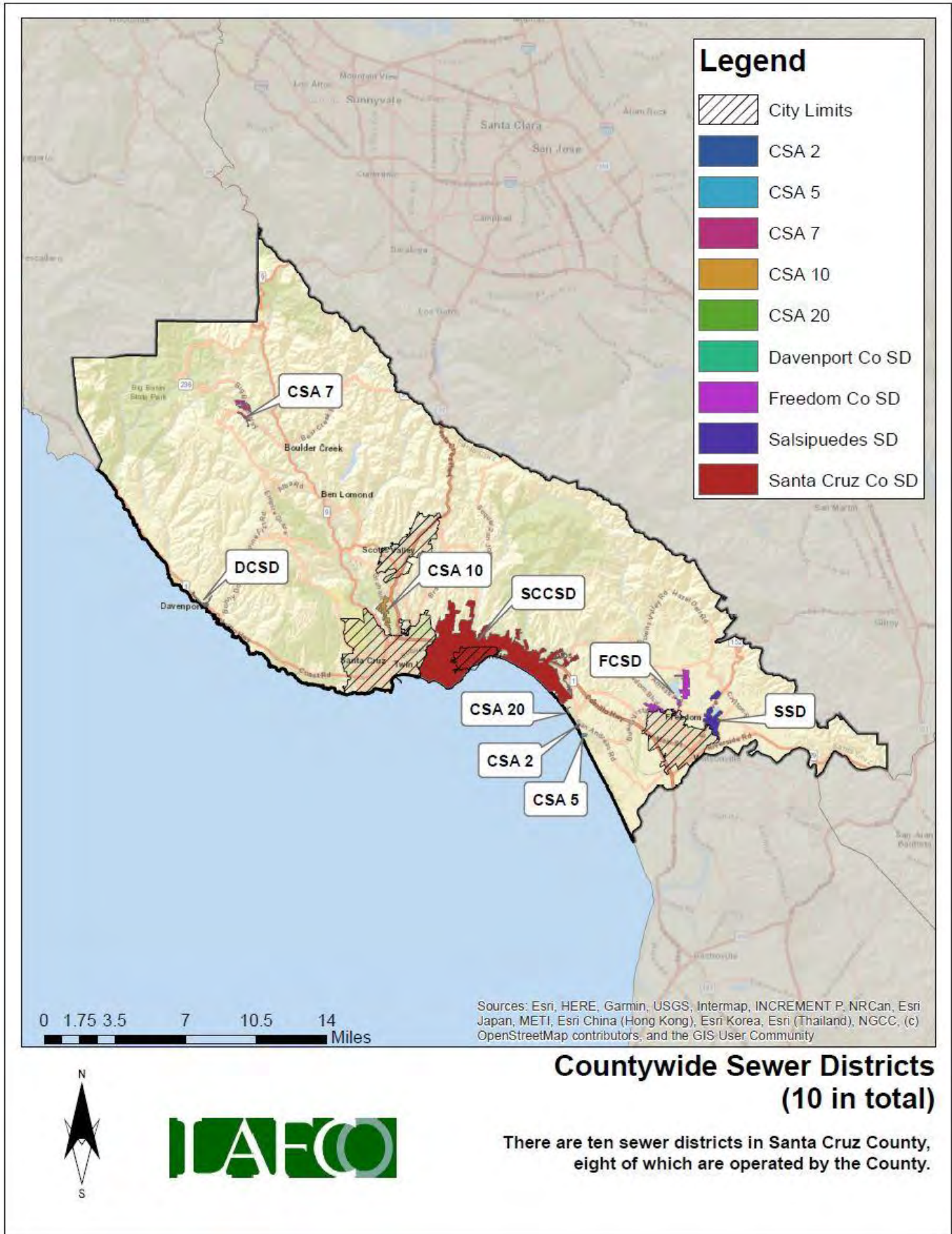
A blue ink signature of Joe A. Serrano, written in a cursive style.

Joe A. Serrano
Executive Officer

cc: County of Santa Cruz (DCSD, FCSD, SCCSD, CSAs 2, 5, 7, 10, and 20)
San Lorenzo Valley Water District (Big Creek Estates Wastewater System)
Salsipuedes Sanitary District

¹ 5/7/25 LAFCO Staff Report: <https://santacruzlafco.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/5a.0-Sewer-MSR-Staff-Report.pdf>

Figure A: Countywide Map (10 Sanitation Districts)





Santa Cruz Local Agency Formation Commission

Date: June 4, 2025
To: LAFCO Commissioners
From: Joe Serrano, Executive Officer
Subject: **Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District Service & Sphere Review**

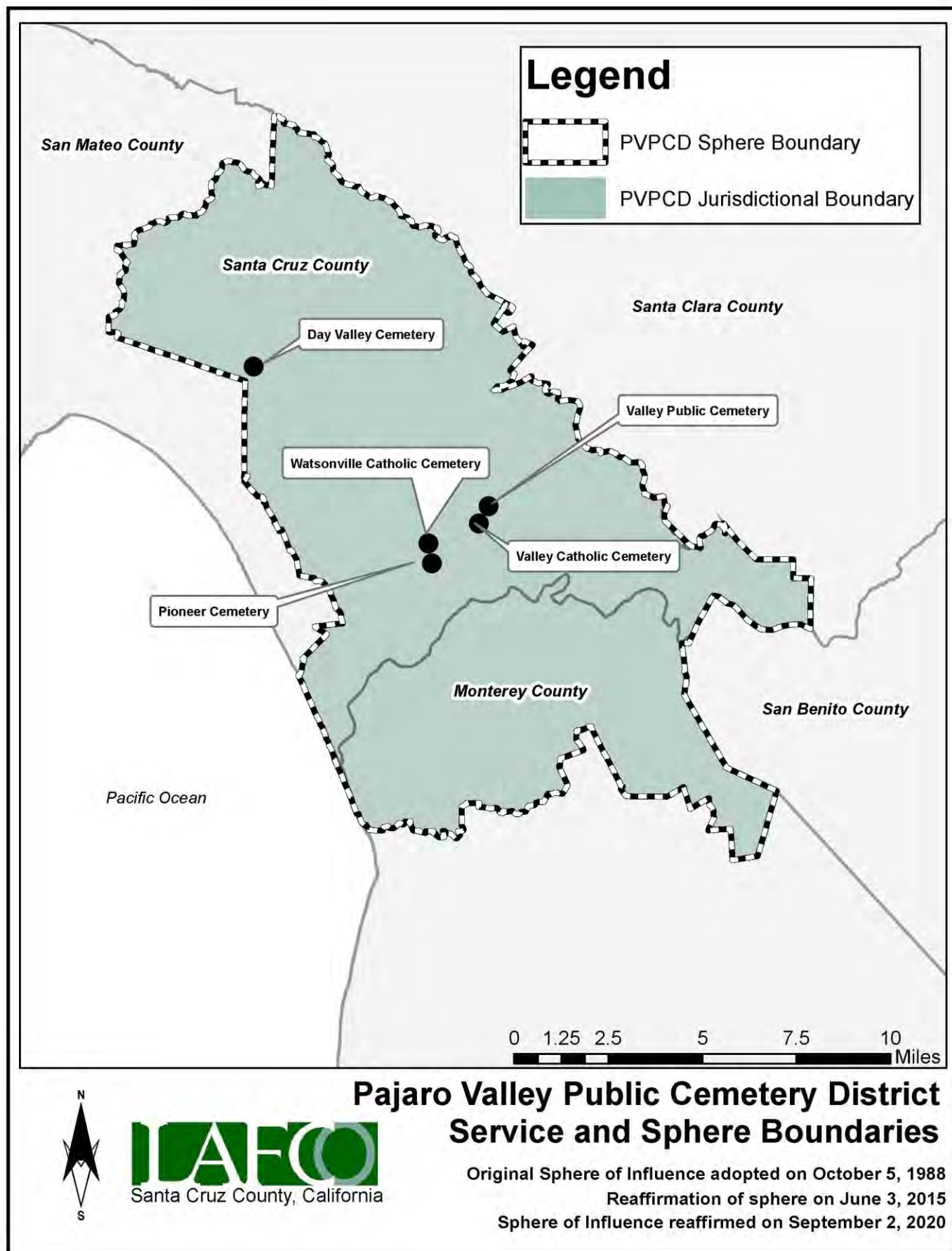
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION

LAFCO periodically performs municipal service reviews and sphere of influence updates for each agency subject to LAFCO's boundary regulations. As part of the Commission's Multi-Year Work Program, LAFCO staff has drafted a service and sphere review for the Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District and scheduled a public hearing. **Figure A** on page 2 shows the jurisdictional boundary of the sole cemetery district in Santa Cruz County.

It is recommended that the Commission take the following actions:

1. Find, pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines, that LAFCO determined that the service and sphere of influence review is not subject to the environmental impact evaluation process because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment and the activity is not subject to CEQA;
2. Determine, pursuant to Government Code Section 56425, that LAFCO is required to develop and determine a sphere of influence for the Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District, and review and update, as necessary;
3. Determine, pursuant to Government Code Section 56430, that LAFCO is required to conduct a service review before, or in conjunction with an action to establish or update a sphere of influence; and
4. Adopt the resolution (LAFCO No. 2025-08) approving the 2025 Service and Sphere Review for the Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District with the following conditions:
 - a. Amend the District's sphere of influence to include the unserved area of Prunedale located in Monterey County;
 - b. Provide a status update to the Commission on the District's website no later than February 4, 2026;
 - c. Coordinate with Monterey LAFCO to analyze the possible annexation of the unserved Prunedale community to either the Castroville or Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery Districts; and
 - d. Direct the Executive Officer to distribute a copy of the adopted service and sphere review to the Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District and any other interested or affected parties, including but not limited to Monterey LAFCO as the affected LAFCO.

Figure A: Vicinity Map



EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT:

LAFCO staff has prepared a service and sphere review for the cemetery district. Key findings and recommendations are presented in the *Executive Summary* of the attached report. The review also includes an analysis of the agency's ongoing operations, current financial performance, existing governance structure, ability to provide services, and its importance within its jurisdictional area. The attached report concludes with determinations required by State law.

Purpose & Key Findings

The goal of this analysis is to accomplish the Commission's direction to complete a service and sphere review for the district under the Multi-Year Work Program and fulfill the service and sphere determinations under the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act. The following are the main conclusions of the report:

1. The District provides services in two counties.

PVPCD encompasses over 166 square miles in two separate counties and offers burial services through five different cemeteries. The cemeteries are all located within Santa Cruz County. It is estimated that approximately 96,000 residents currently live within PVPCD's jurisdiction, mostly in the Watsonville area.

2. Santa Cruz LAFCO is the principal LAFCO for the district.

State law allows cemetery districts to be located within multiple counties as long as the lands are contiguous. When multiple counties are involved, State law assigns authority to the principal county's LAFCO. Santa Cruz LAFCO is the principal LAFCO for PVPCD. Santa Cruz LAFCO is statutorily responsible for any changes of organization related to the District. In the event that a proposed boundary change involves Monterey County, Santa Cruz LAFCO will coordinate with Monterey LAFCO before, during, and after the process is completed.

3. The District is financially stable.

PVPCD experienced a surplus in six of the last seven fiscal years evaluated by LAFCO. This is a significant improvement from the previous service review which noted how the District experienced multiple annual deficits in the past. Financial statements from Fiscal Years 2018 to 2024 indicate that the annual surplus ranged from approximately \$103,000 to \$574,000. LAFCO staff believes that this positive trend may continue as the District's budgetary practices continue to accurately cover annual expenses.

4. The District does not have a capital improvement plan in place.

The purpose of a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is to identify and prioritize needs and project costs for planned improvements to the District's infrastructure. At present, the District does not have a CIP in place. The adoption of a long-term maintenance plan, such as a CIP, would help budget for future improvements and provide more transparency to its constituents.

5. The District is complying with website requirements under State law.

Senate Bill 929 was signed into law in September 2018 and requires all independent special districts to have and maintain a website by January 1, 2020. It outlines minimum website data requirements agencies must provide including contact information, financial reports, and meeting agendas/minutes. PVPCD maintains a website that does not meet the minimum requirements outlined in SB 929. LAFCO recommends that the District update their website for more transparency and awareness for its constituents by no later than December 31, 2025.

6. The District's sphere of influence is coterminous with its jurisdictional limits.

The Commission adopted a multi-county sphere of influence back in October 1988. PVPCD's multi-county sphere is coterminous with its jurisdictional boundary. In September 2020, Santa Cruz LAFCO reaffirmed this sphere boundary. Staff is recommending that the current sphere boundary be amended to include the unserved Prunedale area located in Monterey County.

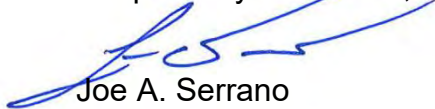
Environmental Review

LAFCO staff has conducted an environmental review for the report in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Staff has determined that the service and sphere review is exempt because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, and the activity is not subject to CEQA (Section 15061[b][3]). A Notice of Exemption, as shown in **Attachment 2**, will be recorded after Commission action.

Agency Coordination and Public Notice

A hearing notice for this draft service review was published in the May 15th issue of the Santa Cruz Sentinel (**Attachment 3**). The draft service and sphere review is attached to this staff report. An administrative draft of the report was shared with the general manager as an opportunity to review LAFCO staff's findings and provide corrections and/or feedback before the report was finalized. Their assistance in completing the report was greatly appreciated by LAFCO. In conclusion, staff is recommending that the Commission adopt the attached resolution (**Attachment 4**) approving the service and sphere review.

Respectfully Submitted,



Joe A. Serrano
Executive Officer

Attachments:

1. Service and Sphere Review – Administrative Draft
2. Environmental Determination – Categorical Exemption
3. Public Hearing Notice
4. Draft Resolution No. 2025-08

cc: Elizabeth Lopez, PVPCD General Manager

Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District

Service and Sphere of Influence Review



Draft Version (June 4, 2025)

Local Agency Formation Commission of Santa Cruz County

701 Ocean Street, Room 318-D Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Website: www.santacruzlafco.org

Phone: (831) 454-2055



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This Service and Sphere of Influence Review provides information about the services and boundaries of the Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District. The report will be used by the Local Agency Formation Commission to conduct a statutorily required review and update process. The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act requires that the Commission conduct periodic reviews and updates of Spheres of Influence for all cities and districts in Santa Cruz County (Government Code section 56425). It also requires LAFCO to conduct a review of municipal services before adopting Sphere updates (Government Code section 56430). The District's last service review was adopted on September 2, 2020.

The service review process does not require LAFCO to initiate changes of organization based on service review conclusions or findings; it only requires that LAFCO make determinations regarding the delivery of public services in accordance with Government Code Section 56430. However, LAFCO, local agencies, and the public may subsequently use the determinations and related analysis to consider whether to pursue changes in service delivery, government organization, or spheres of influence.

Service and sphere reviews are informational documents and are generally exempt from environmental review. LAFCO staff has conducted an environmental review of the District's existing sphere of influence pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and determined that this report is exempt from CEQA. Such an exemption is due to the fact that it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment (Section 15061[b][3]).

Multi-County Special District

Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District (referred to as "PVPCD" or "District") was founded as an independent special district in 1955 to provide for the respectful and cost-effective interment of human remains to meet the cultural, economic, religious, and social needs within southern Santa Cruz County, including a portion of Monterey County. Pursuant to its principal act, PVPCD may be located within multiple counties as long as the lands are contiguous (Health and Safety Code Section 9000). The District's jurisdictional limits has remained the same for the past seven decades. At present, the District operates five cemeteries, all of which are located within Santa Cruz County.

The District encompasses approximately 166 square miles within two counties: Santa Cruz County (118 square miles; \$11 billion in assessed value) and Monterey County (48 square miles; \$2.0 billion in assessed value). The current population within PVPCD's entire service area is approximately 96,000. An overview map is shown as **Figure 1** on page 6.

Principal LAFCO

Since the District is in multiple counties, the principal county's LAFCO has purview over PVPCD. A "principal county" is the county that has "the greater portion of the entire assessed value, as shown on the last equalized assessment roll of the county or counties, of all taxable property within a district or districts for which a change or organization or reorganization is proposed" (Government Code Section 9002[k]). Based on this criteria, Santa Cruz LAFCO has been, and continues to be, the principal LAFCO. The principal LAFCO is statutorily responsible for PVPCD's proposed boundary changes, sphere amendments, and service reviews.

Affected LAFCO

State law does not prohibit other "affected" LAFCOs, such as Monterey LAFCO in this instance, from adopting additional or supplemental service reviews involving a multi-county special district. The last service review adopted by Monterey LAFCO involving PVPCD was in December 2015, as part of a countywide service review.

The goal of this service review is two-fold: (1) fulfill the Commission's direction to complete a service review for PVPCD under the Multi-Year Work Program, and (2) fulfill the service and sphere determinations for PVPCD under the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act. For purposes of this report, and to ensure our analysis provides additional and distinctive information, this service review will primarily focus on areas involving the District and Santa Cruz County. An overview of PVPCD's entire operation and finances will also be provided in this report. Any staff recommendations identified in this review will be shared with Monterey LAFCO.

Sphere of Influence

Santa Cruz LAFCO adopted a multi-county sphere of influence for the District in October 1988. PVPCD's multi-county sphere is coterminous with its jurisdictional boundary. In September 2020, Santa Cruz LAFCO reaffirmed this sphere boundary.

Unserved Community

In 2015 and again in 2020, Santa Cruz LAFCO's service review noted that a community in northern Monterey County, known as Prunedale, is unserved by any cemetery district. Prunedale sits between Castroville Cemetery District (CCD) and PVPCD. The 2020 report included a recommendation that Santa Cruz LAFCO coordinate with Monterey LAFCO to analyze possible annexation and/or a sphere amendment to include the unserved Prunedale community within the Castroville or Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery Districts. No action resulted from those collaborative efforts.

Prunedale continues to be unserved even though two cemetery districts are immediately adjacent to the community. Based on staff analysis, there are also portions of Prunedale that are not part of any sphere boundary. Therefore, Santa Cruz LAFCO is recommending that PVPCD's sphere boundary be amended to include the Prunedale community. It is important to note that a sphere amendment does not automatically annex a territory into a district. The affected and interested agencies, specifically Castroville Cemetery District, Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District, and both Monterey and Santa Cruz LAFCOs must support any proposed annexation if determined that it would benefit the affected residents.

Key Findings

The following are key findings of the 2025 Service and Sphere of Influence Review for the Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District:

1. The District provides services in two counties.

PVPCD encompasses over 166 square miles in two separate counties and offers burial services through five different cemeteries. The cemeteries are all located within Santa Cruz County. It is estimated that approximately 96,000 residents currently live within PVPCD's jurisdiction, mostly in the Watsonville area.

2. Santa Cruz LAFCO is the principal LAFCO for the district.

State law allows cemetery districts to be located within multiple counties as long as the lands are contiguous. When multiple counties are involved, State law assigns authority to the principal county's LAFCO. Santa Cruz LAFCO is the principal LAFCO for PVPCD. Santa Cruz LAFCO is statutorily responsible for any changes of organization related to the District. In the event that a proposed boundary change involves Monterey County, Santa Cruz LAFCO will coordinate with Monterey LAFCO before, during, and after the process is completed.

3. The District is financially stable.

PVPCD experienced a surplus in six of the last seven fiscal years evaluated by LAFCO. This is a significant improvement from the previous service review which noted how the District experienced multiple annual deficits in the past. Financial statements from Fiscal Years 2018 to 2024 indicate that the annual surplus ranged from approximately \$103,000 to \$574,000. LAFCO staff believes that this positive trend may continue as the District's budgetary practices continue to accurately cover annual expenses.

4. The District does not have a capital improvement plan in place.

The purpose of a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is to identify and prioritize needs and project costs for planned improvements to the District's infrastructure. At present, the District does not have a CIP in place. The adoption of a long-term maintenance plan, such as a CIP, would help budget for future improvements and provide more transparency to its constituents.

5. The District is complying with website requirements under State law.

Senate Bill 929 was signed into law in September 2018 and requires all independent special districts to have and maintain a website by January 1, 2020. It outlines minimum website data requirements agencies must provide including contact information, financial reports, and meeting agendas/minutes. PVPCD maintains a website but does not meet the minimum requirements outlined in SB 929. LAFCO recommends that the District update their website for more transparency and awareness for its constituents by no later than December 31, 2025.

