



NOVEMBER 19, 2025 REGULAR MEETING DRAFT MEETING 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, Troy Nicolini, and Elaine Weinreb

Members Absent: None

Alternates Present: David Couch and Gordon Johnson

Alternates Absent: Debra Garnes and Mike Wilson

Staff: Colette Santsche, Executive Officer

Amber Chung, Presiding Clerk/Analyst

Ryan Plotz, Attorney

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was received.

5. CONSENT CALENDAR

A) Approval of September 17, 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes

B) Meeting Calendar for 2026

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

6. PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

A) Proposed Fiscal Year 2025-26 Budget Amendment

EO Santsche presented the proposed budget amendment adjusting application-related revenues and expenditures due to increased application activity in recent years, budgeting for a special study for North Coastal Fire Study, and incorporating legislative advocacy costs to be funded from reserves. Commissioner Kelly asked whether the budget accounted for potential Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District application; Commissioner Bushnell confirmed that applications are subject to full cost recovery.

Motion Bushnell/Weinreb to adopt Resolution No. 2025-07 approving the budget amendment for FY 2025-26 as outlined in Exhibit A. Motion passed by 6-0-0 roll call vote.

7. BUSINESS ITEMS

A) Kneeland Fire Protection District Protest Proceedings Confirmation

EO Santsche reported that the October 16, 2025 protest hearing resulted in insufficient protest, noting that two registered voter protests were received and landowner

protests accounted for 4.5 percent of the total assessed value of land. Commissioners Bushnell and Benzonelli inquired about the current status of commercial timberlands within the originally proposed annexation area, confirming that Resolution No. 25-08 approved the modified annexation excluding these areas.

Motion Kelly/Nicolini to adopt Resolution No. 2025-08, ordering the Kneeland Fire Protection District Annexation without election, subject to the satisfaction of the terms and conditions in Resolution No. 25-06, as adopted by the Commission on September 17, 2025. Motion passed by a 5-1-0 roll call vote as follows:

AYES: Commissioners Bushnell, Kelly, Madrone, Nicolini, Weinreb

NOES: Commissioner Benzonelli

ABSTAIN: None

B) Special Study for North County Fire Services

EO Santsche presented the proposal submitted by Matrix Consulting Group for the North Coastal Fire Study, explaining that the study was identified as a priority by the North County Fire Services Working Group to evaluate service delivery challenges and potential governance and funding options for fire services in the region. Commissioner Weinreb asked for clarification regarding the existing Amador contract between CSA 4 and CAL FIRE, and Commissioner Kelly thanked Chair Madrone for championing the effort, noting the City of Trinidad's strong support for the study.

Commissioner Nicolini asked how the study would relate to future Municipal Service Reviews (MSRs) for affected agencies, and EO Santsche explained that the 2017 North County Regional Fire Services MSR identified similar needs and that future MSRs would document the study findings and use them to inform potential governance options and sphere of influence changes.

Chair Madrone thanked EO Santsche and Cybelle Immitt, County Natural Resources Planning Manager, for their continued work on advancing the study and asked whether LAFCo would need to enter into separate agreements with the three funding partners (CSA 4, City of Trinidad, and Trinidad Rancheria). EO Santsche and Commissioner Kelly confirmed that the participating entities had approved funding through their respective governing bodies and that deposit requests would include acknowledgment provisions, eliminating the need for a separate contract.

Motion Kelly/Weinreb to approve the proposal submitted by Matrix Consulting Group and direct staff to prepare a professional services agreement for execution by the Chair. Motion passed by a 6-0-0 voice vote.

C) Commercial Timberlands Legislative Support

EO Santsche shared an update on efforts to develop special legislation addressing the treatment of commercial timberlands in State Responsibility Areas within Fire Protection District Law. She explained that the proposed approach would build consistency with criteria in County Service Area Law and noted that Assemblymember Chris Rogers' staff indicated this concept is under consideration for a future legislative cycle. Kneeland FPD is also preparing a letter of support at the request of Assemblymember's staff.

Commissioners discussed coordination efforts and potential next steps. Commissioner Bushnell asked whether staff had engaged with Sonoma LAFCo, given similar issues in

that county, and staff confirmed coordination to date with the Humboldt and Mendocino Fire Chiefs' Associations and indicated outreach to Sonoma would follow. Commissioner Nicolini expressed support for using the CSA model as a framework and requested additional information on the proposed legislative talking points. In response to a question regarding future annexations, staff clarified that if legislation were adopted, districts would still be required to complete the full annexation process for previously excluded commercial timberland parcels.

Chair Madrone thanked Commissioner Benzonelli for her assistance with legislative coordination and encouraged outreach efforts be extended to timberland management companies to explain the intent and benefits of the proposed legislation. Commissioner Bushnell also suggested that letters of support from large ranches with timberland zoned land that have previously been annexed would help support the case for the legislation. EO Santsche stated that she intends to continue stakeholder outreach and coordination.

Motion Benzonelli/Nicolini to adopt Resolution No. 25-09 to express Humboldt LAFCo's formal support for the development and advancement of special legislation to address the treatment of commercial timberlands within Fire Protection District Law and directing the EO to continue coordination efforts. Motion passed by a 6-0-0 roll call vote.

8. INFORMATIONAL AND CONTINUING ITEMS

A) Status of Expiring Commissioner Terms

EO Santsche provided an update on Commissioner terms expiring in 2026. She reported that the Mayors' City Selection Committee will be appointing a regular and alternate city member for the 2026-2030 term in June, but will be requested to convene sooner to fill the vacancy created by Commissioner Matthews resignation due to a scheduling conflict with LAFCo meetings. LAFCo staff will also be initiating the processes of filling the special district and public member seats expiring in the coming months.

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

B) Status of Municipal Service Review Preparations

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.

C) Status of Current and Future Proposals

EO Santsche introduced the staff report and provided a brief update on current and anticipated proposals including the Kneeland FPD application covered earlier in the meeting. Another current proposal includes the Humboldt CSD's annexation application which has been ongoing since 2025 and is still considered incomplete pending completion of the property tax exchange process.

EO Santsche continues to coordinate with fire service providers and meets with Humboldt County and the County Fire Chiefs' Association representatives as needed to address service and funding needs and specific fire service planning efforts.

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

9. EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

A) LAFCo Webmap Data Portal Roll Out

EO Santsche explained that the webmap has been officially published on the LAFCo website. She also noted that there is interest in coordinating with other GIS practitioners in the county regarding updates to webmap layers and data points.

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

B) CALAFCO Annual Conference Report Out

EO Santsche reported on her experience attending the CALAFCO Annual Conference in October and on the current status of CALAFCO regarding its restructuring. Chair Madrone requested the presentation materials from the "Incorporation in the New World – What Makes Them Successful?" breakout session be shared once they're distributed. He indicated that the McKinleyville CSD and McKinleyville Municipal Advisory Committee have expressed interest in receiving more information on incorporation logistics.

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

C) CALAFCO "The Sphere" Journal

EO Santsche stated that a copy of CALAFCO's annual journal, "The Sphere", was included in the agenda packet for Commission review and is available on LAFCo's website.

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

D) CALAFCO Legislative Update (November 2025)

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 10:06 a.m. The next regular meeting of the Commission will take place on January 21, 2026, at 9:00am at the City of Eureka Council Chambers located at 531 K Street, Eureka, CA 95501.