



COUNTY OF SONOMA

575 ADMINISTRATION
DRIVE, ROOM 102A
SANTA ROSA, CA 95403

SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 2/6/2024

To: Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): County Administrator's Office

Staff Name and Phone Number: Christel Querijero and Maggie Luce, 565-2431

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Title:

Unincorporated Governance Ad Hoc Committee

Recommended Action:

Provide staff direction regarding the Unincorporated Governance Ad Hoc Committee's work efforts recommendations. □

Executive Summary:

The Board of Supervisors established the Unincorporated Governance Ad Hoc committee on January 1, 2023, to explore governance solutions for unincorporated areas of Sonoma County and a committee charter on May 23, 2023. The Unincorporated Governance Ad Hoc committee is comprised of Supervisor Gorin and Supervisor Hopkins.

This item presents the Ad Hoc committee's recommendations for potential work efforts and requests the Board's decision as to which work efforts to develop implementation plans and General Fund requests in the FY 24/25 budget. Based on high level estimates, the total one-time requested amount is \$923,000.

Discussion:

Background. The Unincorporated Governance Ad Hoc committee was established to explore governance solutions for unincorporated areas of Sonoma County. [On May 23, 2023 <https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6208102&GUID=BE5D3060-2A75-4110-BA8A-877708F25884&Options=&Search=>](https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6208102&GUID=BE5D3060-2A75-4110-BA8A-877708F25884&Options=&Search=>), the Board adopted the Unincorporated Governance charter (Attachment A). The stated and approved desired outcome for the committee reads, "identify strategies for local areas to gain more access and/or funding for municipal services." The charter also identified that the Ad Hoc committee would identify which communities in unincorporated areas of Sonoma County are suited or positioned to be annexed, incorporated, or receive services through the formation of new districts.

At the May 23, 2023, meeting, the Board confirmed support for the following priority areas of focus:

- Identification of potential projects in all Supervisorial Districts for future District Formation Funding
- Scoping of options to increase funding to a) support existing non-County parks; and/or b) create new park, bike, and pedestrian paths.
- Legislative advocacy to improve current laws around incorporation.
- Inventory of current service gaps in unincorporated areas.
- Hold an all-Municipal Advisory Council (MAC) meeting, with representatives from all MACs and communities without MACs.

Ad Hoc Committee's Work to Date. Since the formation of the Ad Hoc Committee, Supervisor Gorin and

Supervisor Hopkins participated in seven Ad Hoc Committee meetings. Key activities from these meetings include drafting the Ad Hoc Committee's charter, receiving a preview of Ag + Open Space and Regional Parks' mapping analysis tool, and exploring and prioritizing potential work efforts to recommend to the Board of Supervisors.

Additionally, the Ad Hoc Committee hosted an all- Municipal Advisory Committee (MAC) listening session on August 16, 2023, with representatives from all five Supervisorial Districts. The primary objective was to hear directly from the community representatives about the top needs for government services in their communities. The input received informed today's Ad Hoc Committee recommendations. More details on the findings from this listening session are available in Attachment B.

The Ad Hoc Committee also hosted a bike lane roundtable with Regional Parks and Sonoma County Public Infrastructure, to identify strategies to improve bike lane and pedestrian path projects. The County Administrator's Office staff will on March 12, 2023 present a discussion on bike lanes and pedestrian paths within the context the Active Transportation framework.

District Formation Projects. Prior to establishing the Unincorporated Governance Ad Hoc Committee, your Board approved \$152,500 in District Formation funding for each Supervisorial District (See [12/14/21 Board item <https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5353336&GUID=F241FD15-FD92-423C-9F95-77797FD51F57&Options=&Search=>](https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5353336&GUID=F241FD15-FD92-423C-9F95-77797FD51F57&Options=&Search=>) and [5/3/22 Board item <https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5567425&GUID=61AE1D3D-5F7B-434E-AD4C-B44C89C64B42&Options=&Search=>](https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5567425&GUID=61AE1D3D-5F7B-434E-AD4C-B44C89C64B42&Options=&Search=>)). These funds are designated for professional services to explore and/or establish Special Districts that will enable communities to provide self-generated funding to address municipal challenges. Current projects include:

- Asti Bridge: An evaluation of a potential new special assessment district for Asti Bridge
- Fire Services: Fire Agency consolidation efforts
- Sonoma Valley Shared Services: exploration, in partnership with the City of Sonoma, of governance options to improve service delivery in Sonoma Valley
- Alexander Valley Water District: analysis of options for a potential new water district
- Lower Russian River Governance Study: feasibility analysis and community engagement process to identify potential governance options to improve services in the Lower Russian River communities.

