

Staff Report

April 11, 2012

Agenda Item No. 3.a.

CITY OF SANTA CLARITA MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW (MSR) AND SPHERE OF INFLUENCE (SOI) UPDATE

Agenda Item 3a is consideration and approval of the City of Santa Clarita Municipal Service Review (MSR) and sphere of influence update.

Background

Since 1971, LAFCOs have been required to develop and adopt a sphere of influence for each city and special district. A sphere is defined by Government Code section 56076 as “a plan for the probable physical boundaries and service area of a local agency, as determined by the commission.”

Developing spheres is central to the Commission’s purpose. Government Code section 56425 states, “In order to carry out its purposes and responsibilities for planning and shaping the logical and orderly development and coordination of local governmental agencies so as to advantageously provide for the present and future needs of the county and its communities, the commission shall develop and adopt a sphere of influence for each local governmental agency within the county and enact policies designed to promote the logical and orderly development of areas within the sphere.” This section also requires the Commission to update spheres of influence “every five years, as necessary.”

Pursuant to Government Code Section 56430, in order to prepare and to update spheres of influence in accordance with Section 56425, the commission is required to conduct a service review of the municipal services provided in the county or other appropriate area designated by the commission. After conducting a service review, the Commission is required to prepare a written statement of its determinations with respect to each of the following:

1. Growth and population projections for the affected area;
2. The location and characteristics of any disadvantaged unincorporated communities within or contiguous to the sphere of influence;
3. Present and planned capacity of public facilities, adequacy of public services, and infrastructure needs or deficiencies including needs or deficiencies related to sewers, municipal and industrial water, and structural fire protection in any disadvantaged, unincorporated communities within or contiguous to the sphere of influence;
4. Financial ability of agencies to provide services;
5. Status of, and opportunities for shared facilities;
6. Accountability for community service needs, including governmental structure and operational efficiencies;
7. Any other matter related too effective or efficient service delivery, as required by commission policy.

In determining a sphere of influence, pursuant to Government Code Section 56425, the Commission must consider and make the following determinations:

1. The present and planned land uses in the area, including agricultural and open-space lands.
2. The present and probable need for public facilities and services in the area.
3. The present capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public services that the agency provides or is authorized to provide.
4. The existence of any social or economic communities of interest in the area if the commission determines that they are relevant to the agency.

City of Santa Clarita MSR and SOI Update

Staff of the City of Santa Clarita has filed seven applications with LAFCO, requesting the annexation of approximately 6,008 acres of territory. Three of the proposals—Elsmere Canyon (807 acres); Vista Canyon-Fair Oaks-Jakes Way (2,442 acres); and South Sand Canyon (692 acres); are not within the City's current SOI. Staff determined that a service review would be required to update Santa Clarita's SOI.

On October 11th, 2011 the Commission awarded a contract to GST Consulting to assist in undertaking a service review for the City of Santa Clarita,

On March 27, 2012, staff conducted a community workshop in Santa Clarita.

Public Outreach

The March 27th community meeting was noticed in advance in a local Santa Clarita newspaper (The Signal). The notice of the community meeting was posted on LAFCO's website on March 6, 2012, and at a later date on the City of Santa Clarita's website. Staff provided a copy of the notice of the community meeting to the Office of Los Angeles County Supervisor Mike Antonovich, whose staff distributed it to various community groups and activists.

The Signal published a story in its Friday, March 27th edition addressing the draft MSR and the community meeting.

GST Consulting's Draft MSR was posted on LAFCO's website on March 6, 2012. Staff brought copies of the Draft MSR to the community meeting on March 28th for distribution to the public.

Two individuals spoke at the community meeting, and two e-mails were received by staff prior to the close of the public comment period on March 28th.

In addition to general questions about LAFCO, service reviews, and SOIs, the public offered two substantive comments about the draft MSR prepared by GST Consulting:

- The first comment is in support of excluding the San Francisquito Canyon area from the City's SOI. San Francisquito Canyon is a rural, large lot, equestrian-oriented community adjacent to the City of Santa Clarita's existing northerly boundary. GST Consulting and LAFCO staff concurred that the City's northerly boundary in this area should stop at the boundary of the San Francisquito Canyon Community Standards District (CSD), which is a

land-use plan recently adopted by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors for this community. In this regard, the MSR presented to the Commission is consistent with the sentiments expressed by this member of the public.

