



**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

Wednesday, September 2, 2026 at 9:00 a.m.
(hybrid meeting may be attended remotely or in-person)

Attend Meeting by Internet: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84673049008>
(Password 408013)

Attend Meeting by Conference Call: **Dial 1-669-900-6833 or 1-253-215-8782**
(Webinar ID: 846 7304 9008)

Attend Meeting In-Person: **Board of Supervisors Chambers**
(701 Ocean Street, Room 525, Santa Cruz CA 95060)

HYBRID MEETING PROCESS

LAFCO has established a hybrid meeting process in accordance with AB 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 August 5, 2026 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.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

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

a. CALAFCO Election (Coastal Region Seats)

The Commission will consider nominating Commissioner Roger Anderson as an additional candidate for the Coastal Region seats on the CALAFCO board.

Recommended Action: Approve the nomination of Roger Anderson for the Coastal Region seats on the CALAFCO Board of Directors.

b. List of Extraterritorial Service Agreements (2026 Edition)

The Commission will receive a status update on the existing out-of-area service agreements in accordance with Government Code Section 56133.

Recommended Action: No action required; Informational item only.

c. List of Joint Powers Authorities (2026 Edition)

The Commission will receive a status update on the existing joint power agreements in accordance with Government Code Section 6503.6.

Recommended Action: No action required; Informational item only.

d. Fire-Related Projects (Recurring Item)

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

Recommended Action: No action required; Informational item only.

e. Legislative Update

The Commission will receive a status update on the current legislative session and activities involving legislation of LAFCO interest.

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 July and August 2026

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, October 7, 2026 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, August 5, 2026
Start Time - 9:00 a.m.**

1. ROLL CALL

Chair Rachél Lather 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. She asked staff to conduct a roll call.

The following Commissioners were present:

- Commissioner Jim Anderson
- Commissioner Joe Clarke (*Vice Chair*)
- Commissioner Justin Cummings
- Commissioner Manu Koenig
- Commissioner Rachél Lather
- Alternate Commissioner Lani Faulkner

The following LAFCO staff members were present:

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

2. EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S MESSAGE

2a. Virtual Meeting Process

Executive Officer Joe Serrano welcomed everyone to the renovated Board of Supervisors Chambers and indicated that the meeting was being conducted through a hybrid model with Commissioners and staff attending in-person while members of the public have the option to attend virtually or in-person.

Chair Rachél Lather moved on to the next agenda item.

3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

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

Chair Rachél Lather called for a motion. **Commissioner Jim Anderson** motioned for approval of the August 5th Meeting Minutes and **Commissioner Manu Koenig** seconded the motion.

Chair Rachél Lather called for a voice vote on the approval of the draft minutes.

MOTION: Jim Anderson
SECOND: Manu Koenig
FOR: Jim Anderson, Joe Clarke, Justin Cummings, and Manu Koenig.
AGAINST: None
ABSTAIN: Rachél Lather

MOTION PASSES: 4-0-1

4. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Chair Rachél Lather requested public comments on any non-agenda items. **Executive Officer Joe Serrano** noted no requests to provide public comment.

Chair Rachél Lather closed public comment and moved on to the next agenda item.

5. SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Chair Rachél Lather requested a presentation about the Big Basin Water Company (BBWC) from the court-appointed receiver, Serviam by Wright LLP.

Mayya Magay, Attorney at Serviam by Wright LLP, provided the Commission with an update on the BBWC receivership, its operational status, and on their effort to consolidate with San Lorenzo Valley Water District (SLVWD). Wastewater service responsibility has been transferred to the County under CSA 7, but transferring water services has been more complicated due to a lack of funding to address longstanding infrastructure needs. Ms. Magay reported receiving a grant to address immediate capital improvement projects, which has allowed BBWC to no longer solely rely on the intertie with SLVWD. Ms. Magay also stated that consolidation with SLVWD remains the most sustainable option for the BBWC community. Finally, BBWC is currently developing a technical plan, the court-receiver will continue to apply for additional funding, and they will pursue consolidation with SLVWD.

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

Becky Steinbruner, a member of the public, inquired about public outreach efforts. **Mayya Magay**, Attorney at Serviam by Wright LLP, provided information regarding the quality of the drinking water and stated that townhalls may be considered in Spring 2027.

Chair Rachél Lather closed public comments and opened the floor for Commission discussion. **Executive Officer Joe Serrano** noted no requests from the Commission.

Chair Rachél Lather moved to the next item since no Commission action was required.

6. PUBLIC HEARINGS

Chair Rachél Lather stated that there were no public hearing items.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

7a. Fire-Related Projects (Recurring Item)

Chair Rachél Lather requested staff to provide a status update on the ongoing reorganization efforts involving CSA 48 and other fire agencies.

Executive Officer Joe Serrano provided the Commission with an update on the Felton Fire Protection District's (FFPD) successful passage of a new benefit assessment. Executive Officer Serrano also provided an update on a potential study between Central Fire District, Scotts Valley Fire Protection District, and the City of Santa Cruz to explore potential shared services opportunities. Finally, information was provided on a public request for an additional feasibility study regarding the reorganization of the Pajaro Valley Fire Protection District (PVFPD), as well as an updated timeline.

Chair Rachél Lather requested public comments on the item. **Executive Officer Joe Serrano** indicated that there were three requests to address the Commission.

Liz Taylor Selling, a member of the public, provided comments on the role of Felton community members in the successful passage of the FFPD benefit assessment and explained the next steps for the fire district.

Becky Steinbruner, a member of the public, provided comments on the countywide fire service municipal review and CSA 48 and expressed concerns on the proposed rate information for the PVFPD reorganization.

Don Jarvis, a member of the public, requested a study to analyze the cost for constituents to receive fire protection services through the proposed PVFPD reorganization.

Chair Dave Martone, from PVFPD, provided an explanation on why the PVFPD board has decided to discontinue their benefit assessment measure effort and move forward with the proposed reorganization.

Chair Rachél Lather closed public comments and opened the floor for Commission discussion. **Commissioner Justin Cummings** provided comments on the recently approved benefit assessment for FFPD and inquired about consulting expenses. **Executive Officer Joe Serrano** explained that if the agencies express support for the additional study, then LAFCO may take the lead and utilize the earmarked funds for professional services in the FY 26-27 budget. Executive Officer Serrano also reiterated the various studies, cost comparisons, and projected expenses already completed for the proposed reorganization.

Commissioner Jim Anderson provided comments on the recently approved benefit assessment process for the FFPD.

Commissioner Lani Faulkner provided comments on the importance of transparency and supporting clarity for the residents of PVFPD.

Chair Rachél Lather closed Commissioner discussion and requested a motion. **Commissioner Justin Cummings** made the motion to approve staff recommendation and **Commissioner Manu Koenig** seconded the motion.

Chair Rachél Lather called for a voice vote on the staff recommendation: **Direct staff to continue coordinating and assisting the affected fire agencies.**

MOTION: Justin Cummings

SECOND: Manu Koenig

FOR: Jim Anderson, Joe Clarke, Justin Cummings, Manu Koenig, and Rachél Lather.

AGAINST: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION PASSES: 5-0

7b. CALAFCO Update

Chair Rachél Lather requested staff to provide a status update of CALAFCO.

Executive Officer Joe Serrano informed the Commission on the return of member agencies to CALAFCO, provided updates on the annual conference in Sacramento, requested nominations for voting delegates and CALAFCO board members, and discussed the CALAFCO award nominations being submitted.

Chair Rachél Lather had a clarifying question on the process. **Executive Officer Joe Serrano** provided information on the nomination process. **Commissioner Jim Anderson** nominated Rachél Lather as the Voting Delegate and Jim Anderson as the Alternate Voting Delegate. **Commissioner Justin Cummings** seconded the motion.

Chair Rachél Lather called for a voice vote on the motion: 1) Designate Commissioner Rachél Lather as the Voting and Commissioner Jim Anderson Alternate Delegate for the upcoming election; 2) Approve the nomination of Joe Serrano as a candidate for the Coastal Region seat on the CALAFCO Board of Directors, and; 3) Approve the proposed nominations for CALAFCO's President's Award and the Government, Community, or Public Partner Award.

MOTION: Jim Anderson

SECOND: Justin Cummings

FOR: Jim Anderson, Joe Clarke, Justin Cummings, Manu Koenig, and Rachél Lather.

AGAINST: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION PASSES: 5-0

7c. Legislative Update

Chair Rachél Lather requested staff to provide a status update on the new legislative session and any LAFCO-related bills.

LAFCO Analyst Francisco Estrada provided information on four LAFCO-related legislative bills. The Commission will receive updates in September and November 2026.

Chair Rachél Lather moved to the next item since no Commission action was required.

7d. Comprehensive Quarterly Report – Fourth Quarter (FY 2025-26)

Chair Rachél Lather requested staff to provide an update on all 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. LAFCO Analyst Estrada addressed these areas, highlighted meetings held during the last quarter of the fiscal year and reported that approximately 69% of the Commission's anticipated annual expenditures had been incurred during the 2025-26 fiscal year, reflecting a favorable budgetary position.

Chair Rachél Lather moved to the next item since no Commission action was required.

8. WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE

Chair Rachél Lather inquired whether there was any written correspondence submitted to LAFCO. **Executive Officer Joe Serrano** indicated that no written correspondence had been submitted.

Chair Rachél Lather moved to the next item since no Commission action was required.

9. PRESS ARTICLES

Chair Rachél Lather 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 Rachél Lather moved to the next item since no Commission action was required.

10. COMMISSIONERS' BUSINESS

Chair Rachél Lather inquired whether any Commissioner would like to share any information. There were no requests from the Commission.

Chair Rachél Lather moved to the next item since no Commission action was required.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Rachél Lather adjourned the Regular Commission Meeting at 10:06 a.m. for the next regular LAFCO meeting scheduled for Wednesday, September 2, 2026 at 9:00 a.m.

RACHÉL LATHER, CHAIRPERSON

Attest:

FRANCISCO ESTRADA, LAFCO ANALYST

DRAFT



Santa Cruz Local Agency Formation Commission

Date: September 2, 2026
To: LAFCO Commissioners
From: Joe Serrano, Executive Officer
Subject: **CALAFCO Update**

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION

Santa Cruz LAFCO is a member of the California Association of LAFCOs (CALAFCO). The annual conference hosted by CALAFCO will be held in Sacramento from October 21 to October 23, 2026. During the August meeting, the Commission nominated their Executive Officer to run for one of the four Coastal Region seats on the CALAFCO Board of Directors. The election will be conducted at the October Annual Conference. The Commission will now consider nominating a commissioner as an additional candidate for the upcoming election.

It is recommended that the Commission nominate Roger Anderson for the Coastal Region seats on the CALAFCO Board of Directors.

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT:

The 2026 CALAFCO Annual Conference will be held from October 21st to October 23rd in Sacramento (Central Region). The Commission has budgeted a fixed amount to permit two Commissioners (Rachél Lather and Jim Anderson) and two staff members (Francisco Estrada and Joe Serrano) to attend the annual conference. However, Commissioner Roger Anderson has expressed interest in not only attending the annual conference but also running for one of the four Coastal Region board seats open this year.

CALAFCO Election

The election will take place on Wednesday, October 22 during the annual conference. At its August 5th LAFCO meeting, the Commission designated Chair Rachél Lather as the voting delegate and Commissioner Jim Anderson as the alternate. The Commission also nominated the Executive Officer to run for one of the four available seats. Both Commissioner Roger Anderson and Executive Officer Joe Serrano are incumbents seeking reelection. Nomination forms are due by Friday, September 4, 2026. Based on this information, staff recommends nominating Commissioner Roger Anderson as a candidate for the upcoming election.

Respectfully Submitted,

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

Joe A. Serrano
Executive Officer



Santa Cruz Local Agency Formation Commission

Date: September 2, 2026
To: LAFCO Commissioners
From: Joe Serrano, Executive Officer
Subject: **List of Extraterritorial Service Agreements (2026 Edition)**

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION

Santa Cruz LAFCO is responsible for reviewing and approving proposed jurisdictional boundary changes, including but not limited to, annexations and detachments to/from cities and special districts, formation of new cities and districts, and consolidations or dissolutions of existing special districts. LAFCO is also responsible for reviewing and approving extraterritorial service agreements between local agencies and landowners with properties outside an agency's jurisdictional and/or sphere boundaries. This Commission received a comprehensive overview of the existing extraterritorial service agreements in Santa Cruz County back in April 2024 as well as subsequent updates since then. This agenda item is for informational purposes only and does not require any action. Therefore, it is recommended that the Commission receive and file this report.

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act ("LAFCO Law") authorizes LAFCO to consider the extension of municipal services beyond the jurisdictional boundary of a local agency, where the subject territory is outside an agency's service or sphere boundaries (Government Code Section 56133). The Commission has also adopted a policy to set clear standards for applying state and local laws governing the extension of services beyond the jurisdictional boundaries of a city or special district. This policy was reviewed and updated by the Commission in September 2023.

Adopted Extraterritorial Service Agreements

At present, there are 52 active ESAs. **Figure A** on page 2 provides a map showing the location of each ESA. **Attachment 1** lists all the active ESAs approved by the Commission from 1995 to 2026. The last approved extraterritorial service agreement was completed in June 2026 and involved the City of Scotts Valley and a single parcel for the provision of sewer services. This ESA, as well as all ESAs approved since 2019, includes an annexation condition under the adopted resolution.

Overview of Existing Extraterritorial Service Agreements

An in-depth analysis of each agency and their respective ESAs was conducted by LAFCO in April 2024¹. For purposes of this status update, LAFCO staff focused more on the purpose, size, and total amount of each ESA per agency. **Table A** on page 3 depicts the total amount of ESAs, parcels, and acreage for each agency in Santa Cruz County. As the table shows, the City of Watsonville has the most ESAs with 17 (35%) out of the 52 ESAs countywide and Soquel Creek Water District has the most parcels within their existing ESAs with 466 parcels (65%) out of the total 715 affected parcels.

