

RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT FORM

Report Title: Consolidation of Sanitation Districts

Report Date: April 13, 2018

Response by: Marin County Board of Supervisors

FINDINGS

- We agree with the findings numbered: **F1, F2, F6, F7, F8, & F9**
- We disagree wholly or *partially* with the findings numbered: **F3, F4, F5 & F10.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendations R1 and R4 require further analysis.

Marin County Board of Supervisors

Response to Findings and Recommendations from Grand Jury Report Consolidation of Sanitation Districts

FINDINGS:

Statement regarding findings, the Marin County Board of Supervisors, which also governs the Murray Park Sewer Maintenance District and San Quentin Village Sewer Maintenance District, provides the following information:

F1. “Marin County has a large number of sanitary districts.”

Response: Agree.

F2. “Independent sanitary districts are accountable only to district voters.”

Response: Agree.

F3. “The public is not greatly involved in local sanitary district governance.”

Response: Partially disagree. The County of Marin can only speak to the two districts it governs, including the Murray Park Sewer Maintenance District and the San Quentin Village Sewer Maintenance District, and therefore cannot comment on other districts’ community involvement. For the County of Marin’s two dependent special districts, the level of public participation can vary depending upon the issues involved.

F4. “The public is not well informed about funding schemes or governance of sanitary districts.”

Response: Partially disagree. The County of Marin can only speak to the two districts it governs and cannot comment on other districts’ community involvement or level of awareness regarding funding or governance. The County of Marin has an extensive multi-day public hearing process to develop and approve County budgets, which include special districts, with budget and supplementary information available throughout the year to the public on the County’s website. Much of this information can be found at the following links:

<https://www.marincounty.org/depts/df/special-districts> and
<https://www.marincounty.org/depts/df/final-budgets>.

- F5. “Marin County’s current system of sanitary districts is not cost-efficient.”**

Response: Partially disagree. The County of Marin can only speak to the two districts it governs and cannot comment on other districts’ community involvement. The LAFCO Central Marin Wastewater Services Study Final Report (July 2017) indicates that the two County of Marin dependent districts have the lowest user charge rates (page 3-19).

- F6. “Consolidation of sanitary districts in Marin has been recommended multiple times by governmental and non-governmental agencies.”**

Response: Agree.

- F7. “Well-executed consolidations of sanitary districts will reduce administrative and operating costs.”**

Response: Agree. A well-studied and executed consolidation is likely to reduce administrative and operating costs in the aggregate; however, the fiscal and user charge rate impacts to each participating district could vary.

- F8. “Well-executed consolidations of sanitary districts will improve service.”**

Response: Agree. A well-studied and executed consolidation is likely to improve service overall; however, service impacts to each participating district could vary.

- F9. “Sanitation districts need to prepare for sea level rise.”**

Response: Agree. It is incumbent upon all levels of government, as well as the private sector, to begin planning for sea level rise and to begin contemplating adaptation strategies.

- F10. “Marin LAFCO is underfunded and understaffed.”**

Response: Partially disagree. Marin LAFCO is a legally separate and independent entity. The County of Marin does not have information or metrics to assess the appropriate funding or staffing requirements of Marin LAFCO.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The 2017-2018 Marin County Civil Grand Jury recommends that:

- R1. “Marin LAFCO should complete the planned reorganization of Murray Park Sewer Maintenance District and San Quentin Village Sewer Maintenance District with Ross Valley Sanitary District.”**

Response: The recommendation requires further analysis. The Civil Grand Jury has requested that the County of Marin respond to this recommendation; however, the appropriate agency to consider such a reorganization is the Marin LAFCO. To the extent that LAFCO decides to further pursue this recommendation, the County of Marin remains open to consideration, including input from County of Marin staff and broad community outreach to affected users. Any analysis of such a reorganization should include the potential costs, benefits and service impacts of consolidation.

- R4. “The County of Marin should allocate additional funds to Marin LAFCO.”**

Response: This recommendation requires further analysis. In the absence of any proposal regarding increased funding to LAFCO, we are unable to agree or disagree that this recommendation should be implemented. It is the responsibility of the LAFCO Board to consider additional funding of their operations. To the extent the LAFCO Board approved an increased budget, the County of Marin would provide its share of additional funding consistent with the required LAFCO funding formula.

While the Grand Jury notes that LAFCO is funded one-third by the County; one-third by Marin’s cities and towns; and one-third by special districts, we do not agree that the County alone “should consider voluntarily increasing its contribution beyond its one-third obligation” to ensure LAFCO is better funded. The County already pays a significant portion of the LAFCO budget. As the public policy benefits of any consolidations will accrue to jurisdictions and residents beyond unincorporated Marin, we believe that any increased funding to LAFCO should be spread consistent with the existing formula.