

# Sonoma County Fire Districts' Association

## MEETING AGEDNDA

Virtual meeting on August 26, 2021, at 1900 hours

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88999207159?pwd=OW52SzhPZWV0Y1BNeldFZlhwUEd1Zz09>

1. President Akre called the meeting to order at 7:02
2. The following members were present:

Name	District	Name	District
Steve Akre	Sonoma Valley	Paul Barry	Cazadero
Fred Peterson	Northern Sonoma County	Bonnie Plakos	North Sonoma Coast
Sean Grinnell	Bodega Bay	Marti Campbell	North Sonoma Coast
Mark Heine	SCFD	Ernie Lovelace	Schell Vista
Sheply Schroth-Cary	Gold Ridge	Michael Gadoua	Rancho Adobe
Tonia Bello	Gold Ridge	Frank Treanor	SCFD
Chris Tachouet	Gold Ridge	Marshall Tuberville	Northern Sonoma County
Mark Hemmendinger	Rancho Adobe	Doug Williams	SMART
Paul Bernier	Northern Sonoma County	Bill Adams	Counsel
Jackie Gardener	North Sonoma Coast	Joe Petersen	Gold Ridge
Daren Bellach	Kenwood	Tatsuo Okaya	Northern Sonoma County
Richard Gulson	Guest	Mark Bramfitt	LAFCO

3. Approve/Amend the Agenda

Chief Bellach moved to approve the agenda as posted, 2<sup>nd</sup> by VP Petersen, approved by all, none were opposed.

4. Treasurer Report

Sec/Tres Grinnell reported a balance of \$6,968.25 was the balance as of July 31, 2021. President Akre reminded the group that dues are important to our organization, and we will be agendizing a bigger discussion in November, as Doug Williams reminded us a couple months ago when we last spoke about dues, that our November/December meeting is the time to set dues for the coming year.

5. Committee Reports (As appropriate)

a. FDAC / FDAC EBA / FAIRA / FASIS

President Akre reported these groups have not met since our last meeting.

b. LAFCO

Executive Officer Mark Bramfitt reported there is not a lot going on with Fire Districts at the moment. I am working on an MSR for the South County agencies. We are anticipating an application from Sonoma County for the annexation of Bodega Bay, our second attempt at this. I had a great briefing with Northern Sonoma County Fire to go through the reorganization process. They have been through it before, but it was a good reminder for new members and most are hopeful for some reorganizations in North County in the near future. My bad news is that our second round of elections for our special district member, representing Class One (fire and emergency service agencies), failed for a lack of a quorum for the second time. We have 38 special districts, all fire and EMS agencies all voted but not the remaining agencies. Failed by just a few votes. I am at a loss, I am going to go to the commission and offer one of two options. Run the same slate of candidates or start the whole process over again. This has happened with other LAFCO's in the past. In So Cal, they are spearheading special legislation to eliminate the minimum number required to participate in the election process. I just need 18 Districts to vote. We have not hired a new Commission Clerk yet and have held off as the workload has been light for the summer, its just me and Cyndi and we are handling things now. We will hire a full or part time clerk in the near future.

President Akre thanked Mark Bramfitt for his work and attendance at these meetings, as well as offered association assistance to help cajole the needed agencies to get the vote out.

Mark Bramfitt acknowledged the lack of an agenda item but offered the idea of submitting a letter of preference to LAFCO of reopening nominations or running with the existing candidates, could be helpful.

LAFCO will not meet until October, which will be when I bring the question to the Commission.

Director Petersen asked if Mark Bramfitt could share the names of those agencies that did not vote? A) I think all fire agencies voted, VOM water voted, some of the ones I was dismayed at not receiving was Coast Life Support and Healdsburg Health Care District, some of the others just do not respond. It's a frustrating experience. Director Petersen asked if Mark Bramfitt would share the list with us so that we could make some calls and help get the vote out. Mark Bramfitt said he would send the list out and consider putting it on his LAFCO website.