¹4/6/24 LAFCO Staff Report: https://www.santacruzlafco.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/6d.0-ESA-List-Staff-Report_Hyperlinked.pdf

Figure A: Countywide Map Depicting the Existing ESAs

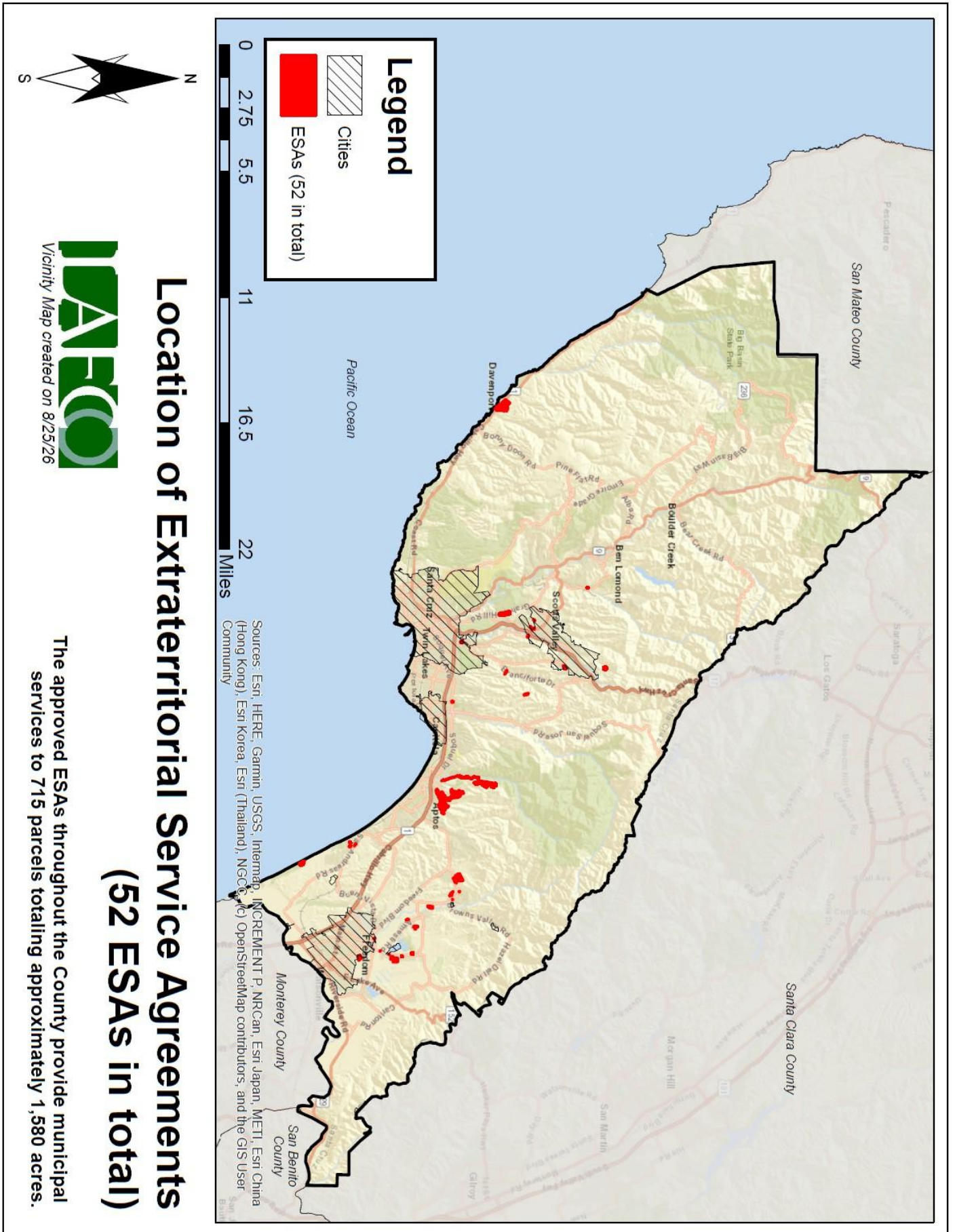


Table A: ESA Summary Chart (In Alphabetical Order)

Agencies	ESAs	%	Parcels	%	Acres	%
Central WD	1	1.9%	1	0.1%	56.2	3.6%
City of Santa Cruz	6	11.5%	67	9.4%	39.2	2.5%
City of Scotts Valley	14	26.9%	22	3.1%	13.8	0.9%
City of Watsonville ⁽¹⁾	17	32.7%	152	21.3%	208.5	13.2%
CSA 7 ⁽²⁾	1	1.9%	1	0.1%	1.1	0.1%
CSA 26	1	1.9%	1	0.1%	5.1	0.3%
Davenport Co. SD	1	1.9%	1	0.1%	109.3	6.9%
Santa Cruz Co. SD	1	1.9%	1	0.1%	4.1	0.3%
San Lorenzo Valley WD	1	1.9%	1	0.1%	0.3	0.0%
Scotts Valley WD	2	3.8%	2	0.3%	5.5	0.3%
Soquel Creek WD	<u>7</u>	<u>13.5%</u>	<u>466</u>	<u>65.2%</u>	<u>1131.4</u>	<u>71.9%</u>
Total	52	100.0%	715	100.0%	1,575	100.0%

Footnotes: (1) An annexation application regarding ESA 21-04 was recently submitted to LAFCO on 8/26/26. (2) The subject parcel under ESA 24-10 was recorded in July 2026 but the file remains open until the State Board of Equalization updates their files accordingly.

Table B compares the type of services offered under the existing ESAs. As the table below shows, water connections is the most requested service totaling 32 ESAs (62%).

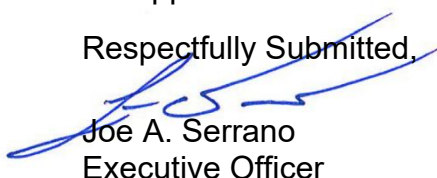
Table B: ESA Summary Chart (Type of Services)

Services	ESAs	%	Parcels	%	Acres	%
Road	1	1.9%	1	0.1%	5.1	0.3%
Sewer	18	34.6%	26	3.6%	129.8	8.2%
Water	32	61.5%	687	96.1%	1,425.2	90.5%
Water & Sewer	<u>1</u>	<u>1.9%</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0.1%</u>	<u>14.4</u>	<u>0.9%</u>
Total	52	100.0%	715	100.0%	1,575	100.0%

CONCLUSION

Services to these areas are currently provided through a mechanism established under Government Code Section 56133. As a result, residents within these ESAs receive service but not the full range of benefits, accountability, or representation associated with being a constituent of the affected agencies. Addressing this “governance gap” is typically achieved through annexation. However, many ESAs were established without annexation conditions or cannot be advanced due to factors outside LAFCO’s authority. To resolve this, the Commission adopted a revised process in 2019 requiring ESA requests to be considered in a manner consistent with other boundary actions, including adding conditions such as requiring future annexation and recordation of resolutions. Although not mandated by state law, this local procedure ensures ESAs function as temporary solutions and serve as a precursor to eventual annexation. LAFCO continues to work with the affected agencies to evaluate when annexation may be feasible for these ESAs and to support a transition to long-term, representative governance.

Respectfully Submitted,



Joe A. Serrano
Executive Officer

Attachment: List of ESAs (52 in total)

**List of Extraterritorial Service Agreements
(as of August 2026)**

6B: ATTACHMENT 1

# of ESAs	Project #	Original Parcel No.	New Parcel No.	Affected Agency	Approval Year	Size (Acres)	Purpose
1	805	108-192-01	108-361-01	City of Watsonville	1995	9.5	Water
2	806	54 parcels (Diamond Estates)		City of Watsonville	1995	19.0	Water
3	816	107-210-16	107-201-16	City of Watsonville	1995	0.4	Water
4	820	050-251-18		City of Watsonville	1996	0.3	Water
5	828	051-381-15	051-381-75	City of Watsonville	1996	2.0	Water
6	835	073-031-05		San Lorenzo Valley WD	1996	0.3	Water
7	840	107-162-03		City of Watsonville	1997	1.9	Water
8	841	050-151-14	050-391-05	City of Watsonville	1997	1.2	Water
9	842	046-062-07		Soquel Creek WD	1997	1.3	Water
10	846	046-072-14		Soquel Creek WD	1997	4.5	Water
11	854	046-061-50		Soquel Creek WD	1998	0.2	Water
12	860	050-232-28	050-232-29	City of Watsonville	1999	3.1	Water
13	862	050-351-21		City of Watsonville	1999	1.7	Water
14	863	83 parcels (Sunset Beach MWC)		City of Watsonville	1999	132.0	Water
15	878	067-101-11, 10, 09, 08, 07, 06, 05, & 04		City of Scotts Valley	2001	1.8	Sewer
16	884	050-031-24	050-031-55	City of Watsonville	2003	7.7	Water
17	902	067-101-12		City of Scotts Valley	2005	0.2	Sewer
18	903	058-071-04	058-071-06	Davenport Sanitation District	2005	109.3	Sewer
19	905	62 parcels (Rolling Woods MWC)		City of Santa Cruz	2006	22.0	Water
20	907	068-241-13		City of Santa Cruz	2006	3.0	Water
21	908	094-051-09		Scotts Valley WD	2006	4.9	Water
22	916	068-282-01		City of Scotts Valley	2007	1.2	Sewer
23	920	056-101-01		City of Scotts Valley	2007	1.0	Sewer
24	922	87 parcels (PureSource MWC)		Soquel Creek WD	2007	102.0	Water
25	923	068-281-03		Scotts Valley WD	2008	0.7	Water
26	924	107-162-02		Central Water District	2008	56.2	Water
27	925	101-162-10		City of Santa Cruz	2008	2.4	Water
28	926	200 parcels (Trout Gulch MWC)		Soquel Creek WD	2008	633.0	Water
29	932	051-511-35		City of Watsonville	2010	6.9	Water
30	935	067-561-04		City of Scotts Valley	2010	0.5	Sewer
31	939	056-102-05		City of Scotts Valley	2011	1.1	Sewer
32	940	107-461-16		City of Watsonville	2011	0.4	Water
33	942	067-281-08		City of Scotts Valley	2012	1.4	Sewer
34	944	050-341-04		City of Watsonville	2012	0.2	Water
35	945	050-041-12		City of Watsonville	2012	1.3	Water
36	946	030-061-04	030-061-28	City of Santa Cruz	2013	0.6	Water
37	948	068-241-07		City of Santa Cruz	2013	1.5	Sewer
38	ESA 20-01	102-021-62		County Service Area 26	2020	5.1	Road
39	ESA 20-26	056-101-17		City of Scotts Valley	2020	1.0	Sewer
40	ESA 20-33	108-291-11		City of Watsonville	2020	6.6	Water
41	ESA 21-04	048-221-09		City of Watsonville	2021	14.4	Water & Sewer
42	ESA 21-06	056-101-11		City of Scotts Valley	2021	1.0	Sewer
43	ESA 21-16	056-102-02		City of Scotts Valley	2022	0.414	Sewer
44	ESA 22-02	056-131-09		City of Scotts Valley	2022	1.01	Sewer
45	ESA 23-15	067-103-17		City of Scotts Valley	2023	0.21	Sewer
46	ESA 23-16	068-121-27		City of Santa Cruz	2023	9.7	Water
47	ESA 23-17	046-021-08		Soquel Creek WD	2023	10.36	Water
48	ESA 24-03	056-102-07		City of Scotts Valley	2024	1.06	Sewer
49	ESA 24-10	083-273-01		County Service Area 7	2024	1.09	Sewer
50	ESA 25-11	175 parcels (San Andreas MWC)		Soquel Creek WD	2026	380	Water
51	ESA 25-13	040-232-18		Santa Cruz Co. San. Dist.	2025	4.11	Sewer
52	ESA 26-07	067-281-01 and -02		City of Scotts Valley	2026	1.81	Sewer



Santa Cruz Local Agency Formation Commission

Date: September 2, 2026
To: LAFCO Commissioners
From: Joe Serrano, Executive Officer
Subject: **List of Joint Powers Authorities (2026 Edition)**

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION

Santa Cruz LAFCO maintains an inventory of existing Joint Powers Authorities (JPAs) in accordance with Senate Bill 1266, which passed in 2016, and requires that every JPA including a city or special district to file its agreement and any amendments with their respective LAFCO. 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

Joint Powers Authorities (JPAs) are independent public entities formed when two or more public agencies agree to jointly exercise powers they share in common. JPAs may enter into contracts, hire staff, acquire property, issue debt, and operate programs. In other words, JPAs function separately from their member agencies. Unlike cities and independent special districts, JPAs are not subject to LAFCO oversight for boundary changes, sphere of influence determinations, or municipal service reviews.

In 2016, the Legislature adopted Senate Bill 1266, which required any JPA that includes a city or special district to file its formation agreement (and any subsequent amendments) with their respective LAFCO. The law's purpose is to ensure statewide consistency in record-keeping practices and to provide the public with a transparent inventory of multi-agency governance structures operating within each county.

Santa Cruz LAFCO maintains this inventory as a public reference tool, as shown in **Attachment 1**. The filing requirement does not grant LAFCO approval, authority or regulatory jurisdiction over JPAs; it simply ensures that LAFCOs remain aware of collaborative entities that may influence regional service delivery.

What are Joint Powers Authorities?

JPAs allow public agencies to combine resources, share expertise, and deliver services more efficiently than they could individually. Common shared JPA functions include transportation planning, emergency communications, water management, regional insurance pooling, and shared administrative services. Since JPAs can own infrastructure, manage programs, and issue debt, they play a meaningful role in local governance (even though they operate outside LAFCO's statutory purview).

For Santa Cruz County, JPAs often serve as the backbone for regional coordination, particularly in areas where service boundaries overlap or where multi-agency investment is required. Maintaining an inventory helps LAFCO understand the broader governance landscape and identify interagency relationships relevant to future studies or discussions.

Senate Bill 1266 Filing Requirements

SB 1266 requires any Joint Powers Authority that includes a city or special district to file its formation agreement, along with all subsequent amendments, with their respective LAFCO. If a JPA later dissolves, the law also requires that a notice of termination be submitted. These filings ensure that LAFCO maintains a complete and accurate record of the JPAs operating within the county.

The intent behind SB 1266 is to strengthen transparency in regional governance by making JPA agreements publicly accessible and easy to locate. By requiring filings with LAFCO, the Legislature sought to ensure that joint agreements (many of which influence service delivery across jurisdictional boundaries) are visible to the public and consistently documented statewide. This supports a clearer understanding of how agencies coordinate, share authority, and manage joint programs or infrastructure.

LAFCO's role under SB 1266 is strictly administrative and informational. JPAs do not require LAFCO approval, nor do LAFCO's regulate their boundaries, governance, or service authority. Instead, LAFCO serves as the repository for JPA agreements, maintaining an inventory that helps illuminate the broader landscape of interagency collaboration within the county.

Existing JPAs in Santa Cruz County

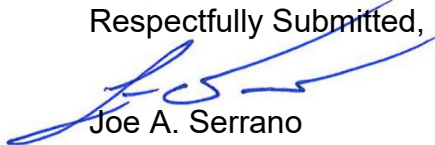
LAFCO has 36 JPAs on file countywide, as shown in **Attachment 1**. These JPAs span multiple service categories, including but not limited to: (1) transportation and regional mobility, (2) emergency communications and preparedness, (3) water resource management, (4) regional planning and environmental programs, and (5) shared services and insurance pooling.

A recent addition in July 2026 was the Regional Fire Districts Joint Powers Authority, formed by the six fire districts to jointly develop and manage regional radio-system infrastructure. This JPA reflects a growing trend of fire agencies collaborating to improve interoperability and long-term system reliability.

