MEMORANDUM
LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION

TO: Local Agency Formation Commission
FROM: Stephen Lucas, Executive Officer
SUBJECT: Municipal Service Review-Sphere of Influence Update - Paradise Cemetery District
DATE: October 28, 2019 for the meeting of November 7, 2019

The Commission adopted the Municipal Service Review and Sphere of Influence Update for Butte County Cemetery Districts on October 3, 2019. The Commission has expressed specific concerns regarding the Paradise Cemetery District (PCD) and directed staff to contact the District to discuss these concerns and the determinations in the MSR/SOI Plan.

Staff has sent a letter (Attachment 1) to the District expressing the Commission's concerns and requesting an informal meeting with PCD staff and/or Trustees. The letter was clear that if a meeting cannot be scheduled in a timely manner, LAFCo staff would attend a PCD Board meeting and speak to the matter. The letter was also provided to District 5 County Supervisor Teeter who we are hopeful can participate in any future discussions.

Action Requested: None

Attachment: 1. October 18, 2019 letter to the Paradise Cemetery District
October 18, 2019

Board of Trustees
c/o Misty Sreen, District Manager
Paradise Cemetery District
980 Elliot Road
Paradise, CA 95969

Re: Municipal Service Review and Sphere of Influence Update for the District

Dear Ms. Sreen,

As you know, the Butte Local Agency Formation Commission held a noticed public hearing on October 3, 2019, at which it adopted a Municipal Service Review (MSR) and Sphere of Influence Update for the eight cemetery districts in Butte County, including the Paradise Cemetery District (PCD). The Commission voiced concerns about the management of the PCD and directed its staff to seek a meeting with the PCD Manager and Board of Trustees to discuss the concerns articulated in the MSR/SOI Plan and in this letter below.

The Commission appreciates that the PCD has experienced considerable stress resulting from the Camp Fire and additional administrative/management tasks may be an unexpected burden. Nonetheless, state law compels the Commission to take very seriously the fundamentally vital importance of transparency and accountability for all public agencies under its charge. With this in mind, the following issues are of considerable concern to the Commission.

Issues of Concern Identified in the MSR

- The District is not in conformance with governmental requirements for financial accounting and audits, as its last annual audit was for Fiscal Year 2014/13. The failure to maintain current acceptable accounting records is a disservice to its constituents.

- It would be appropriate for the District to initiate a conversation with the Kimshew Cemetery District to discuss reasonable options to share services or other resources so that both districts may provide better service into the future.

- During the MSR/SOI Plan Update process LAFCo staff reached out to the PCA on numerous occasions and it was disappointing that the full time district manager did not feel it was necessary to cooperate (complete the LAFCo Questionnaire or respond to numerous phone contacts) with LAFCo staff. In addition, it should be noted that during the Camp Fire event and in the following months, the District was simply unreachable, nor did it provide reasonably acceptable updates via phone messages or e-mail notifications to District residents or to the general public.

- Although the District does not have an internet presence, it has been determined that a website would enhance its service provisions.
• Information, i.e., agendas, minutes and records do not appear to be readily available to members of the public upon request and should be kept in a secure location, preferably in electronic format for the ease of access, retrieval and dissemination. It has been determined that the District, in an effort to preserve records, establish and adopt a record retention procedure including a backup and storage procedures.

• Overall, the District’s operations are being managed adequately to conduct burial related services; however, other administrative and governance issues are apparent and should be addressed by the District Board.

The above issues are serious, but we view them as completely curable if the PCD Trustees prioritizes the need. We would prefer to have a meaningful informal discussion with the District and other stakeholders, but we are also available to address the Board of Trustees on a future agenda. Please consider this informal request and provide LAFCo with possible dates/times for a in person meeting with PCD staff and/or Trustees.

Respectfully,

Steve
Executive Officer

Attachments: Paradise Cemetery District MSR Chapter

cc: LAFCO
    District 5 Supervisor Teeter