The agencies that did not submit a ballot were: BBPUD, Cloverdale HCD, Coast Life Support, Forestville Water Dist., Gold Ridge Resource Dist, Graton CSD, Graton FPD, Green Valley Cemetery Dist, Monte Rio FPD, Monte Rio Park and Rec Dist, North Bay Water, North Sonoma County Hospital Dist, Occidental CSD, Pains Creek/Hiatt Road Water Dist, Russain River Park and Rec, Shiloh Public Cemetery, Sonoma Mountain County Water Dist, Sonoma Resource Conservation Dist, Sonoma Valley Hospital Dist, Timber Cover Fire Dist, and Timber Cove Water Dist.

c. Political Action

President Akre again asked for a volunteer to fill Director Frank Treanor's spot on this committee.

d. FSWG

Director Bob Taylor was not in attendance, so Chief Heine reported FSWG meets every Thursday morning for 3 to 4 hours. The last several weeks have been dedicated to meeting with Chiefs and their elected officials to share what their needs might be for a new sales tax measure. We have heard from every agency except for Bodega Bay and Monte Rio. We have not pushed on the Bodega Bay piece, and it might sound weird, but Bodega Bay will not exist in a year. I am not sure why Chief Baxman has not taken us up on our offer. The new ½ cent sales tax will generate between 50 and 55 million per year. The total ask is about 75 to 80 million a year. We will have to do some hard work at the FSWG level and with the County to identify what the funding priorities will be. Having been through this before the process has been much better this

time. The electeds, city managers, an Board Presidents had a chance to be heard this time. We have been deeply involved with funding for those agencies in consolidation efforts, Sonoma County with Bodega Bay, Gold Ridge with North Bay, North Counties pursuit of Sotoyome and Fitch Mountain and Kenwood with an emergency funding need. We have had two meetings with the CAO and Terri Wright, the first was a bit contentious and the second was a lot more collaborative in attempting to nail down the needed funding agreements for all. Chief Tuberville had nothing more to add and Chief Scroth-Cary added, it has been productive, but we have some work trying to stuff a \$100 million ask into a \$50 Million tax challenge in front of us. President Akre also agreed. The process has been more engaging and beneficial but are faced with a big challenge.

e. Measure G 2.0

See above

6. Program: President Akre apologized, we were going to have Executive Officer Mark Brown was going to present the what the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority does, but due to a miscommunication he was not able to attend tonight but will present next month.

7. Old Business

a. Approve Past Minutes July 26, 21

VP Peterson moved to approve the minutes, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Director Gardener, approved by all, none were opposed.

b. EMS EOA RFP Update – Chief Heine

Chief Heine reported the draft RFP as been with the State EMSA for almost 15 weeks, we were told it would be about a 2-4 week turnaround. Calchiefs believes there a few issues with the RFP for the AG to work through such as the requirement of the bid awardee to pay the current AMR wage package (Illegal); this with a few other items we believe EMSA has given the RFP to the AG for an opinion on those items. Running parallel to this is SCFD has been reaching out to county council (emails, phone calls, etc) and supervisors for the last eight months now trying have a discussion about our exclusive operating rights area within the fire district; they finally granted a meeting with county council. Bottom line, we believe we have exclusive rights through the entirety of our district, which includes a large section that is within the draft RFP. If they issue the RFP that is inclusive of those areas of our fire district they will be in violation of our .201 or exclusive operating rights. Our Board will defend those rights with every tool it has at its disposal. After that meeting the county has gone silent with a little movement today. We have no desire to get into litigation with the County of the EMS Agency and would love to find a collaborative path forward.

c. Sonoma County Vegetation Management/PG&E Settlement Funds update – VP Peterson/Chief Tuberville

VP Peterson said he wished that Mark Brown was on the call tonight. VP Peterson would like to see the Sonoma County Fire Agencies take more charge of this. Chief Tuberville added the is a review of the PG&E settlement funds that is being allocated by Sonoma County Ag and Open Space and back to Caryl Hart, she is representing west county pretty well as they have a few approved projects. The new person is Kim Batchelder, I have been dealing with. My opinion of the 4 mil that was given out so far, some that will never get implemented, that said I am not sure if there is going to be another round of grant applications from settlement funds later this year. The County is hiring three positions that will reside in Ag and Open Space-one to be an executive administrator and the other two that will do environmental review for fire districts, non-profits, and other groups that can't get CEQA done. You might see the County do VTG's over large swaths over the county as it is not realistic to do it over large swaths of the county to get around environmental review. I know the person working with Mark Brown, and they have done the easy reviews and are now trying to go the VTG route as well. Two things to watch out for-opportunities to get more funds and be prepared to do the environmental review. Registered professional forester is likely the way to go but costly and there are other firms that do the work too. Chief Tuberville also mentioned that Sonoma