CONCLUSION

Maintaining an inventory of JPAs supports LAFCO's broader mission of promoting orderly growth, efficient service delivery, and informed public decision-making. While JPAs fall outside LAFCO's regulatory authority, they often intersect with LAFCO-regulated agencies and can influence regional service patterns. Awareness of these entities helps staff contextualize municipal service reviews, annexation proposals, and governance discussions. The inventory also fulfills a statutory obligation under SB 1266 and ensures that Santa Cruz LAFCO remains compliant with statewide transparency requirements. Annual updates will be provided to the commission to ensure the board is aware of any changes to the existing JPA inventory.

Respectfully Submitted,



Joe A. Serrano
Executive Officer

Attachments:

1. List of Joint Powers Authorities (2026 Edition)

Joint Powers Agreement (JPAs) on File with Santa Cruz LAFCO (as of July 2026)

Year	Service(s)	Affected Agencies
1991	Consolidated Communication Center	County of Santa Cruz and the Cities of Capitola, Santa Cruz, and Watsonville
1994	Henry J. Mello Center	City of Watsonville and the Pajaro School
1994	Consolidated Communication Center	County of Santa Cruz and the Cities of Capitola, Santa Cruz, and Watsonville
1994	Risk Sharing PARSAC	City of Watsonville
1995	Criminal Justice	County of Santa Cruz and the Cities of Capitola, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley, and Watsonville
1996	Library Financing	County of Santa Cruz and the Cities of Capitola, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley, and Watsonville
1996	Risk Sharing PARSAC	City of Watsonville
1996	Library	County of Santa Cruz and the Cities of Capitola, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley, and Watsonville
1996	Library Financing	County of Santa Cruz and the Cities of Capitola, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley, and Watsonville
1997	Santa Cruz Co. Emergency Medical EMSIA	City of Watsonville
1998	Communities Development Authority	City of Watsonville
1998	AMBAG	City of Watsonville
1998	ABAF Power, Natural Gas	City of Watsonville
2002	Risk Sharing PARSAC	City of Watsonville
2002	Animal Services	County of Santa Cruz and the Cities of Capitola, Santa Cruz, and Scotts Valley
2004	Animal Services	Cities of Capitola, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley, and Watsonville
2007	Amendment to Animal Services	County of Santa Cruz and the Cities of Capitola, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley, and Watsonville
2010	Associate Membership	City of Watsonville
2011	Leasing Financing	City of Watsonville
2011	Lease Financing	City of Watsonville
2012	Emergency Communications Center	City of Watsonville
2013	CSAC Excess Insurance	City of Watsonville
2013	Library	County of Santa Cruz and the Cities of Capitola, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley, and Watsonville
2015	Library 2 nd Amendment	County of Santa Cruz and the Cities of Capitola, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley, and Watsonville
2016	Sand Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency	County of Santa Cruz, City of Santa Cruz, Central Water District, and Soquel Creek Water District
2016	Clean Renewable Energy	Golden State Finance Authority, CFD No. 2014-1, and the City of Watsonville
2016	Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure	City of Watsonville
2016	Library Amendments	County of Santa Cruz and the Cities of Capitola, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley, and Watsonville
2017	Animal Services	Cities of Capitola, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley, and Watsonville
2017	Santa Margarita Groundwater Agency	San Lorenzo Valley Water District and Scotts Valley Water District
2019	Monterey Bay Community Power (MBCP)	Counties of Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito, those cities and towns within the Counties of Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito, and the Cities of San Luis Obispo and Morro Bay
2020	Monterey Bay Community Power (MBCP)	Counties of Monterey, Santa Cruz, Santa Barbara, and San Benito, those cities and towns within the Counties of Monterey, Santa Cruz, Santa Barbara, and San Benito, and the Cities of San Luis Obispo and Morro Bay
2021	Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency	City of Watsonville, Monterey County Water Resources Agency, Santa Cruz County Control & Water Conservation District, and the Counties of Monterey and Santa Cruz
2026	Regional Fire Districts Joint Powers Authority of Santa Cruz County	Boulder Creek FPD, Ben Lomond FPD, Central Fire District, Felton FPD, Scotts Valley FPD, and Zayante FPD



Santa Cruz Local Agency Formation Commission

Date: September 2, 2026
To: LAFCO Commissioners
From: Joe Serrano, Executive Officer
Subject: **Fire-related Projects (Recurring Item)**

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION

The Commission has been receiving comprehensive updates on the various ongoing fire-related projects throughout the 2026 calendar year with notable accomplishments including but not limited to the formation of the LAFCO Fire Ad-Hoc Committee, the development of a five-year fiscal analysis for a proposed reorganization, and the adoption of the countywide fire report. This staff report provides the latest news regarding the various fire-related projects. This agenda item is for information 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

Santa Cruz LAFCO staff continues to work closely with local fire agencies and their respective communities to support ongoing governance discussions, strengthen service coordination, and advance several active fire-related projects occurring simultaneously across the county. This collaborative work reflects LAFCO's role in helping agencies navigate complex transitions, evaluate long-term service needs, and engage residents in understanding potential governance tradeoffs.

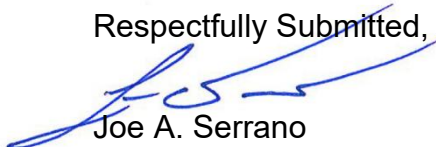
Table A on page two provides a detailed overview of all active fire-related projects and their current status. The following section below provides a summary of recent developments:

- **PVFPD Reorganization:** The County Board of Supervisors adopted a Will-Serve Letter on August 11, affirming its willingness and capability to assume responsibilities should the reorganization be finalized. The affected agencies and LAFCO are tentatively planning another in-person educational workshop on September 30. Additionally, the Commission recently received a letter from the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association requesting clarification regarding the proposed extension of CSA 48's existing benefit assessments as part of the reorganization. Staff is coordinating with legal counsel to consider the contents of the letter and its specific inquiries. More information will be provided at our next scheduled meeting.
- **Felton FPD Update:** In July, the community approved a new benefit assessment that will help the fire agency to adequately fund its operational and administrative expenses. This has prompted local residents to explore forming a citizen/community oversight committee and has requested assistance from LAFCO staff. Staff provided the group with information on the a similar body, the development of the Branciforte Advisory Committee which was part of the Scotts Valley FPD Reorganization in 2023.

Table A: Overview of Fire Projects

Project	Affected Agencies	Description	Timeline / Deadline
CSA 48 Reorganization	County (CSA 48) and CalFIRE	Status: Ongoing The affected agencies and LAFCO are exploring the concept of transitioning CSA 48 into an independent special district.	Group effort started in August 2024; Draft RFP may be considered by the commission in Oct. 2026
Pajaro Valley FPD Reorganization	County (CSA 48), CalFIRE, and Pajaro Valley FPD	Status: Ongoing LAFCO is processing an application submitted by PVFPD that would dissolve the district and concurrently annex the area into CSA 48. A dedicated webpage regarding the project is now available on LAFCO's website: https://santacruzlafco.org/pvfpd_reorg/	Application received on May 2, 2025; Two community workshops held in May 2026 and a third (in-person) workshop is tentatively scheduled for September 30 Commission may consider the reorganization by late-2026
Fire Memorandum of Understanding	City of Santa Cruz, Central Fire District, and Scotts Valley FPD	Status: Pause The affected agencies and LAFCO initially considered hiring a consultant to produce a study; however, those discussions were stalled at the board level. LAFCO has indicated it could take the lead in hiring an outside consultant to produce a special study if supported by the affected agencies.	Group effort started in July 2023; The affected agencies indicated that more time is needed before moving forward with a special study.
Felton FPD Governance Options	Felton Fire Protection District	Status: Complete Felton FPD conducted a successful mailed-in election with approximately 68% support from the community. FFPD is tentatively scheduled to announce the selection of a new full-time fire chief in late-July or early-August 2026.	LAFCO received and filed the governance options report in September 2025; LAFCO analyzed Felton FPD's recent improvements and actions as part of the 2026 Countywide Fire Report.

Respectfully Submitted,



Joe A. Serrano
Executive Officer



Santa Cruz Local Agency Formation Commission

Date: September 2, 2026
To: LAFCO Commissioners
From: Francisco Estrada, LAFCO Analyst
Subject: **Legislative Update**

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION

LAFCO staff tracks bills during the legislative session and provides periodic updates. The Commission may take a position on any tracked bill. This agenda item is for informational purposes only and does not require action at this time. Therefore, it is recommended that the Commission receive and file the staff report.

BACKGROUND

Staff informed the Commission at the February 4, 2026 LAFCO Regular Meeting that they would receive an update on legislation affecting public agencies in Santa Cruz County in May, August, and November, with additional updates to be conducted when necessary.

Tracked Bills

LAFCO staff is monitoring four bills of interest, including SB 1312, for which CALAFCO shifted its position from “Oppose Unless Amended” to “Neutral” after the authors incorporated CALAFCO’s requested revisions. Below is a summary of the four monitored bills:

- **AB 1821 (Public Records Request)**: this bill would extend the deadline for agencies to provide initial response to a public records request. CALAFCO has not taken an official position on this bill at this time.
- **SB 994 (Non-Disclosure Agreements)**: this bill would prohibit local government officials from entering non-disclosure agreements. CALAFCO has taken a “Watch” position.
- **SB 1312 (Abandoned Cemeteries)**: this bill would establish a mandatory process requiring LAFCOs to dissolve failing or abandoned cemetery districts and transfer responsibilities to a designated successor agency. CALAFCO has taken a “Neutral” position.
- **SB 1439 (Omnibus Bill)**: this is an annual bill that corrects non-substantial errors in various laws, including CKH. This omnibus bill includes a provision to extend the deadline for Imperial LAFCO to complete its service review for the Imperial Valley Healthcare District from December 31, 2026 to December 31, 2027. CALAFCO has taken a “Support” position.

Next Update

LAFCO staff will continue to monitor these bills as they continue to be vetted and modified under the ongoing legislative process. Once these bills are considered for passage, LAFCO staff will return with an update and possible commission action in November.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Francisco Estrada'.

Francisco Estrada
LAFCO Analyst



Santa Cruz Local Agency Formation Commission

Date: September 2, 2026
To: LAFCO Commissioners
From: Francisco Estrada, LAFCO Analyst
Subject: **Press Articles during the months of July to August 2026**

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: "Nevada County Consolidated Fire District and Ophir Hill Fire Protection District Announce Consolidation". The article, dated July 16, announces the successful consolidation between the Nevada County Consolidated Fire District and the Ophir Hill Fire Protection District. The multi-year effort will consolidate a new service area of approximately 160 square miles in western Nevada County and provide 37,000 residents with enhanced fire protection and emergency medical services from dedicated around-the-clock staffing from two full-time firefighters at five stations. The expanded resources significantly enhance emergency response capabilities for the consolidated agency and provide residents with a professional level of service.

Article #2: "Nevada LAFCO Fire Chiefs Association Calls for Modernizing Fire Service Funding to Protect Public Safety". The article, dated July 17, reports on a letter submitted by the County Fire Chiefs Association advising the Board of Supervisors on the need to modernize fire protection and emergency response in Nevada County. The letter stresses that fire districts have evolved since the days of volunteer-based fire service and are providing increasingly complex services while relying on outdated funding models. The Association also cited the determinations made in the Nevada LAFCO countywide fire and emergency response municipal service review, the first to be completed in 20 years.

Article #3: "Guest Commentary: Is there water for Santa Cruz growth?" The article, dated July 21, is a guest commentary on the status of the Santa Cruz's water supply resiliency and the importance of the issue in the upcoming mayoral race. The author discusses efforts in recent years to increase water conservation across the county and issues stemming from the impact of population growth. Additionally, the piece mentions strategies used by the Soquel Creek Water District to achieve water-neutral growth and how UCSC expansion in the next few years will impact the City's ability to manage drought years.

Article #4: “Capitola City Council agrees on election district maps”. The article, dated July 24, provides an update on the City of Capitola’s process to transition to district-based elections. After gathering public feedback, the city council settled on a map that divides the City into four districts. Along with the four districts, voters will elect a mayor at large who will serve as the board’s fifth councilmember. Under the new governance structure, councilmembers will serve four-year terms and the mayor, who will be elected in November 2028, will serve two-year terms.

Article #5: “SALC 2.0 Key Findings and Actions to Protect Local Agriculture?” The article, dated July 24, is about the publication of the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation (SALC) 2.0 final report. The report was a collaborative effort between the San Diego County Planning & Development Services Department and San Diego LAFCO and its purpose is to examine the economic challenges facing local agriculture. Among the findings, rising costs, operating decreasing profit margins, and regulatory complexities are cited as reasons small farmers in the county say it’s difficult to stay in business.

Article #6: “Mayor’s Message: Investing in the next generation of civic leaders”. The article, dated July 25, written by Santa Cruz Mayor Fred Keeley, explains to the public the importance of preparing the next generation of Santa Cruz County leaders. As a former educator, Mayor Keeley explains the benefits of providing young people with hands-on experiences in local government to begin fostering lifelong commitments to public service. The article also explains the steps and programs the City has implemented to invite young people to learn and be part of the local decision-making process.

Article #7: “A small volunteer fire station goes quiet in Yolo County after decades of service”. The article, dated July 27, details the recent decision to dissolve a fire district in Yolo County. In 2022, Yolo LAFCO conducted an MSR and found the volunteer-based Elkhorn Fire Protection District was unable to meet staffing, response and service standards required of a fire district in good standing. After a delayed response to a vehicle accident highlighted these issues, LAFCO initiated dissolution proceedings in 2022. The EFPD board initially agreed with LAFCO’s findings but then decided to stay as an independent district. Ultimately, officials voted to dissolve the district and have Yolo County contract with other agencies to provide fire services.

Article #8: “Scotts Valley Water District to consider monthly rate increase”. The article, dated July 30, announces that the Scotts Valley Water District (SVWD) will be proposing a rate increase to help fund ongoing capital and infrastructure projects, which will require a California Proposition 218 voter approved process. If passed, the increase is expected to generate an additional \$286,000 for SVWD. Currently, district projects include resealing, stabilizing and rehabilitating several water tanks across their jurisdiction, drilling a new well, and redesigning the Monte Fiore Pump Station.

Article #9: “American Canyon takes step toward nearly 300-acre expansion”. The article, dated July 31, reports that the City of American Canyon took steps toward expanding its jurisdictional boundaries by nearly 300 acres after the city’s planning department approved pre-zoning of the property. Napa LAFCO will also play a role in the expansion as the Commission will consider approval of the project. The Commission had previously approved an 89-acre expansion north of the largest ongoing development area. The decisions have received push back from community members and legal action seeking to halt the larger expansion effort has been taken, arguing it would conflict with the urban limit line established through a 2008 citizen approved measure.