6. The District's sphere of influence is coterminous with its jurisdictional limits.

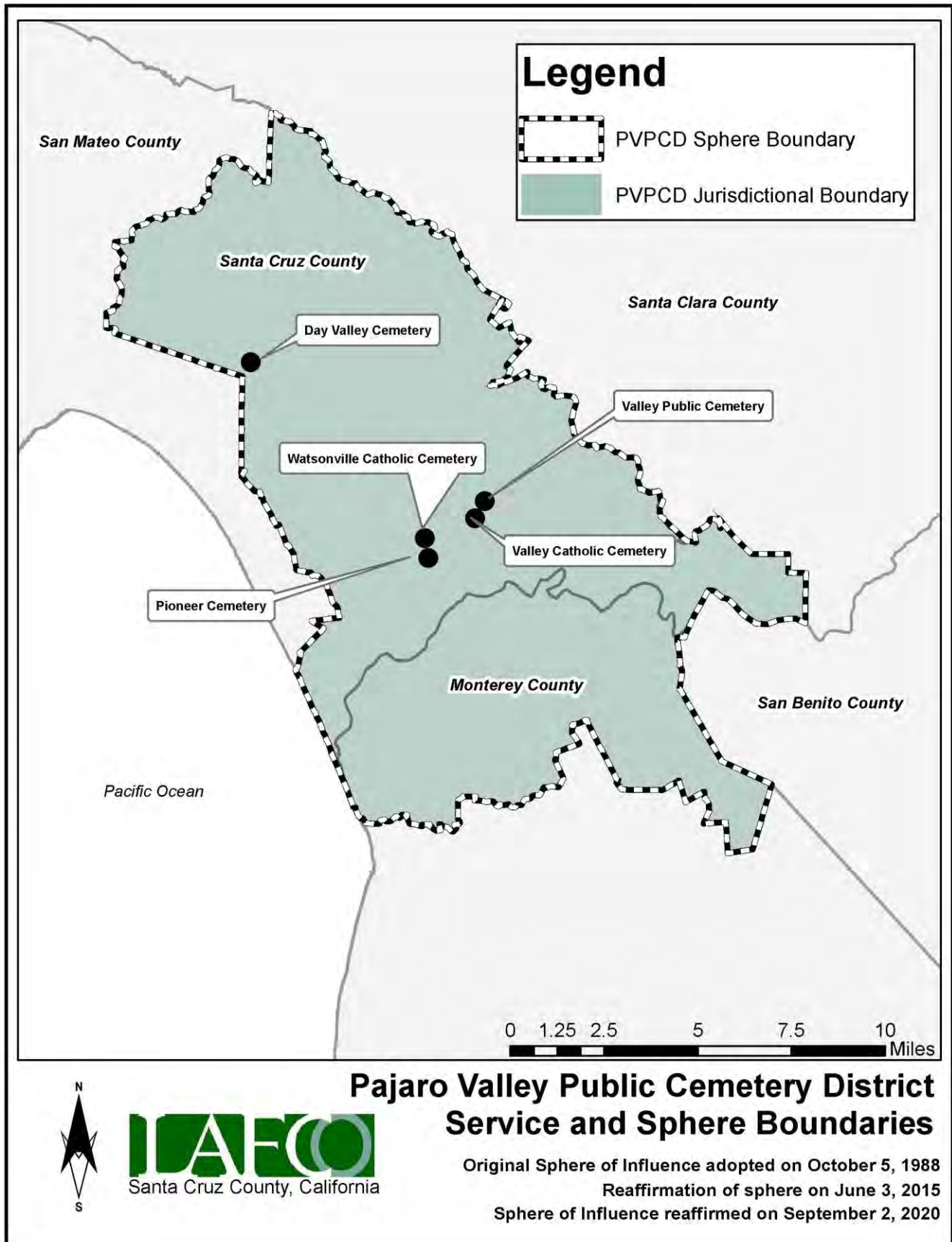
The Commission adopted a multi-county sphere of influence back in October 1988. PVPCD's multi-county sphere is coterminous with its jurisdictional boundary. In September 2020, Santa Cruz LAFCO reaffirmed this sphere boundary. Staff is recommending that the current sphere boundary be amended to include the unserved Prunedale area located in Monterey County.

Recommended Actions

Based on the analysis and findings in the 2025 Service and Sphere of Influence Review for the Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District, the Executive Officer recommends that the Commission:

1. Find that pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines, LAFCO determined that the sphere of influence review is not subject to the environmental impact evaluation process because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment and the activity is not subject to CEQA;
2. Determine, pursuant to Government Code Section 56425, the Local Agency Formation Commission of Santa Cruz County is required to develop and determine a sphere of influence for the Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District, and review and update, as necessary;
3. Determine, pursuant to Government Code Section 56430, the Local Agency Formation Commission of Santa Cruz County is required to conduct a service review before, or in conjunction with an action to establish or update a sphere of influence; and
4. Adopt the resolution (LAFCO No. 2025-08) approving the 2025 Service and Sphere Review for the Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District with the following conditions:
 - a. Amend the District's sphere of influence to include the unserved area of Prunedale located in Monterey County;
 - b. Provide a status update to the Commission on the District's website no later than February 4, 2026;
 - c. Coordinate with Monterey LAFCO to analyze the possible annexation of the unserved Prunedale community to either the Castroville or Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery Districts; and
 - d. Direct the Executive Officer to distribute a copy of the adopted service and sphere review to the Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District and any other interested or affected parties, including but not limited to Monterey LAFCO as the affected LAFCO.

Figure 1: Vicinity Map



DISTRICT OVERVIEW

History

The Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District, formed in 1955, serves communities in the southern portion of Santa Cruz County, such as Aptos and the City of Watsonville. The District also serves a portion of Monterey County, including Pajaro, Las Lomas, and Aromas. PVPCD operates pursuant to the California Public Cemetery District Law (Health and Safety Code Sections 9000 – 9093). The District's service area encompasses 165.71 square miles: Santa Cruz County consists of 117.61 square miles and the remaining 48.10 square miles are located in Monterey County.

Services and Operations

The District provides burial spaces, maintenance of cemetery grounds, and opening and closing services through five different cemeteries, as shown in **Table 1**. Maps depicting the location of each cemetery are shown in **Appendix A**. These cemeteries average a total of 175 to 200 burials a year. Only one cemetery, Valley Public Cemetery, has traditional gravesites available for purchase, and the District anticipates having only approximately 10 years of capacity remaining at Valley Public. The District's ability to acquire property adjacent to existing facilities is limited, and as a result, PVPCD continues to seek additional cemetery site locations to expand its services in south Santa Cruz County and/or north Monterey County.

Table 1: Cemetery Overview

Cemetery	Size & Availability	Location
Day Valley Cemetery	0.5 acres; No availability	206 Meadow Road Aptos, CA 95003
Watsonville Catholic Cemetery	6 acres; No availability	1456 Freedom Blvd. Watsonville, CA 95076
Pioneer Cemetery	15 acres; 70 cremation lots, 110 cremation niches, and no burial lots	66 Marin Street, Watsonville, CA 95076
Valley Catholic Cemetery	5 acres; No availability	2401 East Lake Avenue Watsonville, CA 95076
Valley Public Cemetery	9 acres; 715 burial lots and 572 cremation graves	2445 East Lake Avenue Watsonville, CA 95076

*Note: FY 2024-25 Services and Costs are shown in **Appendix B**.*

Population and Growth

Based on staff's analysis, the population of PVPCD in 2025 is estimated to be 96,000. The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) provide population projections for cities and counties in the Coastal Region. Official growth projections are not available for special districts. In general, the Coastal Region is anticipated to have slow growth over the next fifteen years. **Table 2** shows the anticipated population for each local agency within PVPCD. The average rate of change within both counties is approximately 1.30%.

Population Projection

Based on the projections for the cities and counties within the District's service area, LAFCO staff was able to develop a population forecast for PVPCD. Staff increased the District's 2025 population amount by 1.30% each year. Under this assumption, LAFCO staff projects that the entire population of PVPCD will be approximately 99,000 by 2040.

Table 2: Projected Population

Area	2025	2030	2035	2040	Average
City of Watsonville	55,187	56,829	58,332	59,743	2.78%
Monterey County (Unincorporated)	105,682	106,007	106,323	106,418	0.25%
Santa Cruz County (Unincorporated)	137,896	139,105	140,356	141,645	0.86%
Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District	95,648	96,887	98,143	99,415	1.30%

Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities

State law requires LAFCO to identify and describe all "disadvantaged unincorporated communities" (DUCs) located within or contiguous to the existing spheres of influence of cities and special districts that provide fire protection, sewer, and/or water services. DUCs are defined as inhabited unincorporated areas within an annual median household income that is 80% or less than the statewide annual median household income.

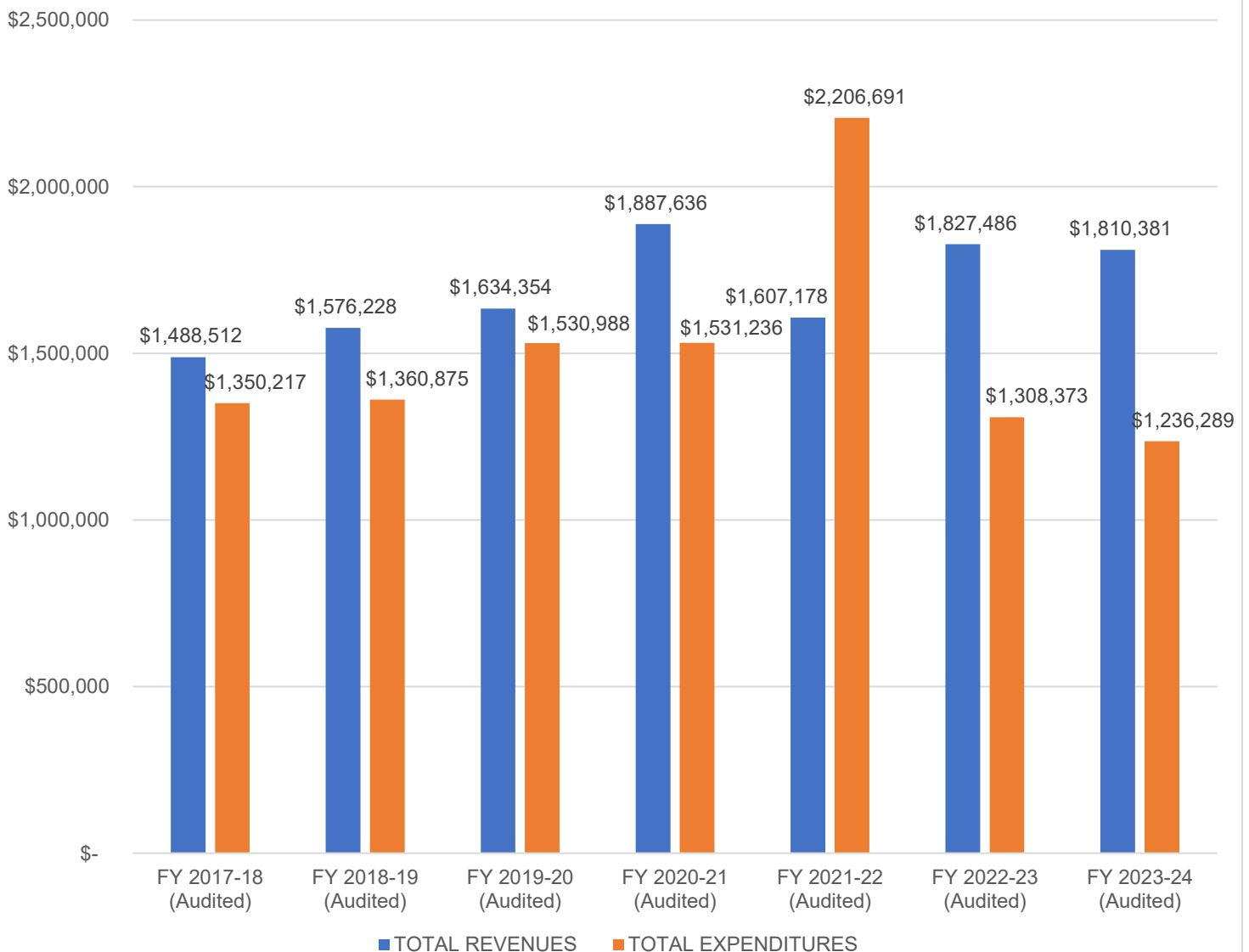
In 2025, the California statewide annual median household income was \$109,266, and 80% of that is \$87,413. LAFCO staff utilized the ArcGIS mapping program to locate potential DUCs in Santa Cruz County. It is important to note that the Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District is not subject to SB 244 because it does not provide water, sewer, or fire service, and therefore, no further analysis is required.

FINANCES

This section will highlight the District's financial performance during the most recent fiscal years. Fiscal Year 2023-24 is the latest audited financial statement available. LAFCO will evaluate PVPCD's financial health from 2018 to 2024. A comprehensive analysis of the District's financial performance during the past seven years is shown in **Table 4** on page 12. **Table 5** on page 13 also provides an overview of the District's assets and liabilities during the past seven fiscal years.

At the end of Fiscal Year 2023-24, total revenue collected was approximately \$1.81 million, representing a 1% decrease from the previous year (\$1.83 million in FY 22-23). Total expenses for FY 2023-24 were approximately \$1.2 million, which decreased from the previous year by 6% (\$1.3 million in FY 22-23). The District ended with an annual surplus in six of the last seven fiscal years, as shown in **Figure 2**. LAFCO staff believes that this positive trend may continue as the District's budgetary practices continue to accurately cover annual expenses.

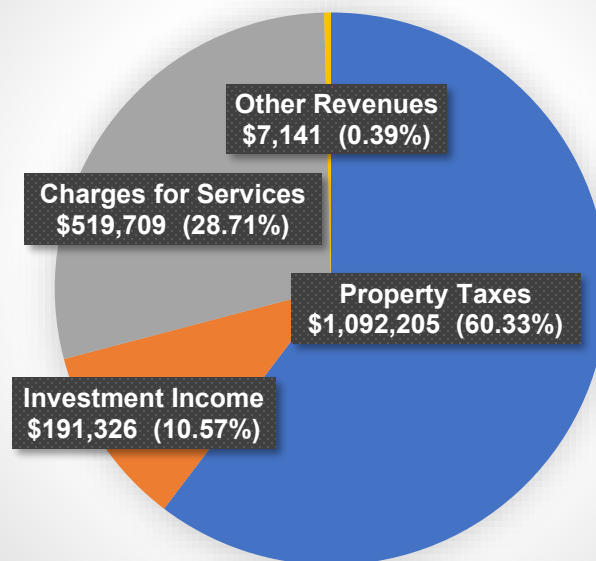
Figure 2: Statement of Revenues & Expenditures



Revenues

The District's primary source of revenue is from Property Taxes. In FY 2023-24, Property Taxes totaled approximately \$1.1 million which represents 60% of the District's entire revenue stream. Other revenue sources include Charges for Services (\$519,000 or 29%), Investment Income (\$191,000 or 10%), and Other Revenue (\$7,100 or less than 1%). **Figure 3** provides a breakdown each revenue stream.

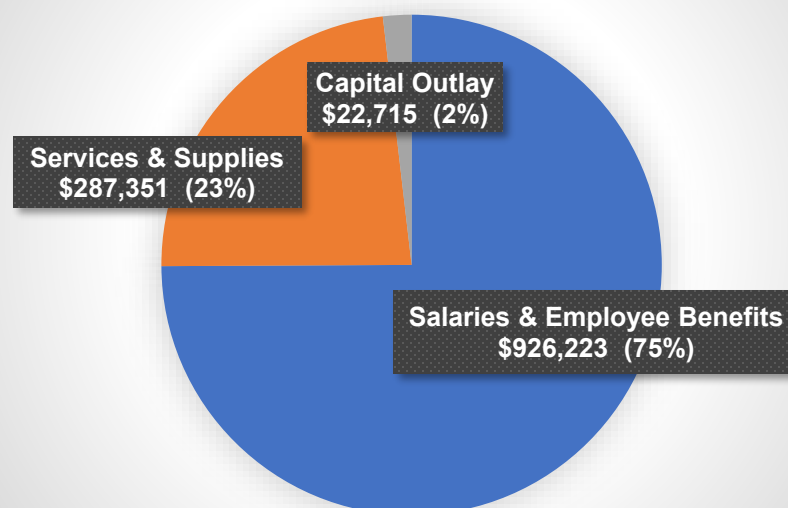
Figure 3: Total Revenue (FY 2023-24)



Expenditures

PVPCD's total expenditures can be categorized into three budgetary groups: Salaries & Benefits, Services & Supplies, and Capital Outlay. **Figure 4** shows that in FY 2023-24, Salaries & Benefits represent approximately 75% of the District's entire operational expenses. The remaining expenditures are based on the costs associated with operational tasks (Services & Supplies), and buildings and infrastructure (Capital Outlay).

Figure 4: Total Expenditure (FY 2023-24)

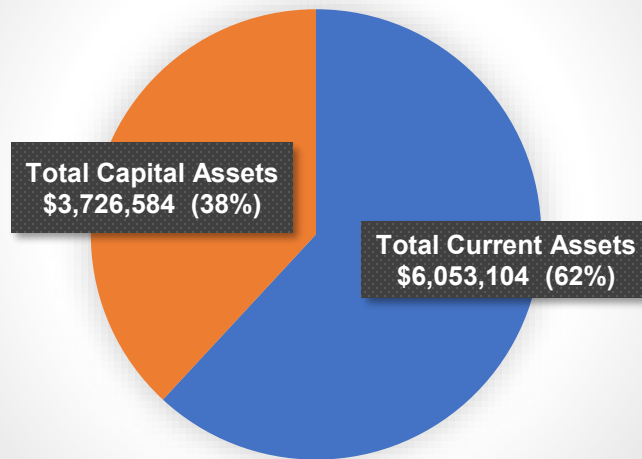


Assets & Liabilities

District Assets

As of June 30, 2024, the District had approximately \$9.8 million in total assets. This represents an increase of approximately \$459,000 or 5% from FY 2022-23's total assets of \$9.3 million. Total assets can be categorized into two types: Current Assets and Capital Assets. In FY 2023-24, current assets were approximately \$6 million, and capital assets were approximately \$3.7 million (less accumulated depreciation). As shown in **Figure 5**, capital assets represented 62% of total assets.

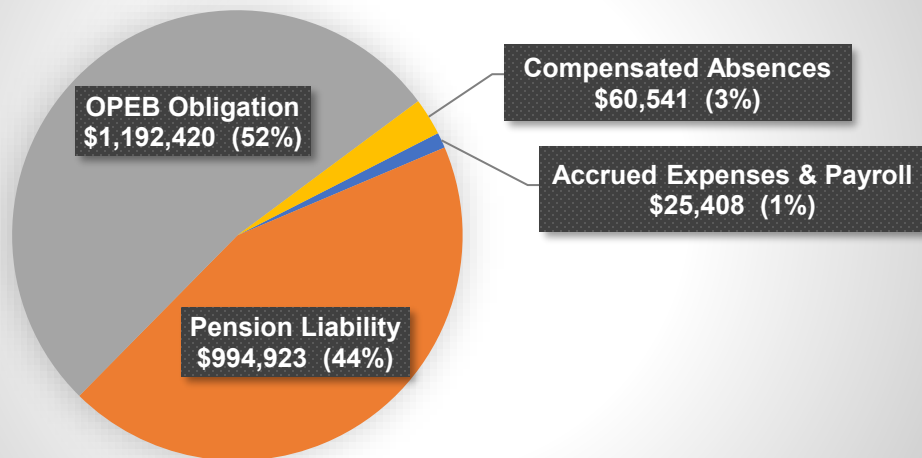
Figure 5: Total Assets (FY 2023-24)



District Liabilities

As of June 30, 2024, the District had approximately \$2.3 million in total liabilities. This represents an increase of approximately \$300,000 or 15% from FY 2022-23's total liabilities of \$1.9 million. Total liabilities can be categorized into four types: Accrued Expenses & Payroll, Pension Liability, OPEB Obligation, and Compensated Absences. As shown in **Figure 6**, OPEB Obligations represented 52% of total liabilities.

Figure 6: Total Liabilities (FY 2023-24)



Fund Balance

As of June 30, 2025, the total fund balance ended with approximately \$6 million. The following table highlights the fund balance from 2018 to 2024. As shown in the table below, the District's fund balance has increased over the years. This healthy balance of \$6 million will be critical in the event that the District encounters unintended expenses, major capital improvement projects, or emergency repairs.