Valley got a chipper as did Cazadero and North Sonoma Coast got money. President Akre said they received a chipper and hope to have a program ready for next year. The second grant was for the Mayacamas Fire Safe Council for \$250k for roadside clearance projects. Director Barry reported these funds came from the California Coastal Conservancy, a grant for a chipper and other equipment, we should see the equipment within the next two weeks.

d. Northern Sonoma County FPD Update – VP Peterson

VP Peterson asked Chief Tuberville and Director Bernier to report on the meeting with the County and then said he would Segway into the funding discussion. Chief Tuberville reported, the affected agencies: Bodega Bay, Sonoma County, Kenwood, Gold Ridge, North Bay (CSA 40) and Northern Sonoma County, the purpose is to absorb CSA 40 by existing fire districts and the 2<sup>nd</sup> objective is to take care of Bodega Bay's financial needs and Kenwood's financial needs, those were the overall objectives I believe. The meeting was attended by the Board ad hoc, Supervisors Hopkins and Rabbit, along with Terri Wright and CAO Bratton, as well as with Fire District reps- the Board Presidents and the Fire Chiefs. As Chief Heine mentioned before, this was the third meeting of the group. It came down to terms that each District had to agree to, but nothing in official writing like a tax exchange agreement or specific terms or anything to agree to sign or consider. Speaking for Northern Sonoma County its something we have been working on for seven plus years now, the annexation of the remaining CSA 40 areas-IRP 61 the Geysers, IRP 63 Fitch Mountain and IRP 64 Sotoyome or what is known as the Mill Creek area and the Lower Dry Creek Valley. The big hanging point is that a lot of funds from Northern Sonoma County are used elsewhere. The rough property tax amount is roughly 1.4 million, so what Northern Sonoma County is looking for, which would form the tax exchange agreement to take to LAFCO the fund the full annexation over a 5-year period and in the end, they will receive the full tax amount. Anecdotally, I believe every other agency that annexes an area gets the full property tax and recently one district got a little more of the tax money. The remaining caveat for all agencies is that they can no longer ask for assistance for 5 to 10 years. Director Bernier thanked Chief Tuberville for his report and had nothing more to add.

Chief Heine said that Marshal's report was a good one and confirmed this was the third meeting we had. The tone of today's meeting was much better than it had been in the previous two meetings. I think one of the goals in the first meeting was to divide and conquer, to get us to fight over remaining money. We vowed very quickly to agree to never let that happen. I was very proud of the partner agencies in the room, everybody's ask, was everybody's ask and needs. They just happened to be different for the different agencies at the table. We were in full support of North Sonoma County Fire's needs to move forward and annex those territories, I think that is the one that is the toughest for the county to get its head around. For us and Bodega Bay, its always been the same, the cost to annex Bodega Bay is \$3 million a year, we've always been very clear and this should be true to all these agreements, that it must have an annual escalator built into that that keeps up even with bay area CPI or other factors of inflation. Supervisor Hopkins said that was a new ask, but we can prove the concept was not new one-about 80 emails. Ours was a little different than our partners in that we did receive a draft agreement, which was likely related to the length of time dealing with the annexation of BB. The agreement is very close to what was further expressed today, we are very close.

Chief Bellach, speaking for Kenwood, said as a group we agreed upon was there was no growth attached to this funding, so we stressed that we need annual growth. Originally, we asked for \$180,000, which was a four-year-old ask, from the original TOT tax. The Board looked at it and stressed it was an old ask, to hire another Captain spot before we were in any deficit spending, now we are in \$230k deficit spending. I asked the group today to add another 120k for a revised ask of \$300k. This will give a little buffer for one year.

Chief Schroth-Cary reported that he felt the meeting was productive with a lot of progress. We still have a ways to go in terms of the details of the tax exchange. And it was heard by all that an escalator needs to be included. We need contracts that do not allow the tax liability to ever go down for the areas we annex. The next hurdle will be in the details of the contracts.

Chief Heine said he agreed with Chief Schroth-Cary and told the group that his draft contract included language that mentioned the ERAF lawsuit with North Sonoma Coast and if they lost (the County) all parties to these agreements would have to share in the loss. We made it very clear that we needed language that included annual increases using whatever method they wanted so long as it was in the neighborhood of 3% annually and that no one would agree to share in the county's loss in a lawsuit for ERAF.

Chief Schroth-Cary also added that it becomes a LAFCO issue as the money is needed in order for the LAFCO approval process.