Article #10: “Mayor’s Message: Watsonville investing in first responders”. The article, dated August 1, is written by Watsonville Mayor Kristal Salcido and provides an update on how the council has been supporting the City’s fire department. Additionally, Mayor Salcido provides an explanation on the long process to acquire vital fire protection equipment and what fire engines must endure over their service life to provide adequate and reliable fire protection services. She concludes by emphasizing the city’s commitment to safety and fiscal stewardship.

Article #11: “A settlement is on the horizon in multiple lawsuits filed in response to the Pajaro Valley levee failure”. The article, dated August 6, provides an update on the lawsuits filed against multiple local agencies for the damage caused by the 2023 Pajaro River floodings. After years of court proceedings to address the damages, farmers and individuals are close to reaching a settlement. Plaintiffs cite that the agencies’ decision to defer maintenance and repairs as causing harm to nearby properties after the levee was breached by the constant intense rainfall and flooding.

Article #12: “Soquel Creek Water District WIFIA loan upgraded to AA as Pure Water Soquel project enters operations”. The article, dated August 7, provides an update on the benefits of a recently completed water recycling capital project by the agency. Pure Water Soquel is a system that will support aquifer replenishment, limit saltwater intrusion, keep capital spending manageable through 2031, and increase its WIFIA loan rating. Although the project will support the sustainability of water services, there are still some risks associated such as declining water usage that can lead to potentially higher rates.

Article #13: “Mayor’s Message: Bustling summer in Capitola”. The article, dated August 8, is written by Capitola Mayor Margaux Morgan and provides updates on the city’s transition to district-based elections, as well as information on a proposed statue to honor women surfers and the ocean, and information on infrastructure renovation projects throughout the city.

Article #14: “Scotts Valley celebrates 60-year anniversary all week long”. The article, dated August 8, is about the city’s 60th anniversary and the activities to celebrate the important milestone. Although European settlers had lived in the area since the 1800s, the city was not incorporated until 1966 and was named after Hiram Daniel Scott. The article details important moments in Scotts Valley’s history, including the discovery of an ancient Indigenous settlement, Alfred Hitchcock’s summer residence, and the CZU Lighting Complex Fires of 2020.

Article #15: “How Scotts Valley became a city”. The article, dated August 9, provides a history on how the City of Scotts Valley was incorporated in 1966. The article documents the city’s long history, including the story of Hiram D. Scott, the man that would later use his fortune to purchase Rancho San Augustin for \$25,000, and the circumstances that lead to the 1966 incorporation to maintain local control. A group of 190 residents formed the Scotts Valley Property Owners Association and is credited with the push to incorporate. After the vote was challenged in court by opponents, Scotts Valley became a city that did not impose taxes until 1976.

Article #16: “With new funds, Felton Fire looks to hire”. The article, dated August 14, informs the public that the Felton Fire Protection District (FFPD) will move forward with the hiring of a full-time chief, three full-time captains, and six full-time firefighters thanks to a benefit assessment recently approved by voters to raise \$1.7 million in funding. The article mentions that a new recruitment process will be conducted to hire a new full-time fire chief after an offer was declined by a candidate. Finally, the article discusses the oversight committee being developed to provide financial oversight of the public funds and information on the November board elections.

Respectfully Submitted,



Francisco Estrada
LAFCO Analyst

Attachments:

1. “Nevada County Consolidated Fire District and Ophir Hill Fire Protection...”
2. “Nevada LAFCO Fire Chiefs Association Calls for Modernizing Fire...”
3. “Guest Commentary: Is there water for Santa Cruz growth?”
4. “Capitola City Council agrees on election district maps”
5. “SALC 2.0 Key Findings and Actions to Protect Local Agriculture?”
6. “Mayor’s Message: Investing in the next generation of civic leaders”
7. “A small volunteer fire station goes quiet in Yolo County after decades of service”
8. “Scotts Valley Water District to consider monthly rate increase”
9. “American Canyon takes step toward nearly 300-acre expansion”
10. “Mayor’s Message: Watsonville investing in first responders”
11. “A settlement is on the horizon in multiple lawsuits filed in response to...”
12. “Soquel Creek Water District WIFIA loan upgraded to AA as Pure Water...”
13. “Mayor’s Message: Bustling summer in Capitola”
14. “Scotts Valley celebrates 60-year anniversary all week long”
15. “How Scotts Valley became a city”
16. “With new funds, Felton Fire looks to hire”

yubanet.com

Nevada County Consolidated Fire District and Ophir Hill Fire Protection District Announce Consolidation

Nevada County Consolidated Fire District

3–4 minutes

Nevada City, Calif. – Effective July 15, 2026, the Nevada County Consolidated Fire District and Ophir Hill Fire Protection District are pleased to announce a collaborative consolidation process approved by the Nevada County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo). Nevada County Consolidated Fire District has assumed the responsibility for continuing fire and emergency medical services for the residents residing in the Ophir Hill community.



Ophir Hill Fire and Nevada County Consolidated Fire directors, chiefs and staff at the Jan. 7 joint meeting. Photo YubaNet

This milestone has been achieved through a multi-year collaboration between the staff and elected Board of Directors from both districts to strengthen emergency response capabilities, enhance operational efficiency, and ensure the continued delivery of exceptional fire protection and emergency medical services to the communities they both proudly serve. This consolidation now covers approximately 160 square miles in western Nevada County, providing service to just over 37,000 residents with two personnel 24/7 at five staffed stations, located throughout the newly consolidated district.

For over 70 years, Ophir Hill Fire Protection District has built a legacy of service founded on dedication, professionalism, and an unwavering commitment to public safety. This consolidation reflects a shared vision for the future—one that preserves those traditions while positioning both organizations to meet the evolving needs of the communities they serve as well as the dynamic changes in the fire service.

With this consolidation, residents of the Ophir Hill community will receive enhanced fire protection and emergency medical services through the dedicated, around-the-clock staffing of two full-time firefighters at Station 52. In addition, the community will benefit from the support of an on-duty Battalion Chief, dedicated fleet maintenance personnel, Fire Marshal, and highly trained technical rescue teams. These expanded resources significantly enhance the District's emergency response capabilities and provide Ophir Hill residents with the professional level of service they deserve and can continue to rely on for years to come.

This consolidation reflects a shared belief that thoughtful

collaboration strengthens public safety. By combining our experience, resources, and expertise where appropriate, the districts are better positioned to address future funding challenges, can better support our firefighters with improved levels of staffing all while continuing to the mission to protect lives and property with excellence and enhanced levels of service.

Nevada County Consolidated Fire District would like to thank the Board of Directors from both districts and extend their sincere appreciation to the employees, community partners, and residents for their continued trust and support in this long process.

Looking ahead, Nevada County Consolidated Fire District remains focused on our mission – to provide the highest level of emergency services to our community by valuing our members, promoting positive leadership, and dedicating ourselves to excellence.

yubanet.com

Nevada County Fire Chiefs Association Calls for Modernizing Fire Service Funding to Protect Public Safety

Nevada County Fire Chiefs Association

6–7 minutes

Nevada County, Calif. — The Nevada County Fire Chiefs Association, along with several Fire District Boards, is calling on the Nevada County Board of Supervisors to modernize the way local fire protection and emergency response services are funded, warning that today’s public safety demands have far outpaced funding formulas established more than four decades ago.

In a letter submitted to the Board of Supervisors, the Association emphasized that local fire districts are providing increasingly complex emergency services while relying on funding models developed more than 40 years ago, when many fire districts were primarily volunteer organizations. Today’s fire service has evolved into an all-hazards emergency response system providing 24-hour fire suppression, emergency medical services, technical rescue, hazardous materials response, disaster preparedness, wildfire mitigation, and emergency management.

“Today’s fire service bears little resemblance to the volunteer-based system these funding formulas were originally designed to support,” said Chief Jason Robitaille, Fire Chief of Nevada County Consolidated Fire District. “The property tax allocation formulas

currently used to fund local fire districts are antiquated and no longer reflect the realities of a modern fire service. They must be updated to provide sustainable funding that supports the level of service our communities expect and deserve.”

The Association pointed to the recently completed Countywide Fire and Emergency Response Services Municipal Service Review (MSR), prepared for the Nevada Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo). California law anticipates that Municipal Service Reviews be updated approximately every five years to evaluate the efficiency and sustainability of essential public services. However, Nevada County’s previous countywide fire MSR had not been comprehensively updated in approximately 20 years, making the current report the first comprehensive evaluation of countywide fire and emergency services in two decades.

The MSR identifies long-term financial sustainability, staffing, and funding modernization as critical issues facing Nevada County’s fire districts and recommends updating funding mechanisms to ensure reliable emergency response capabilities for the future. “As a fire service professional in Nevada County for more than forty years now, I can attest to the fact that the costs of operations are far outpacing our current revenue streams. At the current pace and without a shift in property tax funding, fire districts are going to continue to struggle to provide adequate staffing and replace aging and outdated equipment.” Chief Robb Rothenberger, Fire Chief of Ophir Hill Fire Dist.

The Association expressed concern that the Board of Supervisors recently declined to pursue the MSR’s funding recommendations without first engaging in a discussion with local fire agencies of the potential impacts those decisions may have on emergency medical services, fire suppression, wildfire response, and public safety

throughout Nevada County. The Fire Chiefs Association believes those impacts deserve careful evaluation before opportunities to modernize fire service funding are set aside.

The consequences of limited staffing are already being felt. During the past seven days alone, multiple local government fire engines were committed to wildfire responses, leaving only one engine staffed with two firefighters available to protect the entire western portion of Nevada County until resources from another county were requested. While mutual aid remains a cornerstone of California's fire service, routinely relying on neighboring jurisdictions to maintain minimum coverage is not a sustainable long-term solution.

The Association also noted that many engine companies in Nevada County continue to respond with only two firefighters, despite the increasing complexity of today's emergencies. Modern fireground operations require personnel to simultaneously perform rescue, fire attack, ventilation, emergency medical care, incident command support, and rapid intervention. Increasing engine staffing from two to three firefighters would significantly improve firefighter safety, operational effectiveness, and the ability to provide timely emergency services.

The Association is encouraging the County to evaluate several funding opportunities identified in the MSR, including equitable allocation of Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT), strategic investment of Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) revenues to address visitor-related public safety impacts, and modernization of outdated property tax allocation agreements that no longer reflect today's emergency service responsibilities.

"Our request is not simply about increasing funding," Chief Joel Tam, Fire Chief of Higgins Fire District said. "It is about creating a modern, transparent, and sustainable funding system that reflects

the demands placed on today's fire service. Reliable funding means safer staffing levels, improved emergency response, enhanced wildfire preparedness, better recruitment and retention of firefighters, and a stronger ability to protect the lives and property of everyone who lives in or visits Nevada County."

The Nevada County Fire Chiefs Association remains committed to working collaboratively with the Board of Supervisors, the County Executive Office, and community stakeholders to implement the recommendations identified in the Municipal Service Review and develop long-term funding solutions that strengthen emergency response capabilities throughout Nevada County.

"Our firefighters stand ready every day to protect this community," Chief Mike Stewart, Fire Chief of Washington Fire. "Now our County Supervisors need to update a funding system that stands behind them."

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

Guest Commentary | Is there water for Santa Cruz growth?

Santa Cruz Sentinel

4–6 minutes

By Rick Longinotti

Thanks to community effort and the leadership of Santa Cruz Water Director Heidi Luckenbach, and her predecessor, Rosemary Menard, Santa Cruz is in a better position to endure multiple-year droughts than it has been for decades.

The water director reports, “The water supply gap [in multiple dry years] has been closed by as much as 50%.” (Sentinel guest editorial, June 25, 2026). But if we do not take action, our current level of water security will inexorably decline due to increased demand from population growth.

An extraordinary change in water use has taken place since the turn of the millennium. Since 2000, water demand has fallen from about 4.5 billion gallons a year to around 2.5 billion — a 45% drop. To give perspective, this conservation of 2 billion gallons per year is over four times the amount of water that the city’s proposed desalination plant would have delivered in a dry year. Why this revolution in water use? We can thank efficient plumbing fixtures as well as changes in our behavior, especially water-efficient landscaping.

The cumulative impact of growth over time erodes the drought security of the community. A water department report stated, “Continuing to provide water to new customers upon request, as is the current practice, may do harm to existing customers by making the potential water shortage situation worse than it would otherwise be.” – Adequacy of Municipal Water Supplies to Support Future Development (2004)

Not everyone in city government seems to appreciate the impact of growth on our drought security. Santa Cruz Planning Director Lee Butler stated, “I absolutely think that we’ve got much more space for development on the water side.”

Between 2010 and 2020, the water service area population grew by almost 5,000 people, or 5.5%. We’ve run out of reasonably-priced ways to grow our water supply to stay ahead of population growth. The water department is investigating direct potable use of recycled water (we’d be the first community in California to implement this), and desalination. The high cost of these options would fall on existing customers. Desalination is highly energy intensive, with the cost of carbon emissions falling on future generations. In 2012, 73% of voters approved an amendment to the city charter, giving the voters the authority to decide on desalination.

There is another way to address growth besides high-cost and high-energy technology. For a number of years the Soquel Creek Water District implemented a water-neutral growth policy.

Developers paid into a fund to purchase plumbing fixtures that fully offset the water demand from new development. Similarly, the Santa Cruz County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), adopted a regulation that would require water neutrality if UC Santa Cruz were to receive water outside the city’s service area.

Several offsets for new water demand are feasible: paying for

installation of 0.8 gallon toilets; paying for recycled water to irrigate DeLaveaga Golf Course; paying for homes to install rainwater collection tanks as is popular in Australia. New buildings south of Laurel would have an easier time achieving water neutrality by using recycled water from the Laurel Street pipeline to flush toilets.

One of the stakes in the upcoming election for mayor of Santa Cruz is how UCSC's plan to grow to 28,000 students will impact our water shortage in drought years. In 2006, 80% of Santa Cruz voters favored Measure J that required a vote of the people before the city could supply water for UCSC's expansion into the undeveloped forest north of campus. UCSC sued to get the vote nullified on a technicality. Ryan Coonerty, current candidate for mayor, co-authored with UCSC's chancellor a Sentinel Commentary on Dec. 4, 2011, urging LAFCO approval of the water service expansion for UCSC growth.

Recently, the city won a lawsuit against UCSC over its plan to grow to 28,000 students. UCSC has appealed the decision. Following the appellate court ruling it is likely that the next mayor of Santa Cruz will be negotiating with UCSC on the housing, traffic and water impacts of growth. Voters will have a choice between Ryan Coonerty or Ami Chen Mills for mayor.

Rick Longinotti, a Santa Cruz resident, was the chair of Desal Alternatives, the group that sponsored the charter amendment to put the decision on desalination in the hands of the voters.

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

Capitola City Council agrees on election district maps

Caroline Hemphill

5–6 minutes

CAPITOLA— The Capitola City Council settled on a map that divides the city into four districts during a meeting Thursday evening.

