



AGENDA ITEM 7A

MEETING: November 19, 2025

TO: Humboldt LAFCo Commissioners

FROM: Colette Santsche, Executive Officer

SUBJECT: **Approval of Conducting Authority Proceedings for the Kneeland Fire Protection District Goodwill Response Area Annexation**
The Commission will consider adopting Resolution No. 25-08, acting as conducting authority, finding insufficient protest, and confirming and ordering the Annexation of Goodwill Response Areas to the Kneeland Fire Protection District.

BACKGROUND

On May 21, 2025, the Commission approved the Annexation of Goodwill Response Areas to the Kneeland Fire Protection District (KFPD) through Resolution No. 25-03. This action initiated the mandatory 30-day reconsideration period and triggered conducting-authority protest proceedings under Government Code §57000 et seq.

Within the reconsideration period, Humboldt Redwood Company (HRC) submitted a formal request for reconsideration objecting to inclusion of 17 HRC parcels, citing the statutory exclusion of “commercial forest lands which are timbered lands” under Health & Safety Code §13811. The Commission held three publicly noticed reconsideration hearings, consulted with LAFCo legal counsel regarding statutory interpretation and litigation risk, and received extensive public and agency comment.

On September 17, 2025, the Commission adopted Resolution No. 25-06, granting the reconsideration request, removing the 17 HRC parcels, and approving the modified annexation boundary. Resolution No. 25-06 also rescinded and replaced Resolution No. 25-03. This action reset and re-initiated the conducting-authority protest proceedings for the modified annexation area.

Under Government Code §§57075–57078, LAFCo must determine whether the annexation is:

- Terminated – if a majority of registered voters submit valid written protests;
- Subject to an election – if at least 25% of registered voters, or at least 25% of landowners who also own 25% or more of the assessed land value, protest; or
- Ordered without an election – if neither threshold is met.

DISCUSSION

The Commission previously delegated authority to the Executive Officer to conduct the protest hearing. The hearing was initially convened on June 24, 2025, at the Kneeland Fire House but was continued to October 16, 2025, to allow completion of reconsideration proceedings. For both protest hearing dates:

- Notice was mailed at least 21 days in advance to all registered voters and landowners within the affected territory;
- The notice was published in the Mad River Union; and
- The agenda and materials were posted to the LAFCo website.

During the protest hearing, several public comments were received expressing concern and frustration regarding the reconsideration process and the exclusion of HRC parcels. Commenters noted that HRC's request has overshadowed what was otherwise a positive, community-supported annexation effort and expressed disappointment that the company does not appear to recognize the benefits of being part of an organized fire district. Concerns were raised about fairness, as smaller landowners will continue to pay their share while HRC parcels—despite generating emergency service demands—will not contribute to the district's funding. Commenters emphasized that this outcome reflects a lack of foresight and undermines broader community and public safety benefits.

At the close of the hearing, the Executive Officer evaluated the written protests filed and not withdrawn:

- Registered voters within the annexation area: 93
- Registered voter protests received: 2
- Total assessed land value within the annexation area: \$26,917,383
- Assessed value represented by landowner protests: approximately \$1,212,521, or 4.5% of the total assessed value

These protest totals do not meet any statutory threshold requiring an election or termination of proceedings. Therefore, the annexation qualifies to be ordered without an election pursuant to Government Code §57075(a)(1)(C).

The annexation will not become effective until all terms and conditions in Resolution No. 25-06 are met to the satisfaction of the Executive Officer, prior to recordation of the Certificate of Completion. The Certificate must be recorded within one year unless the Commission grants a time extension. Staff will continue to update the Commission on condition compliance and final recordation.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Commission adopt Resolution No. 25-08, 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.

Attachments

Attachment A: Draft Resolution No. 25-08
Attachment B: Protest Hearing Summary

RESOLUTION NO. 25-08**ACTING AS THE CONDUCTING AUTHORITY,
FINDING INSUFFICIENT PROTEST, AND CONFIRMING AND ORDERING ANNEXATION
OF GOODWILL RESPONSE AREAS TO THE KNEELAND FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**

WHEREAS, the Humboldt Local Agency Formation Commission, hereinafter referred to as the "Commission," adopted Resolution No. 25-06, following duly noticed public hearings, consideration of the administrative record, and determinations made pursuant to Part 3, Division 3, Title 5 of the California Government Code (commencing with Section 56650, Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000), thereby approving the Kneeland Fire Protection District Annexation of Goodwill Response Areas subject to terms and conditions; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Part 4, Division 3, Title 5 of the California Government Code (commencing with Section 57000), the Commission serves as the conducting authority responsible for determining whether the approved change of organization shall be confirmed, terminated, or subjected to an election based on the value of written protests received from landowners and registered voters in accordance with Government Code Section 57091(a)(1); and

