



AGENDA ITEM 8B

MEETING: November 15, 2017

TO: Humboldt LAFCo Commissioners

FROM: Colette Metz, Administrator

SUBJECT: Status of the Rohner Community Recreation and Park District Reorganization
The Commission will receive an update on efforts to evaluate reorganization options for the Rohner Community Recreation and Park District.

BACKGROUND

The Rohner Community Recreation and Park District (hereafter RCRPD) was originally formed on July 16, 1968 for the purpose of overseeing the planning, acquisition and construction of a community swimming pool to benefit the both incorporated and unincorporated areas surrounding Fortuna. As such, the District was established as a "dependent" special district with the authority of appointing board members shared by the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors and the Fortuna City Council.

On September 21, 2016, the Commission approved a Countywide Recreation and Park Services Municipal Service Review (MSR) that included the RCRPD. The MSR determined that the RCRPD Board had not been meeting for several years and had essentially delegated its responsibility for providing services to the City of Fortuna Parks and Recreation Department. Currently, approximately \$15,000 in property taxes generated within the District boundaries are annually transferred to the City of Fortuna. These funds are used to offset costs of providing recreation programs to the community, including service to residents in the unincorporated areas.

DISCUSSION

The MSR evaluated two governance structure options for the RCRPD, including: 1) dissolution and designating the City of Fortuna as successor agency; and 2) establishing the RCRPD as a subsidiary district of the City of Fortuna. After further review, it has been determined that the subsidiary district option is likely not feasible due to the requirement at least 70 percent of the territory and 70 percent of registered voters within the District must be within the City, in order to meet legal requirements of establishing a subsidiary district. In the case of RCRPD, the City of Fortuna boundary currently makes up only 17% of the territory within the District. If the RCRPD was reduced to match the City's SOI area, then the City would make up only 47.3% of the territory within the district. Neither of these boundary options would meet the territorial requirement needed to initiate a subsidiary district formation process.

Another governance structure option considered for the RCRPD is dissolution and designating the City of Fortuna as the successor for the purpose of winding up the affairs of the district. Considering the RCRPD does not have property, assets, or indebtedness, this process would be limited to addressing the existing property taxes collected within the District boundaries and transferred to the City of Fortuna. The County Auditor estimates that approximately \$14,000 in property taxes could be retained annually from within city limits if the District is dissolved. This means that the majority of the District's revenue comes from within city limits. Dissolution proceedings may be initiated by the Commission and would include at least one noticed public hearing and protest proceedings.

A third option has recently been identified which consists of expanding the RCRPD to include the greater Eel River Valley for purposes of resource management, conservation, trails, and recreation. There are advantages of having a regional park district to acquire and preserve open space land, protect and restore the natural environment, and provide opportunities for public enjoyment and education. Examples of regional park districts in other areas include the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, and the East Bay Regional Park District. One of the more promising opportunities is to work with the Salt River Watershed Council to evaluate the feasibility of this option, which could address the organizational and funding needs for the long-term monitoring and maintenance of the Salt River Project. Currently, the Humboldt County Resource Conservation District is lead agency on this multi-year, multi-agency, landowner-driven endeavor that takes a holistic, watershed-wide approach to address sediment, fish passage, flooding, and drainage issues in the Salt River Watershed of Ferndale. However, their lead involvement is going to end in less than five years, meaning that another organizational option with a stable funding source is needed to continue the project.

LAFCo staff is continuing to consider all options for reorganizing the RCRPD moving forward. We look forward to the Commissions thoughts and feedback.

RECOMMENDATION

This item has been agendaized for information only. The Commission is invited to discuss and provide direction to staff on any related matter as needed.