Table 3: Fund Balance

	FY 2017-18 (Audited)	FY 2018-19 (Audited)	FY 2019-20 (Audited)	FY 2020-21 (Audited)	FY 2021-22 (Audited)	FY 2022-23 (Audited)	FY 2023-24 (Audited)
Ending Balance	\$2,938,395	\$3,153,748	\$3,257,114	\$5,534,004	\$4,934,491	\$5,453,604	\$6,027,696
Change from Previous Year (\$)	-	\$215,353	\$103,366	\$2,276,890	\$(599,513)	\$519,113	\$574,092

Table 4: Total Revenues & Expenditures

	FY 2017-18 (Audited)	FY 2018-19 (Audited)	FY 2019-20 (Audited)	FY 2020-21 (Audited)	FY 2021-22 (Audited)	FY 2022-23 (Audited)	FY 2023-24 (Audited)
REVENUES							
Property Taxes	\$ 807,162	\$ 886,412	\$ 909,270	\$ 937,963	\$ 981,805	\$ 1,041,593	\$ 1,092,205
Use of Money & Property / Investment Income	\$ 29,155	\$ 51,874	\$ 55,274	\$ 34,437	\$ 19,777	\$ 81,816	\$ 191,326
Aid from Other Government Agencies	\$ 5,538	\$ 4,810	\$ 5,530	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Charges for Services	\$ 336,333	\$ 330,167	\$ 359,717	\$ 909,743	\$ 595,013	\$ 698,077	\$ 519,709
Other Revenues	\$ 10,324	\$ 2,965	\$ 4,563	\$ 5,493	\$ 10,583	\$ 6,000	\$ 7,141
Transfers In	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
TOTAL REVENUES	\$ 1,488,512	\$ 1,576,228	\$ 1,634,354	\$ 1,887,636	\$ 1,607,178	\$ 1,827,486	\$ 1,810,381
EXPENDITURES							
Salaries & Employee Benefits	\$ 643,500	\$ 753,441	\$ 850,826	\$ 846,946	\$ 937,694	\$ 846,147	\$ 926,223
Services & Supplies	\$ 242,547	\$ 198,053	\$ 354,711	\$ 306,666	\$ 322,847	\$ 433,229	\$ 287,351
Capital Outlay	\$ 164,170	\$ 109,381	\$ 25,451	\$ 377,624	\$ 946,150	\$ 28,997	\$ 22,715
Other Expenses	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Transfers Out	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 1,350,217	\$ 1,360,875	\$ 1,530,988	\$ 1,531,236	\$ 2,206,691	\$ 1,308,373	\$ 1,236,289
Surplus/(Deficit)	\$ 138,295	\$ 215,353	\$ 103,366	\$ 356,400	\$ (599,513)	\$ 519,113	\$ 574,092
FUND BALANCE							
Beginning of Year (7/1)	\$ 2,800,100	\$ 2,938,395	\$ 3,153,748	\$ 5,177,604	\$ 5,534,004	\$ 4,934,491	\$ 5,453,604
End of Year (6/30)	\$ 2,938,395	\$ 3,153,748	\$ 3,257,114	\$ 5,534,004	\$ 4,934,491	\$ 5,453,604	\$ 6,027,696

Table 5: Total Assets & Liabilities

	FY 2017-18 (Audited)	FY 2018-19 (Audited)	FY 2019-20 (Audited)	FY 2020-21 (Audited)	FY 2021-22 (Audited)	FY 2022-23 (Audited)	FY 2023-24 (Audited)
ASSETS							
Cash:							
Cash in Bank & Investments	\$2,621,599	\$2,829,754	\$2,990,568	\$5,291,134	\$4,672,802	\$5,249,656	\$ 5,852,797
Receivables:							
Account Receivable	\$ 13,582	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 3,720	\$ 3,720	\$ 3,720	\$ 3,720
Inventory	\$ 326,636	\$ 360,422	\$ 322,526	\$ 301,153	\$ 276,464	\$ 225,360	\$ 196,587
Total Receivables	\$ 340,218	\$ 360,422	\$ 322,526	\$ 304,873	\$ 280,184	\$ 229,080	\$ 200,307
Total Current Assets	\$2,961,817	\$3,190,176	\$3,313,094	\$5,596,007	\$4,952,986	\$5,478,736	\$ 6,053,104
Capital Assets:							
Land & Construction in Progress	\$1,251,050	\$1,105,362	\$1,105,362	\$1,105,362	\$1,105,362	\$1,105,362	\$ 1,105,362
Structures & Improvements	\$2,208,460	\$2,462,131	\$2,476,415	\$3,012,338	\$4,108,672	\$4,137,669	\$ 4,160,384
Equipment	\$ 291,016	\$ 297,316	\$ 308,483	\$ 150,184	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Plots Held for Sale	\$ 3,945	\$ 3,945	\$ 3,945	\$ 3,945	\$ 3,945	\$ 3,945	\$ 3,945
Total Property & Equipment	\$3,754,471	\$3,868,754	\$3,894,205	\$4,271,829	\$5,217,979	\$5,246,976	\$ 5,269,691
Less: Accumulated Depreciation	\$ 892,836	\$ 964,550	\$1,040,152	\$1,134,868	\$1,265,218	\$1,404,643	\$ 1,543,107
Depreciable Capital Assets, Net	\$2,861,635	\$2,904,204	\$2,854,053	\$3,136,961	\$3,952,761	\$3,842,333	\$ 3,726,584
Total Capital Assets	\$2,861,635	\$2,904,204	\$2,854,053	\$3,136,961	\$3,952,761	\$3,842,333	\$ 3,726,584
TOTAL ASSETS	\$5,823,452	\$6,094,380	\$6,167,147	\$8,732,968	\$8,905,747	\$9,321,069	\$ 9,779,688
Deferred Outflows of Resources:							
Deferred Outflows Related to Pension	\$ 183,626	\$ 149,555	\$ 136,032	\$ 176,477	\$ 170,639	\$ 384,647	\$ 411,908
Deferred Outflows Related to OPEB	\$ 29,115	\$ 29,115	\$ 39,140	\$ 267,054	\$ 222,761	\$ 178,468	\$ 246,056
Total Deferred Outflows of Resources	\$ 212,741	\$ 178,670	\$ 175,172	\$ 443,531	\$ 393,400	\$ 563,115	\$ 657,964
TOTAL ASSETS & DEFERRED OUTFLOWS	\$6,036,193	\$6,273,050	\$6,342,319	\$9,176,499	\$9,299,147	\$9,884,184	\$10,437,652
LIABILITIES							
Accrued Expenses & Payroll	\$ 22,772	\$ 14,226	\$ 51,439	\$ 62,003	\$ 18,495	\$ 25,132	\$ 25,408
Unearned Revenue	\$ 650	\$ 22,202	\$ 4,541	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Net Pension Liability	\$ 707,598	\$ 685,529	\$ 755,775	\$ 746,178	\$ 335,708	\$ 826,819	\$ 994,923
Net OPEB Obligation	\$1,023,464	\$1,023,464	\$1,119,820	\$1,352,960	\$1,035,849	\$1,063,309	\$ 1,192,420
Compensated Absences (Due Within One Year)	\$ 50,012	\$ 54,867	\$ 31,998	\$ 45,864	\$ 47,486	\$ 59,988	\$ 60,541
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$1,804,496	\$1,800,288	\$1,963,573	\$2,207,005	\$1,437,538	\$1,975,248	\$ 2,273,292
Deferred Inflows of Resources:							
Deferred Inflows Related to Pension	\$ 23,000	\$ 28,104	\$ 27,996	\$ 5,322	\$ 293,056	\$ 11,121	\$ 37,927
Deferred Inflows Related to OPEN	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 115,387	\$ 448,477	\$ 394,616	\$ 357,233
Total Deferred Inflows of Resources	\$ 23,000	\$ 28,104	\$ 27,996	\$ 120,709	\$ 741,533	\$ 405,737	\$ 395,160
Net Position:							
Net Investment in Capital Assets	\$2,861,635	\$2,904,204	\$2,854,053	\$3,136,961	\$3,952,761	\$3,842,333	\$ 3,726,584
Restricted for Nonexpendable	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$2,181,209	\$2,277,214	\$2,389,122	\$ 2,539,676
Unrestricted Net Position	\$1,347,062	\$1,540,454	\$1,496,697	\$1,530,615	\$ 890,101	\$1,271,744	\$ 1,502,940
TOTAL NET POSITION	\$4,208,697	\$4,444,658	\$4,350,750	\$6,848,785	\$7,120,076	\$7,503,199	\$ 7,769,200
TOTAL ASSETS & DEFERRED INFLOWS	\$6,036,193	\$6,273,050	\$6,342,319	\$9,176,499	\$9,299,147	\$9,884,184	\$10,437,652

GOVERNANCE

The Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District is governed by a five-member Board of Trustees, which is appointed by the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors. District boundaries straddle the Santa Cruz-Monterey County line, and its Sphere of Influence is coterminous with the current boundaries. The District maintains five cemeteries, all of which are located in Santa Cruz County.

Local Accountability & Structure

The current Board is as follows:

Table 6: Board of Trustees

Board Member	Term of Office
Violet Lucas, Chair	Appointed: January 14, 2020 Term Limit Ends: December 31, 2027
Robert Tanner, Vice-Chair	Appointed: March 26, 2019 Term Limit Ends: December 31, 2025
Nancy Bilicich	Appointed: September 28, 2021 Term Limit Ends: December 31, 2025
Ed Banks	Appointed: January 23, 2018 Term Limit Ends: December 31, 2025
Steven George	Appointed: November 22, 2016 Term Limit Ends: December 31, 2027

The Chair and Vice-Chair designations are rotated on a two-year term. Board meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month at 2:00 pm. These Board meetings are typically held at the District's administrative office in Watsonville which are open to the public. Public hearing notices are provided through online posting.

Challenges and Opportunities

State laws increase in number and complexity each year. Compliance is a challenge for all districts, especially small agencies such as PVPCD. The District responds to legal requirements to the extent that their resources permit them to do so. Levels of compliance vary from district to district, and some implement best management practices that go above and beyond the basics. Smaller districts have particular difficulty in keeping up with current requirements for financial and audit reporting, transparency and accountability, the conduct of meetings, personnel practices, insurances, contracting provisions, and trustee and staff required trainings. Some cemetery districts also have difficulty finding residents to fill trustee positions. The following section discusses current challenges and identifies possible opportunities to ensure the delivery of services in a more efficient and effective manner.

Capital Improvement Plan

The purpose of a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is to identify and prioritize needs and project costs for planned improvements to the infrastructure that will serve the affected ratepayers in an efficient and cost-effective manner over the next five-plus years of growth and change. At present, the District does not have a CIP in place. The adoption of a long-term maintenance plan, such as a CIP, would help budget for future improvements and provide more transparency to its constituents.

LAFCO Staff Recommendation: *The District should consider adopting a long-term maintenance plan to ensure scheduled and unforeseen repairs, replacements, and installations are adequately funded.*

Website Requirements

Senate Bill 929 was signed into law in September 2018 and requires all independent special districts to have and maintain a website by January 1, 2020. SB 929 identifies several components that must be found within an agency's website. Additionally, the Special District Leadership Foundation (SDLF), an independent, non-profit organization formed to promote good governance and best practices among California's special districts, has also outlined recommended website elements as part of its District Transparency Certificate of Excellence. This program was created as an effort to promote transparency in the operations and governance of special districts to the public.

LAFCO conducted a thorough review of the District's website based on SB 929's criteria and the recommendations set by the SDLF. **Table 7** on page 16 summarizes staff's findings on whether their website meets the statutory requirements. At present, PVPCD does not meet all the benchmarks. While the District has a website in place, it must consider adding more useful information and resources that are easily accessible to the public.

Table 7: Website Transparency

Website Components	Status (Yes = ✓)
Required Items (SB 929 Criteria and SDLF Benchmarks)	
1. Names and Contact Information of Board Members*	✓
2. Board Member Term Limits	
3. Names of Key Staff, including General Manager	
4. Contact Information for Staff	✓
5. Election/Appointment Procedure & Deadlines	
6. Board Meeting Schedule*	✓
7. Mission Statement	✓
8. Description of District's Services/Functions and Service Area	
9. Authorizing Statute/Enabling Act	
10. Adopted District Budgets*	
11. Financial Audits*	
12. Archive of Board Meeting Agendas & Minutes*	✓
13. Link to State Controller's Webpages for District's reported Board Member and Staff Compensation	
14. Link to State Controller's Webpages for District's reported Financial Transaction Report	
15. Reimbursement & Compensation Policy / Annual Policies	
16. Home Page Link to Agendas/Board Packets	✓
17. SB 272 - Compliance-Enterprise Catalogs	✓
18. Machine Readable/Searchable Agendas	
19. Recipients of Grant Funding or Assistance	
20. Link or Copies of LAFCO's Service & Sphere Reviews	
Total Score (out of a possible 20)	7 (35%)

LAFCO Staff Recommendation: *The District must update its website to fulfill the legal requirements under SB 929 by December 31, 2025.*

Local and Regional Collaborations

The District is an active member of both the California Association of Public Cemeteries (CAPC) and the Public Cemetery Alliance (PCA). Based on staff's analysis, more opportunities are available for sharing resources and expertise among cemetery districts. Many nearby cemetery districts already take advantage of efficiency and cost-sharing measures, including the shared use of equipment, staff and contracted services. Those districts with more resources are generous with their assistance to districts with fewer resources. PVPCD is encouraged to work with neighboring special districts, nearby cities and private cemeteries to explore new ways of reducing costs and increasing efficiencies where possible. Below are two opportunities identified by LAFCO:

- **Utilization of Nearby Board Chambers:** The District's board meetings are typically conducted at their administrative office in Watsonville. While the District does not experience large audiences during public meetings, their current meeting room is limited in size. It may be beneficial to utilize the City of Watsonville's chambers or a nearby agency's board chambers. Benefits under this potential collaboration is two-fold: (1) it establishes a more transparent board meeting procedure under the Brown Act, and (2) it helps build additional partnerships with neighboring municipalities.
- **Utilization of Santa Cruz LAFCO:** Small districts often have limited access to resources. LAFCO could be used as an additional resource to the agency. LAFCO staff is willing to provide PVPCD with a summary of State requirements and best practices for the operation of a public agency. LAFCO can also share information about professional development training and technical assistance resources available to special districts. This type of collaboration may be useful for the Board and staff members in the short and long run.

LAFCO Staff Recommendation: *The District should consider collaborating with other local agencies to maximize efficiencies, improve internal operations, and/or explore cost-saving opportunities.*



SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act

City and special district spheres of influence define the probable physical boundaries and service area of a local agency, as determined by the Commission (Government Code Section 56076). The law requires that spheres be updated at least once every five years either concurrently or subsequently to the preparation of Municipal Service Reviews. Spheres are determined and amended solely at the discretion of the Commission. In determining the sphere of influence for each local agency, the Commission is required by Government Code Section 56425(e) to consider certain factors, including:

- The present and planned uses in the area, including agricultural and open-space lands;
- The present and probable need for public facilities and services in the area;
- The present capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public services that the agency provides or is authorized to provide;
- The existence of any social or economic communities of interest in the area if the commission determines that they are relevant to the agency; and
- For an update of a sphere of influence of a city or special district that provides public facilities or services related to sewers, municipal and industrial water, or structural fire protection, that occurs pursuant to subdivision (g) on or after July 1, 2012, the present and probable need for those public facilities and services of any disadvantaged unincorporated communities within the existing sphere.

Current Sphere Boundary

Santa Cruz LAFCO adopted a multi-county sphere of influence for the District back in October 1988. PVPCD's multi-county sphere is coterminous with its jurisdictional boundary. In September 2020, Santa Cruz LAFCO reaffirmed this sphere boundary, as shown in **Figure 7** on page 19.

Unserved Community & Proposed Sphere Amendment

In 2020, Santa Cruz LAFCO's service review noted that a community in northern Monterey County, known as Prunedale, is unserved by any cemetery district. Prunedale sits between Castroville Cemetery District (CCD) and PVPCD, as shown in **Appendix C**. The report also suggested that Monterey LAFCO would explore annexation possibilities with CCD. As part of Monterey LAFCO's 2015 service review, the Castroville Cemetery District was consulted but chose not to pursue expansion due to feasibility constraints. Prunedale continues to be unserved even though two cemeteries are immediately adjacent to the community. Based on staff's analysis, there are also portions of Prunedale that are not part of any sphere boundary. Santa Cruz LAFCO is recommending that PVPCD's sphere boundary be amended to include the unserved areas. **Figure 8** on page 19 depicts the proposed sphere amendment.

Figure 7: Current Sphere Map

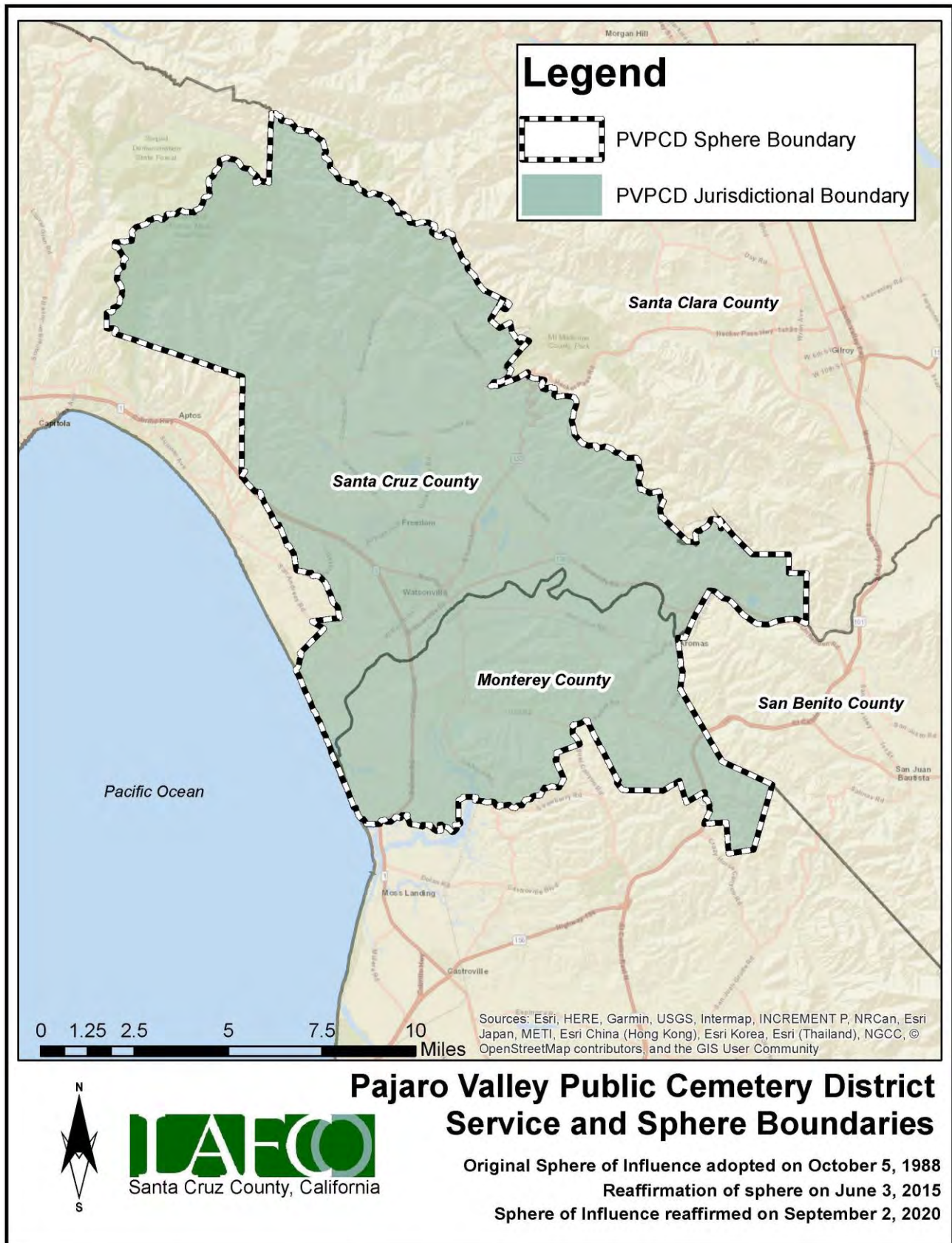
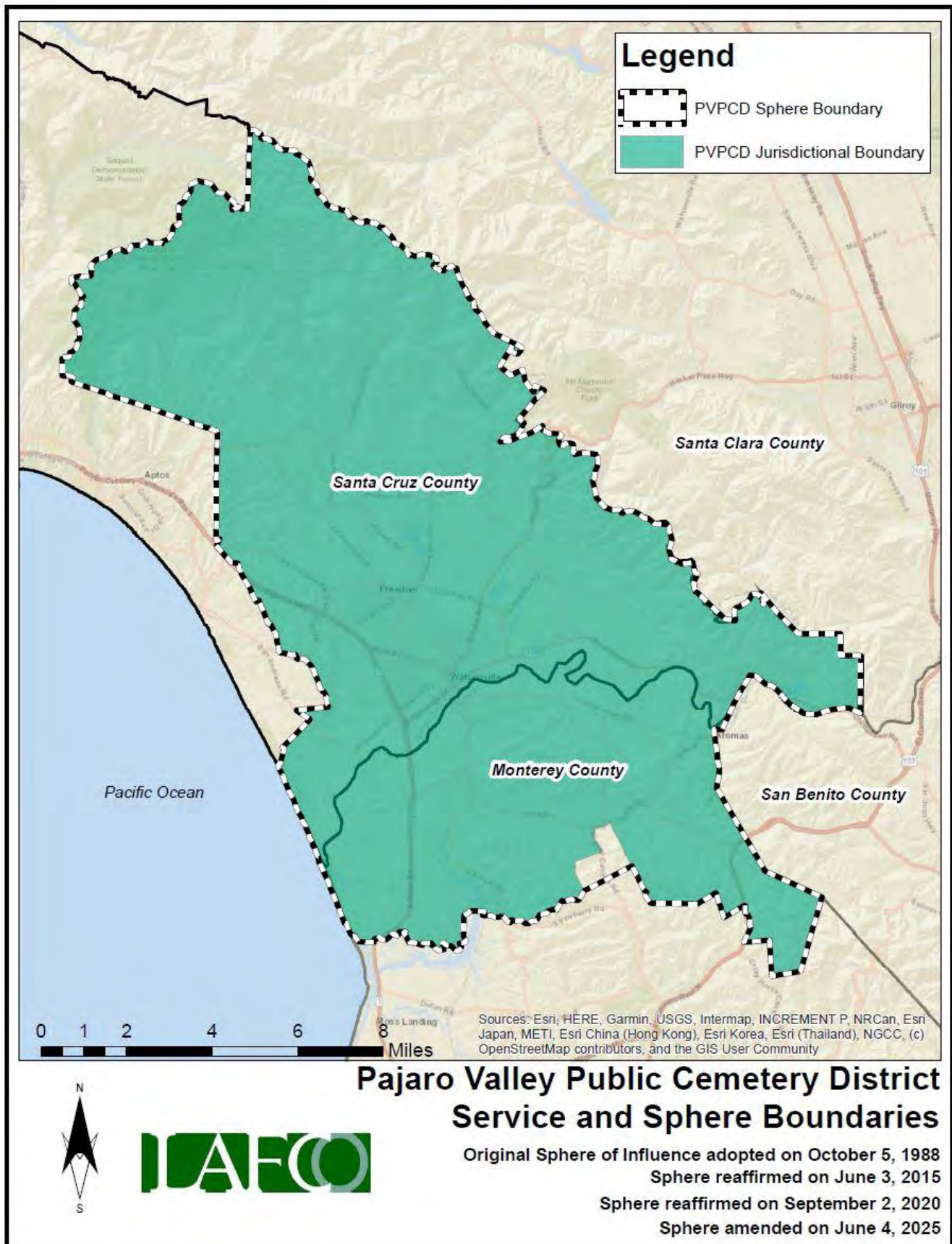


Figure 8: Proposed Sphere Map



District Summary

Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District	
Formation	Health & Safety Code §9000 et seq. (Public Cemetery District Law)
Board of Trustees	Governed by a five-member Board of Trustees. Board members are appointed to four-year terms by the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors.
Contact Person	Elizabeth Lopez, General Manager
Employees	6 full-time crew members
Facilities	The District owns and manages 5 cemeteries: (1) Day Valley Cemetery, (2) Watsonville Catholic Cemetery, (3) Pioneer Cemetery, (4) Valley Catholic Cemetery, and (5) Valley Public Cemetery.
District Area	The District's entire boundary consists of nearly 117 square miles and encompasses two counties – Monterey and Santa Cruz. The majority of the District is within Santa Cruz County.
Sphere of Influence	The sphere boundary is coterminous with the District's jurisdictional limits and includes lands from both counties.
FY 2024-25 Budget	<p>Total Revenue = \$1,407,500</p> <p>Total Expenditure = \$962,237</p> <p>Projected Net Position (Beginning Balance) = \$6,027,696</p>
Contact Information	<p>Mailing Address: 66 Marin Street Watsonville, CA 95076</p> <p>Phone Number: 831-722-0310</p> <p>Email Address: pvcemetery@cruzio.com</p> <p>Website: https://www.pvpcd.org/</p>
Public Meetings	Meetings are typically held on the second Tuesday of the month, at 2:00 pm. These Board meetings are typically held at the District's administrative office in Watsonville and are open to the public.
Mission Statement	To provide efficient, cost effective burial services for the community, and provide maintenance to the cemeteries in a respectable, clean and safe manner that honors the loved ones of family, friends and the community at large.

