

SANTA BARBARA LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION
EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

August 4, 2011 (Agenda)

LAFCO 11-4: Remaining Area Annexation to the Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District;

PROPONENT: Board of Supervisors, by resolution adopted April 12, 2011.

ACREAGE & LOCATION All territory within Santa Barbara County that is not within the Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District excluding areas within an incorporated city or other fire district and excluding the off-shore Channel Islands (Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, San Miguel and Santa Rosa.).

PURPOSE: To ensure all territory within Santa Barbara County is located within the jurisdiction of a local fire protection agency and to apportion property tax revenue to compensate the Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District for providing services within the annexation area.

GENERAL ANALYSIS:

Description of Proposal

The annexation consists of approximately 1,925 parcels comprising 629,941 acres. The vast majority of this land - 629,563 acres - is located within the National Forest; however, 378 acres are outside of and are primarily surrounded by the National Forest boundaries

If this proposal is completed all territory in mainland Santa Barbara County which is not already within a fire protection agency such as a city or local fire protection district will be included within the Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District.

The application received from the County Fire Department states:

Although not presently located within the Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District, the parcels to be annexed are already served by the Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District. Annexation would apportion property tax revenue to compensate the Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District for provision of fire protection services within the annexation area and ensure that all territory within Santa Barbara County is located within the jurisdiction of a local fire protection agency. No physical development is proposed or would occur as a result of the annexation.

Consideration is being given to transferring a portion of the property taxes collected within the annexation area to the Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District. This would provide a level of annual tax revenue for the services that are already being provided to this area by the District.

The Board of Supervisors is scheduled to consider the property tax exchange for this annexation at its meeting on Tuesday, August 2 and the staff will report to the Commission on the action which is taken by the Board that day.

While annexation will include the territory within the County Fire Protection District it will not reduce or replace Federal government responsibilities to provide fire prevention, suppression and other emergency services for land within the Los Padres National Forest as it does presently.

History and Background

The Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District was formed in 1957 and operates pursuant to the Fire Protection District Law of 1987 (Health and Safety Code, Section 13800 et seq.). It is governed by the Board of Supervisors as, ex officio, the District Board of Directors.

The District provides fire prevention and suppression, emergency medical services, hazardous materials response, building code review, fire safety education and other emergency activities. It operates fifteen fire stations.

For some unknown historical reason – perhaps because the District was not formed until 1957 – the portion of Santa Barbara County consisting mainly of the Los Padres National Forest was not included within the District or within any other local fire protection agency.

This contrasts with the Ventura County Fire Protection District which was formed in 1928. Its boundaries encompass that portion of the Los Padres National Forest located in Ventura County.

Although Los Padres National Forest within Santa Barbara County is not within the boundaries of the County Fire Protection District, frequently District staff and equipment respond to fires and other emergencies within this area. They are often the closest public safety agency to the location of the emergency.

Project Information

1. Land Use, Planning and Zoning - Present and Future:

The property is within the sphere of influence of the County Fire Protection District.

The annexation area consists of approximately 629,941 acres. The majority of land uses are rural and agricultural in nature, including 805 parcels of grazing land, 256 acres of dry farms and 180 acres of recreational open space. There are 434 parcels with residential uses and three with commercial uses, in addition to miscellaneous other uses.

County General Plan and zoning for the area includes various agricultural, mountainous, open space, recreational, residential; commercial and utility designations. There will be no change in land use, general plans or zoning as a result of this annexation.

Surrounding land uses are primarily grazing pasture, vineyards, irrigated farms, rancho estates, golf courses and other uses.

2. Topography, Natural Features and Drainage Basins

The topography is primarily hilly and mountainous with canyons and drainage areas. There are notable rivers including the Sisquoc and Santa Ynez as well as smaller streams and waterways. There are no significant natural features that will affect the proposal.

3. Population:

There are approximately 434 parcels with residential uses. No new homes are proposed or will result from this annexation.

4. Governmental Services and Controls - Need, Cost, Adequacy and Availability:

The District provides fire protection and suppression, emergency medical response, rescue, hazardous material response and other emergency response services.

The application notes:

The services of the Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District are currently being provided to the proposed annexation area with the [] District bearing the full cost. This annexation, while not covering the full cost of [] District services, will help to offset the fiscal impact through the collection of property taxes with a portion of these taxes allocated to the [] District.

The application notes that wildland fire protection within the Los Padres National Forest is the sole responsibility of the U.S. Forest Service and the annexation will not affect its responsibilities to provide wildland fire protection for National Forest lands.

5. Environmental Impact of the Proposal:

The County has found the proposal may not constitute a "project" since it consists of "Organizational or administrative activities of governments that will not result in direct or indirect physical impact on the environment" per CEQA Guidelines Section 15378.

The staff recommends the Commission find the reorganization to be categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to Class 19, the annexation of existing facilities and lots for exempt facilities per CEQA Guidelines Section 15319.

6. Boundaries and Lines of Assessment:

The boundaries are definite and certain and contiguous to the existing District boundaries. There are no conflicts with lines of assessment or ownership.

7. Assessed Value, Tax Rates and Indebtedness:

The proposal is within several tax rate areas. Overall tax rates will not be affected by this change. The annexing agency has no existing indebtedness. The assessed value of the annexation area is \$285,751,850 (2010-2011 roll).

ALTERNATIVES FOR COMMISSION ACTION

Following review of any testimony and materials that are submitted, the Commission should consider the following options:

OPTION 1 – If the Board of Supervisors has adopted the property tax exchange agreement for this proposal, adopt this report and APPROVE the proposal.

- A. Find the proposal to be categorically exempt and direct staff to issue a notice of exemption pursuant to Class 19.
- B. Adopt this report and approve the proposal to be known as the Remaining Area Annexation to the Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District.
- C. Direct the staff to initiate and conduct subsequent proceedings in compliance with the decision of the Local Agency Formation Commission only upon the signing of the resolution by the Chair.

OPTION 2 – Adopt this report and DENY the proposal:

OPTION 3 - CONTINUE this proposal to a future meeting for additional information.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Approve OPTION 1.



BOB BRAITMAN
Executive Officer
LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION