

ALTO 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

Life would indeed be simple if it were true that all of the problems recited by LAFCO could be solved by consolidating these four small sanitary agencies into one. LAFCO states that existing rates will not be affected by consolidation. One must ask why it is that there will be no change to rates or reserves. If consolidation is such a good idea shouldn't there be significant savings?

It has been acknowledged that these agencies are being run efficiently, with active programs to maintain and upgrade their systems. Residents know that their sewer systems are being managed by people living in their neighborhood. This is "hands-on" governance at its most fundamental level.

People attend our meetings when they have a direct interest in matters being discussed. Increasing the size of the district will NOT increase public participation, nor will attendance by Alto residents be increased by holding the meetings in a community some distance from Alto.

Whenever there is a vacancy on our Board we make every effort to interest people in standing for the position. However the job of Sanitary District Director does not appeal to many otherwise civic-minded people. Most of the citizen's boards throughout the County fill their vacancies by nomination of volunteer applicants who are subsequently confirmed by the County Board of Supervisors. Contested elections are a rarity in ALL Marin's districts.

This consolidation is not an action of good government, but simply outsiders trying to tell us how to run Alto!

Vote NO on consolidation!

s/STANLEY JAMES BRANSGROVE

Director-Chair

s/ROGER GAINER

Director

ARGUMENT AGAINST MEASURE C

All four affected sanitary districts oppose the County LAFCO's attempt to force their consolidation. This merger would remove local control of our sanitary districts. After a transition period during which Alto will have representation, at-large elections will result in dominance of the new board by the district with the largest population – Richardson Bay. Alto's reserve funds, the sewer service assessments levied on our residents, and our system rehabilitation program will be under control of a board on which Alto has no representation.

Alto already collaborates, to save money, with Richardson Bay and the other districts whenever possible in our maintenance and rehabilitation programs. Richardson Bay doesn't want consolidation either, and has stated that under consolidation *it would be forced to add staff to perform the additional work*. The present managers of Alto, Almonte and Homestead Valley are part-time employees who work from home and receive no fringe benefits. Eliminating them would require hiring a full time employee with fringe benefits, and providing him/her with an office and miscellaneous equipment. *WHERE'S THE SAVING?*

The "saving" LAFCO cites is elimination of board stipends. Directors receive \$100.00 per meeting, for an annual cost of \$6,000.00. *Loss of accountable local control should be worth more!*

During the past fifteen years we have replaced over 3,300 feet of old clay sewers with modern high-strength plastic pipe, resulting in a dramatic reduction of sewage overflows to the point where there have been no reportable spills in the past two years. We had to raise our sewer service tax assessments to pay for this, but Alto's rate remains among the lowest in the County. We contend that funding and management of Alto's future rehabilitation projects should be controlled by residents of Alto, not by a Board of outsiders.

RETAIN LOCAL CONTROL! VOTE "NO" ON CONSOLIDATION!

s/ROGER GAINER

Director

s/STANLEY JAMES BRANSGROVE

Director-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 – especially for a district with 928 residents.

The new district will be governed by board members elected at large. Residents of all four districts will be eligible to vote and serve on the board.

Consolidation does not assume increased staffing costs. If the board of the consolidated district did choose 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 eliminated by consolidation. Residents are protected from liability/cost 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.”

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