SERVICE AND SPHERE REVIEW DETERMINATIONS

The following service and sphere review determinations fulfill the requirements outlined in the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act.

Service Provision Determinations

Government Code Section 56430 requires LAFCO to conduct a municipal service review before, or in conjunction with, an action to establish or update a sphere boundary. Written statements of determination must be prepared with respect to each of the following:

1. Growth and population projections for the affected area.

PVPCD encompasses over 166 square miles. It is estimated that approximately 96,000 residents currently live within PVPCD's jurisdiction, mostly in the Watsonville area. LAFCO staff projects that the District's population may reach 99,000 by 2040.

2. The location and characteristics of any disadvantaged unincorporated communities within or contiguous to the sphere of influence.

PVPCD is not subject to SB 244 because it does not provide water, sewer, or fire service.

3. Present and planned capacity of public facilities, adequacy of public services, and infrastructure needs or deficiencies including needs or deficiencies related to sewers, municipal and industrial water, and structural fire protection in any disadvantaged, unincorporated communities within or contiguous to the sphere of influence.

PVPCD provides burial services through five different cemeteries. Only the Valley Public Cemetery has traditional gravesites available for purchase, and the District anticipates having approximately 10 years of capacity remaining at Valley Public. The District's ability to acquire property adjacent to existing facilities is limited, and so PVPCD is seeking an additional cemetery site within its jurisdictional limits.

4. Financial ability of agencies to provide services.

PVPCD's primary source of revenue is from property taxes. The District has experienced annual surpluses in six out of the last seven fiscal years (2018 to 2024). LAFCO staff believes that this positive trend may continue as the District's budgetary practices continue to accurately cover annual expenses.

5. Status of, and opportunities for, shared facilities.

The District is an active member of both the California Association of Public Cemeteries and the Public Cemetery Alliance. LAFCO encourages more collaborative efforts with neighboring cemetery districts and local agencies, such as the City of Watsonville.

6. Accountability for community service needs, including governmental structure and operational efficiencies.

The District currently has a website, but it does not meet the requirements under SB 929. LAFCO encourages PVPCD to continue updating the website for more transparency.

7. Any other matter related to effective or efficient service delivery, as required by commission policy.

No additional local LAFCO policies are specifically relevant to this service review.

Sphere of Influence Determinations

Government Code Section 56425 requires LAFCO to periodically review and update spheres of influence in concert with conducting municipal service reviews. Spheres are used as regional planning tools to discourage urban sprawl and encourage orderly growth. Written statements of determination must be prepared with respect to each of the following:

1. The present and planned land uses in the area, including agricultural and open-space lands.

The present and planned land uses are based on the general plans from the County and the City of Watsonville, which range from urban to rural uses. General plans anticipate growth centered on existing urban areas and the maintenance of agricultural production, rural residential uses, and environmental protection in rural areas. Land use designations within most of the five cemeteries are zoned as Public Facilities or Open Space. The area within Day Valley Cemetery is zoned as Residential-Suburban by the County.

2. The present and probable need for public facilities and services in the area.

The service needs in the area are the maintenance of the five cemeteries, and the expansion of cemetery facilities within 10 years.

3. The present capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public services that the agency provides or is authorized to provide.

The District owns and maintains five cemeteries covering a total of 36 acres. Four of the cemeteries have no spaces remaining for sale, but they do have room for interments in previously sold plots. The District has approximately 10 years' worth of space remaining at the Valley Public Cemetery. The District recognizes this infrastructure need and is looking to acquire land for a new cemetery.

4. The existence of any social or economic communities of interest in the area if the commission determines that they are relevant to the agency.

The District provides services to the Pajaro Valley. This is a social and economic community of interest which is relevant to the provision of public services provided by the Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District.

5. For an update of a sphere of influence of a city or special district that provides public facilities or services related to sewers, municipal and industrial water, or structural fire protection, that occurs pursuant to subdivision (g) on or after July 1, 2012, the present and probable need for those public facilities and services of any disadvantaged unincorporated communities within the existing sphere of influence.

The District does not provide services related to sewers, municipal and industrial water, or structural fire protection. Therefore, this determination is not applicable.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Cemetery Maps (3 in total)

Appendix B: FY 2024-25 Services & Costs

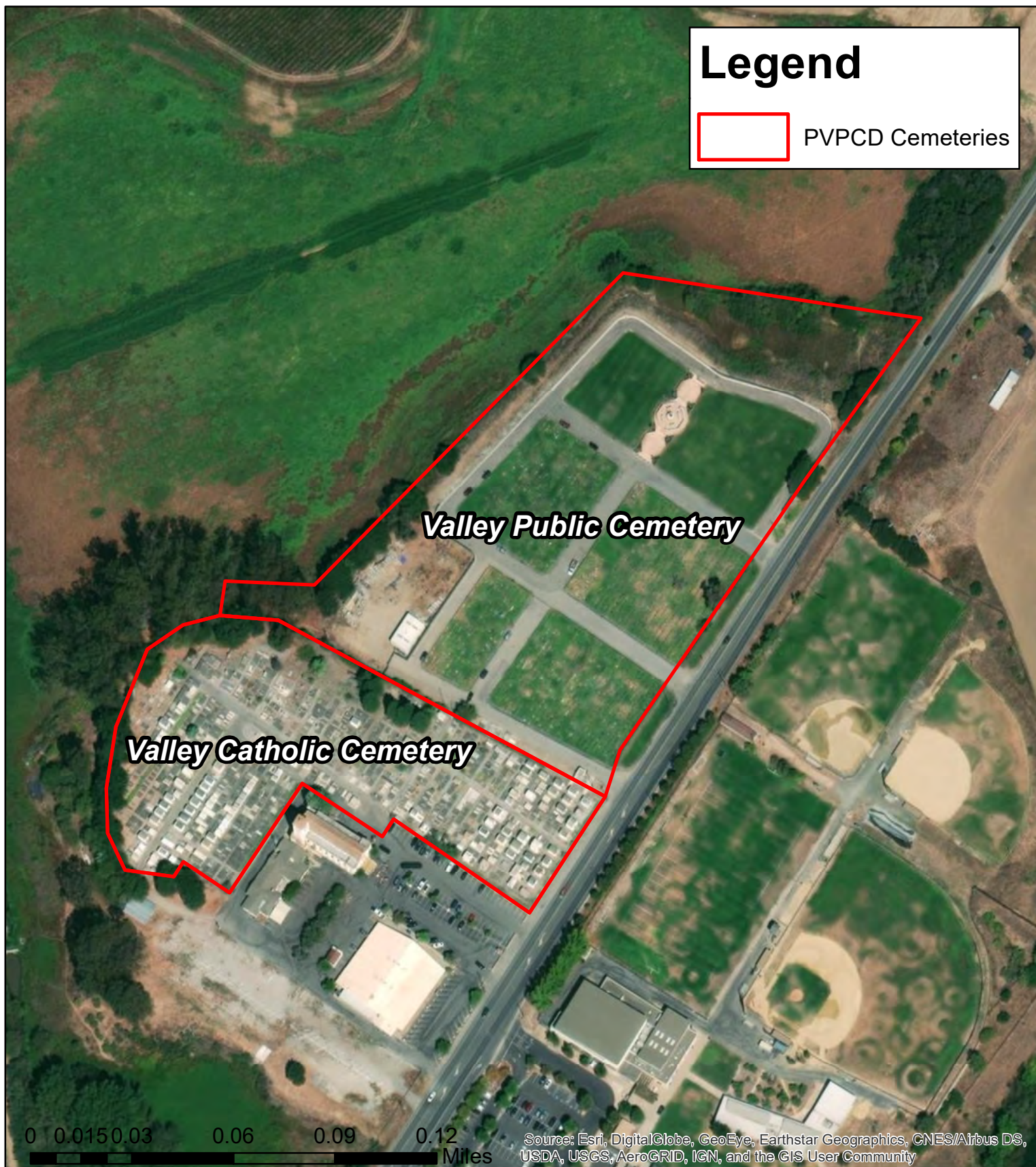
Appendix C: Unserved Prunedale Map

DRAFT

APPENDIX A:

PVPCD

Cemetery Maps
(3 in total)



Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District
(District Cemeteries: 5 in total)
Map of Valley Public and
Valley Catholic Cemeteries



Santa Cruz County, California

Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District (District Cemeteries: 5 in total)

Map of Watsonville Catholic and Pioneer Cemeteries



Legend



PVPCD Cemeteries

**Day Valley
Cemetery**

Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, USGS, Intermap, INCREMENT P, NRCan, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri Korea, Esri (Thailand), NGCC, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community. Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community



Santa Cruz County, California

Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District (District Cemeteries: 5 in total)

Map of Day Valley Cemetery



Freedom Boulevard

D

C

B

A

E

F

G

H

4

3

2 1/2

2

16

15

14

13

12

11

10

Section 9

7

Block 10

Section 10

10

Section 8

8

Section 7

7

Section 6

6

Section 5

5

Section 4

4

Section 3

3

Section 2

2

Section 1

1

Block 1

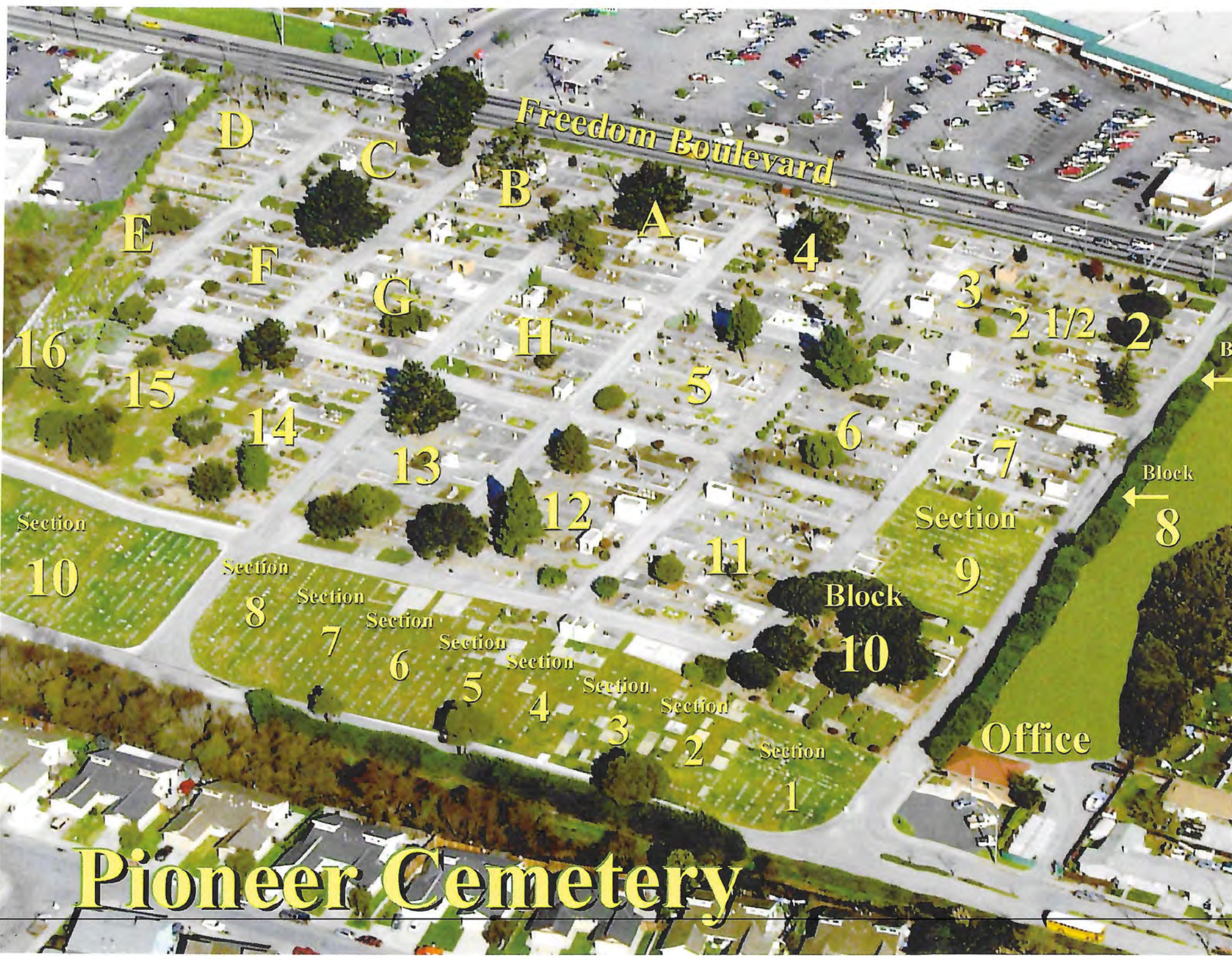
1

Block 8

8

Office

Pioneer Cemetery



Freedom Boulevard

D

C

B

A

E

F

G

H

16

15

14

13

12

5

6

3

2 1/2

2

Section

10

Section

8

Section

7

Section

6

Section

5

Section

4

Section

3

Section

2

Section

1

11

Block

10

Section

9

Block

8

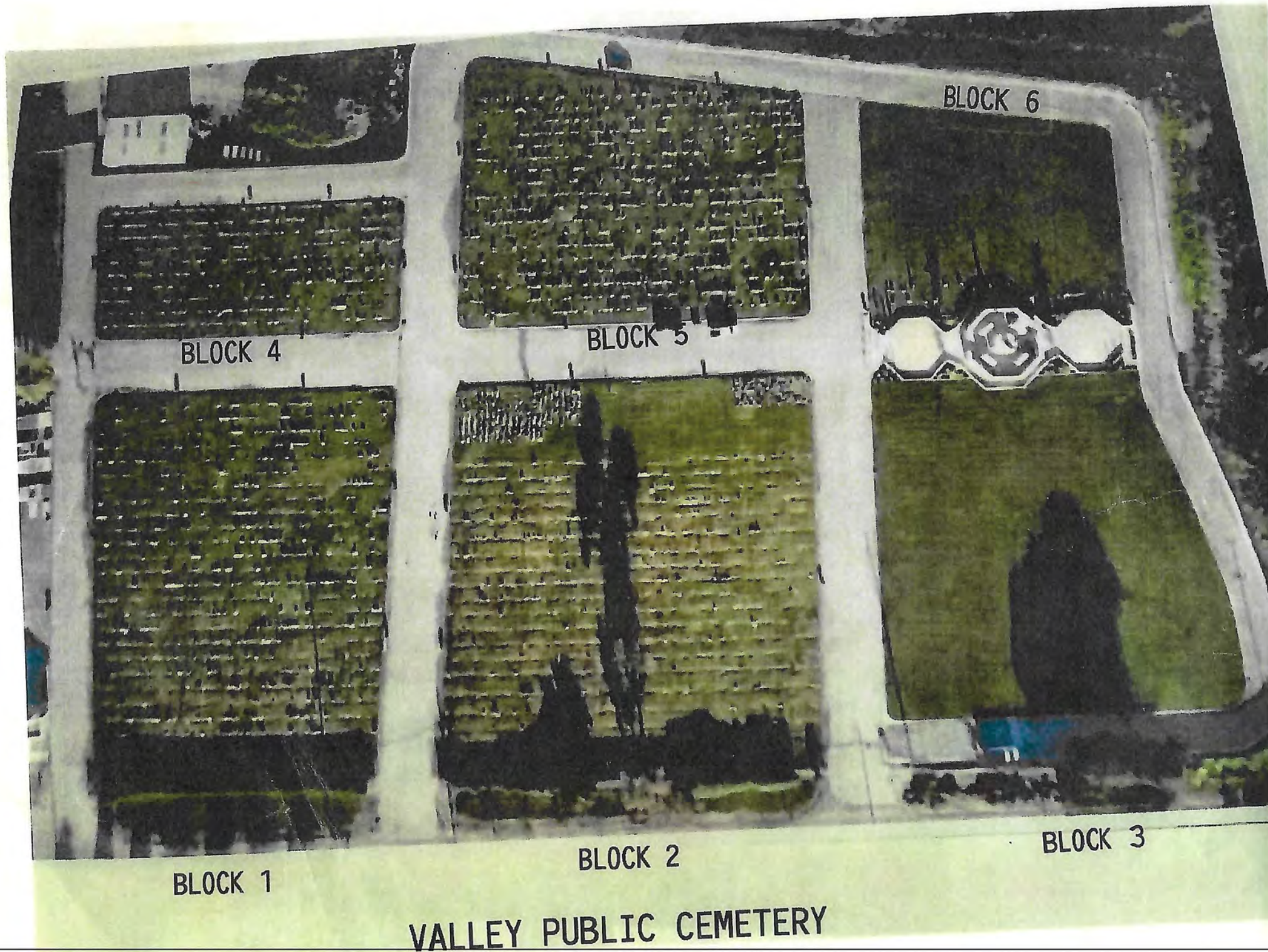
Office

Pioneer Cemetery





VALLEY CATHOLIC CEMETERY



BLOCK 1

BLOCK 2

BLOCK 3

BLOCK 4

BLOCK 5

BLOCK 6

VALLEY PUBLIC CEMETERY

APPENDIX B:

PVPCD

Services & Costs

(FY 2024-25)

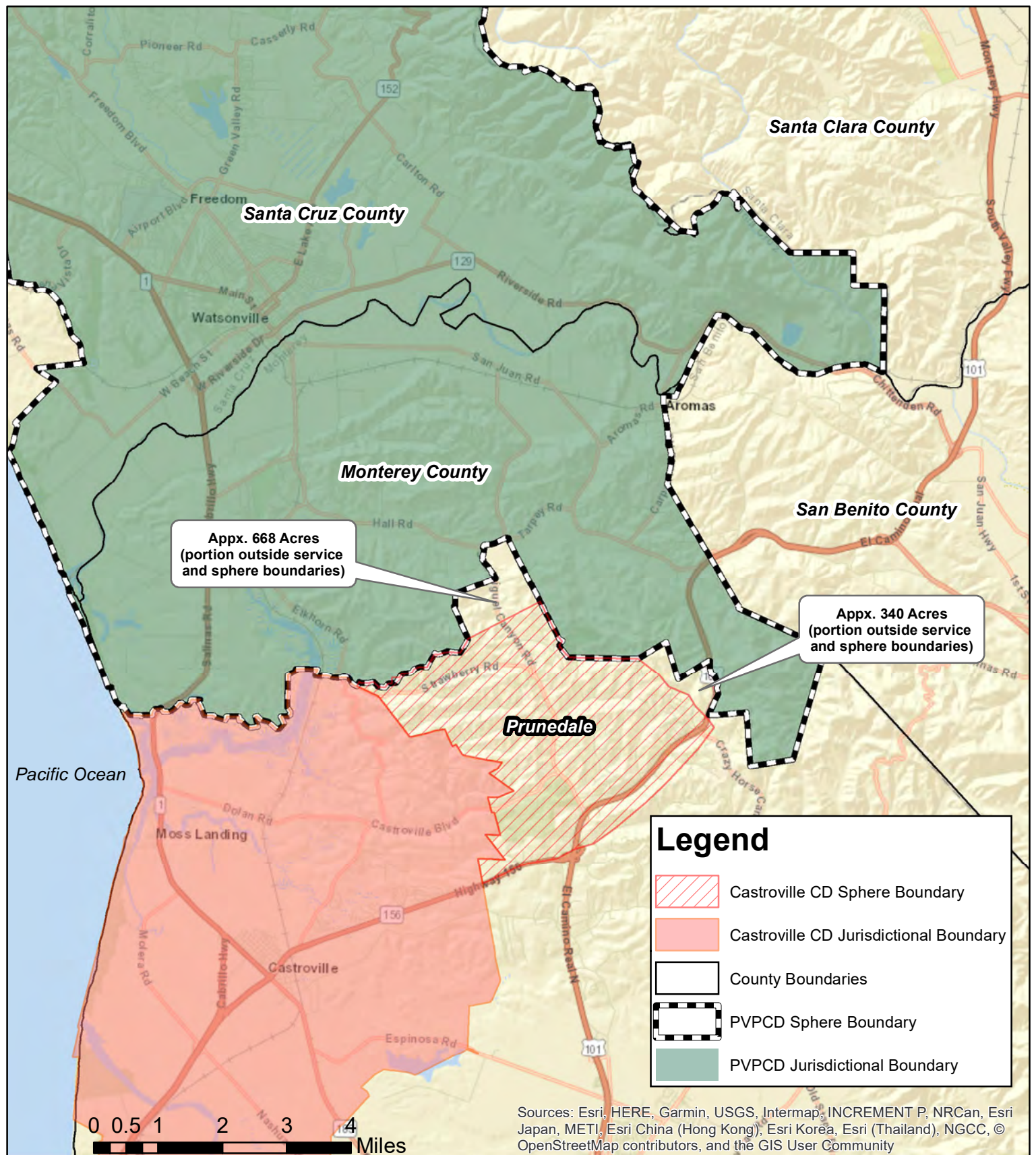
Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District
FY 2024-25 Services & Costs

Single Depth (1 Casket / 3 Creains)		Double Depth (2 Caskets / 2 Creains)	
Service	Cost	Service	Cost
Plot	\$1,500.00	Plot	\$2,000.00
Endowment Care	\$900.00	Endowment Care	\$900.00
Opening & Closing	\$900.00	Opening & Closing	\$1,000.00
Garden Crypt	\$600.00	Garden Crypt	\$850.00
Installation	\$550.00	Installation	\$700.00
Sales Tax	<u>\$58.50</u>	Sales Tax	\$82.88
		1st Opening	-
		2nd Opening & Closing	<u>\$900.00</u>
Total Cost	\$4,508.50	Total Cost	\$6,432.88

APPENDIX C:

PVPCD

Prunedale Map



Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District Unserved Community

Prunedale is an unincorporated rural community with appx.18,000 residents. The unserved area is adjacent to two cemetery districts. Portions of Prunedale are outside both service or sphere boundaries.