Though outside the purview of the Unincorporated Governance Ad Hoc Committee, District Formation projects align with the Ad Hoc Committee's charter as they share a focus on improving governance and service delivery in unincorporated areas. An update on current District Formation projects was presented to the Board on [July 11, 2023 <https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6277619&GUID=5E06EA53-DF41-4D83-ABEF-E3EA486AFE41&Options=&Search=>](https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6277619&GUID=5E06EA53-DF41-4D83-ABEF-E3EA486AFE41&Options=&Search=>). The next update to the Board will be on July 9, 2024.

Ad Hoc Committee Recommended Work Efforts

The Ad Hoc Committee has identified 8 potential work efforts to improve government service delivery in unincorporated communities for Board consideration. Below is a brief description of each work effort.

1. Regional Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts (EIFD):
RECOMMENDATION: Direct staff to include a funding recommendation to be considered as part of the FY24/25 budget hearings that will finance exploring and/or creating new EIFDs. Geographic areas may include Petaluma, Sonoma Valley, Moorland, Geyserville, Mark West, and West County.
 - *Preliminary one-time cost estimates to create up to three new EIFDs is \$650,000.*
2. New County Service Area zone of benefit for parks and plazas:
RECOMMENDATION: Direct staff to include a funding recommendation in the FY24/25 budget hearings to explore creating a new zone of benefit within the existing County Service Area (CSA) 41 to finance new neighborhood parks and plazas. The creation of a new zone of benefit would result in new

assessments being levied against properties within the new zone to fund the identified project(s).

- *Preliminary cost estimates totaling \$148,000 would include mapping, fiscal analysis, community engagement, analysis of policy options to create a new assessment or tax.*

County Service Areas are designated areas that provide expanded service levels in unincorporated areas where residents are willing to pay for the extra service. Sonoma County's CSA 41 is authorized to provide any governmental service and facility within the county service area that the county is authorized to perform and that the county does not perform to the same extent on a countywide basis, including, but not limited to, recreation facilities such parks, parkways, and open space. The Board currently governs 31 CSA 41 projects. Of which 23 are for lighting, 3 for specific parks, and 4 for small water community systems.

By creating a new zone of benefit within CSA 41, parcel owners can choose to provide a financing mechanism in selected unincorporated areas to create new neighborhood parks and plazas.

3. Legislation advocacy to remove barriers to incorporation:

RECOMMENDATION: Direct staff to identify legislation advocacy options for improving current laws around incorporation to increase opportunities for unincorporated communities to incorporate.

- *There is no anticipated additional cost for this work effort, as it would be included in the County's existing legislative platform and advocacy work.*

No new cities have incorporated in the state since 2011. It is currently very difficult for California's unincorporated communities to incorporate and form a new city. Part of the reason for this is due to Senate Bill 89, which was passed in 2011. This bill changed the allocations of the Vehicle License Fee, which took away a key funding source that had previously been available for newly incorporated cities. Staff have not identified any currently proposed legislation that would reduce barriers to incorporation; however, advocacy for this type of legislation could be added to the next cycle of the County's 2-year legislative platform.

4. Municipal Advisory Council best practice implementation & knowledge sharing convenings:

RECOMMENDATION: 1) Direct staff to review the County's current Municipal Advisory Councils (MAC) practices, research best practices from other jurisdictions, and identify opportunities for improvement. 2) Direct staff to include a funding request in the FY 24/25 budget hearings to finance convening quarterly knowledge sharing for all-MAC meetings. This will be in addition to these groups existing business meetings already supported by Districts' staffs.

