

SANTA YNEZ COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Michael LeBrun, Interim General Manager
DATE: April 20, 2022
SUBJECT: Discussion and action regarding transition from at-large elections to district-based elections

Recommendation

Review and discuss District progress on consideration for moving to district-based elections. Direct staff.

Policy Implications

Currently the District conducts at-large elections. On March 18, your Board adopted a Resolution 22-06, setting forth its intention to transition from at-large elections to district-based elections.

Fiscal Implications

A consultant (demographer) will be needed to study District demographics and develop an approach.

Alternatives Considered

None

Discussion

Many agencies have moved to district-based voting in recent years to improve representation of the electorate on elected bodies. District-based voting is where the agency is broken up into geographic voting blocks, much like the County Board of Supervisors and other larger agencies.

At a Special Meeting on March 18, 2022, your Board adopted a Resolution 22-06 and formed an Ad Hoc with Directors Jones and Redfern for the purpose of developing a timeline, outreach program and approve the consultant contract. At today’s meeting staff will provide an update on the process and schedule overview.

Attachment

Resolution 22-06

RESOLUTION NO. 22-06

**RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE
SANTA YNEZ COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT SETTING
FORTH ITS INTENTION TO TRANSITION FROM AT-LARGE
ELECTIONS TO DISTRICT-BASED ELECTIONS**

WHEREAS, members of the Board of Directors (the “Board”) of the Santa Ynez Community Services District (the “District”) are currently elected by an at-large election method under which the voters of the District’s entire jurisdiction elect the Board members; and

WHEREAS, Elections Code Sections 10508 and 10650 permit the District, by resolution, to change from its current at-large election method to a district-based election method under which the candidate must reside within an election district that is a divisible part of the District’s jurisdictional boundaries and is elected only by voters residing within that election district; and

WHEREAS, the District believes that its current at-large election method complies with the California Voting Rights Act ("CVRA") and is legal in all respects. Nevertheless, the District recognizes that (i) public policy appears to favor district-based elections, (ii) if, prior to adopting a resolution of intention, the District were to received a notice from a prospective plaintiff alleging a violation of the CVRA, the District could be required to reimburse the prospective plaintiff for costs of up to \$30,000, and (iii) litigation, if initiated under the CVRA, would involve significant costs and uncertainty. The District has therefore determined that the public interest would be served by its adoption of this resolution and transitioning to district-based elections.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Directors of the Santa Ynez Community Services District as follows:

1. The District intends to proceed with all diligence to complete the process for transitioning to district-based elections. Before the November 2022 regular election, the Board intends to hold a public hearing and to consider the adoption of a resolution to institute a district-based election system (the “Implementing Resolution”). If feasible, said public hearing shall be scheduled so as to allow sufficient time for voting districts to be established and candidates within such districts to register for the November 2022 regular election.

2. Prior to holding a public hearing to consider the adoption of the Implementing Resolution, the District intends to undertake the following steps to facilitate the transition from at-large elections to district-based elections, as required by Elections Code Sections 10010:

(a) Before drawing a draft map or maps of the proposed boundaries of the voting districts, the District will hold at least two public hearings over a period of no more than

thirty (30) days, at which the public is invited to provide input regarding the composition of the voting districts. Before these hearings, the District may conduct outreach to the public, including to non-English-speaking communities, to explain the districting process and to encourage public participation.

(b) After all draft maps are drawn, the District will publish and make available for release at least one draft map and, if members of the Board will be elected in their voting districts at different times to provide for staggered terms of office, the potential sequence of the elections. The District will also hold at least two additional hearings over a period of no more than forty-five (45) days, at which the public is invited to provide input regarding the content of the draft map or maps and the proposed sequence of elections, if applicable. The first version of a draft map will be published at least seven (7) days before consideration at a hearing. If a draft map is revised at or following a hearing, it will be published and made available to the public for at least seven (7) days before being adopted.

(c) In determining the final sequence of the district elections, the Board will give special consideration to the purposes of the CVRA, and it will take into account the preferences expressed by members of the voting districts.

3. As required by Elections Code Section 10650, the Implementing Resolution will include a declaration that the change in the method of electing members of the Board is being made in furtherance of the purposes of the California Voting Rights Act of 2001 (Chapter 1.5 (commencing with Section 14025) of Division 14 of the Elections Code).

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 18th day of March, 2022, by the following vote of the Board of Directors of the Santa Ynez Community Services District:

AYES: Beard, Jones, Redfern, D’Ambra

NOES:

ABSENT: Van Pelt

ABSTAIN:

Karen Jones, President
of the Board of Directors

ATTEST:

Wendy Berry, Secretary
of the Board of Directors