For months, Capitola has been gathering public feedback to draw districts for future City Council elections. The process began when the city received a letter from Malibu law firm Shenkman & Hughes accusing the city's at-large voting system of violating the California Voting Rights Act. Specifically, the letter said the system weakens the voting power of Latinos, pointing to the lack of Latino representation on the council.

Since the act was passed in 2001, hundreds of cities and school boards have switched to district-based voting systems. So far, none have been successful in fighting complaints in court, even those that have spent millions of dollars in legal fees.

Last month, the Capitola City Council [decided](#) to draw four City Council districts. A mayor chosen in an at-large election would serve as the fifth councilmember. Members of the public and a demographer from the National Demographics Corporation submitted ideas for how the city could be divided into four districts with similar populations. Thursday evening, each member of the City Council picked their preferred maps.

Aside from Mayor Margaux Morgan, all of the councilmembers shared a top-choice map, which was drawn by the National Demographics Corp. Morgan named the map as her second choice.

The chosen map has an “upside-down T” shape in the middle that encompasses most of Capitola’s coastal area, including Capitola Village, and extends up to the northern city limit. Its western boundary runs along Soquel Wharf Road. This area will become District 3.

The west side of the city is divided along Capitola Road. To the north of the road is District 1, which includes the Capitola Mall. South of the boundary is District 2, which includes the Jewel Box neighborhood. District 4 sits in the northeast corner of the city with a southern boundary at Park Avenue. The district includes New Brighton Middle School and Noble Gulch Park.

A [detailed interactive map](https://www.cityofcapitola.gov) of the chosen districts can be found at [cityofcapitola.gov](https://www.cityofcapitola.gov).

The chosen map needed to adhere to several requirements. The districts needed to be continuous, of roughly equal population sizes, and where possible, avoid dividing neighborhoods and communities of interest. The districts must also be compact with easily identifiable boundaries, such as roads or rivers.

The chosen map keeps most neighborhoods and communities of interest, including mobile home communities, together, but there is one notable exception. While most of the Turner Lane mobile home community falls in District 4, a small portion of the homes are located in District 3. Morgan’s preferred option would have kept all mobile home communities together but would have split the Cliffwood Heights neighborhood. Doug Johnson from the National Demographics Corp. noted that in order to stay within population requirements, either Turner Lane or Cliffwood Heights would have to be split between two districts.

After deciding on a district map, the City Council had to choose which districts would come online first. Based on the current election sequence, two seats will become available in 2028, and three in 2030.

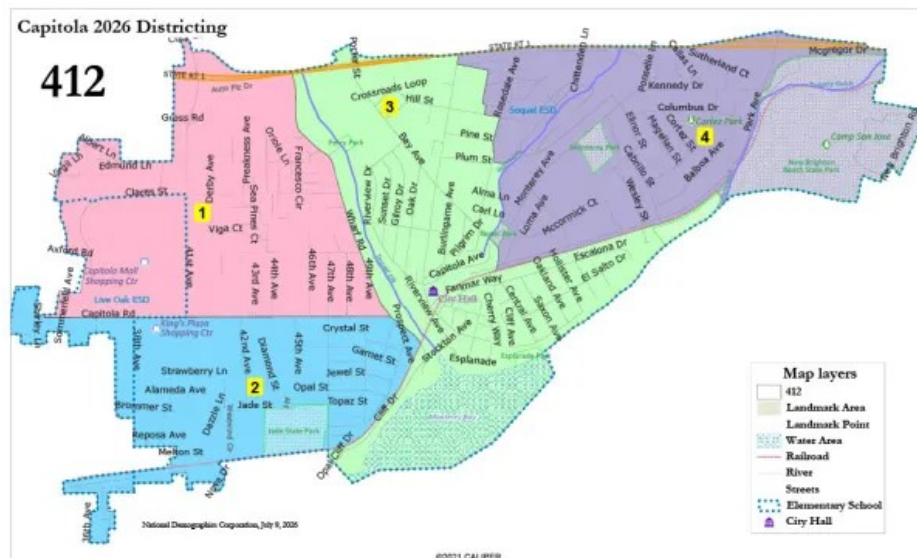
In previous meetings, the City Council decided that one of the seats up for election in 2028 should be the at-large mayor position. The other seat would go to one of the four districts, and the remaining

three districts would come on board in 2030.

The two seats that will be up in 2028 are currently held by councilmembers from District 2 and District 3. To decide which district would come online first, Morgan tossed a 50-cent piece. The coin toss determined that the District 3 seat will be up in 2028.

With the new election system, councilmembers will serve four-year terms. The mayor will serve two-year terms. In 2028, District 3 will elect its first representative, and the whole city will vote on a mayor. In 2030, Districts 1, 2 and 4 will elect their first representatives, and the whole city will once again select a mayor. The new districts and election sequence will not influence the 2026 election.

The second reading and final adoption of the new map and election sequence is set for Aug. 27.



The Capitola City Council selected a map that divides the city into four districts. The first district will come online in 2028. (Courtesy of the city of Capitola)

[sandiegocounty.gov](https://www.sandiegocounty.gov)

SALC 2.0: Key Findings and Actions to Protect Local Agriculture

5–7 minutes

The County of San Diego (County) is pleased to announce that the [Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation \(SALC\) 2.0 Final Report](#) is now available. This multi-year agricultural conservation planning effort provides a look at the economic challenges facing local agriculture and identifies practical strategies to support a more resilient future.

What is SALC 2.0?



[SALC 2.0](#) is a collaborative grant project between the County's Planning & Development Services Department (PDS) and the San Diego County [Local Agency Formation Commission \(LAFCO\)](#), with funding from a California Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program Planning Grant. As the name suggests, SALC 2.0 is the second Planning Grant awarded to LAFCO. The first effort, called the [San Diego Agricultural Planning Program](#), was completed in 2023 in partnership with the Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County and recommended additional economic analysis on the costs and benefits of small farm in the

region.

SALC 2.0 strives to do just that. It includes a [Market Analysis](#) to identify major cost centers and profitability across all agricultural operations, with an emphasis on small farms; a [Gap Analysis](#) that focused on profitability of four focal crops (avocados, lemons, strawberries, and tomatoes); and a [Strategic Action Plan](#) for how municipalities and public agencies can increase the viability of agriculture in the region.

Key Economic Findings

SALC 2.0's economic analyses identified that rising labor and water costs, market pressures, and regulatory complexity continue to make it difficult for small farms in San Diego County to remain profitable. Some key findings from the analysis are:

- San Diego region's agricultural sector is facing sustained declines in both the number of farms and total acreage in production.
- Operating expenses have increased across most categories over the past two decades. Labor expenses represent the largest cost component for many farms.
- Average operating profit margins are about 13%, well below the 25% threshold commonly associated with financial health for farms.
- Avocados were highly sensitive to water costs, yield variability, and market price fluctuations, with declining yields exacerbating cost pressures.

The project also included the development of the [Agricultural Profitability Assessment Tool](#), or AG-PAT. This Excel-based tool allows agricultural producers of the four focal crops to input their operating costs and yields to get an estimate of their annual net returns per acre.

Strategic Action Plan

The [Strategic Action Plan](#) provides practical actions that local public agencies, regional partners, and support organizations can take to

strengthen agricultural sustainability. It includes 19 Strategic Actions, or “Tools,” organized around four main goals, or “Seeds:”

1. Improve infrastructure and support systems
2. Grow consumer awareness and demand
3. Cultivate a supportive policy environment
4. Strengthen regional alignment and advocacy

The Strategic Action Plan was informed through the economic analyses, stakeholder input, and best practice research. Together, this framework is designed to move SALC 2.0 from analysis to action, offering a practical roadmap to strengthen the economic sustainability of small farms while supporting a resilient regional agricultural economy.

Community-Driven Planning

Community and stakeholder input played a central role in shaping the deliverables of SALC 2.0. Producers, partner organizations, and agency staff participated in workshops, open houses, working group meetings, public review periods, and a solutions-focused forum. Engagement was designed to be accessible and inclusive, helping ensure the Final Report reflects real-world needs and conditions. A complete summary of the input received is included in the [Community Input Summary](#) (Appendix A) of the Final Report.

What’s Next?



PDS formally shared the SALC 2.0 Final Report with the Board of

Supervisors through a [Board Memo](#) on June 17, 2026. While SALC Planning Grants do provide funding for agricultural conservation planning efforts, they do not finance implementation. Additionally, the Board Memo included an analysis that identified existing County efforts ([Attachment B](#)) that align with the Strategic Action Plan. This will help the County leverage existing efforts to move the Strategic Actions forward while County staff identify additional funding opportunities.

Our grant partner LAFCO has also moved to formally provide the Final Report to the LAFCO commission at the LAFCO Commission Hearing on June 15, 2026 ([Item 7c](#)). Along with developing an annual progress report, LAFCO will explore expanding agricultural analysis in their planning efforts and assess the feasibility of a Regional Agricultural Water Advisory Committee to help address water affordability and efficiency issues.

As the region moves forward, SALC 2.0 offers a strong roadmap for supporting a more resilient future for local agriculture. The County looks forward to continuing to work alongside producers, public agencies, and community partners to build on current efforts and put these strategies into action.

Read the full [SALC 2.0 Final Report](#) and [Board Memo](#) on our [website](#) to explore the findings and recommended actions.

8A: ATTACHMENT 6

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

Mayor's Message | Investing in the next generation of civic leaders

Fred Keeley

3–4 minutes



One of the greatest responsibilities of local government is not only serving today's community, but helping prepare tomorrow's leaders. Public service is strengthened when young people have opportunities to learn how government works, contribute their ideas, and experience firsthand what it means to serve others.

That commitment is especially visible each year as City Hall welcomes interns from across our community. Our offices are bustling with students exploring careers, developing professional skills, and working alongside dedicated staff in departments ranging from public works and parks & recreation to planning, finance, police, fire and communications. Their curiosity, creativity and enthusiasm are a welcome reminder that the future of public service is bright.

These experiences are about much more than résumé building. Internships help students develop confidence, gain practical skills and better understand how local government shapes the places where we live, work and play. At the same time, city employees and councilmembers have the opportunity to mentor emerging leaders and pass along the values that define public service; integrity, collaboration, curiosity and a commitment to community.

Having spent many years teaching students at the Panetta Institute for Public Policy and San José State University, I've seen firsthand how hands-on experiences can inspire a lifelong commitment to public service. Those experiences continue to reinforce my belief that the strongest communities invite young people to be part of the conversation.

That philosophy extends beyond internships. The city of Santa Cruz is committed to ensuring young people have a meaningful voice in local government through programs like the Youth Liaison Program, where students serve alongside city advisory bodies and contribute perspectives on issues affecting the community. Their participation helps ensure that decisions are informed by the experiences and ideas of the next generation.

The challenges and opportunities facing Santa Cruz will continue to evolve, and today's young people will be the ones leading tomorrow's solutions. By investing in mentorship, civic education and opportunities for engagement, we are helping build a community where future leaders can grow, serve and thrive.

Thank you to this year's interns, our youth liaisons, and the city employees and councilmembers who generously share their time and expertise. Together, they demonstrate that investing in young people is one of the most meaningful investments we can make in Santa Cruz's future.

Fred Keeley is mayor of Santa Cruz.

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

A small volunteer fire station goes quiet in Yolo County after decades of service

Daniel Hennessy

7–9 minutes

The Abridged version:

- The **Elkhorn Fire Protection District** in eastern Yolo County **has been dissolved**.
 - The district, which is one of 16 in the county, **struggled to maintain staffing and resources**.
 - The dissolution was met with **opposition from residents** in the district.
-

A lot of hands built the volunteer firehouse in Elkhorn.

Made of corrugated metal sheets, the small structure was erected by farmers and residents of the Yolo County community on the bank of the Sacramento River.

“We had to bolt that thing together,” said Richard Yeung, chief of the [Elkhorn Fire Protection District](#) for 42 years. “It was a great community event.”

Sign Up for the Yolo County Newsletter

Stay in-the-know on all things Yolo! Weekly email with stories and insights from Yolo County reporter Daniel Hennessy.

In the years since then, the all-volunteer department, one of 16 in Yolo County, became a focal point in the area. There were Thanksgiving potlucks and lectures from the chief.

The volunteer firefighters based at the station responded to emergency calls, covering roughly 30,000 acres.

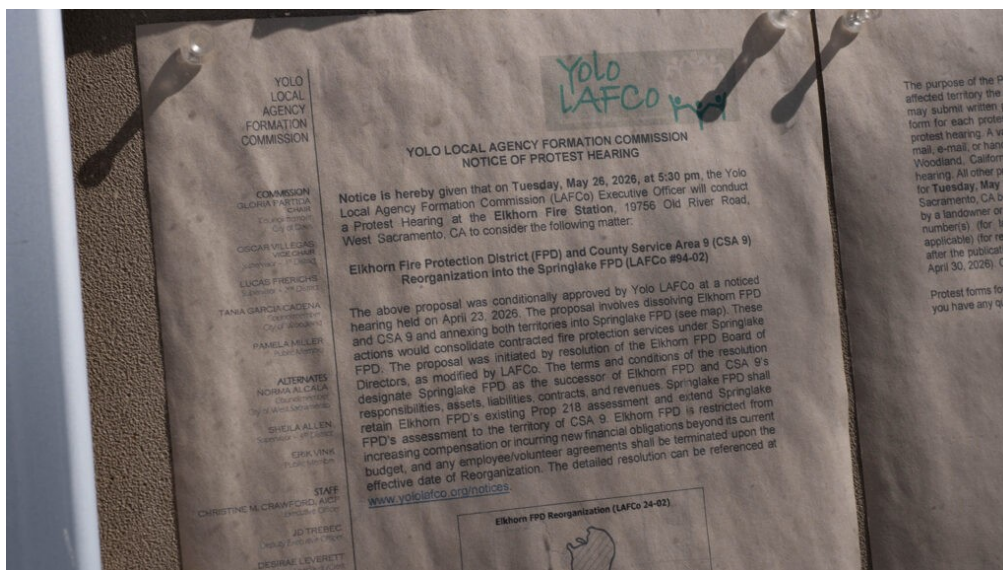
“I’ve personally done CPR on five of our residents here,” Yeung said.

But time also brought challenges to a district that had limited resources since its first day in 1965. With a small and shrinking population, [250 in 1965 and roughly 85 today](#), the potential volunteer base is low. At the same time, more vehicle traffic through the district has increased service needs.

“The commute time between 3:30 and 6 (p.m.) can be overwhelming,” Yeung said, referring to travelers on Old River Road between Interstate 80 and Interstate 5.

The department has struggled to keep up, prompting local officials to make the decision to dissolve the fire protection district despite local opposition. On July 1, the station stopped taking emergency calls for the first time in decades.

“The service need outgrew the population,” said Christine Crawford, executive officer of the Yolo Local Agency Formation Commission. “It’s just not a safe situation.”