Santa Cruz County, California

Notice of Exemption

To: ☐ Office of Planning and Research
1400 Tenth Street, Room 121
Sacramento CA 95814

From: (Public Agency)
Santa Cruz Local Agency Formation Commission
701 Ocean Street, Room 318-D
Santa Cruz CA 95060

To: ☒ Clerk of the Board
County of Santa Cruz
701 Ocean Street, Room 500
Santa Cruz CA 95060

Project Title: Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District Service and Sphere of Influence Review

Project Location: The cemetery was formed in 1955 to serve the communities in the southern portion of Santa Cruz County, such as Aptos and the City of Watsonville. The District also serves a portion of Monterey County, including Pajaro, Las Lomas, and Aromas. PVPCD operates pursuant to the California Public Cemetery District Law (Health and Safety Code Sections 9000 – 9093). **The District's service area** encompasses 165.71 square miles: Santa Cruz County consists of 117.61 square miles and the remaining 48.10 square miles are located in Monterey County. A vicinity map depicting the District's jurisdictional and sphere boundaries is attached (refer to Attachment A).

Project Location City: N/A

Project Location County: Santa Cruz County

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project: The report is for use by the Local Agency Formation Commission in conducting a statutorily required review and update process. The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act requires that the Commission conduct periodic reviews and updates of spheres of influence of all cities and districts in Santa Cruz County (Government Code section 56425). It also requires LAFCO to conduct a review of municipal services before adopting sphere updates (Government Code section 56430). Santa Cruz LAFCO has prepared a municipal service review, and sphere of influence update for the District. The purpose of the report is to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of public services by the District, in accordance with the statutory requirements outlined in the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Local Agency Formation Commission of Santa Cruz County. The LAFCO public hearing for this proposal is scheduled for 9:00 a.m. on June 4, 2025.

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Santa Cruz Local Agency Formation Commission

Exempt Status: (check one)

- ☐ Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
☐ Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
☐ Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269 (b)(c));
☐ Categorical Exemption: State type and section number
☐ Statutory Exemptions: State code number
☒ Other: The activity is not a project subject to CEQA.

Reason Why Project is Exempt: The LAFCO action does not change the services or the planned service area of the County Service Area. There is no possibility that the activity may have a significant impact on the environment--State CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3).

Lead Agency Contact Person: Joe A. Serrano

Area Code/Phone Extension: 831-454-2055

Signature: _____ Date: June 5, 2025
 Joe A. Serrano, Executive Officer

☒ Signed by Lead Agency



**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that at 9:00 a.m., Wednesday, June 4, 2025, the Local Agency Formation Commission of Santa Cruz County (LAFCO) will hold public hearings on the following items:

- **Comprehensive Sanitation Service and Sphere of Influence Review:** Consideration of a countywide service and sphere review for the following ten sanitation districts – Bear Creek Estates Wastewater System, Davenport County Sanitation District, Freedom County Sanitation District, Salsipuedes Sanitary District, Santa Cruz County Sanitation District, and County Service Areas 2, 5, 7, 10, and 20.
- **Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District (PVPCD) Service and Sphere of Influence Review:** Consideration of a service and sphere review for the only cemetery district in Santa Cruz County.

The purpose of both reports is to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of municipal services by each subject agency, in accordance to the statutory requirements outlined in the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act.

In compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), LAFCO staff is scheduled to prepare a Categorical Exemption for the proposals listed above. Instructions for members of the public to participate in-person or remotely are available in the Agenda and Agenda Packet: <https://santacruzlafco.org/meetings/>. During the meeting, the Commission will consider oral or written comments from any interested person. Maps, written reports, environmental review documents and further information can be obtained by contacting LAFCO's staff at (831) 454-2055 or from LAFCO's website at www.santacruzlafco.org. LAFCO does not discriminate on the basis of disability, and no person shall, by reason of a disability, be denied the benefits of its services, programs or activities. If you wish to attend this meeting and require special assistance in order to participate, please contact the LAFCO office at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting to make arrangements.

A blue ink signature of Joe A. Serrano, written in a cursive style.

Joe A. Serrano
Executive Officer
Date: May 15, 2025

LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY
RESOLUTION NO. 2025-08

On the motion of Commissioner
duly seconded by Commissioner
the following resolution is adopted:

RESOLUTION OF THE LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION
APPROVING THE 2025 SERVICE AND SPHERE OF INFLUENCE REVIEW
FOR THE PAJARO VALLEY PUBLIC CEMETERY DISTRICT

The Local Agency Formation Commission of Santa Cruz County (the “Commission”) does hereby resolve, determine, and order as follows:

1. In accordance with Government Code Sections 56425, 56427, and 56430, the Commission has initiated and conducted the 2023 Service and Sphere Review for the Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District (“District”).
2. The Commission’s Executive Officer has given notice of a public hearing by this Commission of the service and sphere of influence review in the form and manner prescribed by law.
3. The Commission held a public hearing on June 4, 2025, and at the hearing, the Commission heard and received all oral and written protests, objections, and evidence that were presented.
4. This approval of the 2025 Service and Sphere of Influence Review for the District is exempt under the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) because this Commission action does not change the services or the planned service area of the subject agency. There is no possibility that the activity may have a significant impact on the environment. This action qualifies for a Notice of Exemption under CEQA and staff is directed to file the same.
5. The Commission hereby approves the 2025 Service and Sphere of Influence Review for the Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District.
6. The Commission hereby approves the Service Review Determinations, as shown on Exhibit A.
7. The Commission hereby approves the Sphere of Influence Determinations, as shown on Exhibit B.
8. The Commission hereby expands the sphere boundary for the District to include the unserved Prunedale community located in Monterey County, as shown in Exhibit C.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Local Agency Formation Commission of Santa Cruz County this 4th day of June 2025.

AYES:

NOES:

ABSTAIN:

MANU KOENIG, CHAIRPERSON

Attest:

Joe A. Serrano
Executive Officer

Approved as to form:

Joshua Nelson
LAFCO Counsel

EXHIBIT A
PAJARO VALLEY PUBLIC CEMETERY DISTRICT
2025 SERVICE REVIEW DETERMINATIONS

- 1. Growth and population projections for the affected area.**
PVPCD encompasses over 166 square miles. It is estimated that approximately 96,000 residents currently live within PVPCD's jurisdiction, mostly in the Watsonville area. LAFCO staff projects that the District's population may reach 99,000 by 2040.
- 2. The location and characteristics of any disadvantaged unincorporated communities within or contiguous to the sphere of influence.**
PVPCD is not subject to SB 244 because it does not provide water, sewer, or fire service.
- 3. Present and planned capacity of public facilities, adequacy of public services, and infrastructure needs or deficiencies including needs or deficiencies related to sewers, municipal and industrial water, and structural fire protection in any disadvantaged, unincorporated communities within or contiguous to the sphere of influence.**
PVPCD provides burial services through five different cemeteries. Only the Valley Public Cemetery has traditional gravesites available for purchase, and the District anticipates having approximately 10 years of capacity remaining at Valley Public. The District's ability to acquire property adjacent to existing facilities is limited, and so PVPCD is seeking an additional cemetery site within its jurisdictional limits.
- 4. Financial ability of agencies to provide services.**
PVPCD's primary source of revenue is from property taxes. The District has experienced annual surpluses in six out of the last seven fiscal years (2018 to 2024). LAFCO staff believes that this positive trend may continue as the District's budgetary practices continue to accurately cover annual expenses.
- 5. Status of, and opportunities for, shared facilities.**
The District is an active member of both the California Association of Public Cemeteries and the Public Cemetery Alliance. LAFCO encourages more collaborative efforts with neighboring cemetery districts and local agencies, such as the City of Watsonville.
- 6. Accountability for community service needs, including governmental structure and operational efficiencies.**
The District currently has a website, but it does not meet the requirements under SB 929. LAFCO encourages PVPCD to continue updating the website for more transparency.
- 7. Any other matter related to effective or efficient service delivery, as required by commission policy.**
No additional local LAFCO policies are specifically relevant to this service review.

EXHIBIT B
PAJARO VALLEY PUBLIC CEMETERY DISTRICT
2025 SPHERE OF INFLUENCE DETERMINATIONS

1. The present and planned land uses in the area, including agricultural and open-space lands.

The present and planned land uses are based on the general plans from the County and the City of Watsonville, which range from urban to rural uses. General plans anticipate growth centered on existing urban areas and the maintenance of agricultural production, rural residential uses, and environmental protection in rural areas. Land use designations within most of the five cemeteries are zoned as Public Facilities or Open Space. The area within Day Valley Cemetery is zoned as Residential-Suburban by the County.

2. The present and probable need for public facilities and services in the area.

The service needs in the area are the maintenance of the five cemeteries, and the expansion of cemetery facilities within 10 years.

3. The present capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public services that the agency provides or is authorized to provide.

The District owns and maintains five cemeteries covering a total of 36 acres. Four of the cemeteries have no spaces remaining for sale, but they do have room for interments in previously sold plots. The District has approximately 10 years' worth of space remaining at the Valley Public Cemetery. The District recognizes this infrastructure need and is looking to acquire land for a new cemetery.

4. The existence of any social or economic communities of interest in the area if the commission determines that they are relevant to the agency.

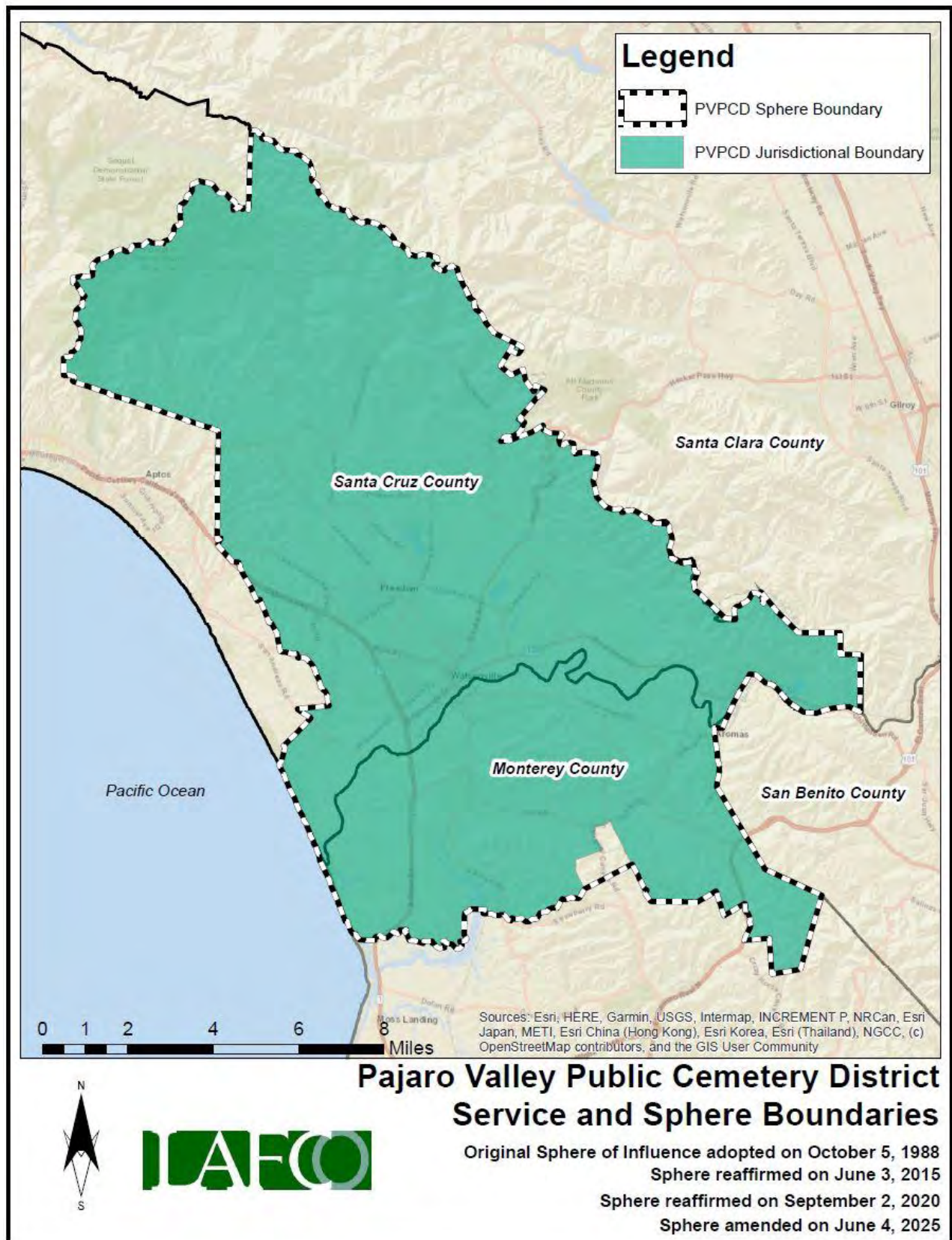
The District provides services to the Pajaro Valley. This is a social and economic community of interest which is relevant to the provision of public services provided by the Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District.

5. For an update of a sphere of influence of a city or special district that provides public facilities or services related to sewers, municipal and industrial water, or structural fire protection, that occurs pursuant to subdivision (g) on or after July 1, 2012, the present and probable need for those public facilities and services of any disadvantaged unincorporated communities within the existing sphere of influence.

The District does not provide services related to sewers, municipal and industrial water, or structural fire protection. Therefore, this determination is not applicable.

EXHIBIT C
PAJARO VALLEY PUBLIC CEMETERY DISTRICT
SPHERE OF INFLUENCE MAP

LAFCO expands sphere boundary for the cemetery district.





Santa Cruz Local Agency Formation Commission

Date: June 4, 2025
To: LAFCO Commissioners
From: Joe Serrano, Executive Officer
Subject: **Fire-related Projects – Status Update**

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION

Santa Cruz LAFCO continues to play a key role in exploring service and governance efficiency opportunities with local agencies, including but not limited to the 12 fire districts in Santa Cruz County. During the past year, LAFCO staff has been collaborating with various fire agencies to determine if there are any opportunities to maximize existing resources, elevate service delivery, and meet the unique demands from their respective constituents. This staff report provides an update on all the fire-related projects within the county.

It is recommended the Commission direct staff to continue working with the fire agencies on their respective projects and develop a governance options study for the Felton Fire Protection District.

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT:

October 2021 marked a significant milestone in Santa Cruz LAFCO history. The Commission adopted a countywide fire report that analyzed the existing fire agencies. The Countywide Fire Protection Service & Sphere Review sparked interest from various fire agencies, led to multiple LAFCO presentations and discussions, helped launch the reorganization of the Branciforte Fire Protection District, and reinforced the fact that the affected fire agencies, the County, and LAFCO play a critical role in the current and future delivery of fire protection and emergency medical services in Santa Cruz County. The Commission's analysis of the collected data and identification of possible solutions clearly demonstrated how potential changes of organization can come to fruition through joint efforts between the affected agencies and LAFCO. This collaborative effort continues to this day. Table A on page 2 provides an overview of all the fire-related projects that LAFCO is currently working on. A summary of each project is also available in this staff report.

County Service Area 48 Reorganization Analysis

In August 2024, the Commission received a fire study developed by AP Triton which analyzed the financial impact to CSA 48 if the fire agencies in Santa Cruz County annexed areas within their sphere. This report led to the formation of a stakeholder group, with representatives from the County, CalFIRE, and LAFCO, to evaluate the transition of CSA 48 as a dependent fire agency into an independent fire protection district. The study will cover the proposed governance, level of service, operational structure, financial capacity, and sustainability as a new special district. The group has been meeting on a regular basis since August to develop a transition study that will be reviewed and considered by the affected boards (LAFCO and the Board of Supervisors). The goal is to complete this transition study before the end of the 2025 calendar year.

Table A: Overview of Fire Projects

Project	Affected Agencies	Description	Timeline / Deadline
CSA 48 Reorganization	County (CSA 48) and CalFIRE	<p align="center">Status: Ongoing</p> <p>The affected agencies and LAFCO are exploring the concept of transitioning CSA 48 into an independent special district.</p> <p>A transition plan/study is being developed.</p>	<p>Group effort started in August 2024;</p> <p>Draft transition plan may be available by October 2025</p>
Pajaro Valley FPD Reorganization	County (CSA 48), CalFIRE, and Pajaro Valley Fire Protection District	<p align="center">Status: Ongoing</p> <p>LAFCO is processing an application submitted by PVFPD that would dissolve the district and concurrently annex the area into CSA 48.</p> <p>LAFCO is currently soliciting comments from affected / interested local agencies. Multiple community meetings will occur in the coming months.</p>	<p>Application received on May2, 2025;</p> <p>Commission may consider the reorganization by January 2026</p>
Fire Memorandum of Understanding	City of Santa Cruz, Central Fire District, and Scotts Valley Fire Protection District	<p align="center">Status: Pending</p> <p>The affected agencies and LAFCO continue to explore shared services opportunities and recently considered adopting an MOU to develop a feasibility study.</p> <p>The MOU is currently on pause as the affected agencies and LAFCO determine next steps.</p>	<p>Group effort started in July 2023;</p> <p>Group will discuss next steps in early-June 2025</p>
Felton FPD Governance Options	Felton Fire Protection District	<p align="center">Status: Pending</p> <p>The affected agency is currently facing internal and external issues, and may need assistance in determining their future.</p> <p>After commission approval, LAFCO will develop a report which will analyze all possible options to ensure that the Felton community receives adequate fire protection and emergency medical services.</p>	<p>Ben Lomond FPD-Felton FPD Shared Agreement started in November 2024 but expiring on June 6, 2025;</p> <p>LAFCO is expected to develop a report identifying possible governance options by September 2025</p>

Pajaro Valley Fire Protection District Reorganization

The Pajaro Valley Fire Protection District Board of Directors adopted a resolution on April 24, 2025 to dissolve the district and concurrently annex the dissolved area into CSA 48. The District submitted an application to start the reorganization effort in May 2025. Since then, LAFCO has been coordinating with the County and PVFPD to discuss the entire reorganization process. LAFCO has already distributed a status letter (which indicates what is missing in the application) to the applicant and a referral letter (which summarizes the proposal and solicits comments) to the affected/interested agencies. Since this proposed reorganization involves approximately 6,000 residents, LAFCO will be co-hosting at least four community meetings in the Pajaro Valley area to ensure that the residents are aware of the reorganization and why it is being considered. These events will occur between July to November 2025. LAFCO staff believes that the proposal will be ready for commission consideration by January/February 2026.

Fire Memorandum of Understanding (Potential Fire Study)

LAFCO staff has been part of a stakeholder group since July 2023 with representatives from the City of Santa Cruz and Central Fire Protection District to explore shared services opportunities. The Scotts Valley Fire Protection District later joined the group in November 2024. Based on the ongoing discussions, the group initially agreed to hire an outside consultant to analyze the benefits and constraints of potential shared services agreements, including but not limited to possible reorganizations and/or consolidations through the development of this feasibility study. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was developed to formalize the collaboration between the four parties. The City of Santa Cruz and LAFCO both approved the MOU during their respective board meetings in May; however, the Central Fire District Board decided not to adopt the MOU. Scotts Valley Fire Protection District decided to table the item until the affected parties discussed next steps. The group will meet in early-June to discuss how to move forward in exploring shared services opportunities with or without an MOU.

