



**MARCH 18, 2026 REGULAR MEETING  
ADOPTED MINUTES**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The regular meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. in the City of Eureka Council Chambers with Chair Madrone presiding.

**2. FLAG SALUTE**

**3. ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Heidi Benzonelli, Michelle Bushnell, Cheryl Kelly, Steve Madrone, Elaine Weinreb  
Members Absent: Troy Nicolini and Kimberley White  
Alternates Present: David Couch\* and Gordon Johnson  
Alternates Absent: Debra Ganes and Mike Wilson  
Staff: Colette Santsche, Executive Officer  
Amber Chung, Acting Clerk/Administrator  
Ryan Plotz, Attorney

\*Alternate Commissioner Couch seated as voting member

**4. PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comment was received.

**5. CONSENT CALENDAR**

**A) Approval of January 21, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes**

**Motion Bushnell/Benzonelli** to approve the consent calendar. Motion passed by 6-0-0 voice vote.

**6. PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS**

**A) Proposed Budget and Work Plan for Fiscal Year 2026-27**

EO Santsche introduced the staff report and outlined the proposed budget and workplan for fiscal year 2026-27. Commissioners asked clarifying questions regarding the legislative advocacy line item and how it was being budgeted in the current fiscal year versus the upcoming fiscal year.

**Motion Bushnell/Kelly** to adopt Resolution No. 2026-03, approving the proposed budget and work plan for fiscal year 2026-27 and authorizing staff to circulate the budget to local funding agencies for review. Motion passed by 6-0-0 roll call vote.

**7. BUSINESS ITEMS**

**A) City of Trinidad Request for Authorization to Extend Water Service Outside City Boundaries to APNs 515-321-002 and 515-321-013 (Mill Creek Lane and Quarry Road)**

EO Santsche introduced the staff report, including a letter of support that was received after the meeting materials were already distributed. Commissioner Bushnell

questioned why an out of agency services extension was being recommended instead of annexation of the parcels in question. EO Santsche responded that the parcels in question are not contiguous to the City of Trinidad boundary but are included in the City's mapped water service area and adopted sphere of influence. Recommended conditions of approval include the requirement for property owners to execute and record a Covenant and Agreement consenting to annexation and waiving their rights to protest annexation in the future. In addition, the property owners would be required to apply for annexation within one year of LAFCo approval or prior to water service activation (whichever occurs first) and the City has committed to actively pursue annexation of the subject parcels and surrounding water service area.

LAFCo has not denied a similar request in the past and that while the Commission typically prefers to approve annexations instead of out of area extensions, LAFCo policy states that approving out of area extensions in anticipation of annexation is acceptable.

Commissioners Bushnell, Benzonelli, Weinreb, and Alternate Commissioner Couch expressed that they would like the condition regarding the property owners' wells to be destroyed to be removed. They requested backflow protection, amongst other actions, be implemented to prevent the wells from being destroyed. EO Santsche said that condition would be removed and that she would work with the City and County Division of Environmental Health as needed to ensure that any necessary backflow prevention is installed.

Commissioner Kelly stated that the City of Trinidad is supportive of providing services to the area and that sufficient capacity exists to do so. She expressed that she personally sees this as a health and safety issue and that the services extension is aligned with long-term planning, since annexation would be a multi-year planning effort.

Chair Madrone shared his reflections after having seen and walked through the Pierce's property. He pointed out an error in GHD's analysis; the water capacity analysis did not account for the potential addition of ADUs, only the existing two residences. He expressed concern over approving the services extension in anticipation of annexation when the other property owners in the area were not in approval of being annexed.

Commissioner Bushnell inquired about what precedent this sets for future property owners in the City that want to receive service but do not want to be annexed. EO Santsche replied that these are expected to be the last two properties in the Mill Creek Ln area that are not connected. She also said that the majority of water service connections were made prior to 2001, when LAFCo approval was not required by state law. She acknowledged that annexation planning is a significant undertaking for a small city, particularly one located in the coastal zone, and annexation is expected to require technical studies, landowner outreach, environmental review, and preparation of required pre-zoning and general plan amendments. LAFCo staff has been coordinating with the city and is encouraged of the city's commitment to do its due diligence to pursue annexation. Commissioner Kelly stated that the public outreach process would need to be thorough to adequately present the pros and cons of annexation to property owners.