A notice for a protest hearing by the Yolo Local Agency Formation Commission posted next to the Elkhorn Fire Protection District station near West Sacramento on July 24, 2026. (Shelley Ho)

Increased pressure

Just before midnight on a summer evening two years ago, a 911 call was placed from a remote stretch of Old River Road on the very eastern edge of Yolo County.

The caller told dispatchers about a crashed vehicle that appeared to have multiple injured passengers inside. Emergency services were immediately mobilized, including paramedics, an air ambulance and volunteer firefighters from the Elkhorn firehouse.

About 10 minutes after the call, the ambulance arrived and found two injured young people and an adult without a pulse. Eight minutes later, Yeung showed up in a specialized truck built to go off-road and fight wildfires.

When the victims needed to be moved, the firetruck was unable to complete the task without a second volunteer who was coming from Woodland.

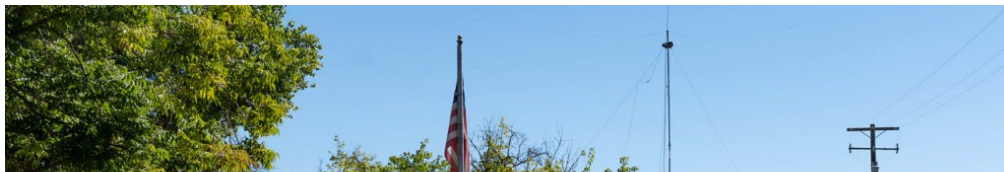
Precious minutes passed and the victims remained in place.

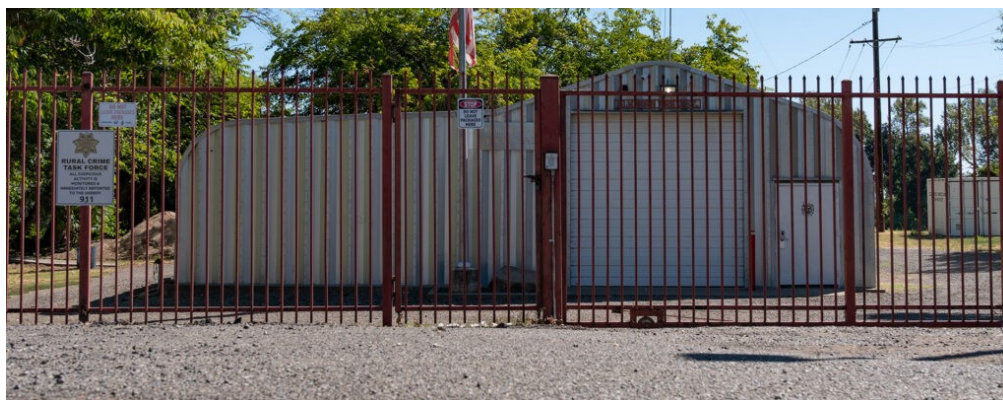
Finally, the on-duty battalion chief for the nearby Woodland Fire Department self-assigned and took command. Thirty-three minutes after the 911 call, Woodland responders showed up and completed the rescue.

The response intensified scrutiny on the Elkhorn district, which had already been identified in a 2022 [municipal service review report](#) as unable to meet staffing, response and service standards required of a fire district. That made the district heavily reliant on mutual aid from the Woodland and West Sacramento fire departments, an arrangement for which the two cities were not compensated.

In the meantime, car trips on I-5 through the district ballooned to 59,000 each day, according to a [LAFCo report](#).

“Public safety has been an ongoing concern,” Crawford said.





The exterior of the Elkhorn Fire Protection District station near West Sacramento on July 24, 2026. (Shelley Ho)

Dissolution

Because of concerns about the Elkhorn district's capacity to meet the area's needs, LAFCo initiated dissolution proceedings in 2022.

After the revealing report findings, the fire district board initially agreed to the proposal, which would have meant the district being annexed by the neighboring Springlake Fire Protection District. Annexation requires officials to conduct a protest vote, giving residents the opportunity to deny the action.

When the vote began this year at the end of April, some members of the Elkhorn board had changed their mind, pointing to efforts to turn the district around.

"We know the area, we know the roads, we know where the orchards are," Yeung said. "We are debt free, money in the bank and moving forward."

With three new volunteer recruits who were "19 years old and ready to go," Yeung and some board members felt they could bolster the district's services.

People in Elkhorn agreed, with a majority of the small population voting to reject the annexation.

But county officials disagreed with the district's assessment of its capabilities, instead opting to dissolve the district and have Yolo County contract with Woodland and West Sacramento to provide services. That arrangement, which doesn't legally require a protest

vote, went into effect July 1.

“We were shocked,” Yeung said.

Now, calls in the Elkhorn area are covered by Woodland or West Sacramento fire departments, which coordinate with each other to respond.

Since July 1, there have been two or three calls in the area, said Woodland Fire Chief Eric Zane.

“It doesn’t change a whole lot for us,” he said. “It’s not a huge lift.”

Unlike before, the departments are now receiving property tax income that used to go to the Elkhorn district as compensation for covering the area.



Exterior of the Elkhorn Fire Protection District station located near West Sacramento on July 24, 2026. (Shelley Ho)

A statewide problem

The Elkhorn firehouse was not alone in its struggle to maintain volunteer staffing.

More than half of California’s fire departments are entirely or mostly run by volunteers, according to [a report released by researchers at UC Santa Barbara](#). Many of those are in rural areas, where the status quo has been to maintain volunteer-led departments.

In recent years, volunteerism has dropped, and many departments

across the state found themselves struggling to find recruits.

The researchers found that this has contributed to “uncovered shifts, lower response rates, reduced station functionality and pressure on EMS support in some counties.”

Elkhorn has suffered from these kinds of volunteer shortages at multiple points throughout its history.

When Yeung was brought on in 1984, the department was made up of five farmers, each of whom could be reached on their home phone if they weren’t out in the field working.

Yeung was eventually able to increase that number to a dozen at its peak, he said, operating on a budget of about \$8,000 per year.

“You don’t have a whole lot to work with,” he added.

At first, each volunteer was given a stipend of about \$5 per day, an amount that eventually increased to \$40.

“To at least pay for their fuel,” Yeung said.

That makes it hard to recruit and maintain good firefighters. For those who are serious about the job, the goal is to eventually make a living doing it.

“If you start early, it’s a great career,” Yeung said.

By this year, the firehouse crew had dwindled to six, three of whom live in the district, according to the agency that dissolved the district.

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

Scotts Valley Water District to consider monthly rate increase

Gabrielle Gillette

5–6 minutes

SCOTTS VALLEY — Residents in the Scotts Valley Water District may see a change to their monthly water bill starting next year.

The Scotts Valley Water District announced Wednesday its proposal to increase rates to help fund ongoing projects in the district and replace aging infrastructure.

The proposal is a part of California's Proposition 218 process, a measure requiring local governments to put changes to taxes or property-related assessments, fees or charges in front of voters for consideration.

Though the exact rate increase will vary from customer to customer based on size, user category and amount of water used, the median household's monthly bill is expected to increase \$7.61, according to the district's website. However, the website also says the district's board of directors has historically implemented lower rates than what was initially adopted.

The current proposal will see rates increase 6.5% overall, a rate which water district general manager David McNair said its board of directors worked to ensure is equitable for property owners but sustainable for the district.

"Keep in mind, a lot of the local agencies around us are looking at much higher rates than what we're proposing, but nonetheless, 6.5% is a significant increase," McNair said. "But we're aware of all utilities going up as well as ours, and that's why the board wanted

us to take a second look at the initial proposal and we were able to get it down to 6.5.”

If passed, the increase is expected to bring in an additional \$286,000 annually on top of its expected budget of nearly \$9.2 million in 2027.

Water rates support maintenance and staffing for the public agency, as operations costs continue to rise with the price of electricity, chemicals and construction-related materials, McNair said.

For example, the Scotts Valley Water District does not have surface water to use and instead pumps all its water from wells that can reach over 1,000 feet deep, which requires a lot of energy, McNair said. With rising energy costs, the district is struggling to meet the amount of money it needs to keep in its reserves.

The district also prides itself on having highly trained staff, but other neighboring districts pay higher than the Scotts Valley Water District does, he added, and the district needs to maintain a competitive pay rate to keep its employees.

“All of our construction projects, the materials that we need to keep our system together, to make repairs and all that kind of stuff have gotten far more expensive,” McNair said. “Costs have gone up considerably over the last five years, and it certainly doesn’t look like it’s going to be getting any better anytime soon.”

Currently, the Scotts Valley Water District’s projects include resealing, stabilizing and rehabilitating several water tanks across Scotts Valley, drilling a new well at 5299 Scotts Valley Drive, interconnecting the Scotts Valley Water District with the Santa Cruz Water Department system and redesigning the Monte Fiore Pump Station.

The district has conducted a rate increase every five years, McNair said. 2016 saw an increase rate of 25%, which was met with significant backlash, though subsequent years had a calmer response with lower increase rates.

Customers were sent a notice of the proposed fees in late July. Those who object to the rate increase can file a written protest about the proposed rate increase. If a majority of the customers protest the proposed increase, the district cannot proceed with it. Protests must be given to the district by Oct. 8, which is when the voting period will end. Besides the Prop 218 process, the district additionally adopted an exhaustion of administrative remedies under California Assembly Bill 2257, which allows property owners and customers to file an additional objection to the proposed rates no later than 4:30 p.m. Sept. 22.

The Scotts Valley Water District provides water service to over 6 square miles within the city of Scotts Valley and a portion of unincorporated Santa Cruz County north of the city limits.

The proposal requires a simple majority to pass, and if adopted, the proposed rates would take effect Jan. 1, 2027, and increase each year for the next five years.

The district's board of directors will hold a community meeting about the rate increase Aug. 19 from 4:30-6:30 p.m. at the district's Santa Margarita Community Room, 2 Civic Center Drive in Scotts Valley, and a public hearing Oct. 8 at 6 p.m. at the same location. Find details on the proposed rate increase at svwd.org/ratestudy.

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

American Canyon takes step toward nearly 300-acre expansion of city limits

Edward Booth

5–6 minutes

American Canyon, Napa County's fastest-growing city, took a step toward expanding its city limits by nearly 300 acres this past week, after the city's planning commission endorsed pre-zoning the property located north of the city and east of Highway 29.

That "special study area" pre-zoning recommended by the commission — and set to be considered Sept. 1 by council members — would prepare the 281 acres of unincorporated Napa County land owned by the Hess and Laird families for annexation into the city by signaling what the city intends to do with it, according to Brent Cooper, the city's community development director.

That includes allowing for current activities on the property, including crop growing and grazing. But the designation is ultimately a placeholder: it would replace Napa County's current industrial zoning for the area while the city determines long-term uses for the property, Cooper said Thursday, July 30 at the planning commission meeting.

"The city needs to take time to really consider and work with all of you and the property owner on what might be an ultimate use for here," Cooper said. "In the meantime we have a special study zoning. It's not intended to be there forever, but it's there until it's not."

A decision on whether the city's expansion can proceed ultimately is in the hands of the Napa County Local Agency Formation

Commission, or LAFCO, oversees jurisdictional boundaries for local government entities.

[That commission on June 1 approved](#) a city-proposed 89-acre expansion north of Watson Ranch, the city's largest ongoing development. But the commission at the same meeting pushed back a decision on the larger expansion proposed by the Hess and Laird families, to allow time for written objections from landowners and voters in the affected area.

According to American Canyon officials, one of the major benefits of the expansion is that it will enable an extension of Newell Drive and South Kelley Road, a long-planned parallel path to the Highway 29 route north of the city that's often clogged with traffic.

Under the expansion, American Canyon also plans to take on a portion of Napa County's housing allocation — the number of units cities and counties are required by the state to produce, assigned locally by the Association of Bay Area Governments. Napa County has made several such agreements with the city of Napa and American Canyon, in an effort to keep housing out of fire-prone and agricultural areas.

But representatives for the Watson Ranch developer Terrence McGrath have pushed back against the proposed larger expansion. Development entity American Canyon 1 LLC on June 15 filed a legal petition seeking to halt the larger expansion effort, arguing that it would run afoul of a 2008 citizen measure that made it so the city can't expand its urban limit line through Jan. 1, 2030, without prior approval from voters.

City attorney Theresa Highsmith previously argued that approving prerequisites to an expansion was legal and didn't equate to expansion itself, especially given that entities outside of the city would need to approve it.

Planning commissioners at the July 30 meeting generally spoke in support of the pre-zoning and the annexation effort. Commissioner Eric Altman said he thinks the annexation will be good for the city,

and he looks forward to seeing additional parcels in the area get annexed as well.

Altman added that he and the other commissioners often hear American Canyon residents ask why the city lacks businesses such as a Trader Joe's or Sprouts Farmer Market. The reason, he said, is connected to private property owners pushing to bring certain businesses to town, but it also has to do with the city having enough of a population to support those businesses.

"There needs to be a certain population threshold that's going to be big enough to be frequenting whatever the location is, whatever the business is, so that the business actually can remain in business locally," Altman said. "I think people tend to not understand that."

You can reach Staff Writer Edward Booth at 707-521-5281 or edward.booth@pressdemocrat.com.

%5B%7B%22id%22%3A3079%2C%22name%22%3A%22Napa%20County%20H
%22%7D%5D

The Press Democrat

Stay ahead of the curve with the latest headlines and biggest stories from Napa County, delivered each Thursday.

[SIGN ME UP!](#)

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

Mayor's Message | Watsonville investing in first responders

Kristal Salcido

3–4 minutes



Firefighters respond to a residential blaze in Watsonville. (Contributed – Watsonville Fire Department)

A city's primary responsibility is ensuring the safety of its people. I am proud to share that our City Council recently adopted a budget that makes a major investment in our frontline defense. We have officially approved the purchase of a brand new, state-of-the-art fire engine for our fire department.

Last year alone, the Watsonville Fire Department responded to more than 5,550 calls for service, highlighting the critical role our firefighters and paramedics play in protecting our community every day.

Securing this vehicle requires true strategic foresight and immense behind-the-scenes work. Due to nationwide supply chain demands, it takes approximately two years to custom-build a modern fire

apparatus. However, the clock doesn't just start at the factory. Our fire department leadership spends months in the preconstruction phase, carefully researching specifications, forming selection committees, engineering the blueprint to fit our city's unique streets and holding meticulous preconstruction conferences with the manufacturer. By investing the time and effort today, we guarantee a flawless final product tailored specifically to our community's needs.

It is easy to look at a polished fire engine in a parade and assume it is in perfect condition. In reality, these vehicles endure incredible abuse. They idle for hours at accident scenes, navigate rough roads at high speeds and push mechanical components to their absolute limits during heavy pumping operations. While our department maintains them meticulously, the hidden wear and tear of emergency response eventually requires us to replace aging equipment.

Modern fire engines are much more than trucks; they are mobile, lifesaving command centers. As an Advanced Life Support department, our engines are staffed by highly trained paramedics. This means our apparatus literally brings a mobile emergency room directly to your doorstep, equipped with the cardiac monitors, medications and advanced trauma gear needed to save lives in those first critical minutes.