Felton Fire Protection District Governance Options Analysis

Felton Fire Protection District (FFPD) was formed in October 1946 and encompasses nearly six square miles of territory located in the San Lorenzo Valley. In 2021, FFPD operated with one full-time fire chief, one part-time employee and 28 volunteer firefighters. Since then, FFPD has seen four different fire chiefs, board member resignations, a reduction in volunteers, and the discontinuation of a two-year agreement with Ben Lomond Fire Protection District (BLFPD) for operational services after only six months in effect. The recent governance and operational issues facing FFPD has tasked local agencies, including LAFCO, to explore possible options to ensure that the Felton community receives adequate fire protection and emergency medical services. The agreement between BLFPD and FFPD is expected to expire on June 6 – leaving FFPD without a fire chief or any administrative support. It is LAFCO's understanding that a potential agreement with Zayante Fire Protection District (ZFPD) may be considered to address this imminent dilemma. However, this would be a temporary solution offered by ZFPD to give FFPD additional time to consider their options. Therefore, LAFCO staff has determined that a governance options analysis may be helpful to determine FFPD's future. The proposed analysis would be completed in-house with direct coordination with affected and interested local agencies. The report will be similar to the analysis conducted for the Big Basin Water Company back in March 2024¹. It is recommended that the commission direct staff to complete this analysis and present the findings by September 3, 2025.

¹ 3-6-24 BBWC Staff Report: https://santacruzlafco.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/6a.0-BBWC-Staff-Report_Hyperlinked.pdf

Conclusion

Fire agencies throughout the state and nation continue to struggle in addressing growing costs, the decline in volunteer and professional firefighters, and the rise of year-round “fire seasons.” Additionally, the population in Santa Cruz County is increasing while also aging, raising expectations for timely emergency medical services along with reliable fire protection services. Today, fire agencies are more open to exploring alternative methods to address these shared challenges and costs. More importantly, our local fire agencies now see this Commission as a resource for efficient governance and have invited LAFCO to be part of the solution. It is recommended that the Commission direct staff to continue working with our local fire agencies as well as to conduct a government options analysis for the Felton Fire Protection District.

Respectfully Submitted,



Joe A. Serrano
Executive Officer



Santa Cruz Local Agency Formation Commission

Date: June 4, 2025
To: LAFCO Commissioners
From: Joe Serrano, Executive Officer
Subject: **LAFCO Meeting Schedule - Proposed Cancellation of August Meeting**

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION

LAFCO approves a meeting schedule at the end of each calendar year. The Commission adopted the meeting schedule for the 2025 calendar year on November 6, 2024. Due to a staff conflict, the Commission will consider cancelling the August 6, 2025 Meeting.

It is recommended that the Commission cancel the August 6, 2025 LAFCO Meeting and reconvene at the September 3, 2025 LAFCO Meeting.

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT:

LAFCO's Executive Officer is expecting the birth of their second child during the first week of August. Being on standby to support their pregnant spouse is a top priority to the Executive Officer. Therefore, staff is recommending that the Commission cancel the August 6, 2025 meeting and reconvene the following month on September 3, 2025. It is important to note that the cancellation of the August meeting does not negatively affect any ongoing or scheduled projects.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Joe A. Serrano', is written over the typed name.

Joe A. Serrano
Executive Officer



Date: June 4, 2025
To: LAFCO Commissioners
From: Joe Serrano, Executive Officer
Subject: **Educational Workshops Update**

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION

LAFCO has hosted or participated in successful educational workshops over the past few years to help local and statewide agencies explore solutions to common issues, share best practices, learn about current and new legislation, and understand the rules and regulations that govern their board and staff members. LAFCO staff continues to conduct and schedule educational workshops during the 2025 calendar year. This agenda item is for informational purposes only and does not require any action. Therefore, it is recommended that the Commission receive and file the Executive Officer's report.

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT:

As the Commission enters the halfway mark of 2025, it is evident that some local and statewide agencies are currently facing various issues - such as lack of staffing, financial constraints, inefficient public participation and transparency, and/or legislative awareness. For these reasons, LAFCO sees value in hosting and/or participating in educational workshops to help promote best practices and provide additional resources. Below is an update on recently completed and upcoming workshops.

Water Educational Workshops (Private Water Systems)

There are 132 private water systems throughout Santa Cruz County. In 2022, the Commission completed a countywide service review that not only analyzed the water districts in the county but also the private water systems¹. The intent of this additional evaluation was to provide more information about these unique local entities, but more importantly, it allowed LAFCO to build working relationships with representatives from these systems. As a result, LAFCO was invited as a guest speaker to the April 2, 2025 Small Water Systems Forum hosted by the County. LAFCO was asked to explain its role with consolidations or emergency interties between small systems and public agencies.

Since the April meeting, the Drought Response Interagency & Partners (DRIP) Collaborative reached out to LAFCO for additional assistance. DRIP was formed to help daylight and provide recommendations on shared issues relating to drought management in California. This year, DRIP is analyzing the correlation between water droughts and land use planning as well as evaluating LAFCO's role in decision making for the public and private water systems. Given the Commission's interest in making water systems more resilient, and our position with CALAFCO, Santa Cruz LAFCO has been invited to be part of DRIP's stakeholder group. This may lead to another educational event.

¹ 2022 Water MSR: <https://santacruzlafco.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Countywide-Water-MSR-Adopted-Version.pdf>

Road Educational Workshop (Road CSAs)

There are 34 road-related county service areas (CSAs) throughout Santa Cruz County. These CSAs, under County oversight, are tasked with providing enhanced or extended road services to 34 different communities. The vast majority of these CSAs were formed in the 1970s and 1980s and while their existence remains relevant, their operations, coordination, and transparency are in need of overall improvement based on findings from LAFCO's countywide service review completed in 2022². LAFCO staff is currently coordinating with the County to co-host a workshop tailored to help the road CSAs learn more about best practices, common issues, and understand their statutory requirements. Staff is hoping to conduct this educational workshop later in the year.

CALAFCO Webinars

Santa Cruz LAFCO is a member of the California Association of LAFCOs (CALAFCO). CALAFCO serves as a statewide organization dedicated to assisting member LAFCOs with educational, technical, and legislative resources that otherwise would not be available. In addition to the staff workshop and annual conference held each year, CALAFCO also offered webinars as an online resource for information sharing among the various LAFCOs and other governmental agencies. March 2024 was the last webinar offered by CALAFCO. Santa Cruz LAFCO's Executive Officer, also acting as the Coastal Region Officer, was tasked to revive the annual webinars. Staff is scheduled to host three CALAFCO webinars in 2025:

- **Webinar #1: "Commissioner Best Practices"** (July) – this will be tailored to commissioners and will focus on identifying ways to be an effective board member;
- **Webinar #2: "Commissioner 201"** (August) – this will also be tailored to commissioners and will focus on understanding the Brown Act and Public Records Act in today's world; and
- **Webinar #3: "GIS 101"** (September) – this will be tailored for LAFCO staff members and will provide a crash course on how to use ArcGIS for LAFCO projects.

The first two webinars may be co-hosted with the California Special Districts Association (CSDA). The third session will be co-hosted with the County of Santa Cruz, specifically their GIS/IT Department.

Other Upcoming Events – CSDA Annual Conference

The California Special Districts Association (CSDA) is a 501c(6), not-for-profit association that was formed in 1969 to promote good governance and improved core local services through professional development, advocacy, and other services for all types of independent special districts. Since 1969, CSDA has been offering its members cost-efficient programs and representation at the State Capitol and boasts a membership of over 1,300 organizations throughout California. There continues to be effective synergy between the two organizations – that is why CSDA has invited Santa Cruz LAFCO for the second consecutive year to present at their annual conference in Monterey later this year (late-August). Your Executive Officer will join Marin LAFCO's Executive Officer and a board member from the Vandenberg Village Community Services District (Santa Barbara County) to discuss the value LAFCOs can offer to special districts.

² 2022 Road MSR: <https://santacruzlafco.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Countywide-CSA-Road-MSR-Adopted-Version.pdf>

Conclusion

The goal of these workshops is to facilitate greater discussion and hopefully lead to improvements within the attendee's organization. If successful, this may lead to future workshops or even routine stakeholder meetings between representatives and Santa Cruz LAFCO staff to develop solutions to other shared issues that will benefit their respective constituents going forward.

Respectfully Submitted,



Joe A. Serrano
Executive Officer



Santa Cruz Local Agency Formation Commission

Date: June 4, 2025
To: LAFCO Commissioners
From: Francisco Estrada, LAFCO Analyst
Subject: **Press Articles during the Month of April and May**

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION

LAFCO staff monitors local newspapers, publications, and other media outlets for any news affecting local agencies or LAFCOs around the State. Articles are presented to the Commission on a periodic basis. This agenda item is for informational purposes only and does not require any action. Therefore, it is recommended that the Commission receive and file the Executive Officer's report.

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

The following is a summary of recent press articles. Full articles are attached.

Article #1: "Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley, Central Fire explore merger". The article, dated April 21, informs the public on efforts by the City of Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley Fire Protection District, and Central Fire District to explore potential plans for the departments to share services or changes of organization. Through a feasibility study, the collaborative group aims to identify solutions that improve response times, maximize resources, and ensure long-term sustainability for the agencies. With recent ballot measures that have failed to increase funding, the study is expected to provide recommendations on ways to increase coordination to strengthen fire response times amongst the agencies and support wider public safety.

Article #2: "Ukiah's annexation proposal: understanding the next steps in expanding city boundaries". The article, dated April 23, details the decision by the Ukiah City Council to approve the annexation of territory into their city limits, which will now allow them to move forward with submission of a formal application to Mendocino County LAFCO. The article also explains the steps and nuances of the LAFCO annexation process and states that the annexation process is expected to begin in the summer. Local farmers, community members, and other concerned residents attended the council meeting to express concern, opposition, or confusion about the annexation process.

Article #3: "La Jolla's Separation from San Diego Moves Forward Following Signature Gathering Confirmation". The article, dated May 1, announces that the Association for the City of La Jolla was successful in submitting enough signatures to move the process of cityhood forward. Next in the process is for San Diego LAFCO to draft a final certified financial analysis, with the goal of triggering a citywide vote on whether La Jolla should break away from the city. Although many support the proposed action, the Mayor for the City of San Diego has expressed his opposition and has stated that the city will legally challenge the LAFCO annexation process.

Article #4: “Capitola Vice Mayor Alexander Pederson abruptly resigns from office”.

The article, dated May 9, announced the resignation of Vice Mayor Alexander Pederson from the Capitola City Council. This is the second resignation from the Capitola City Council to occur this year following the resignation of former Mayor Yvette Brooks. Mr. Pederson cites the purchase of a new home in the City of Santa Cruz and ongoing harassment as reasons he is stepping away. He was also facing a recall effort led by local residents who disagreed with his transportation stance.

Article #5: “Felton Fire ‘on thin ice’ after losing chief, service contract with Ben Lomond”.

The article, dated May 14, details to the public the decision by the Ben Lomond Fire Protection District (BLFPD) to cancel a two-year contract to provide the Felton Fire Protection District (FFPD) with a Chief, assistance in responding to calls, and helping train new volunteers. The current contract ends on June 8, but the board stated it would consider multiple options for service after the contract ends, including stipends for volunteers to cover a 24-hour shift, a contract with Zayante Fire Protection District (ZFPD), or the utilization of a private firefighter company.

Article #6: “Next hurdle for La Jolla cityhood effort may be legal action by San Diego”.

The article, dated May 15, details the decision by the San Diego City Council to proceed with litigation against San Diego LAFCO over its role in verifying petition signatures for the potential cityhood of La Jolla. The City of San Diego contends that the decision by LAFCO to overrule the registrar office undermines public confidence in the signature gathering process, but San Diego LAFCO staff say they will continue to remain open and transparent with the Commission, the City, applicants, and the public on the annexation process and status of the proposal.

Article #7: “County Fire set to take over fire protection services in South County”.

The article, dated May 15, provides an update to the public on Santa Clara LAFCO’s May 7 decision to consolidate fire protection services in the unincorporated southern portions of the county. After holding a protest hearing, the Commission received 470 protests against the proposed action, falling short of the threshold to initiate a special election or terminate the proposal. The purpose of the reorganization is to ensure the sustainability of fire protection services in the areas served by Santa Clara County Fire Department and to address longstanding fiscal challenges, including a multi-year structural budget deficit and an inability to meet long-term facility, apparatus, and staffing needs.

Article #8: “Sebastopol Fire Department reorganization with Gold Ridge to proceed”.

The article, dated May 16, provides an update to the public on Sonoma LAFCO’s decision to reorganize the Sebastopol Fire Department with the Gold Ridge Fire Protection District and subsequent protest hearing. The purpose of the reorganization is to provide better fire protection and emergency response while managing increasing costs. LAFCO reported receiving fewer than 200 total protests to the proposal at the protest hearing, well short of the thresholds needed to trigger a special election or terminate the proposal.

Article #9: “San Lorenzo Valley Water District seeks board applicants after director resigns”.

The article, dated May 18, announced that San Lorenzo Valley Water District is accepting applications to fill a board vacancy following the resignation of Director Jeff Hill. Director Hill cited increased family obligations as the reason for his resignation. The board will review applications and interview candidates before appointing a new director, which is also a seat up for reelection in November 2026.

Article #10: “2 Solano Cities Could Annex Some of California Forever’s Land. Here’s How”. The article, dated May 20, provides the public with an update on California Forever, a project with the intention of building a new city in southeastern Solano County. Currently, California Forever representatives and Suisun City and Rio Vista officials are in the process of drafting reimbursement agreements that would allow for them to explore the option of annexation. California Forever owns 60,000 acres in Solano County, but its proposed city would sit on only 17,500 acres and the article goes on to explain the role of LAFCO as part of this proposed new development.

Respectfully Submitted,



Francisco Estrada
LAFCO Analyst

Attachments:

1. “Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley, Central Fire explore merger”
2. “Ukiah’s annexation proposal: understanding the next steps in expanding city boundaries”
3. “La Jolla’s Separation from San Diego Moves Forward Following...”
4. “Capitola Vice Mayor Alexander Pederson abruptly resigns from office”
5. “Felton Fire ‘on thin ice’ after losing chief, service contract with Ben Lomond”
6. “Next hurdle for La Jolla cityhood effort may be legal action by San Diego”
7. “County Fire set to take over fire protection services in South County”
8. “Sebastopol Fire Department reorganization with Gold Ridge to proceed”
9. “San Lorenzo Valley Water District seeks board applicants after director resigns”
10. “2 Solano Cities Could Annex Some of California Forever’s Land. Here’s How”

santacruzlocal.org

Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley, Central Fire explore merger - Santa Cruz Local

Stephen Baxter

5–6 minutes

The Santa Cruz City Council is expected to formally approve the study's commission at the council's meeting Tuesday.

The City of Santa Cruz now runs its own fire department, while Scotts Valley Fire and Central Fire are independent special districts. The study would include potential plans for the departments to share services or consolidate entirely.

"This study allows us to explore ways to enhance fire protection services across our region," Santa Cruz City Manager Matt Huffaker wrote in an April 17 statement. "By working together, we can identify solutions that improve response times, maximize resources, and ensure long-term sustainability for our fire departments."

Members of the Santa Cruz Local Agency Formation Commission, or LAFCO, have signed a memorandum of understanding to conduct the study. A consultant will analyse the three agencies' fire services and "analyze possible consolidation strategies," Santa Cruz city spokesperson Erika Smart wrote in a statement.

Exploration of consolidation

The three agencies are expected to select the consultant to write the report in the coming weeks and start the study this year. "Community input will be encouraged at key milestones," Smart wrote.

The study is also expected to evaluate opportunities to pool staff, vehicles and equipment "while maintaining separate administrative structures,"

Smart wrote.

A separate 2024 LAFCO study considered the possibility of converting CSA 48, an area the county now provides fire protection, to an independent fire district that could absorb other struggling fire agencies.

Central Fire, Santa Cruz Fire and Scotts Valley Fire already help each other in emergency response through mutual aid, sending firefighters and engines to assist if a department needs help. The study is expected to look for ways to increase coordination to strengthen fire response and public safety.

The study also is expected to include:

- A review of each fire service's responsibilities, staff, facilities, equipment, policies and financial standing.
- An exploration of merging fire districts or changing fire district boundaries to improve response times.
- Weighing the costs and benefits of consolidation approaches and providing recommendations.

Failed ballot measures, desired upgrades

The Scotts Valley Fire Protection District covers roughly 30 square miles in and around the city of Scotts Valley, including areas that were served by Branciforte Fire Protection District before the districts merged in 2023.

In [2023](#) and [2024](#), voters rejected ballot measures that would have allowed Scotts Valley Fire to build a new fire station on land owned by the City of Scotts Valley on La Madrona Drive near the Hilton Hotel. It would have replaced a decades-old facility on Erba Lane that is not earthquake safe.

A new station on La Madrona Drive would reduce response times in the southern end of the district, Scotts Valley Fire Chief Mark Correia told Santa Cruz Local in 2024. The bond money also could have been used to fund repairs or to replace Scotts Valley Fire administrative offices.

Central Fire also asked voters to approve a bond measure in November 2024 and failed. The \$221 million bond measure would have paid for new

fire facilities and equipment. It needed more than 66% of the vote and received about 57.5% support. The average annual cost for homeowners would have been about \$200, according to a Central Fire report.

Central Fire merged with Aptos/La Selva Fire Protection District in 2021. The district has seven fire stations and covers much of mid-Santa Cruz County, including Capitola, Soquel, Aptos, Live Oak, La Selva Beach and Rio Del Mar.

Two of the department's seven fire engines and all three of its wildland fire trucks were in "poor" condition, according to a 2022 long-range master plan for the district. Central Fire stations in Soquel, Capitola and La Selva Beach stations are more than 50 years old and may need to be replaced or relocated, Central Fire Chief Jason Nee said in 2024.

Rob Oatey, the Santa Cruz Fire chief, said in 2024 that he wanted to build a [new \\$20 million training facility](#) for Santa Cruz Police and Fire to replace outdated training facilities inside and outside the city.

Oatey said a training center has been in his sights since he became interim fire chief in 2022. "Since I've taken over, it's sort of been one of my big goals and targets that I've been trying to tackle," Oatey said in 2024. "It would be used on a daily basis," he said.

"Residents rely on fire services during their most critical moments, and it is our responsibility to ensure they receive the highest standard of emergency care," Oatey wrote in an April 17 statement.

"As our communities continue to grow, fire protection services must evolve to meet their needs," Oatey wrote. "This study is an important step in exploring how regional cooperation could strengthen fire response and enhance public safety."

mendovoice.com

Ukiah's annexation proposal: understanding the next steps in expanding city boundaries

Sydney Fishman

6–8 minutes



Lake Mendocino Drive, located just outside the city of Ukiah, Calif., on Wednesday, April 23, 2025. Lake Mendocino Drive is one of the areas proposed for annexation. Ukiah has not yet officially submitted its annexation application to LAFCo but plans to do so by summer of 2025. (Sydney Fishman/Bay City News)

UKIAH, CA., 4/23/25 — Last week, [a tense debate unfolded at a Ukiah](#)

[City Council meeting](#), where city staff presented a proposal to annex the Willow area south of the city and a portion of Millview to the north. In a unanimous vote, the council agreed to move forward with the annexation proposal and allow city staff to submit an application to the Mendocino Local Agency Formation Commission.

Local farmers, community members and other concerned residents attended the meeting to voice concerns about the proposal. Many expressed confusion about how the annexation process works and how to file a formal complaint against the proposal.

Annexation is the process by which a city or town proposes to expand its boundaries to include surrounding unincorporated areas. If approved, those areas become part of the city, and residents eventually receive city services such as water, sewer, police and fire protection. Property taxes in annexed areas are then shared with the city government.

The city of Ukiah has not yet officially submitted its annexation proposal to LAFCo. The city's Community Development Department — which oversees planning, building inspection, business licensing, code enforcement and other services — is conducting a more detailed analysis of the proposed annexation, including financial impacts, the availability of services and other factors, before submitting the application.

According to LAFCo employees, the annexation process involves much more than simply submitting a proposal. The entity seeking annexation must first complete a comprehensive application, which includes an environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act, a plan for providing services, and a fiscal impact study.

LAFCo considers several factors before moving forward with an annexation proposal, including whether a city, such as Ukiah, can provide resources like utilities to the property owners being annexed. The commission also assesses the impact on fire and school districts and whether the proposal is consistent with the city's future plans.





The Lake Mendocino Estates sign at 530 Lake Mendocino Dr., located just outside the city of Ukiah, Calif., on Wednesday, April 23, 2025. Lake Mendocino Drive is one of the areas proposed for annexation. Ukiah has not yet officially submitted its annexation application to LAFCo but plans to do so by summer of 2025. (Sydney Fishman/Bay City News)

Once the city submits the application, it takes the city about four to six months after the annexation application is submitted for LAFCo to review the documents and then solicit feedback from the public.

After reviewing the application, LAFCo holds a public hearing with the commission to consider the application, and if the commission approves it, there will be a second public hearing called the “protest” hearing.

Before the protest hearing, LAFCo sends protests forms to all registered voters and landowners in the area proposed for annexation. Residents have no less than 30 days to sign and return the forms. If more than 50% of voters oppose the annexation, the proposal is terminated. If 25-50% of voters protest, an election is required. If under 25% of voters protest it, then the annexation moves forward without an election.

The hearings are open to the public, and LAFCo posts the dates and times on [its website](#) for those who wish to attend.

For the city of Ukiah, staff will present the LAFCo application documents at a City Council meeting this summer. To move the application forward, the council must approve the documents and issue a resolution — a formal statement granting final approval for that version of the proposal to be submitted to LAFCo.

If city staff submits the annexation application by the end of summer, LAFCo will take four to six months to process it as well as conduct the protest period. As a result, the annexation, if approved, likely will not happen until the end of 2025 or later.

“It just depends on how long that coordination is,” explained Uma Hinman, executive officer of Mendocino LAFCo, in an interview. “This [annexation] would not happen until the end of the year, maybe.”

The city of Ukiah’s proposed reorganization boundary map representing which areas outside of the city are proposed to be annexed. This map was presented at a Ukiah City Council meeting in Ukiah, Calif., on Wednesday, April 16, 2025. (City of Ukiah via Bay City News)

For City Councilmember Juan Orozco, the annexation proposal comes at a time when the city of Ukiah is looking to increase tax revenue to support its infrastructure. Orozco also noted that after speaking with constituents and hearing their comments at last week’s City Council meeting, he believes people are speculating about changes that are not likely to happen anytime soon.

“I don’t think people need to be concerned about having to let go of their cattle or anything like that — the kind of things the city might not normally allow within current city limits,” he added.

But some residents and business owners are concerned about the City Council moving forward with a proposal that could affect the livelihoods of local community members.

Ross Liberty, founder and president of Factory Pipe, a motorsports equipment company based in Ukiah, believes that the city is making a hasty decision that needs more careful consideration.

“I think the city’s idea to expand the boundary ... is rash and ill-advised,” Liberty said in an interview. He added that annexing new areas could divert crucial tax revenue away from the county. “In five or 10 years, when the county loses that revenue, it could be in dire economic straits,” he said.

Liberty added that if city staff wants to move forward with a major decision, they need to seek more public input from residents to understand whether it’s something the community supports.

“Everybody wants to say they believe in democracy, and this is a big decision,” he noted. “They don’t do a single poll, they choose not to ask the voters how they feel. This is the biggest decision to affect the county or this area ever, voters should be involved and have a say.”

To learn more about LAFCo’s work in Mendocino County, visit their website by using [this link](#).



californiaglobe.com

La Jolla's Separation from San Diego Moves Forward Following Signature Gathering Confirmation – California Globe

CriticalDfence9 says:

5–6 minutes

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Downtown San Diego Sunset. (Photo: Dancestrokes/Shutterstock)

San Diego stands to lose taxes that contribute 6% to the city budget, and 3% of their total population

By [Evan Symon](#), May 1, 2025 8:45 pm

01 May 2025 8:45 pm

An [effort](#) by the [Association for the City of La Jolla](#) to secede from the city of San Diego reached a critical milestone this week following confirmation that enough signatures have been verified to move the process to cityhood forward.

According to the San Diego Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), the agency in charge of new city creation in San Diego County, the ACLJ has collected more than the required 6,750 signatures needed to continue on with the process. Up next in the process is drafting a final certified financial analysis, with an ultimate goal by supporters being a vote for all citizens in San Diego on whether or not La Jolla could break away from the city.

"It's a relief. It's like, finally, this is done," said ACLJ Vice President Diane Kane. "We would like to make this the jewel it was many years ago. It's lost a lot of its luster, and we just want to fix it for everybody."

However, despite the high number of signatures in favor of the split, many within the city of San Diego have remained dead set against a split and have challenged the validity of the signatures. Leading the movement to keep La Jolla and its 46,000 residents within the city has been San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria. In particular, Gloria was incensed this week that LAFCO convinced the San Diego Registrar of Voter's to undo their earlier decision to not count some of the signatures on the ACLJ petition. As the decision helped moved the number of valid signatures over the needed amount, Gloria vowed legal action to help the stop the break away attempt.

"The City formally objected to many of LAFCO staff's interpretations, including the allowance of names not matching registered voter data, incorrect addresses and ZIP codes, incomplete addresses, and illegible submissions already rejected by the Registrar," said Gloria in a statement this week. "To ensure full transparency regarding LAFCO's override of the ROV's Certification of Insufficiency, the City will issue a formal Letter of Objection and continue to explore the legal options available."

A La Jolla breakaway

For a long time, La Jolla's roughly 46,000 of San Diego's roughly 1.38 million residents, have wanted to separate from San Diego. Many in the neighborhood feel like needed projects there, including infrastructure, public safety issues, and road repairs, have taken a backseat to other areas of the city despite the neighborhood giving a lot through taxes to the city. In 2023, the ACLJ pushed forward and [began studies and paperwork](#) on making La Jolla a city.

Unlike other recent attempts by neighborhoods in cities like Los Angeles that never made it past that phase, the ACLJ managed to do so. In May 2024, they moved onto the signature gathering phase, and for months, gathered the needed 25% of all registered voters in La Jolla, or about 6,500 people, in order to place the issue on the ballot. The issue, initially written off by many in San Diego, finally began to be taken seriously [in November](#) when the number of signatures began to climb. While Gloria and others in San Diego tried to convince those in La Jolla to stay, it was too late. This led to the announcement that enough signatures were gathered, as well as Gloria's attempt to stop the secession. And, despite the effort, the ACLJ has said that they are going to continue on with the process.

"The Local Agency Formation Commission follows a different part of the code to state law," added ACLJ treasurer Ed Witt. "I respect the mayor. I know Todd is a great guy, but he's wrong. We think we can take that burden away from the city for our infrastructure and save them money and save them liability and make La Jolla and the city of San Diego better for everyone."

Should La Jolla successfully become its own city, San Diego stands to lose taxes that contribute 6% to the city budget, and 3% of their total population.



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Evan V. Symon is the Senior Editor for the California Globe. Prior to the Globe, he reported for the Pasadena Independent, the Cleveland Plain Dealer, and was head of the Personal Experiences section at Cracked. He can be reached at evan@californiaglobe.com.



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Capitola Vice Mayor Alexander Pedersen abruptly resigns from office

PK Hattis

7–9 minutes

CAPITOLA — Capitola Vice Mayor and first term Councilmember Alexander Pedersen abruptly resigned at the start of the council's meeting Thursday, citing his recent purchase and planned relocation to a new home in Santa Cruz as well as what he referred to as a sustained "campaign of legal harassment and intimidation" from a local community group.

"When I ran for office, I did so with an intention to serve this community and to have a positive impact. I had no expectation of the level of vitriol that would be expressed by this small but vocal minority," said Pedersen. "While I strongly believe that it is wrong to validate this type of behavior, I also have a responsibility to ensure the security and emotional well-being of my family."

Pedersen's resignation was immediate, and he did not return to the council's meeting after it had completed its closed session.

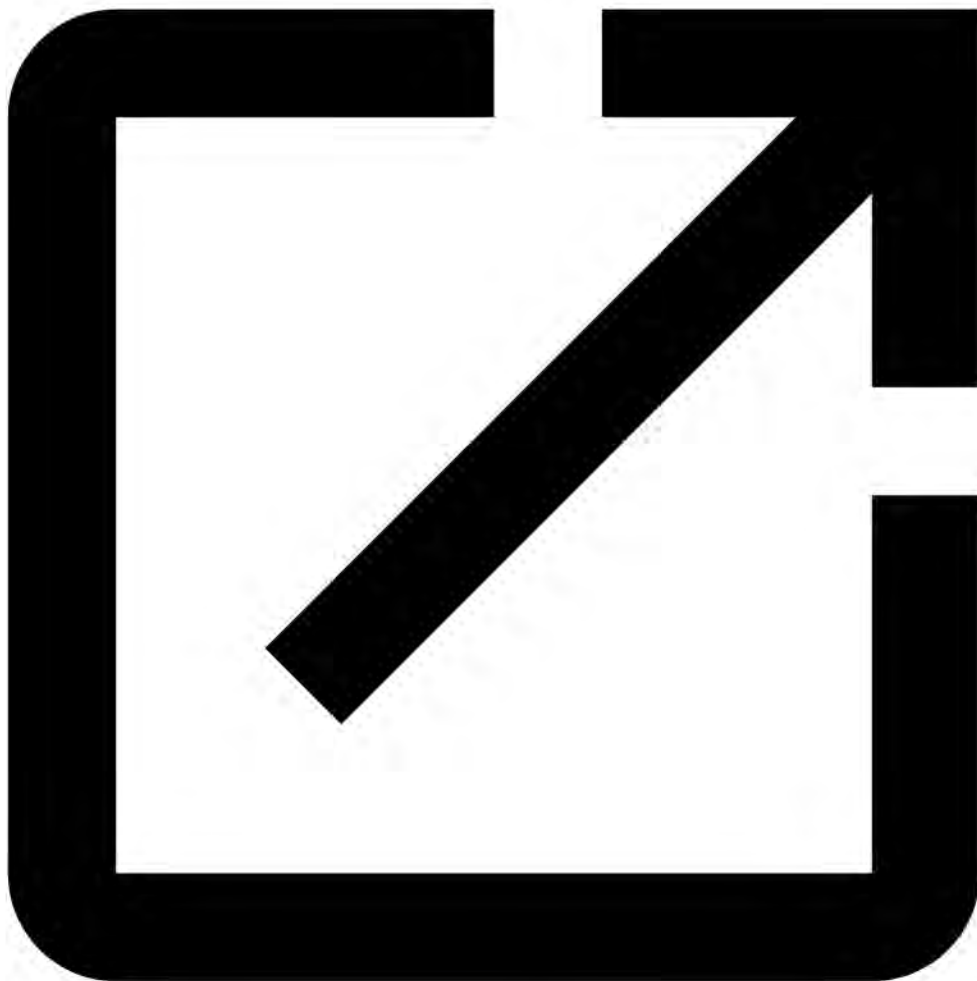
Pedersen told the Sentinel he and his wife became first-time homeowners when their purchase of a Santa Cruz residence closed in mid February. He said he notified the city of a change of address within Capitola prior to a move on March 15.

Pedersen stressed at the meeting that he didn't believe the acquisition was cause for concern, but the kind of mortgage he and his wife obtained required that one of them live at the new Santa Cruz property for the first

year of ownership. Pedersen continued to rent and live in Capitola while his wife moved into their new home, but he said the toll of living apart has been emotionally and financially difficult.

“I want to state clearly that it is not uncommon or unethical for elected officials to own property outside of the district while living within the community in which they serve,” said Pedersen. “And I do not believe that I am the only person on this council — currently or previously — to do so.”

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A Capitola spokesperson told the Sentinel Friday that Pedersen notified the city of his home purchase April 24 and that there is no policy prohibiting city councilmembers from purchasing property anywhere. The spokesperson added that rules from the state's Fair Political Practices Commission require elected officials to disclose property purchased within the city and within two miles of city limits.

The spokesperson also confirmed that there were past instances of Capitola councilmembers owning property or homes outside of the city limits.

Pedersen added that his resignation also comes after an eight-month effort to remove him from office by a local group that refer to themselves as the Concerned Citizens of Capitola. A member of this group, TJ Welch, announced at the [council's Jan. 30 meeting](#) that the group had served Pedersen with a notice of an intent to recall and accused him of several violations related to residency requirements, his oath of office for decision making as a member of the county's Regional Transportation Commission and financial conflicts of interest.

Moments later, Pedersen delivered a lengthy refutation of each accusation, some of which the Sentinel was able to corroborate, and suggested the effort was politically motivated due to disagreements about the high-profile Coastal Rail Trail transportation project along the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line, including a segment that passes through the city.

Pedersen said at Thursday's meeting that the group continued to spread harmful lies about him and have contacted his supervisor and colleagues at work in an effort to jeopardize his employment.

Reached by phone Friday, Welch declined to comment on Pedersen's resignation and took the opportunity to share frustration with the lack of media coverage of the recall petition effort from January.

The notice of intention to recall was confirmed by the Capitola City Clerk's Office and the next step was for the group to circulate the recall petition and collect enough signatures to force a recall election. As of Thursday,

according to the city clerk, the group was still in the signature collection phase, which required them to get 25% of the city's more than 7,000 registered voters to lend their signatures in support of a recall election. The deadline to return those signatures to the city for review is July 7, according to the clerk.

Pedersen, elected to his first term in 2022, is the second member of the Capitola City Council to resign this year. He was [preceded by former Mayor Yvette Brooks](#), who stepped away from the dais after six years in office to accept a role as CEO of United Way of Santa Cruz County.

Brooks' resignation kicked off an almost monthlong process to fill the empty seat. After initially deciding to replace Brooks with one of the two candidates that ran for City Council last November but failed to receive enough votes to claim victory at the time, the council pivoted and chose instead to create an open process that attracted eight applicants.

Councilmember Margaux Morgan, who was the third highest vote-getter in the November election, was [chosen to finish](#) the final two years of Brooks' term and she pledged not to run again.

Comments from Pedersen's former colleagues were relatively brief, with all thanking him for his service, wishing him well and some congratulating him and his wife on their newfound homeownership.

"I'm sorry that it came to this. I know it's a very emotional decision that you had to make, and it was a strong one," said Morgan. "Hopefully your work for the community and neighboring communities won't stop here."

Councilmember Melinda Orbach said she was sad to see Pedersen go.

"But I know that it's hard serving this city; I've felt it for the last few months," she said. "I know it was a really difficult decision for you, but ultimately it's the right one because you should always, always put yourself and your family first."

Pedersen's decision came three weeks after the council hosted one of its most controversial meetings in recent memory that concluded with it

rejecting a proposal to relocate a section of the rail trail project outside of the rail line corridor. At the same time, the local legislators made clear that their reading of Measure L — passed by Capitola voters in 2018 — specified that the trail must be [developed exclusively inside the rail corridor](#) within Capitola city limits.

Despite some voiced disagreements, the council's decision was unanimous, while the issue bitterly divided the public, with community members spending hours pushing hard for their preferred design scenario.

Orbach and Pedersen both shared that the policy dispute had tipped into inappropriate territory. Orbach detailed an instance where a member of the public wandered through her neighborhood trying to find her home, and Pedersen claimed some had made efforts to ruin his livelihood.

After hearing concerns from the public about the city's code of conduct policy when it comes to councilmember residency requirements, Mayor Joe Clarke requested that staff work to clarify that language in city policy and suggested it be shared a future meeting.

The council will consider how to proceed with filling the vacancy left by Pedersen when it convenes May 22.

Originally Published: May 9, 2025 at 8:58 AM PDT

santacruzlocal.org

Felton Fire 'on thin ice' after losing chief, service contract with Ben Lomond - Santa Cruz Local

Jesse Kathan

8–10 minutes

By [Jesse Kathan](#)|2025-05-14T19:47:59-07:00May 14, 2025|Tags: [Ben Lomond](#), [Ben Lomond Fire](#), [Dan Arndt](#), [Dan Walters](#), [Don Jarvis](#), [Featured](#), [Felton](#), [Felton Fire](#), [fire](#), [Isaac Blum](#), [Jeff Maxwell](#), [Jesse Kathan](#), [Norm Crandell](#), [San Lorenzo Valley](#), [Stacie Brownlee](#), [wildfire](#), [Zayante](#), [Zayante Fire](#)|



Some Felton firefighters have said the agency is not prepared to respond to 911 calls without Ben Lomond Fire's support. (Jesse Kathan — Santa Cruz Local)

Felton Fire Board of Directors meetings

- 6 p.m. Monday, May 19 and 6 p.m. Monday, May 26 at Felton Fire

Protection District training room, 131 Kirby St., Felton.

- Agendas are expected on the [Felton Fire website](#).

FELTON >> Ben Lomond Fire directors on Friday canceled a two-year contract to provide Felton Fire a chief, help respond to calls and train new volunteer firefighters.

The changes come after Ben Lomond Fire Chief Stacie Brownlee alleged a hostile work environment with Felton Fire's governing board. Members of the Felton board have denied wrongdoing.

Brownlee has served as chief of Felton Fire since November. Felton Fire has had four fire chiefs since 2023 and has struggled with money and staffing. Its leaders are now considering options to improve its emergency response.

"I feel, just, frustrated that we're here again," said Felton firefighter Jamie Berlanga at a Monday meeting of the Felton Fire directors. Without Ben Lomond's assistance, Felton Fire's emergency response "is on thin ice" with no fire captains, four or fewer firefighters trained as EMTs, two fire engine drivers and one driver trained to pump water, he said.

Felton Fire has about 20 volunteers in all, Brownlee said.

Uncertain path forward

Felton Fire responds to about 900 emergency calls annually across about 6 square miles of the Felton area.

Initiated in November, Felton Fire's contract with Ben Lomond Fire is now set to end June 8. The end of the contract would not make emergency response times slower, said Felton Fire Board Director Erica Schwanbeck.

"In the past, there has been a lot of support from neighboring districts to make sure that the Felton community is taken care of," Schwanbeck said. "I would want to assure the community that that's the priority, first and foremost, that services are available."

Prior to the contract, Zayante Fire had responded to scores of Felton's 911 calls because Felton Fire did not respond, said Zayante Fire Chief

Jeff Maxwell. With the end of the Ben Lomond contract, Maxwell said he worried that his firefighters would have to cover more for Felton.

“My primary mission is to the constituents — my neighbors and the Lompico area,” Maxwell said. “If we take on more than we can deliver, it’s going to erode our ability to provide service.”

At the Felton Fire board meeting Monday, Board Chair Norm Crandell said the board would consider multiple options for service after the contract ends, including stipends for volunteers to cover a 24-hour shift or a contract with Zayante Fire or a private firefighting company.



Felton Firefighter Jamie Berlanga addresses the Felton Fire Board of Directors at a meeting Monday. (Jesse Kathan — Santa Cruz Local)

Staff problems

Felton Fire formerly employed a chief, two full-time fire captains, and two full-time firefighters. One captain still works at the Felton station, but is now formally employed by Ben Lomond. Brownlee said she’s not sure whether the captain will continue with Felton. Prior to Brownlee’s tenure, Felton Fire also paid stipends to some volunteers.

Now, Felton Fire now has about 20 volunteers, many new to firefighting, Brownlee said. Some volunteers work for Cal Fire and may not respond to calls during the summer, said Felton firefighter Victor Albers.

Like many volunteer fire departments in Northern California, Felton Fire

has struggled to recruit and retain enough volunteers to respond to calls. The high cost of living and more opportunities for paid firefighting jobs have contributed to [fewer volunteers](#).

In November and December, Brownlee removed several firefighters and EMTs from service who she said didn't respond to calls or didn't live within the district.

Felton Fire is usually led by a paid chief. Since former chief Bob Grey retired in September 2023, leadership has changed four times:

- Dan Walters, a retired Santa Cruz city firefighter, served as interim chief for less than a year before he reached the limit of the hours he could work without losing his state pension.
- In 2024, longtime volunteer firefighter Dan Arndt served as acting chief for less than five months before resigning.
- Former Felton firefighter Issac Blum served as a volunteer interim chief from August 2024 until the contract with Ben Lomond began in November.

Since November, Ben Lomond Fire Chief Stacie Brownlee has been Felton's chief. But the Felton board of directors created a "hostile working environment," Brownlee said.

"They didn't talk to me as a chief. They talked to me as, you know, 'sweetie,'" Brownlee said. "I've been doing this job for 15 years, and for them to not trust me and not let me do my job, it's disappointing."

Crandell, the Felton Fire board chair, said he never saw someone call Brownlee "sweetie" or act hostile towards her. Brownlee "liked to be in control of a situation, and a good fire chief should have control," Crandell said. "She felt like — and I believe she stated this directly — that she was not our employee, that we were paying for her services, and that she would run our station how she felt."



*Felton had about 3,700 residents in 2023, according to census data.
(Stephen Baxter — Santa Cruz Local)*

Money problems

Hiring paid staff or a paid chief would be financially difficult for the district, its leaders have said. As a member of the CalPERS pension system, Felton Fire must contribute money towards pensions with every paycheck.

Pension debt has strained Felton Fire's budget for years. This year, the district submitted a petition to exit CalPERS, which can be a long and costly process. For more than a year, the board of directors has considered placing a parcel tax or bond measure on the ballot to bolster the budget.

Felton Fire is struggling with issues common to many fire districts, former Aptos/La Selva Fire Chief Don Jarvis said at Monday's meeting. Jarvis said Felton Fire should consider consolidating with Zayante Fire or Santa Cruz County Fire. Aptos/La Selva Fire merged with Central Fire in 2021.

Jarvis has also worked as a consultant on fire district issues with the Local Agency Formation of Santa Cruz County, or LAFCO, which regulates boundaries and other aspects of special districts.

"In my professional opinion, Felton Fire District has reached the point where it no longer has the means to provide the level of service that the

Felton community really deserves,” Jarvis said.

Crandell said he hoped the Felton board could find an alternative to the “nuclear option” of dissolving entirely. “Maybe I’m nostalgic, but I like the idea of having an agency that has a room for young people to volunteer and try out to see whether or not fire service is a good idea for them,” he said.

Crandell outlined his top priorities: “We’ve got to keep the community safe, and we’ve got to keep the crew safe.”

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Jesse Kathan is a staff reporter for Santa Cruz Local through the California Local News Fellowship. They hold a master's degree in science communications from UC Santa Cruz.

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Next hurdle for La Jolla cityhood effort may be legal action by San Diego

Ashley Mackin Solomon

7–8 minutes

Efforts for La Jolla to separate from San Diego as its own city could face a new obstacle after the San Diego City Council decided during a closed session this week to authorize legal action over the regional Local Agency Formation Commission's handling of petition signatures promoting La Jolla's potential cityhood.

