



Santa Cruz Local Agency Formation Commission

Date: October 7, 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. The commission will receive the latest news regarding the various fire-related projects, including the proposed Pajaro Valley Fire Protection District reorganization effort. 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

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 and commitment in helping agencies navigate complex transitions, evaluate long-term service needs, and engage residents in understanding potential governance tradeoffs. The following section provides a summary of the most recent development regarding the ongoing reorganization effort.

PVFPD Reorganization

The Commission recently received a letter from the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association (HJTA) requesting clarification on the proposed extension of CSA 48's existing benefit assessments as part of the reorganization, as shown in **Attachment 1**. The letter raises questions about whether such an extension would be permissible and if additional voter approval is required. While the correspondence outlines HJTA's general concerns regarding benefit assessments, it does not acknowledge that LAFCO law (Government Code Section 56886) expressly authorizes the extension, continuation, or modification of existing benefit assessments as part of a change of organization, including reorganizations, when such assessments are already lawfully imposed within the affected territory. This authority is established by the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Reorganization Act of 2000 and has long been applied in similar reorganizations statewide. The HJTA letter is attached for informational purposes only, and no Commission action is required at this time.

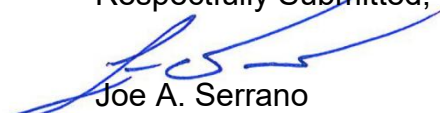
Other Fire-Related Projects

Beyond the PVFPD reorganization effort, staff continues to monitor and support several related fire-governance projects countywide. The proposed CSA 48 reorganization remains an active initiative, with its own feasibility study anticipated to begin after completion of the PVFPD reorganization, ensuring that fiscal and governance assumptions are based on updated conditions. Separately, the feasibility study evaluating long-term governance options among the City of Santa Cruz, Central Fire District, and Scotts Valley Fire Protection District remains on pause at the request of the affected agencies, pending completion of current reorganization work and clearer regional direction. And finally, staff continue to monitor the progress made by the Felton Fire Protection District after the successful passage of a new benefit assessment. The District is currently searching for a new fire chief and is providing assistance in the formation of a resident fire advisory committee. A full summary of each fire-related project, including current status and next steps, is provided on page three under **Table A**.

Table A: Overview of Fire Projects

Project	Affected Agencies	Description	Timeline / Deadline
CSA 48 Reorganization	County (CSA 48) and CalFIRE	Status: Pending The affected agencies and LAFCO are exploring the concept of transitioning CSA 48 into an independent special district. At present, the County and LAFCO are focusing on the proposed PVFPD before continuing this effort.	Group effort started in August 2024; Draft RFP may be considered by the commission in mid-2027
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://santacruzlafo.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 to occur in early-2027 Commission may consider the reorganization by early-2027
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

Attachment: [Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association \(dated August 13, 2026\)](#)