By proactively upgrading our fleet, we ensure that when you call for help, our firefighters and paramedics can respond rapidly with the most reliable equipment available. Our local crews put their lives on the line for us every day. Providing them with the tools they need to do their jobs safely is a direct investment in the future of our entire community.

I want to thank the City Council for their fiscal stewardship, and our fire chief and crew for their dedicated service.

Kristal Salcido is the mayor of Watsonville.

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

A settlement is on the horizon in multiple lawsuits filed in response to the Pajaro levee failure.

Aric Sleeper

3–4 minutes

When the levee along the Pajaro River broke around midnight on March 11, 2023, the resulting flood devastated the community of Pajaro – inundating homes and businesses and leading to an abrupt early-morning evacuation of residents, many of whom were displaced for an extended period and whose belongings were damaged or destroyed.

Farms also faced catastrophic floods, suffering millions in damage from the deluge.

In 2024, multiple lawsuits were filed on behalf of multiple plaintiffs – including hundreds of residents, as well as agricultural operations in the Pajaro Valley such as Driscoll’s, JAL Berry Farms, and other non-farm businesses.

Defendants named in the suits included the counties of Monterey and Santa Cruz, along with the Monterey County Water Resources Agency, the Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency and Caltrans, among others.

Now, after more than two years in court, those cases are nearly settled, according to court records, with specific terms not yet announced or entered into the court record.

According to Chief Assistant Monterey County Counsel Kelly L. Donlon, “The parties have preliminary agreement in all the Pajaro levee flood-related cases on financial terms, but not all parties have yet agreed and we are still negotiating the non-monetary terms.”

One of the lawsuits, filed by Willoughby Farms, argued that the

roughly \$7 million in damage the company suffered on properties including Trafton Ranch and Cox Ranch were avoidable and caused by the multiple agencies' decisions to "defer maintenance and repair, which created an unreasonable risk of harm to Willoughby Farms," and that "the unreasonable conduct violated California law."

"This case is about a farm devastated in multiple places by a failed levee system and sewer system along the Pajaro River," the complaint reads. "In a series of inadequate planning, operation and maintenance decisions, the agencies named in this lawsuit failed their duties owed to Willoughby Farms."

The company's 65-acre O'Connell Ranch is located directly adjacent to the levee.

Willoughby's attorneys argued that the case is not about harm by "unforeseeable rainfall or harm associated with a foreseeable risk of owning property near a river."

The court documents highlight that the Army Corps of Engineers constructed the levee in 1949 to reduce flooding risks to the surrounding areas, with agencies including the County of Santa Cruz and the Monterey County Water Resources Agency signing a 1947 resolution assuring the Army that they would operate and maintain the levee.

Willoughby's lawsuit alleges breaches of California's civil and government code along with a breach of the California Constitution, which states: "Private property may be taken or damaged for a public use and only when just compensation, ascertained by a jury unless waived, has first been paid to, or into court for, the owner."

More details about the settlement terms are expected in the coming weeks.

tradersunion.com

Soquel Creek Water District WIFIA loan upgraded to AA as Pure Water Soquel project enters operations

4–5 minutes

Soquel Creek Water District's credit profile strengthens after the completion of a major water recycling facility tied to its long-term capital plan. The upgrade reflects expectations that the Pure Water Soquel system supports aquifer replenishment, limits saltwater intrusion and keeps future capital spending manageable through 2031.

Highlights

- Soquel Creek Water District's WIFIA loan rating upgraded to AA from AA- by KBRA, with outlook revised to Stable, following project completion.
- KBRA cites the August 2025 completion of the advanced water purification facility, central to a 10-year capital plan, and notes project costs remain within funding sources.
- Key risks include low or declining water usage impacting revenues, elevated regional water bills, and potential challenges to rate-setting flexibility under Proposition 218.

Credit upgrade follows project completion

As reported by [Kroll Bond Rating Agency](#), the long-term rating on the Soquel Creek Water District's Pure Water Soquel Project WIFIA loan is upgraded to AA from AA-, while the outlook is revised to Stable from Positive.

KBRA says the rating action reflects the District's completion in August 2025 of the advanced water purification facility, the largest component of its 10-year capital improvement program through 2031. The project is designed to support the sustainability of the District's groundwater-based supply by replenishing aquifers with treated recycled water and helping limit saltwater intrusion.

KBRA also says project costs come in moderately above the original budget but remain reasonable and within available funding sources. The agency expects the new facility to operate as planned, with manageable operating expenses, while future capital expenditures are largely funded without additional debt and supported by timely rate adjustments.

Financial strengths and remaining risks

Among the credit positives cited by KBRA are the project's completion and operation, the absence of plans for new debt, and the District's financial performance. The agency points to manageable leverage, sound debt service coverage, multiple reserves and pay-as-you-go funding of capital expenditures through 2031.

KBRA also notes that the District's board shows a willingness to approve rate increases when needed, based on periodic rate studies. That supports liquidity and debt service coverage at projected levels, even as the utility manages a large capital program.

The agency identifies several ongoing challenges, including low to declining water usage linked to conservation and drought-management measures, which can pressure rates and affordability. It also says water bills remain comparatively high for the region, although projected rate increases are expected to moderate as capital spending declines and as other California water systems address their own supply and reliability issues.

For a further upgrade, KBRA says stronger-than-expected water

sales and customer growth would need to lift financial metrics, especially debt service coverage. A downgrade could follow if affordability concerns or Proposition 218 challenges limit rate-setting flexibility, if water usage stays below budget without offsetting action, or if unexpected regulatory mandates or higher capital spending require new borrowing and weaken leverage.

[Albuquerque's AA credit ratings affirmation](#) was previously covered in our report, highlighting the city's strong revenue base, disciplined financial management, and diversified income sources. We noted that tourism activity and ongoing development projects helped support fiscal stability and the city's ability to manage revenue swings under a Stable Outlook.



This material may contain third-party opinions, none of the data and information on this webpage constitutes investment advice according to our [Disclaimer](#). While we adhere to strict [Editorial Integrity](#), this post may contain references to products from our partners.

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

Mayor's Message | Bustling summer in Capitola

Margaux Morgan

4–5 minutes



The general area of Esplanade Park in Capitola where a female surfer statue has been proposed. Projects organizers said that there are only two other public surfer statues depicting women across the globe. (PK Hattis — Santa Cruz Sentinel file)

Although during the summer months Capitola only has one meeting each month, there are still a lot of things moving and shaking.

At our last City Council meeting July 23, the council voted on a district map to go into effect in 2028. Based on the group of maps that were presented to the council, we unanimously voted to adopt Map No. 412. We also had the first reading of the new districting

ordinance. The last step of that process was to figure out which district out of the four depicted on the map would be the first district to go to vote in 2028.

I know, this often has felt like a never-ending math problem, because in the year 2028 there will be two district seats open — District 2 and 3 — which we had to figure out which one would be first. The decision was made to throw a good old-fashioned coin toss in order to choose a district in an unbiased manner. Who was the lucky one to perform the toss, you might ask. That's right, me! I've had no formal coin toss training, but decided I could rise to the occasion. By the flip of the coin, it was decided that District 3 would be the first elected district in 2028 on the ballot, including the citywide-elected mayor. Districts 1, 2 and 4 will follow in the year 2030, along with the citywide-elected mayor.

A very exciting item that was held at the July 23 meeting was the unanimous council approval of the public art statue "To Honor the Women of the Water." I can not express how grateful and excited I am that Kari Lochhead and her team, consisting of many local surf and ocean legends, came to Capitola to offer this wonderful opportunity. The concept is to install a female surfer statue at the beginning of Capitola Village's Esplanade Park. The artists are the same who created the male surfer statue that is proudly displayed on West Cliff in Santa Cruz.

This iteration will be only the third in the world to represent the women of the beach and water. We are so fortunate in Capitola to host events like Women on Waves, the Junior Guard programs that incorporate many young women, our beach, water and parks that are open to all, and this statue to represent our inclusionary community. Now two statues will flank the coast line and coastal reserve as beautiful book ends with two of the best backdrops on the planet.

On the subject of Esplanade Park, we are continuing to take input on the overall Esplanade Park Coastal Access Enhancement and Adaptation Plan. We are aiming for more costal resiliency and

resident/visitor experience overall.

Other improvements are taking place along the 41st Avenue corridor. This is a major thoroughfare for the city (and county) that the city would like public input on as well.

Overall, within Capitola we are developing our first Active Transportation Plan where we can make our streets, sidewalks, bike lanes, etc. more accessible and safe for all walks of life. This is also an area where input can be given!

All three of these survey type items can be located on our city website (we've gone dot gov!) under "Projects" at cityofcapitola.gov.

To conclude, I know our entire community and neighboring cities were all very effected by the tragic and unnecessary passing of one of our own, Rachell Summers. I (and as a whole of the city) want to send sincere condolences to Rachell, her family, friends and coworkers alike. Please take a moment, draw in a breath of silence and hold she and them in your hearts.

Our next regularly scheduled Capitola City Council meeting will be held Aug. 27 at 6 p.m. at the council chambers located at 420 Capitola Ave., Capitola.

Margaux Morgan is the mayor of Capitola.

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

Scotts Valley celebrates 60-year anniversary all week long

Gabrielle Gillette

8–10 minutes

SCOTTS VALLEY — Scotts Valley celebrated its 60th anniversary this week, honoring its change makers and founders with events every day of the week, and Mayor Donna Lind has been there to see it all.

Though European settlers had been living in the area since the 1800s, starting with José Bolcoff's settlement of the land, the area did not officially become a city until 1966.

Scotts Valley was named for Hiram Daniel Scott, who purchased Rancho San Agustin land grant, which later became Scotts Valley in 1850. Scott built the Greek revival-style Scott House, which now stands behind City Hall on Civic Center Drive, in 1853.

In its early days, Scotts Valley had a plethora of tourist attractions bringing wonder to the area.

Axel Erlandson's "Tree Circus" was moved to Scotts Valley Drive in 1946 and grown into awe-inspiring shapes like a heart, zig zag and castle. Amusement parks like Lost World, with its life-size dinosaur replicas, and Santa's Village, bringing year-round Christmas cheer, gave the community color and started putting Scotts Valley on the map.

In the 1960s, plans to build a cemetery along Skypark Drive pushed residents to form the Scotts Valley Property Owners Association, spearheaded by Agnes Knox Lewis, to protest the project. The association helped form a community that put in years of legal battles to help secure Scotts Valley's incorporation as a city in 1966, Lind said.

“Back in those days, a woman couldn’t even get a checking account except under her husband’s name,” Lind said. “So I’m so proud that it was a woman who took a lead, became a chair and helped organize a group that fought to become a city.”

The first City Hall sat on the site of the current Scotts Valley Senior Center, on Kings Village Road next to the then-Skypark Airport. The building was a red two-story farmhouse with city hall upstairs and the Scotts Valley Police Department downstairs, where a teenage Lind interviewed with Scotts Valley’s first city manager, Friend Stone, for the city hall secretary position in 1968.

Stone outfitted the entire city hall with a \$20,000 loan from the Santa Cruz County Bank — which he paid back in the first year, Lind said. He purchased the office’s desks, chairs, file cabinets and other furniture for around \$1 each. He traded some things and got others at a discounted rate, such as the city’s original police car, and used volunteers to help set everything up.

Those early days set the tone for the city’s next 60 years, as the city has taken to be as protective of community funds and fiscally responsible as possible, Lind said.



Lind sits in an early Scotts Valley City Council meeting taking notes as secretary. Her secretary job, which Lind acquired in high school, led to her post as the first female police officer in Scotts Valley. Lind worked with the police department for 40 years before joining the Scotts Valley City Council and becoming mayor in 2011, serving four non-consecutive terms.

(Courtesy of Donna Lind)

Another huge pillar of Scotts Valley's DNA since the onset has been the emphasis and appreciation of its community.

The current city hall at Civic Center Drive was constructed by local volunteers and donated property from local businesses in the early 1980s, Lind said.

"They were all there teaching each other and we built City Hall with donated property and volunteer work and community donations," she said. "So I mean, just very proud of the history, being extremely fiscally responsible."

However, despite City Hall's construction being a positive community effort, it's planning stage had a rocky start.

In 1978, archaeologist Jan Whitlow discovered an ancient Indigenous settlement at the site of the soon-to-be constructed city hall that dated back 4,000 to 7,000 years, and has since been deemed the oldest Indigenous settlement with the longest documented history in Central California, according to the Santa Cruz Archaeological Society.

However, the site was disregarded and attempted to be destroyed by the City Council, as the site sat where the parking lot was planned for city hall. After the Santa Cruz Archaeological Society sued the city of Scotts Valley in 1981, the city agreed to change their planning procedures, and the archaeological dig lasted from 1982 to 1987.

Scotts Valley has been the site of other historical moments in time, perhaps one of the most famous being Alfred Hitchcock's summer residence tucked away off Canham Road, Lind said. The Skypark airport made it easier for celebrities like Hitchcock and Grace Kelly to fly in and stay at his residence, Lind said; residents even occasionally saw them around town.

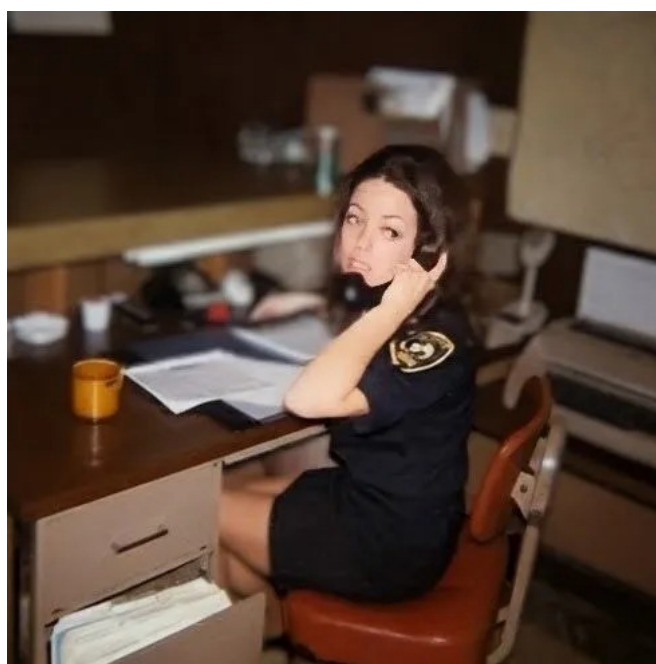
But despite its run-in with early Hollywood celebrities, the heart of the city is its community members and their commitment to supporting each other, Lind said.

When residents returned to their homes after being evacuated

during the CZU Lightning Complex Fires in 2020, Lind, the City Council and then-City Manager Tina Friend lined up along the road with signs welcoming people back to their homes.