- *A preliminary cost estimate of \$25,000 would cover staff time, venue rentals, facilitation, and interpretation.*

Municipal Advisory Councils (MACs) are established in the County's unincorporated areas to serve as a mechanism to increase communication between the Board and residents on decisions affecting their community. A list of current County of Sonoma MACs is [available online <https://permitsonoma.org/boardscommissionsandcommittees>](https://permitsonoma.org/boardscommissionsandcommittees).

5. Enhance outdoor recreation facilities at public schools:

RECOMMENDATION: Direct staff to reach out to local school districts to gauge their interest in the County exploring options to fund improvements to outdoor recreation facilities at these schools and increase community access to these facilities.

- *Preliminary cost estimate provided by Regional Parks' leadership is \$50,000 for staff to conduct outreach. If effort is approved, department staff will include the request as part of the FY 24/25 budget hearings.*

In considering options to increase community access to small parks and neighborhood recreation areas in unincorporated communities, the Unincorporated Governance Ad Hoc Committee and Regional Parks discussed a prior State-funded program (Community Partnerships for Youth) that used to be administered by Regional Parks. This program awarded two rounds of \$2.5 million in funding, beginning in 1994, for school recreation facilities in Sonoma County. The Community Partnerships for

Youth program funded recreation projects at approximately 35 schools, with funding ranging from about \$75,000 to \$200,000 per project. However, this program and funding source are no longer offered by the State. Therefore, a new source of funding would be required if there is adequate interest in this approach to fund school recreation facilities for use by the broader community. Staff have not yet confirmed whether there is interest from the schools or community to increase public access to schools' outdoor recreation facilities.

6. Current County services inventory:

RECOMMENDATION: Direct staff to include a budget request for the FY 24/25 budget hearings to create an inventory of the existing County services and the geographic distribution of these services, with a focus on Safety Net services.

- *The preliminary estimate for this work is \$50,000 for a consultant to compile data and create the inventory. A meaningful amount of staff time would also be needed from the Department of Health Services and the Human Services Department to work with the consultant.*

The Ad Hoc Committee envisions an inventory that captures the geographic distribution of individuals receiving services, looking at the zip codes of current clients. This data could be compared with the Portrait of Sonoma and other data to better understand gaps in services.

7. Grant technical assistance for community organizations:

RECOMMENDATION: Direct staff to explore strategies to increase grant technical assistance for community-based organizations (CBOs).

- *No additional funding is needed given existing efforts are already underway.*

Several County departments offer technical assistance for County grants to community-based organizations, including Ag + Open Space, who will be bringing updated guidelines for their Matching Grant Program to the Board on March 5, 2024. Recommendations will include strategies to increase technical assistance for potential grantees. Additionally, the Human Services Department currently manages a contract with a consultant that provides technical assistance for the CBOs receiving funding through the County's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) program. This assistance includes compliance monitoring and audits, quality improvement plan development, and virtual office hours.

8. Navigator job classification:

RECOMMENDATION: Direct staff to assess options for a potential new Navigator job classification.

- *No additional funding is needed for this work effort at this time, as the work of exploring the new job classification is already underway by HR.*

The Ad Hoc Committee discussed a need for staff members to help community members understand and connect with available County services.

A table summary of the Ad-Hoc recommended work efforts is included as Attachment C.

Strategic Plan:

N/A

Racial Equity:

Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?

No

An equity analysis will be conducted for Unincorporated Governance work efforts that are approved by the Board.

Prior Board Actions:

5/23/23: [Review & Approve the Governance Solutions for Unincorporated Areas Charter <https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6208102&GUID=BE5D3060-2A75-4110-BA8A-](https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6208102&GUID=BE5D3060-2A75-4110-BA8A-)

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY23-24 Adopted	FY24-25 Projected	FY25-26 Projected
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested	\$923,000		
Total Expenditures	\$923,000		
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF	\$923,000		
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
General Fund Contingencies			
Total Sources	\$923,000		

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

The preliminary one-time cost estimates are a high-level cost estimate for the recommended work efforts. Based on today’s Board direction, staff will include General Fund requests in the Budget Hearing process based on refined information.

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

- A: Ad Hoc Committee Charter
- B: Notes from 8/16/23 all-MAC listening session
- C: Work Effort Summary Sheet
- D. Presentation

Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:

N/A