Executive Officer Mark Bramfitt added that collaboration with the County on this issue has been bad from the LAFCO staff perspective. I do not want to be pessimistic about whether or not LAFCO will follow these county plans or not, but what has been absent these discussions have been Ft Ross, but the county has said they should go with Monte Rio. I cannot tell you how the commission will vote, funding agreements will go a long way, I wish we would have been more collaborative along the way. Not to be pessimistic, but some of these alignments are opposed by scope of view, not just LAFCO staff. The county seems hell bent on getting out of CSA 40, but they are no higher than you, they are client of LAFCO and do not tell LAFCO what to do. I will put the best info forward, as will you and the commission will make the decision.

#### 8. New Business

- a. Consider Supporting Funding Needs of Member Agencies with the County of Sonoma –  
VP Peterson

VP Peterson thanked Mark Bramfitt for his candor and the input from the holistic partner agencies ☺... VP Peterson said there are two parts to his ask of the group. One is to be able to get to the finish line. We as Sonoma County Fire Districts, and I am proud of the entities that stuck with this, and we did not bite with the county tried to divide us; we also did not let the rumors break us apart either. We need to make a statement to the Sups that we need this funding moving forward and we agree. The first step for this organization to have a voice. We need to stop letting the County tell us what they are going to serve us! What I am requesting is a letter, stating what we hope to have happen with the consolidations and the funding.

Chief Heine said he spoke with President Akre, and he agreed that we could do another joint letter between the chiefs' association and the fire districts association. A strong letter of support for the board of supervisors to get across the finish line each of these four agreements, specifically the terms as presented by the fire districts. We cannot sit idly by while a lot of these go down. We (Steve and I) will work on a draft letter and share with everyone to see where everyone is comfortable with and I will do the same on the chiefs side.

VP Peterson said Chief Heine touched on the second part of what he wanted to do which was to get the chiefs association to do the same thing, so thank you! Since the ink is not dry we must remain vigilant. Chief Heine gave a current real-life scenario, everything that has been said in these meetings, the term sheets flying back and forth, the sources of revenue, and all this stuff, none of that is reflected in the agreement county council actually sent us; 2 ½ pages at the most. Here is the money, here is when we are going to pay it, sign here. It just shows you the disconnect. They want all these agreements to go back to the meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup>... But here is the catch, I have an agreement, its ready to go, all we have to do is sign here. The baffling aspect. Bodega Bay needs immediate sustainability funding, they need money by mid fiscal year to make payroll. We can annex Bodega Bay by January one and save them 400k that can then go back into the pot for everyone else. So I asked, can we just sign this agreement and have you put it on your next agenda? No, its going on the October 26<sup>th</sup> agenda.

Chief Heine said he would work with Chief Akre on Monday to get a letter out for review.

President Akre reiterated his vision that fire districts and the fire service in Sonoma County speaks with a strong and united voice.

Chief Heine expressed his thanks to the holistic partner agencies for their unity and strength to not allow the county to break us apart. It appeared to me the county also noticed as their posture was very different today than in the past. We are stronger together and it shows.

9. Good of the Order

President Akre brought up a future agenda item about including the press in future meetings, insofar as getting our message out to the public. The item will be added to the October meeting.

Director Petersen asked about our funding stream, if you consider the number of annexations, I want to ensure the financial strength of the association. Director Bernier added that he would be amenable to raise our annual fees, it's well worth it. A) President Akre, thanked them both, the discussion will occur in November, which is in our bylaws, the time to set dues for the next year. VP Peterson also voiced his approval as well. He also mentioned a desire to host an "in-person" meeting in October, but we could also wait until November and for vaccinated members. President Akre said will continue to look to opportunities for an in person meeting just as soon as it aligns with public health orders.

Chief Bellach told the group that Kenwood had two board members resign last month. Received 5 applications to replace them and the board will decide next week on the replacements. The special tax assessment was assigned its letter- Measure E. And no far no opposing arguments have been filed.

Chief Grinnell thanked Chief Heine and our holistic partners for the support given to Bodega Bay. We also received two grants-a Calfire grant for wildland fire equipment and a FEMA grant for a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lucas device.

10. Next Meeting September 23, 2021, via Zoom

11. Close

Director Petersen moved to adjourn, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Chief Grinnell, all approved, none opposed.

Minutes prepared by Sec/Tres Sean Grinnell, September 13, 2021

Minutes approved on \_\_\_\_\_

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President Steve Akre