

LAFCO

Santa Barbara Local Agency Formation Commission

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November 3, 2005 (Agenda)

Local Agency Formation Commission
105 East Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara CA 93101

LAFCO 05-2 – Cities Annexation to the Santa Barbara Coastal VCD

Dear Members of the Commission:

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended the Commission approve the Cities Annexation to the Santa Barbara Coastal Vector Control District with conditions set forth in the enclosed staff report, including a benefit assessment election within the proposed annexation area.

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This matter was on the Commission's agenda on April 7, at which time it was continued for future consideration. Since such a long time has elapsed I think is best to briefly summarize the events that brought this matter to the Commission's agenda.

- In 1998 the Commission adopted a Countywide Sphere of Influence for the Santa Barbara Coastal Vector Control District (except for the Carpinteria Mosquito Abatement District).
- In 1999 the District's Sphere was expanded and the land in the Carpinteria MAD was annexed to the District.

At that time the District encompassed the Goleta Valley and Carpinteria Valley, including the lands within the Cities of Goleta and Carpinteria.

- In 2002 the remaining unincorporated area was annexed to the District.
- In 2004 the City of Santa Barbara was annexed to the District; the process included a successful election to impose a benefit assessment on the parcels being annexed.

Commissioners: Tim Campbell, Chair ♦ Joe Centeno ♦ Dick DeWees ♦ John Fox ♦ Bob Orach ♦ Susan Rose ♦ Bernice Stableford

♦ Jack Hawxhurst ♦ Brooks Firestone ♦ Penny Leich ♦ Cathy Schlottmann ♦ **Executive Officer:** Bob Braitman

- In February 2005 the current proposal was submitted. It includes the rest of the County, namely lands within the Cities of Buellton, Guadalupe, Lompoc, Santa Maria and Solvang.

If approved by the Commission and property owners within this annexation area, the District boundaries and service area will be Countywide.

Positions of the Cities within the Proposed Annexation

Although cities do not have the legal authority to veto annexations to vector control districts – the law leaves that judgment to the Commission - the LAFCO staff solicited the views of each of the affected cities when the application was received.

- The City of Santa Maria is opposed to annexing properties in the City to the District.
- While the Lompoc City Council has not taken a formal vote, we understand members of the City Council are not in favor of the annexation as proposed.
- The City of Buellton supports the annexation “for all the remaining territory within the County not currently in the District.”
- The City of Guadalupe is “in favor of letting the voters decide if funding the proposed services through a benefit assessment is desired.” (Letter enclosed)

While city councils may support or oppose the annexation, the approval of city governments is not required in the annexation process. The law leaves the matter to LAFCO and the land owners in the areas proposed to be annexed.

Justification for Staff Recommendation

The staff recommends approval of the annexation for the following reasons:

1. The Commission’s decision in 1999 to create a Countywide Sphere of Influence for the District indicates a policy that the annexation area is a logical part of the District.
2. Vector Control is a basic government service, similar to fire protection, law enforcement and health care services. Since the County no longer provides vector control services it is appropriate that the entire County be within the Vector Control District.

The District provides a variety of services designed to protect public health and safety. The continued appearance of West Nile Virus cases in California is of concern and is one of the District's priorities in its service area.

3. One reason the Commission continued the earlier hearing was to investigate whether the County Health Department has plans or funding to provide vector control services. The enclosed letter from Dr. Elliot Schulman, County Health Officer, to the City of Santa Maria does not support this option and states:

In practice, the vast majority of mosquito abatement and vector control programs in California are funded by property taxes or benefit assessment fees and most of these programs are managed by special district boards. Vector control/mosquito abatement districts serve approximately 54% of the geographic area of California and 80% of its population. The assessment district approach has proven to be the most reliable method of providing consistent and sustainable service levels for the surveillance, prevention and control of mosquitoes and other vectors.

4. If LAFCO approves the annexation, it will be completed, as required by Proposition 218, only if a majority of the property owners participating in the benefit assessment election favor the annexation. By approving the proposal the Commission is allowing the property owners within the annexation area to decide the issue.

April 7 LAFCO Meeting

When this matter was considered on April 7 a motion to approve the annexation failed on a 2 to 5 vote. A subsequent motion to annex only the cities of Buellton and Solvang was withdrawn. It was at that time that the matter was continued.

Our April 7 staff report, with all attachments, including an explanation of the Proposition 218 approval process, is enclosed with this meeting packet so this information is readily available.

Alternatives for Commission Action

After consideration of this report and any testimony or additional materials that are submitted the Commission should consider taking one of the following options:

- Option 1 – Approve the annexation as submitted, with conditions set forth in the enclosed staff report, including a benefit assessment election within the proposed annexation area.

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Option 2 – Restrict the annexation to cities that have not opposed the annexation, with conditions set forth in the enclosed staff report, including a benefit assessment election within the proposed annexation area.

Option 3 – Adopt this report and deny the annexation.

Option 4 - Continue consideration of the annexation to a future meeting.

Recommendation:

Approve the annexation as submitted (Option 1).

Sincerely,

BOB BRAITMAN
Executive Officer