- The second comment is from a resident in support of including the Tesoro del Valle area in the City's SOI. Tesoro del Valle is a master-planned community, approved by the County of Los Angeles, northerly of the City's boundary, east of the Interstate 5 Freeway, and adjacent to West Creek and Castaic. In the documents presented to the Commission today, GST Consulting and LAFCO staff are recommending that the entire Tesoro del Valle community be included in the City's SOI.

Draft MSR Recommendation (GST Consulting)

In 2011, representatives of the City of Santa Clarita submitted a proposed sphere of influence to LAFCO. Exhibit "K," which is found on Page 70 of the Draft MSR, is a map depicting the City of Santa Clarita's proposed sphere of influence.

GST Consulting was retained by LAFCO to prepare a Draft MSR for the City of Santa Clarita. Exhibit "L" on Page 74 of the Draft MSR is a map depicting the proposed sphere of influence recommended by GST Consulting.

GST's recommended SOI is different from the City's request in the following ways:

- The San Francisquito Canyon area is eliminated from the SOI. As indicated previously, this neighborhood is governed by a Community Standards District (CSD) recently adopted by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors.
- "Area C," a large addition on the eastside of the City's existing City and SOI boundary, is eliminated from the SOI. As noted in the draft MSR, the area is "used for various mining operation and open space preservation uses," and "neither use requires an extension of municipal services in the near term."
- "Area A," located between the southern boundary of the City and the intersection of the I-5 and Antelope Valley (SR-14) Freeways. The boundary requested by the City of Santa Clarita is based upon watershed ridge separating the Santa Clarita and San Fernando Valleys. The boundary recommended by GST Consulting extends that boundary to the "confluence of the two freeways."
- The boundary for "Area 7" was "squared off" to create a more logical boundary.

GST's recommendations are reflected in the Draft MSR that was posted to LAFCO's website on March 6th, 2012. A copy of the Draft MSR is attached to this staff report.

Staff Analysis

Staff concurs with most of the recommendations contained in the Draft MSR prepared by GST Consulting, with the following changes:

- The territory in “Area D” is eliminated from the proposed SOI. Staff feels that inclusion of Area D would be premature at this time. There is a current application on file to annex the North Copperhill area, which has yet to be considered by the Commission. “Area D” is contiguous to North Copperhill to the north and east. A decision not to include “Area D” in the City’s SOI in no way precludes the City or a land-owner from requesting annexation of the Area D in the future, should the Commission ultimately approve the North Copperhill annexation.
- With respect to “Area A,” staff recommends no change to the City’s existing SOI. At first glance of a map, it would appear that the confluence of the I-5 and Antelope Valley Freeway would be a logical SOI boundary. Upon further review, however, staff notes that the area contains a significant ridgeline which divides the watersheds between the Santa Clarita Valley and the San Fernando Valley. The territory is in private ownership and, as such, it may be developed in the future. Because the territory drains to the south (toward the San Fernando Valley), the City of Los Angeles would be the logical service provider should the property be developed. In this regard, staff feels that the ridgeline serves as a better boundary than the freeway intersection, and the SOI should therefore not be changed.

CEQA

MSRs are feasibility and planning studies for possible future actions that have not been approved, adopted, or funded. The preparation and adoption of an MSR is statutorily exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines section 15262. Approval of the Sphere of Influence Update is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because, as set forth in State CEQA Guidelines section 15061, it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the Sphere of Influence Update will have a significant effect on the environment. As the territory in the Sphere of Influence is considered for annexation, the City will need to comply with CEQA when it pre-zones the territory.

Staff Recommendation

The attached Resolution and map reflect the changes contained in “Staff Analysis,” above.

In consideration of information gathered and evaluated for the service review of the City of Santa Clarita the following recommendations are provided for consideration by the Commission:

- 1) Open the public hearing and receive testimony on the MSR;
- 2) There being no further testimony, close the public hearing;

- 3) Adopt the MSR report for the City of Santa Clarita and the determinations contained in the report, as required by Government Code Sections 56425 and 56430; and
- 4) Adopt the attached Resolutions Making Determinations Approving an Update to the SOI for the City of Santa Clarita.

Attachments

City of Santa Clarita Municipal Service Review & Sphere of Influence Update Final Draft MSR Report (April 2, 2012) prepared by GST Consulting.

http://lalafco.org/MSR%20SOI%20Updates/FINAL%20DRAFT%20Santa%20Clarita%20MSR_4_2_12.pdf

Clarification #1 to the Final Draft City of Santa Clarita MSR

<http://lalafco.org/MSR%20SOI%20Updates/Clarification%20Santa%20Clarita%20MSR%2004-05-12.pdf>