



Legislation Text

File #: 2023-0437, **Version:** 1

To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

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

Staff Name and Phone Number: Maggie Luce, 565-1796 and Christel Querijero 565-7071

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Title:

Review & Approve the Governance Solutions for Unincorporated Areas Charter

Recommended Action:

- A) Review and Approve the Governance Solutions for Unincorporated Areas Ad Hoc Committee's Charter.
- B) Provide feedback on the Governance Solutions for Unincorporated Areas Ad Hoc committee's priority areas of focus.

Executive Summary:

The Board of Supervisors established the Unincorporated Governance Ad Hoc committee on January 1, 2023, to provide direction to staff on exploring governance solutions for unincorporated areas of Sonoma County. The Unincorporated Governance Ad Hoc is comprised of Supervisor Gorin and Supervisor Hopkins. This item requests approval of the Unincorporated Governance charter and seeks input on priorities for the Ad Hoc committee's scope of work.

Discussion:

Unincorporated Areas in Sonoma County

As of 2021, Sonoma County's unincorporated areas are home to 134,250 residents, 27% of the total population. Unincorporated areas are those communities and areas that are outside the jurisdictional boundaries of incorporated cities. The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors is the governing body that provides services to unincorporated areas outside of cities including include fire protection; emergency services and planning; Sheriff's law enforcement; building and land use regulations; road maintenance; parks; and lighting, water, and sewer utilities. Unincorporated areas, many of which are rural and geographically remote, may lack some of the services that are provided to dense urban areas such as sewer systems, public transportation, sidewalks, and streetlights. [Municipal Advisory Councils \(MACs\)](#) are established in the County's unincorporated areas to serve as a mechanism to increase communication between the County and residents on local government decisions affecting their community. The County's strategic plan calls for the establishment of resilient neighborhood/regional and satellite service centers to improve equitable public access to services in unincorporated areas. There are currently satellite service centers located in Petaluma and Guerneville. Staff are scheduled to bring an upcoming item to your Board for consideration of a lease for a satellite site in Sonoma Valley.

Unincorporated Governance Charter:

On January 1, 2023, the Board of Supervisors established the Unincorporated Governance Ad Hoc committee to provide direction to staff on exploring governance solutions for unincorporated areas of Sonoma County. The Ad Hoc recommends that the Board of Supervisors adopt the draft charter (Attachment A) to confirm the expectations for the scope of work for this Ad Hoc committee. As outlined in the draft charter, the Ad Hoc will focus on the acquisition or improved delivery of specific types of governance services that are either lacking or insufficient in the unincorporated areas. The desired outcome for the Unincorporated Governance Ad Hoc committee is to identify strategies for local areas to gain more access and/or funding for municipal services. Furthermore, the Ad Hoc committee seeks to 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.

Priority Areas of Focus

In addition to developing the draft charter, the Unincorporated Governance Ad Hoc committee directed staff to begin scoping potential focus areas. The Ad Hoc committee seeks input on the level of Board interest in these focus areas. Staff will take this feedback from the full Board of Supervisors to develop the Unincorporated Governance workplan, including timeline and required resources. Priority areas recommended by the Unincorporated Governance Ad Hoc committee include:

1. Identification of potential projects in all Supervisorial Districts for future District Formation Funding
2. Scoping of options to increase funding to a) support existing non-County parks; or b) create new park, bike, and pedestrian paths
3. Legislative advocacy to improve current laws around incorporation
4. Inventory of current service gaps in unincorporated areas including but not limited to:
 - a. Health & Human services
 - b. Infrastructure (roads, culverts, bike lanes)
 - c. Permitting
 - d. Sheriff

Staff will bring an update on the status of District Formation Funded activities to the Board of Supervisors on July 11, 2023. Staff will continue to work with the Ad Hoc Committee to further scope unincorporated governance projects.

Background on District Formation Funding and Activities:

The County's Community Investment Program allocates \$175,000 each year from Transient Occupancy Tax to support District Formation activities. This policy recognizes that rural areas of Sonoma County are experiencing an increased need for municipal services. These District Formation funds may be used for professional services to establish Special Districts that will enable communities to provide self-generated funding to address municipal challenges.

On December 14, 2021, the Board of Supervisors (BOS) approved use of District Formation Funds in the amount of \$152,500 for District 1 and \$152,500 for District 5. On May 3, 2022, the BOS allocated \$152,500 each for the remaining districts (2, 3, and 4) to be used for district formation related activities. The County Administrator's Office staff is supporting each Supervisorial District to utilize these funds. Staff will bring an update on the status of District Formation Funded activities to the Board of Supervisors on July 11, 2023.

Prior Board Actions:

[May 3, 2022: District formation activities for unincorporated areas in north, south and central Sonoma County](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=>>

[December 14, 2021: Governance for Unincorporated Areas of Sonoma Valley and West County](https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3916843&GUID=C59D0C40-53DC-43EC-9B1D-913574BDFDA0&Options=&Search=>)

[April 16, 2019: Transient Occupancy Tax Policy](https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3916843&GUID=C59D0C40-53DC-43EC-9B1D-913574BDFDA0&Options=&Search=>) <<https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3916843&GUID=C59D0C40-53DC-43EC-9B1D-913574BDFDA0&Options=&Search=>>

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 22-23 Adopted	FY23-24 Projected	FY 24-25 Projected
Budgeted Expenses		\$55,185	
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures			
Funding Sources		\$55,185	
General Fund/WA GF		\$55,185	
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources		\$55,185	

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

Fiscal impact at this time is limited to CAO staff dedicated to support the Ad-Hoc, which is estimated at .25 FTE.

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

The Policy, Grants and Special Projects division of the County Administrator's Office will lead this project with support from County Counsel. If the Board of Supervisors adopts the charter, staff will come back to the Board with a work plan, including the anticipated level of staff support necessary to implement the plan.

Attachments:

Attachment A: Draft Charter

Attachment B: Priority Focus Areas

Attachment C: Presentation

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

None