Jennifer Pierce, property owner of APN 515-321-002, provided public comment on why she wanted services to be extended to her property including her history of connection attempts, the current situation of her onsite water system that is drawn from Mill Creek via a pump and lines that do not meet current standards, as well as her agreement to waive her right to protest future annexation and committal to paying annexation fees. Michael Cavanagh, property owner of APN 515-321-013, provided public comment via Zoom on his application and echoed many similar concerns to those of Jennifer Pierce. He stated that he would like to keep his shallow well for agricultural use should the request for services extension be approved. Commissioners asked both property owners clarifying questions regarding other options they could explore to either improve or replace their well; they stated that these options were infeasible due to financial or logistical reasons.

Commissioners asked EO Santsche additional questions about the precedent of approving this extension and how approval would affect future development. EO Santsche stated that every application is considered on a case-by-case basis and that LAFCo would not be obligated to approve out of agency service requests. She also stated that updating LAFCo's out of agency services policy may be appropriate to help clarify issues such as these; this would come back to the Commission at a later meeting and would not be necessary to take action on the item today. Commissioners asked clarifying questions regarding the coastal zone boundary in the area.

**Motion Kelly/ Weinreb** to adopt Resolution No. 2026-04, authorizing the City of Trinidad to extend water services outside the City boundary to 469 Mill Creek Lane and 295 Quarry Road, pursuant to Government Codes Section 56133, with the removal of the language pertaining to well removal. Motion passed by 4-2-0 roll call vote with Commissioners Benzonelli and Madrone dissenting.

Commissioners took recess from 10:47 a.m. to 10:54 a.m.

## **8. INFORMATIONAL AND CONTINUING ITEMS**

### **A) Form 700, Ethics, and Fiscal Training Requirements**

EO Santsche introduced the staff report and provided an update on what requirements each Commissioner still needed to fulfill. She stated that staff would follow up via email after the meeting to get these requirements fulfilled. Commissioners asked clarifying questions regarding their outstanding requirements.

The Commission received and filed the report and no further action was taken.

### **B) Status of Expiring Commissioner Terms**

EO Santsche provided an update on Commissioner terms expiring in 2026. She noted that a call for nominations was distributed to independent special districts for the Regular and Alternate special district seats expiring in June. It was noted that staff will be starting the recruitment process for an Alternate Public Member.

The Commission received and filed the report and no further action was taken.

### **C) Status of Municipal Service Review and Sphere of Influence Updates**

EO Santsche introduced the staff report and provided an overview of current MSR preparations. Staff is working on drafting the City of Eureka and Scotia Community Services District MSR/SOI Updates.

No Commissioner comments or questions. The Commission received and filed the report and no further action was taken.

**D) Status of Applications, Projects, and Agency Coordination**

EO Santsche introduced the staff report and provided updates on current projects.

**9. EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT**

**A) CALAFCO-U LAFCO 201 Flyer**

EO Santsche noted that there would be another CALAFCO-U Session held in April and requested that Commissioners inform Acting Clerk Chung if they'd like to be registered for that.

The Commission received and filed the report and no action was taken.

**B) CALAFCO Staff Workshop Announcement**

EO Santsche noted that the CALAFCO Staff Workshop is from May 6-8 in Pismo Beach and that she would be attending.

The Commission received and filed the report and no action was taken.

**C) CALAFCO Legislative Update (March 2026)**

EO Santsche noted that legislative items currently being tracked by CALAFCO have been included in the agenda packet for review.

The Commission received and filed the report and no action was taken.

**10. WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE – None**

**11. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:14 a.m. The next regular meeting of the Commission will take place on May 20, 2026, at 9:00 am at the City of Eureka Council Chambers located at 531 K Street, Eureka, CA 95501.