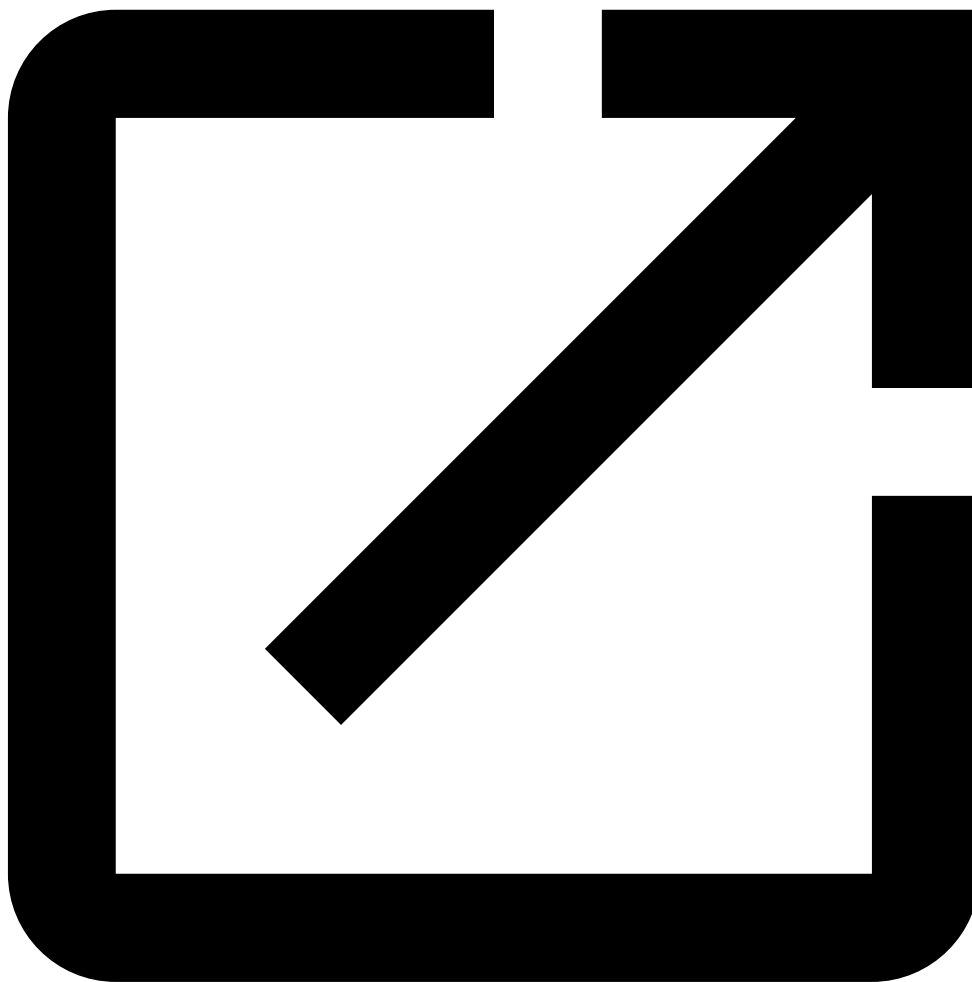
Having previously called the process for verifying the signatures "outrageous," San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria sought to initiate litigation against the San Diego Local Agency Formation Commission, or LAFCO, which provides guidance to communities seeking to incorporate as cities.

The City Council voted 6-0 on May 12 to authorize the city attorney's office to proceed with litigation.

Councilman Joe LaCava, whose District 1 includes La Jolla and who lives in Bird Rock, voted in favor. He did not comment further, and a representative said May 15 that he was "out of the office due to illness."

Council members Stephen Whitburn and Marni von Wilpert recused themselves from the vote, and Councilman Raul Campillo was absent.

The dispute centers on LAFCO's actions during the verification process that ultimately reversed the San Diego County registrar of voters office's initial determination that the petition drive by the Association for the City of La Jolla had failed to gather enough valid signatures to continue the cityhood effort.



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“From the outset, I’ve made it clear that the city of San Diego has serious concerns about LAFCO’s exceptionally broad and questionable interpretations that led them to overturn the county registrar of voters’ official determination that the La Jolla secession petition was insufficient,” Gloria said this week.

“The decision by LAFCO to overrule the registrar undermines public confidence in the integrity of this signature-verification process and sets a troubling precedent. This litigation aims to provide San Diegans with the transparency they deserve, hold LAFCO accountable for its arbitrary and capricious decisions and affirm the registrar’s original certification of insufficiency.”





San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria delivers his annual State of the City speech in January. (Ana Ramirez / The San Diego Union-Tribune)

Association for the City of La Jolla President Trace Wilson said the organization would not comment on the potential litigation.

Representatives of the city attorney's office said they "can't provide any comment on the potential for litigation."

LAFCO Assistant Executive Officer Priscilla Mumpower told the *La Jolla Light*, "We have, and will continue to remain, open and transparent with the LAFCO commission, the city, applicants and the public regarding the process and status of this proposal. We remain committed to fulfilling the obligations and responsibilities outlined to San Diego LAFCO in state law, which grants LAFCO the authority to be inclusive in enfranchising residents, rather than disenfranchising them. We look forward to continuing our efforts in reviewing this [proposal](#) and working with all parties on next steps."

The next steps would include "initiating an administrative review on the proposal and ... selecting an outside consultant to prepare a comprehensive fiscal analysis evaluating the ability of La Jolla to fund a sufficient level of municipal services while assessing [monetary impacts](#) to the city of San Diego," Mumpower said.

ACLJ, the leading group of cityhood proponents, set out in a six-month effort last year to gather signatures from 25% of La Jolla's registered voters, or 6,536, in support of the separation initiative. The petition drive was a required step to keep the cityhood application process going.

In mid-December, the group [submitted nearly 8,000 signatures](#) to the registrar of voters office and LAFCO for review and validation.

However, the registrar of voters office said in March that the group [fell 1,027 short](#) of the number required because of signatures determined to be invalid or in need of information such as a date or an address.

LAFCO gave the association from March 17 to April 1 to correct the invalid signatures, collect new ones or both to fill the gap. The group came up with 1,506.

In late April, the association [received a letter](#) saying it had collected a total of 6,772 valid signatures, putting it over the threshold.

Soon after, Gloria issued a [formal objection](#) that argued LAFCO overstepped in the process of verifying the signatures, and he disputed many of the signatures that ultimately were deemed valid.

The city's objection said "the [registrar of voters] reviewed both the petition and supplemental petition [the second round of signature-gathering] and found them insufficient, with a shortfall of 218 valid signatures."

The city stated that ACLJ "requested to review the rejected signatures and contest those they believe the [registrar of voters] improperly rejected."

LAFCO conducted a secondary review of the contested signatures on the supplemental petition and ultimately "overruled the [registrar's] rejection on 239 signatures," the city said.

Of the 239 "resurrected" signatures, the city said it was "allowed to review 212." The city contended that of those, only 33 were valid, and it objected to the remaining 179.

The city also said it "objects to LAFCO's secondary review of the

signatures [ACLJ] contested” and believes the registrar of voters should be the authority on whether signatures are valid.

On May 2, LAFCO issued a [formal response to San Diego’s objection](#), calling many of the city’s claims “inaccurate” and saying it was moving forward with the cityhood application process.

LAFCO Executive Officer Keene Simonds wrote in a letter to Gloria that “I want to assure you that the concerns outlined in your letter are readily addressable within the framework of LAFCO statute” and said certain claims the city made “appear to reflect a misunderstanding of the distinct responsibilities assigned to the [registrar of voters] and LAFCO in reviewing voter petitions for jurisdictional changes.”

“[Applicable government regulations] clearly assign to the LAFCO executive officer the sole authority to determine the petition’s overall validity — including whether to issue a certificate of sufficiency or insufficiency,” Simonds argued.

He added that the city was incorrect in certain assertions, such as that the “LAFCO executive officer lacks authority to conduct a secondary review of signatures once they have been reviewed” by the registrar of voters or that LAFCO cannot “deviate from the [registrar’s] determinations regarding incorrect or illegible printed names.”

Representatives of the registrar of voters office have not responded to the *Light’s* request for comment. ♦

Originally Published: May 15, 2025 at 3:30 PM PDT

morganhilltimes.com

County Fire set to take over fire protection services in South County

Michael Moore

5–6 minutes



The area shaded in orange in the map above, posted on the LAFCO website, encompasses the South Santa Clara County Fire Protection District. Photo: LAFCO



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Following a failed effort to protest the dissolution of the South Santa Clara County Fire District, county officials are preparing to consolidate fire protection services in unincorporated areas into the Santa Clara County Central Fire Protection District.

Voters and property owners had an opportunity to protest the dissolution

of the South County Fire District after the county's Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) voted April 2 to do so. On May 7, the LAFCO executive officer held a protest hearing. The commission received about 470 protests against the move—far short of a majority needed to reverse the commission's previous decision.

Commission staff continue to review and verify the protests, and are planning to compile a report to present at the June 4 LAFCO board meeting.

The Santa Clara County Fire Department has long provided services for the Central Fire District and will assume responsibility for fire protection services within the area currently served by SCFD—which has been overseen by Cal Fire.

County Fire staff said in a May 7 statement that the transition is underway and will take effect by July 1.

The county board of supervisors voted unanimously in January to begin the dissolution of the South County Fire District and consolidate it into the Central Fire District.

"This reorganization ensures the sustainability of fire protection services in the areas served by SCFD and addresses longstanding fiscal challenges in the South Santa Clara County Fire District, including a multi-year structural budget deficit and lack of capacity to meet long-term facility, apparatus and staffing needs," County Fire said in the recent statement.

Under the new structure, County Fire will commit to delivering the same service level that residents and property owners have received from SCFD.

County Fire said it will bring additional services including an "all-risk, all-hazards model," an urban search and rescue team and a hazardous materials team. However, county officials have said it will cost about \$4.5 million more for County Fire to deliver similar existing services in the SCFD boundaries.

County Fire staff added they expect emergency response times to improve in the South County area with county 911 communications assuming dispatching responsibilities. The current area of the SCFD will

be served by year-round, 24/7 staffing at the Masten and Treehaven fire stations, and at the new, temporary Vineyard station in Morgan Hill.

“County Fire will prioritize building a permanent fire station that is strategically located to provide optimal response times to emergency calls in the fire district’s expanded service area,” County Fire’s statement says.

SCFD’s boundary encompasses about 288 square miles of unincorporated areas surrounding the cities of Morgan Hill and Gilroy, and extending to the Santa Clara-Santa Cruz County line in the southwest, and the Santa Clara-San Benito County line in the south. The territory includes the unincorporated area of Coyote Valley in the north, and portions of the Diablo range to the east.

“As Fire Chief, I’m deeply grateful for the confidence placed in our department by the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors,” County Fire Chief Suwanna Kerdkaew said. “Santa Clara County Fire Department leadership and its members look forward to extending our longstanding tradition of professional and courteous service to community members and businesses in San Martin and the surrounding area.”

Morgan Hill and Gilroy officials, Cal Fire staff who run SCFD and dozens of residents have spoken out against the dissolution of the South County district, arguing that County Fire does not have nearly the resources that the state fire protection agency brings to the table. Opponents are also concerned that fire protection fees charged by County Fire to property owners in South County will likely increase under the consolidation.

At the April 2 LAFCO meeting, Mayor Mark Turner was the only commissioner who voted against the county’s proposal to dissolve SCFD.

Morgan Hill continues to contract with Cal Fire to run the Morgan Hill Fire Department, which provides fire protection service within the city limits.



[thecommunityvoice.com](https://www.thecommunityvoice.com)

Sebastopol Fire Department reorganization with Gold Ridge to proceed

4–5 minutes

Formal protest period ends; reorganization to take effect by July 1.

Members of the merged Fire Departments and City of Sebastopol representatives.

The Sonoma County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) conducted a public hearing Wednesday to receive any testimony from interested parties and to conclude the formal Protest Period for the proposed reorganization of Sebastopol's Fire Department with the Gold Ridge Fire Protection District. As fewer than 200 protests were received from City voters and/or property owners, Gold Ridge Fire Protection District Reorganization No. 2025-02 (City of Sebastopol) Involving Annexation of the Territory of the City of Sebastopol for the Provision of Fire and Emergency Services Only is approved. The reorganization will take effect no later than July 1, 2025.

"This reorganization will provide a higher level of service to the community, and I look forward to the hard work of merging our organizations and better serving the people of Sebastopol," said Gold Ridge Fire Chief Shepley Schroth-Cary. "We firmly believe our two agencies combined will create a stronger and safer community."

Sebastopol has pursued a reorganization with Gold Ridge to provide better fire protection and emergency response while managing costs. Rising calls for emergency services – up 16 percent since 2019 – have stretched the Sebastopol department's volunteer model. The

reorganization is designed to deliver substantially improved services.

The reorganization will also allow for additional resources to anticipate needs in the city, and plan for threats such as wildfires and other natural disasters. It will require extending Gold Ridge's existing parcel taxes to properties in Sebastopol. These taxes will total approximately \$265 per year for a typical single-family home and could vary based on the number of structures on the property.

"This reorganization is the product of many years of discussion and careful analysis," said Vice Mayor Jill McLewis and a member of the City's Fire Ad Hoc Committee. "The time it takes for firefighters to respond to emergencies is crucial, and this merger leverages Gold Ridge's larger scale to provide better coverage, faster response times, and more backup crews when needed. We'll have a safer community as a result."

"I have been personally involved in the research and deliberations on the fire issue for nearly as long as I have been on the council," said Neysa Hinton, Councilmember and member of the City's Fire Ad Hoc Committee. "I am confident that we as a community have reached the right decision. The reorganization is a responsible and sustainable path to a safer city, and I am grateful to Gold Ridge for their dedication to this process and for the services they will be providing in the years to come."

The Protest Period at LAFCO, which opened after it approved the merger on March 5, gave residents and property owners a chance to weigh in on the process. The City of Sebastopol and Gold Ridge conducted Town Hall meetings in person and online to educate the community on the background and process that led to the reorganization. LAFCO reported receiving fewer than 200 total protests to the proposal, well short of the 25 percent threshold of registered voters or landowners to trigger an election on the proposal.

More information about the merger is available on the City's website at www.cityofsebastopol.gov/SebFireReorg

[santacruzsentinel.com](https://www.santacruzsentinel.com)

Coast Line | San Lorenzo Valley Water District seeks board applicants after director resigns

Santa Cruz Sentinel

2–3 minutes

BOULDER CREEK — The San Lorenzo Valley Water District Board of Directors is accepting applications to fill a board vacancy following the resignation of Director Jeff Hill.

Hill, who cited an increase in family obligations for his resignation, stepped down effective May 12. He was appointed to the board in 2022 following 1 1/2 years of service on the district's Budget and Finance Committee

At its May 15 meeting, the board formally acknowledged the vacancy and voted to direct acting General Manager Jennifer Torres to post a notice of vacancy in accordance with Government Code §1780. Applications for the open board seat are available at the San Lorenzo Valley Water District office (13060 Highway 9, Boulder Creek) or online at www.slvwd.com. Completed applications must be received by 5 p.m. June 19.

The board will review and interview applicants before appointing a new director. The seat will be up for election in November 2026 for a new four-year term. The appointee's partial term will expire following the election.

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[kqed.org](https://www.kqed.org)

2 Solano Cities Could Annex Some of California Forever's Land. Here's How

Adhiti Bandlamudi

9–11 minutes

May 20

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The intersection of Highway 12 and Highway 113 in Solano County outside of Suisun City on May 13, 2025. Elected officials in Suisun City and Rio Vista have expressed interest in annexing some of California Forever's land. *(Beth LaBerge/KQED)*

Why would Suisun City and Rio Vista want to annex California Forever's land?

At just 4 and 6.6 square miles, respectively, Suisun City and Rio Vista are the smallest cities in the county, geographically speaking. And staff from

both cities have said they want to explore annexation to broaden their cities' tax bases.



The town of Collinsville in Solano County on May 13, 2025. (*Beth LaBerge/KQED*)

However, in Rio Vista, staff have also said they want to maintain the city's character as a "[quaint river town](#)." They hope, by controlling some of California Forever's land, they can influence what eventually gets built there.

City managers from both Suisun City and Rio Vista have not said how much land either city might annex. They're both in the process of drafting reimbursement agreements with California Forever that would allow them to explore annexation on the company's dime.

What's in it for California Forever?

The company said it isn't sure yet. Representatives have repeatedly told KQED they are interested in working with both cities as they explore annexation.

"This is still early innings and there are important procedural steps to work through, but we're looking forward to getting a reimbursement agreement signed with the cities and getting into discussions of what could be possible," California Forever CEO Jan Sramek told KQED in a statement.

Apart from the company's specific motivations, there are myriad reasons

a landowner might want to incorporate into a city, said Jim Burling, vice president of legal affairs with the Pacific Legal Foundation and a property rights expert. He said annexation talks usually start after a developer or landowner approaches a city with a plan to build something in an unincorporated area. In this case, the situation was reversed, with Suisun City and Rio Vista initiating the discussions.

“The landowner may not have access to various city services: water, sewer, utilities, police departments — that kind of thing — and the landowner might want to become part of the city in order to get those kinds of services,” he said. “The city might want to get the development, especially if it’s a commercial development, because the city can acquire the tax revenues.”

Not all landowners want to be annexed. When Suisun City reached out to other nearby property holders, some said [they weren’t interested](#) because they already have their own trash, water and septic services and didn’t want their property taxes to increase.

Who gets to decide?

In California, the ultimate decision of whether land can be incorporated into a city lies in the hands of the Local Agency Formation Commissions. LAFCOs are independent government agencies made up of elected and appointed officials from cities, the county and the general public.

The agencies were created in 2000 under the [Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act](#) to manage city growth and make sure they could provide services to areas under their jurisdictions. According to urbanist and land use expert Alex Schafran, that’s because during the 1940s and ’50s, California experienced a huge boom in population following a [surge in land speculation and development](#). Cities across the state grew aggressively and ate up farmland in the process.

That was the case in Solano County, as well, with cities growing rapidly from the 1970s through the early 2000s, County Administrator Bill Emlen said.

But Schafran said some cities, such as Richmond, grew and annexed land that was geographically disconnected from other parts of the city.

The “checkerboard” nature of city growth made it difficult to provide

municipal services and infrastructure to all the areas the city controlled. As a result, some counties were left with their own checkerboard of less valuable unincorporated land.

“LAFCO was created to rein in this crazy annexation wave and, in particular, to put some guardrails around it so that you weren’t leaving the county with islands of less valuable land that it was on the hook to somehow maintain and provide services to,” Schafran said.

Apart from Suisun and Rio Vista in Solano County, Emlen sees a new wave of cities, including Dixon and Vacaville, that are also interested in further expanding their boundaries.

How does annexation work?

The short answer is that a city will put together an application to present to LAFCO, and then the commission votes to approve or deny the annexation. But the process of just getting to the application phase is incredibly lengthy and involves dozens of hearings, negotiations and reports.

The first report is a [municipal services review](#), which outlines the infrastructure and public services that would be needed in the incorporated area and how the city has managed those services within its current boundaries.



The intersection of Highway 12 and Highway 113 in Solano County outside of Suisun City on May 13, 2025. *(Beth LaBerge/KQED)*

Then comes the “[Sphere of Influence](#)” report, which lays out what the annexed land will be used for — whether it will remain farmland, for instance, or be redeveloped into homes, retail or office space. It also establishes a physical boundary for the annexed land.

The annexation proposal has to be compliant with the California Environmental Quality Act and reviewed for potential impacts to the environment.

And if a developer wants to build something on the annexed land, it might also enter into a development agreement with the city to clarify what the project would include and how it could impact the city. Burling said this agreement can also assure the developer that its project can be built on the annexed land after it becomes part of the city.

Once a city completes the necessary reviews to submit an application to LAFCO, the agency reviews it and conducts studies of its own, if necessary, on how the city will service the unincorporated land. The [commission](#) then votes on whether the annexation can move forward.

When can the public weigh in?

Most of the reports included in the annexation process will be presented during public meetings, where residents can voice opinions in support or opposition of incorporating the land into the city.

If there are landowners or registered voters in the unincorporated area who don't want their land to be annexed, they can file documentation asking for a protest hearing. If enough landowners are opposed, the proposal either dies or goes to an election among residents in the area slated to be annexed.

However, Christina Love, the deputy executive director for Solano LAFCO, who worked in the city of Vacaville for 13 years, said protest hearings are unusual.

“Speaking from my experience from the city-side of it, the developers have done their homework and either work with the property owners or own the land, so a protest hearing is usually not a big deal,” she said.

How soon could this all happen?

On average, it can take two to five years, but in extreme cases, it can take up to a decade to complete.

How would annexation impact California Forever's proposal?

We don't know yet.

Because Rio Vista and Suisun City have not decided how much land they will each annex, or where the annexed land could be located in relation to California Forever's proposed new city, it's still unclear how annexation could affect the plan.



A barn stands along the road near Birds Landing in Solano County on May 13, 2025. *(Beth LaBerge/KQED)*

The company has also not stated whether it will delay placing its initiative on the 2026 ballot if annexation talks move forward, though both processes could happen simultaneously if the proposed city remains in an unincorporated part of the county. Although California Forever owns some 60,000 acres, its proposed city would sit on only 17,500 acres, with the rest preserved as a buffer zone for the nearby Travis Air Force Base, agricultural land and open space.

Emlen has previously indicated that if either city were successful in annexing all of the land for the new city, California Forever would not be required to present its plan to Solano voters because the company would

no longer be building in an unincorporated area and would not be subject to the county's Orderly Growth Ordinance. The [county law](#) requires voter approval to build on agricultural land.

But he said it is unlikely that would happen because LAFCO would require the cities to be able to provide services to the new community, and right now, neither city has that capacity.

Do counties have any say?

The county enters the group chat pretty early.

While a city updates its "sphere of influence" plan, the county must sign off and make sure it is consistent with its own general plan. Love said that if the county and city can agree on the sphere of influence, it makes her job a lot easier.

If not, LAFCO would have to prepare an analysis, including a list of pros and cons for how annexation would impact the county and the city. The commission would have to consider that for its final vote.