People making their journeys back to the city honked their horns and even got out of their cars to hug Lind and the other city administrators, Lind said, a moment she will never forget.

“They were crying, they got out of their cars and hugged us and honked their horns and that is a memory I’ll never forget,” Lind said. “Just seeing people who thankfully were coming back to their homes, not knowing if they lost everything, it was an emotional time. I still get choked up over it.”



Scotts Valley Mayor and then-Scotts Valley Police officer Donna Lind answers the phone at Scotts Valley's original City Hall. The City Hall was a two-story red farmhouse with City Hall on the top floor and the police department on the bottom floor. Lind was the first female police officer and first female sergeant in Scotts Valley. (Courtesy of Donna Lind)

Going forward into the city’s next 60 years, Lind said she looks forward to having a space for people to gather in the planned [Town Center project](#) to continue the city’s transition of being a tight-knit community.

As a relatively new city compared to others in Santa Cruz County, Scotts Valley lacks a focal point seen in areas like Capitola Village or Downtown Santa Cruz. The Town Center project, which is

estimated to begin construction in 2028 or 2029, is intended to be a space for the city to host events and for residents and visitors to easily shop local to boost community spirit.

Even without a Town Center, though, Scotts Valley does not lack community events. This week, for the 60th anniversary, the city hosted a celebration each day.

Kicking off Aug. 2, the city threw Scotts Valley's Birthday Bash in Skypark, with live music, food and recreation of historical sites like a blow-up Santa's Village. The event also featured stories from founding community members about starting their local businesses and being a police officer during the early days.

Monday saw the Coffee with the Legends event, where Lind and other historical local legends gathered to tell stories about their experiences in local government as early members. On Tuesday, Scotts Valley Police Department hosted its National Night Out and Thursday celebrated the start of the school year for Scotts Valley Unified School District.

Friday, Saturday and Sunday are the city's Shop, Snip and Scan days, where people can take a selfie with their purchases at local Scotts Valley businesses and post it with the hashtag #SV60 for a chance to win a prize.

"At the celebration of the city's birthday, many of us shared stories and what is still the same is there is still a tight-knot small town community feel," Lind said. "What we hear over and over is there's still that small town feeling, and we still hang on to that, desperately hang on to that. We don't want to lose that because that's what kept me here all these years."

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

How Scotts Valley became a city | Ross Eric Gibson, Local History

Ross Eric Gibson

11–13 minutes



- Historians Ross Gibson and Jay Topping pose in front of the 1860s Wells Fargo Stage Coach at Scotts Valley's 50th birthday. (Contributed — Eric Taylor and L.L. Maloney)

1 of 5

Historians Ross Gibson and Jay Topping pose in front of the 1860s Wells Fargo Stage Coach at Scotts Valley's 50th birthday. (Contributed — Eric Taylor and L.L. Maloney)

[Expand](#)

Scotts Valley is Santa Cruz County's fourth incorporated city, taking it from being the Middle of Nowhere, to the Heart of the County.

Scotts Valley celebrated its 60th year of cityhood on Aug. 2, 2026, at the old Skypark Airport. Jay Topping displayed an 1860s Wells Fargo stagecoach that was built in Stockton and ran from Marysville to Downieville. The beautifully preserved coach was exhibited courtesy of owner John Blackman, and the Scotts Valley Parks & Recreation Department. I helped the Scotts Valley Historical Society pass out old programs for the Scotts Valley Cavalcades, a mid-1970s wild west show of Santa Cruz County history once performed in an arena the size of a football field. I was one of the numerous writers and stage managers.

At one birthday festival booth was the official blue and green tartan plaid used on the Scotts Valley city flag. I asked for someone to hold the flag out so I could get a picture of it, and a man obliged. I asked his name, and it was retired Mayor Derek Timms. From the bandstand came recollections from historian Deborah Muth, author of the book "Scotts Valley." Sixty years of popular music was also performed by Vantage Point, a band with ties as far back as Scotts Valley's "The Barn" rock venue.

Former police chief Steven Walpole Jr. told the crowd that in its short existence, the city of Scotts Valley has had only seven police chiefs. The first was Gerald C. Pattenger (1966-86), then came Steve's father Stephen D. Walpole (1986-2001), John Weiss (2006-16) and Steve Walpole Jr. (2017-25), up to the current Jayson Rutherford. Steve felt among the worst disasters to hit Scotts Valley was not the 1989 earthquake — which caused blackouts, pavement cracks and road closures — but the 1982 storm, with heavy flooding and property damage, yet causing worse damage with a killer landslide several miles west of Scotts Valley. The CZU Lightning Complex fires required door-to-door contact preparing for a fire that fortunately didn't reach Scotts Valley. Then on Dec. 14, 2024, there was the unexpected EF-1 tornado, whose 90-mile-an-hour winds flipped over six vehicles with people inside, one of which was a CalFire pickup truck, with some of their fire equipment found in a nearby tree.

The valley got its name from Hiram D. Scott, who jumped ship in Monterey in 1846, and headed to Branciforte. He and a friend built a sailing ship at Beach Flats. Then halfway through construction, Hiram was lured away by the Gold Rush in 1848-49 where he struck it rich. He built a river ferry in Stockton, charging \$1-per-head of cattle to cross, and built Stockton's first hotel. He returned to Santa Cruz in 1850, bought Rancho San Augustin from Joseph Majors for \$25,000 and built his cottage there in 1853. In the past century, his cottage was moved several times due to its landmark status. He raised hay, potatoes, horses and ran a tannery. His valley led to the road over the mountains, and soon his ranch was designated by travelers as "Scotts Valley." But it was a ranch, not a produce station, much less a village or city.

NOT A CITY

The completion of Highway 17 in 1961, stood parallel to the 1919 two-lane Glenwood Highway over the mountain, with a portion of the old highway renamed "Scotts Valley Drive." Motorists could now bypass a host of roadside attractions and businesses that were on the old highway. Next came a controversial proposed large cemetery to be in view of Santa's Village. Santa Cruz City bought Scotts Valley's Skypark Airport for \$197,000 and annexed the airport property into the city as Santa Cruz Municipal Airport. There was concern the rest of Scotts Valley would also be annexed for a bedroom community and urban sprawl.

A number of Scotts Valley residents wanted home rule, an idea they could unite behind. Yet it became clear people had different ideas of what this meant. Some were country-folk or urban transplants who had settled in Scotts Valley for its country lifestyle, peaceful ranching and horse-riding culture. At the other extreme were the developers who didn't want any city restrictions. In the middle were those who simply wanted local consent through public hearings and democratic involvement.

Agnes Knox Lewis hated to see the beautiful dairy barns demolished and dairy herds removed for the new highway, and was livid at the proposed cemetery. At the time, women were not noted for being activists, yet Agnes, her friends Lucy Dolph and a third woman, went to protest at a County Planning Commission meeting

and found they were not alone, numbering 22. But they weren't being taken seriously as a political entity, so they formed the Scotts Valley Property Owners Association with 190 members and Agnes as association president. One of her citizens committees wrote a report that the Scotts Valley aquifer lay under the proposed cemetery site.

When the group proposed they would incorporate as a city, the County Supervisors wondered how, since they were missing the elements of a city. The grocery store at Camp Evers seemed all that passed for a downtown. When asked if Scotts Valley had an industrial base, they replied trailer parks, listing three of the most beautifully landscaped in the world. Then the association said the city could run without local taxes "...indefinitely...[provided] we keep expenditures down, and don't demand luxuries."

A number of valley residents asked to be taken out of the proposed city limits, which got whittled down from 10 square miles to 3½. However, this excluded opponents from the cityhood vote in 1964, and they continued their opposition out of fear that establishing a city would trigger annexation of their property. The city was incorporated by only 25 votes (327-302). Home rule can be far from unanimous. Opponents contested the election in superior court and lost.

The vote for cityhood wasn't confirmed until 1966, with two city councilmen ejected because without knowing it, they had moved into houses outside the zigzagging city limits. Bill Graham and C.R. Robberson flipped a coin, in which the loser would have to be mayor (this was Graham). The first ordinance they passed was to reclassify ponies from livestock to pets, to permit them inside city limits. The cemetery issue resolved itself when the owner didn't show up to his own state hearing, and his permit expired soon after.

In 1966, Scotts Valley had 4,700 residents, 1,220 voters, 117 businesses, 6 churches, 2 public grade schools and a Bible college. It was George Ow Sr. who was concerned with the lack of a downtown in Scotts Valley. He did a survey, determining there was a potential of 25,000 customers in the area, and opened his "Kings Village Shopping Center" Nov. 4, 1968. In addition to a supermarket (run by his wife Emily), within a year his shopping

center had 20 other businesses within walking distance. After 10 tax-free years, Scotts Valley imposed taxes in 1976.

ODD ATTRACTIONS

Scotts Valley's roadside attractions were a quirky and eclectic lot, too unique for some to consider them local heritage. Santa's Village was a Christmas oddity, usually visited during summer vacation. When it closed in 1977, it was renamed Village Faire, but funding problems forced it to close permanently in 1979. The 11 real log cabins were considered quality construction in a fantasy style, but a request to save one for Scotts Valley City Hall was rejected, and the cabins were bought by resorts in the Sierras. The Marion Hollin's Polo Barn, built 1930 for Steeplechase races, was last used as the mule barn at Santa's Village, a renowned example of architect Wm. Wuster's early work. It was designated to be restored as a landmark, as a concession for building on the site. But when the developer offered the City Council a million dollars to allow demolition of the polo barn in 2014, the city accepted.

Axel Erlandson grafted and bent a forest of saplings into strange topiary shapes. This started as a private hobby, then opened as a roadside attraction in 1946 called "The Tree Circus." It gained the attention of Ripley's Believe-It-Or-Not newspaper feature, and a knotted "Believe-It-Or-Knot" tree was designated in their honor. When Erlandson fell ill in 1963, he sold his attraction for \$12,000, to Larry & Margaret Thompson, who interspersed the trees with cartoonish dinosaur statues and called it "The Lost World." Larry died in 1965, and his wife and others ran the park, yet the dinosaurs merely de-emphasized the uniqueness of the tree oddities. A developer bought the site, and Mark Primack worried that the trees were not being watered, so he and a group of volunteer "Commando Gardeners" kept the plants alive, until it was announced the trees would be bulldozed. The Scotts Valley Planning Department refused to allow the trees protection as heritage trees. But Michael Bonfante, owner of the Nob Hill grocery chain, responded to Primack's advocacy, and helped transport 29 of the surviving 40 trees to his Gilroy theme park, originally called Bonfante Gardens.

Jim Swanson's vision in 1969 was to build a shopping center

resembling an Old West town and call it Fort Scott or “Pinnacle Pass.” His design inspiration was a 1939 movie-set ghost town outside Tucson, Arizona, where westerns were still occasionally filmed. In the late 1960s, Westerns were popular on TV and in the movies for young and old. One of the buildings moved to the site was a Scotts Valley tannery bunkhouse from the 1860s.

Construction of Pinnacle Pass started in 1969 and was completed in 1972. Unfortunately, the location down in a gulch was hard to see passing by at freeway speeds, so it was not the success expected. Yet when an apartment house was proposed recently, the Scotts Valley Historical Society sought to get the 160-year-old landmark moved to safety, but the state’s Builder’s Remedy allows bypassing all local authority, and the building was demolished. So much for local control!

In February 1947, Jack and Lola Graham built the Skypark Airport to train new pilots after World War II using G.I. Bill benefits. The Grahams sold the airport to Russell and Esther Abbott in 1954, who moved their aviation operations from Capitola to Skypark. The Abbotts were friends of Alfred Hitchcock, who had a home in Scotts Valley, and they would transport him and his Hollywood guests in and out of Scotts Valley. After Scotts Valley cityhood was approved in 1966, airport management was leased to James and Ann Dahm, and Scotts Valley Days held antique airplane fly-ins at Skypark, including the first legal drag races at another time. When the Dahms’ lease expired in 1983, Scotts Valley closed its airport, but it became an emergency staging area after the 1989 earthquake, and President George H.W. Bush landed here to tour the damage.

FURTHER INTEREST: “Scotts Valley,” a history book by Deborah Muth.

santacruzlocal.org

With new funds, Felton Fire looks to hire

Jesse Kathan

4–5 minutes

Staffing up

The assessment is expected to bring in nearly \$1.7 million annually, with the first installment expected in November, Interim Fire Chief Isaac Blum said. District leaders are already moving forward with new hires promised during district leaders' campaign for the assessment.

The assessment allocates money for a full-time chief, three full-time fire captains and six full-time firefighters to ensure that crews responding to fires have at least three members. For years, the district has relied almost entirely on volunteers paid a stipend for each 12-hour shift, and responding crews sometimes have had two members.

After interviewing a round of candidates for the chief position, the Felton Fire Board of Directors reported in a board meeting Aug. 10 that their top choice, former Monterey Fire Department Division Chief Stewart Roth, turned down an offer to lead the district because of his family's difficulty with relocation. The board voted to re-open the position to new applicants who may be attracted by the stable funding provided by the newly approved assessment.

Blum, the interim chief, said before the assessment election that he planned to vacate the chief role at the end of the summer. At

Monday's meeting, he said he would stay on through a second round of interviews for a permanent chief. Blum has said in an interview that although he hasn't ruled out the possibility of leading Felton Fire full time, the move would represent a large pay cut from his current position at Nasa Ames Research Center at Moffett Federal Airfield.

One fire captain was hired before the assessment passed, and two more will be hired as soon as the district can find qualified candidates, he said.

Blum said he also plans to bring on volunteer firefighters to supplement the paid positions. Fifteen county residents, including four who live within Felton Fire, have applied as potential volunteers, he said.

A final draft of the district budget for the upcoming fiscal year, including the new positions, is set to be discussed at the next board meeting Sept. 14.

District oversight

The Prop. 218 assessment calls for a citizen panel to oversee spending, but it's still unclear what shape the committee will take. The group could be legally independent of the fire district and completely self-governing. The board could also create a formal commission, which would be bound by the legal structure and transparency rules of the Brown Act.

Board members decided to discuss the structure of the oversight committee at the Sept. 14 board meeting.

Board election

Three positions on the board of directors are up for grabs in the Nov. 3 general election, including two full-term seats and one short-term seat. The short-term seat, which would expire in 2028, is

currently held by Craig Winters, who directors appointed to the position in July 2025. Winter is not running to finish out that term.

Instead, Winters is challenging directors Norm Crandall and Jim Anderson, who are running for reelection for a four-year seat. Bill Finlayson is also running for one of the full-term seats. The top two vote-getters between Crandall, Anderson, Winters and Finlayson would win the two seats.

As the sole candidate for the short-term seat, John Payne is set to be appointed in lieu and the seat will not appear on the ballot.

The board sets the district budget, hires the chief and helps set policies for the district.

Correction: This story has been updated to reflect that John Payne was the sole candidate for the short-term seat.