

ALMONTE SANITARY DISTRICT MEASURE C	
C MEASURE C: Shall the order adopted on September 13, 2012 by the Local Agency Formation Commission of the County of Marin, ordering the consolidation of the Alto, Almonte, Homestead Valley and Richardson Bay Sanitary Districts into a single district known as the Southern Marin Sanitary District be confirmed subject to the terms and conditions specified in the order?	YES
	NO

IMPARTIAL ANALYSIS OF MEASURE C

Impartial Analysis of the Proposed Consolidation of the Alto, Almonte, Homestead Valley & Richardson Bay Sanitary Districts

This ballot measure, if approved by a majority of electors voting in this election, would consolidate the Alto, Almonte, Homestead Valley and Richardson Bay Sanitary Districts into a single sanitary district to be known as the Southern Marin Sanitary District. The consolidation has been initiated and approved by the Marin Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO).

In making its approval, Marin LAFCO made findings that consolidation would reduce costs and improve local government accountability.

The areas affected by the consolidation include the unincorporated Alto, Almonte, Homestead Valley, Strawberry and north Tiburon areas plus a portion of the Town of Tiburon between Gilmartin Drive and Monterey Drive.

The four sanitary districts affected by this consolidation provide sewage collection service. The districts operate sewer mains and pump stations and jointly treat their sewage through the Sewerage Agency of Southern Marin (SASM).

Consolidation would affect governance and management functions of the districts. The consolidated sanitary district would be governed by a single, five-member board consisting of representatives of each existing district for a period of two years. Thereafter, board members would be elected at large.

Services after consolidation would be financed by existing fees. No new or increased taxes or assessments are included in this measure.

The assets and liabilities of the four existing districts will remain segregated in four rate zones following consolidation. Expenditures of reserves generated in any existing district rate zone on improvements in another rate zone are prohibited under legally enforceable terms and conditions of approval.

The above statement is an impartial analysis of Measure C. If you desire a copy of the measure, please call the Marin County Elections Department at (415) 473-6456 and a copy will be mailed at no cost to you.

s/PETER BANNING
Executive Officer

ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF MEASURE C

Rising sea levels, aging collection systems and deferred maintenance are among the infrastructure problems facing Southern Marin that must be addressed based on region-wide priorities. This consolidation provides the most effective governance arrangement to achieve that goal.

That is why Marin Local Agency Formation Commission, an independent agency, approved this consolidation in a 6-1 vote. They concluded, after extensive study, that (1) operating costs of sewer service would be reduced due to economies of scale and (2) government accountability would be improved.

- ECONOMIES CREATED BY CONSOLIDATION of sewer services provide for increased buying power, replacing management personnel with operating personnel, centralization of common functions, faster response time to spills and faster adoption of operational improvements.
- SMALLER IS NOT ALWAYS BETTER. The four limited-purpose districts are among the county’s smallest. Almonte district’s population is only 1,064, and Alto’s a mere 928. The total for all four districts is 14,819. Together they incur the overhead of 20 board members, 4 managers, and 48 meetings per year. The stipends and staff time required to support such top-heavy governance are duplicative.
- EXISTING RATES WILL NOT BE AFFECTED BY CONSOLIDATION. Each district’s assets are protected under enforceable terms and conditions of LAFCO’s approval.
- “LOCAL CONTROL” IS ACTUALLY ENHANCED BY CONSOLIDATION. Citizen participation is only meaningful if the activities and decisions of an elected board are known to its constituents and attract their involvement. Public participation in meetings of these districts is negligible.
- THERE HAVE BEEN NO CONTESTED ELECTIONS IN MORE THAN TEN YEARS. Maintaining separate districts clearly does not contribute to political accountability.

The Tamalpais and Alto Richardson Bay Fire Districts were consolidated into the Southern Marin Fire District in 1999, creating significant cost savings without loss of local control. We are confident this sewer district consolidation will be equally successful.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS MARIN COUNTY
s/Marjory Eller, President
MARIN LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION
s/Jeffry Blanchfield, Chairman

REBUTTAL TO ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF MEASURE C

LAFCO'S ARGUMENTS FOR CONSOLIDATION SIMPLY DON'T STAND UP TO SCRUTINY:

- **Economies of Scale are Illusory:** LAFCO touts consolidation savings but even ignoring the added administrative overhead LAFCO could only identify potential savings of 1% or less in two scenarios of a \$3,452,332 budget. Their 4.2% savings scenario is based on the questionable assumption that existing staff could handle a 50% increase in workload (sewer miles, area, households served, etc.). Just the administrative complexities alone added by creating and maintaining 4 sets of books to account for existing agencies rate-zones plus segregating capital improvement projects, O&M costs, etc. would outweigh the meager LAFCO savings forecast.
- **Smaller is Better:** All four agencies have been running their districts successfully since the early 1950's. The agencies have scaled and focused their operations for each district's individual needs. Sometimes increasing size leads to more bureaucracy not less.
- **Existing Rates Will Not Be Affected By Consolidation:** What is the point of consolidation when even LAFCO foresees little financial savings and those in the best positions to know, the current sanitary districts, see consolidation's likelihood of increased costs?
- **Local Control Not Enhanced by Consolidation:** Cutting elected representation from 20 to 5 board members and combining four well-functioning districts with proven track records into a single district against their unanimous opposition does not enhance local representation.
- **Contested Elections are LAFCO's Panacea:** All directors file to *run* for office. Uncontested elections are common throughout Marin's political landscape. Board vacancies are always filled.

s/KEVIN REILLY
Chair, ASD

ARGUMENT AGAINST MEASURE C

All four affected sanitary districts oppose Marin County LAFCO's action attempting forced consolidation.

Points against Consolidation:

- **Loss of Local Control:** After a transitional period, the consolidated board will be elected at large. Almonte residents will comprise only 12% of registered voters while Richardson Bay will represent 62%. Election of directors from Almonte, Alto (7%) and Homestead Valley (18%) could be difficult. Almonte residents could have little say over their reserve funds, sewer service tax assessments and sewer rehabilitation program.
- **Consolidated District likely higher cost:** After years of study, LAFCO could only identify minimal cost savings. LAFCO's speculated savings of 1.7%, 9.2% and 2.3% under three scenarios are actually half that when evaluated against the districts' entire operating budgets. LAFCO's largest savings estimate unrealistically assumes that the new district could function with Richardson Bay's existing staff of four. In truth, at least one if not more full-time benefited employees would need to be hired for the increased workload, negating LAFCO's savings estimates.
- **Potential Exposure to Increased Financial and Regulatory Liability:** Almonte, Alto and Homestead Valley have only gravity sewer lines. Richardson Bay has 15 pump stations and force mains plus gravity sewers. If a pump station fails, potential spill volumes could be larger as well as associated regulatory penalties. Pump stations also cost more to operate and replace.
- **Environmental Concerns Not the Issue:** All four districts are compliant with all regulatory requirements. Almonte is replacing district sewers at a rate three to four times faster than EPA requirements.
- **Less Influence at Treatment Plant:** Mill Valley operates the treatment plant by contract. Reducing our SASM Board seats via consolidation weakens Almonte's influence with treatment plant issues.

RETAIN LOCAL CONTROL! VOTE "NO" ON CONSOLIDATION!

s/KEVIN REILLY

Almonte Sanitary District, Chair

REBUTTAL TO ARGUMENT AGAINST MEASURE C

“Local Control” is not a valid argument. With no contested elections in over 10 years and almost nonexistent public input, local control is merely an opinion that supports retaining the offices of all members of the four boards. Maintaining the sewer pipes in each of four small, inefficient sanitary districts, each with its own governing board and general manager, is unnecessary and needlessly expensive.

Consolidation does not assume increased staffing. If the board of the consolidated district chose to hire new employees, they would provide new service: physical work on the sewer systems instead of the cost now required for duplicative support for 15 board members and 3 part-time general managers to be eliminated by consolidation.

Residents are protected from liability/costs from problems arising in the other three districts. Separate rate zones, which protect reserves and other assets, are required for each district. Protecting these zones CANNOT be discontinued “. . . until . . . rates among the zones are substantially equal, reserves in balance, and infrastructure condition within each zone is substantially in balance as determined by the successor district governing board.”

A consolidated district would be of equal size and voting power on the SASM board, with the City of Mill Valley rather than Almonte remaining as one of six members on the fractious SASM board.

Voluntary collaboration among the districts has been limited or ineffective. For example, regulatory filings in response to the 2008 spills required separate compliance reporting from each district for five years.

Consolidation is the best answer.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS MARIN COUNTY
s/Marjory Eller, President

MARIN LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION
s/Jeffrey Blanchfield, Chairman