



SUMMARY REPORT

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**Agenda Date:** 12/14/2021

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**To:** Sonoma County Board of Supervisors  
**Department or Agency Name(s):** County Administrator's Office  
**Staff Name and Phone Number:** Christel Querijero, 707-565-7071  
**Vote Requirement:** 4/5th  
**Supervisorial District(s):** First, Fifth

**Title:**

Governance Studies for Unincorporated Areas of Sonoma Valley and West County

**Recommended Action:**

- A) Receive information related to District 1 and District 5 requests to conduct formal review of current government services in Sonoma Valley and West County, respectively, in order to identify potential governance options and other opportunities for improved service delivery.
- B) Direct staff to dedicate time and resources to work with District staff, representatives of the City of Sonoma and jurisdictions in West County, and others to pursue these potential governance options and opportunities for improved service delivery.
- C) Adopt a Resolution authorizing a budgetary adjustment to the FY 2021-22 Transportation and Public Works District Formation final budget in the amount of \$305,000 for contracts with consultants to conduct service reviews, fiscal analysis, and community engagement.

(4/5<sup>th</sup> Vote Required) (First and Fifth Districts)

**Executive Summary:**

This item requests that the Board of Supervisors approve funding and staff resources to support Districts 1 and 5 interests to engage consultants to analyze the provision of services to unincorporated communities in the Sonoma Valley and West County, respectively, in order to identify potential alternate governance and service options. \$305,000, to be split evenly between District 1 and District 5, is requested from District Formation funds.

**Discussion:**

While West County and Sonoma Valley regions each have unique factors and considerations, the proposed governance study approach to both areas involves community engagement and hiring consultants with expertise in service review analysis. The community engagement is needed to ascertain the scope of the governance studies and any district formation needs. This engagement will inform the governance studies and analysis.

Sonoma Valley

In recent years, community members and elected officials have discussed conducting a review of available governance options and funding opportunities to improve health and safety services and community infrastructure in unincorporated Sonoma Valley. There is a shared interest between the City of Sonoma and the County in undertaking this project. The City Council approved \$30,000 to contribute to this governance

review, and both Councilmembers and staff have participated in a series of conversations to discuss moving this project forward. The County is also pursuing funding support for this project from private organizations.

This governance review will evaluate service delivery to the Springs area up to Agua Caliente Knolls. Examples of expenses that may be analyzed in the review include expenses associated with law enforcement, fire and EMS, infrastructure, parks and recreation, maintenance, finance and administration. Examples of revenue that may be considered in the review include sales tax, property tax, transportation occupancy tax, and other fees for services. In addition to helping identify the priorities for the governance review, community members will also be involved in developing solutions and proposed alternatives for governance structures and services provided to these areas. Permit Sonoma GIS will provide mapping support to identify the unincorporated geographic areas included in the scope of the review, including maps that overlay existing service areas such as water districts.

If approved by the Board, staff will issue request for proposals (RFPs) for consultant(s) to conduct community engagement and provide the fiscal analysis for the review. Initial engagement will be conducted prior to the review to invite community input on the scope of the governance review. The review will include a detailed financial analysis of revenue and expenses. The consultant will use the analysis findings to identify and evaluate options and opportunities for Sonoma Valley governance. Additional community engagement will occur to gather feedback on which of these options to pursue.

#### West County

Staff have identified gaps and inadequacies in service provisions to the small towns in West County, including those along the lower Russian River. Furthermore, some services in these towns may overlap, resulting in redundancy and inefficiencies. While West County provides a significant share of outdoor recreational activities for the County and region, residents of the West County's underfunded small towns bear the brunt of the trash, waste, and issues brought with the influx of visitors.

Over time a patchwork of Service Districts has sprung up in the West County to address particular issues. However, this has resulted in some areas with services located geographically next to other areas with inadequate services. In addition to inconsistent service provision, this patchwork structure is facing a dwindling volunteer base and a lack of coordination between entities. This patchwork is financially inefficient as each entity has its own overlapping operational and legal costs. There is a lack of coordination and communication between service districts, participating organizations, and the County.

Specific services that staff have identified as lacking along the lower Russian River communities include:

- Health
  - Trash, restroom, and street cleaning
  - Septic and wastewater
- Safety
  - Drug and homeless issues
  - Code enforcement
  - Emergency services
- Community
  - Permit service

- Land use input
- Community park and river access services
- Economic development
- Communications infrastructure - broadband and cell service

Using a similar approach as outlined for Sonoma Valley, the West County governance review will engage and inform community members and participating organizations of the existing challenges faced with the current governance structures and potential solutions. An RFP will be issued to bring on consultant(s) to research options including expansion or consolidation of local service districts, the taxes paid by the region and how those are tied to services, and options for service district provision (expansion, formation, combination) up to and including incorporation. This study will also determine boundaries for the service area based on needs, historic and current boundaries, local management capacity, and funding sources.

The consultant(s) for the West County project and County staff will bring together community participants to develop and implement solutions. The scope of work will include a series of community meetings, the fiscal review, research on possible alternative approaches, and community engagement to refine proposed solutions.

Underlying Fiscal Impact

The County Administrator’s Office (CAO) will lead this project with support from County Counsel, Permit Sonoma, and District 1 and District 5 staff. Staff costs will be absorbed within existing budgets, with no need for additional staff. The governance studies will be funded by \$305,000 in District Formation Funds. There is currently \$590,000 in the District Formation Fund balance. \$285,000 would remain in the balance should the Board approve the \$305,000 request for these governance studies. Staff will comply with all County procurement guidelines and anticipate that each district will enter into multiple agreements for the consultant services described above.

Timeline

If approved, CAO staff will work with District 1 and District 5 staff to establish timelines for developing the Request for Proposal scopes, issuance, consultant selection, and project implementation.

**Strategic Plan:**

**Prior Board Actions:**

None

**FISCAL SUMMARY**

<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>FY 21-22 Adopted</b>	<b>FY22-23 Projected</b>	<b>FY 23-24 Projected</b>
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested	\$305,000		
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$305,000</b>		
<b>Funding Sources</b>			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			

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Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance	\$305,000		
Contingencies			
<b>Total Sources</b>	<b>\$305,000</b>		

**Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:**

Additional appropriations requested for FY 21-22 include \$305,000 for governance studies financed with available District Formation fund balance in the Transportation and Public Works Budget. There is currently \$590,000 in the District Formation Fund balance. \$285,000 would remain in the balance should the Board approve the \$305,000 request for these governance studies.

**Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):**

There are no staffing impacts associated with this request.

**Attachments:**

Budget Resolution  
PowerPoint slide presentation

**Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:**

None