WHEREAS, the Commission delegated authority to the LAFCo Executive Officer to order, hold, and report on conducting authority proceedings pursuant to California Government Code Section 57000(c); and

WHEREAS, the Executive Officer held a duly noticed protest hearing at the Kneeland Fire Hall on October 16, 2025, after providing notice in the form and manner prescribed by law; and

WHEREAS, at said hearing, the Executive Officer summarized the Commission's determinations and conditions adopted in Resolution No. 25-06, and heard and received all oral and written protests, objections, and evidence presented; and

WHEREAS, upon conclusion of the protest hearing, the Executive Officer determined the value of written protests filed and not withdrawn, consisting of 2 written protests from registered voters and 11 written protests from landowners representing 34 parcels and approximately 4.5% of the total assessed land value within the annexation area—insufficient to constitute a majority protest or to require an election under Government Code Section 57075; and

WHEREAS, because neither a majority protest nor the thresholds requiring an election were met, the Commission is required to confirm and order the annexation without an election in accordance with Government Code Section 57091(a)(1)(C).

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Commission as follows:

1. The Commission, acting as the conducting authority, hereby confirms and orders the Kneeland Fire Protection District Annexation of Goodwill Response Areas without an election, as provided under Government Code Section 57091(a)(1)(C).
2. The Commission hereby authorizes and directs the Executive Officer to file a Certificate of Completion upon the satisfaction of the terms and conditions in LAFCo Resolution No. 25-06.

PASSED AND ADOPTED at a meeting of the Humboldt Local Agency Formation Commission on the 19th day of November, 2025, by the following roll call vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

Steve Madrone, Chair
Humboldt LAFCo

Attest:

Colette Santsche, Executive Officer
Humboldt LAFCo



**PROTEST HEARING SUMMARY
ANNEXATION OF GOODWILL RESPONSE AREAS TO
THE KNEELAND FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**

Thursday, October 16, 2025 – 5:30 PM

Kneeland Fire House - 6201 Greenwood Heights Drive, Kneeland

1. CALL TO ORDER

The protest hearing was called to order by the Executive Officer at 5:30 PM.

2. PUBLIC APPEARANCES

No general public comments were offered on items not appearing on the agenda.

3. PROTEST HEARING – KNEELAND FPD ANNEXATION

The Executive Officer provided an overview of the annexation process, noting that Humboldt LAFCo approved the Kneeland Fire Protection District (KFPD) Goodwill Response Area Annexation on May 21, 2025 (Resolution No. 25-03). This action triggered a 30-day reconsideration period followed by required protest proceedings under the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act.

The Executive Officer summarized the reconsideration request filed on June 20, 2025, by Humboldt Redwood Company (HRC), citing Health & Safety Code §13811 regarding exclusion of “commercial forest lands which are timbered lands” within State Responsibility Areas. Three reconsideration hearings were held on August 20, September 3, and September 17, 2025. After reviewing statutory constraints and legal risk, the Commission approved the reconsideration request and adopted Resolution No. 25-06, removing 17 HRC parcels from the annexation.

The Executive Officer proceeded with the protest hearing on the modified annexation boundary, consistent with Government Code §57000 et seq. The hearing included:

- Description of the proposal and purpose of protest proceedings;
- Summary of Resolution No. 25-06 and the revised annexation area;
- Receipt of public testimony;
- Entry into the record of all written protests received prior to the hearing.

Several public comments were received, including questions about the reconsideration process and expressions of frustration regarding the perceived lack of fairness associated with the exclusion of HRC parcels. Commenters noted that while HRC's lands will continue to generate emergency medical, rescue, and structure-related service demands, the company will not contribute to the special tax, whereas smaller landowners within the annexation area remain responsible for paying their fair share.

Public members in attendance also emphasized that HRC's reconsideration request has overshadowed what was otherwise a broadly supported and constructive annexation process, one intended to stabilize services and benefit the greater Kneeland community. Commenters expressed disappointment that HRC has not recognized the community-wide advantages of being included within an organized fire district and felt the company's position lacked foresight regarding long-term service needs and the shared benefits of reliable fire and emergency response. These comments echoed broader concerns raised throughout the reconsideration

proceedings about the inequitable impacts of current statutory restrictions on rural fire protection districts.

At the close of testimony, the Executive Officer evaluated all written protests filed and not withdrawn. A total of two (2) registered voter protests and eleven (11) landowner protests representing 34 parcels were received. The protested assessed value constituted approximately 4.5% of the total assessed land value within the annexation area—well below the statutory thresholds requiring termination or an election.

Based on insufficient protest in accordance with Government Code §57075, the Executive Officer announced that a recommendation would be forwarded to the Commission to order the annexation without an election.

4. ADJOURNMENT

The hearing adjourned at approximately 6:20 PM. The next regular LAFCo meeting is scheduled for November 19, 2025, at 9:00 AM in the Eureka City Hall Council Chambers.