

HOMESTEAD VALLEY
COMMUNITY COUNCIL

"One voice for the people of Homestead Valley"

P.O. Box 3694 Landers, CA 92285
www.hvccsite.org

July 23, 2009

To: Kathleen Rollings-McDonald, Executive Officer
Local Agency Formation Commission
215 N. "D" Street, Suite 204
San Bernardino, CA 92415-0490

Dear Kathleen Rollings-McDonald,

Please accept these comments to the Town of Yucca Valley Municipal Service Review/Sphere of Influence Amendment, received by LAFCO on Mar 30, 2009. Also please enter them into the LAFCO #3134 record. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Jim Harvey
President, Homestead Valley Community Council

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Comments to the Municipal Service Review: Town of Yucca Valley, Sphere of Influence Amendment

The Homestead Valley Community Council would like to thank LAFCO for the opportunity to comment on the Town of Yucca Valley MSR/SOI Amendment, as part of LAFCO #3134.

The Homestead Valley Community Council was established to provide one voice for the unincorporated Homestead Valley communities of Yucca Mesa, Flamingo Heights, Landers, and Johnson Valley. For years, HVCC has been recognized as the representative body to our four member communities, addressing their individual and collective interests to local, regional, state, and federal legislators.

At the HVCC monthly meeting on September 15, 2008, delegates from the community of Yucca Mesa informed the Council they had just learned of a Yucca Valley sphere of influence expansion proposal that would include Yucca Mesa. We were surprised by this announcement, but then were stunned to learn the Town of Yucca Valley had been preparing this proposal for over a year. Neither the community of Yucca Mesa, nor the HVCC had been contacted by the Town of Yucca Valley regarding this proposal. We find this conduct extremely suspicious, but not unusual when a proposal is expected to be as unpopular and controversial as this proposal has become.

Representation:

In reading the Municipal Service Review/Sphere of Influence Amendment recorded by LAFCO on March 30, 2009, our attention is first called to the Executive Summary: Primary Municipal Service Issues, and the statement *“Institutional structure limits the ability of residents of the proposed SOI area to have their voices heard and influence the county's provision of local services”*.

This statement is presumptuous, reckless, and is followed by nothing short of a creative use of numbers to imply a false conclusion. Furthermore, the Homestead Valley Community Council takes offense to this absurd assertion, as should the Office of the Third District Supervisor. As previously stated, the HVCC has a history of providing exceptional local representation for our member communities to the county, and we have been extremely pleased with county responses. HVCC has monthly community meetings attended by the Third District Supervisor's Field Representative, and our officers meet with him between meetings when warranted. Any issues related to county services, land use, development, Hwy 247 improvements, renewable energy, etc., can be brought to the council by community residents during these regular meetings. Had the Town of Yucca Valley and/or The Planning Center contacted us during the composition of this report, they may have drawn a different and more accurate conclusion.

Additionally, HVCC has a fully featured website that lists current issues, and facilitates a process for residents to inform us of their concerns through a convenient contact form. HVCC delegates are listed

on the site, and are very accessible through the member community organizations. This accessibility and confidence in both the HVCC and San Bernardino County by the community of Yucca Mesa should not be summarily dismissed, as the referenced statement from the MSR amendment clearly does. A case could be made that Yucca Mesa residents would have less access to accountable legislators after a sphere of influence amendment/annexation, than they do now through the community associations, HVCC, and the County Field Representative. Ironically, we have spoken to countless residents of Yucca Valley who feel disenfranchised by their own town representatives and legislators. I can assure you this is not the case in Yucca Mesa.

Geography:

Yucca Mesa is geographically separate from the developed and populated sections within the Town of Yucca Valley. This separation is not evident by simply looking at the area map. In fact Yucca Mesa and its local water source are located in a completely different basin from that of Yucca Valley. The Ames Valley Water Basin Agreement was established in 1991, and has been the subject of court arguments and judicial stipulations till as late as 2001. The Yucca Valley MSR/SOI amendment ignores this geographical difference and the many complicated issues that would arise should the Town of Yucca Valley assume the Hi Desert Water District, as it suggests it could after annexation.

Yucca Mesa is a Homestead Valley community. Residents of Yucca Mesa were delegated to the Homestead Valley Community Plan Committee. They assisted in the development of the Homestead Valley Community Plan, which was issued on March 13, 2007, as part of the San Bernardino County General Plan. Yucca Mesa is not currently without a development plan. The MSR/SOI amendment also ignores this fact. The Homestead Valley Community Plan is available on our website.

Community Identity:

In 1993, LAFCO adopted resolution 2406, approving LAFCO # 2741 Sphere of Influence establishment for the Town of Yucca Valley. During the feasibility study that led up to the eventual incorporation and the sphere of influence, the proponent group conducted a survey to establish the level of interest for incorporation in Yucca Valley and Yucca Mesa. Most interesting is this statement in the LAFCO resolution: ***“The results of the survey showed that 53% of the registered voters residing in Yucca Mesa supported incorporation. Bearing in mind the percentage of support, the proponents felt that Yucca Mesa had its own community and identity and should not be encroached upon.”***

Today an overwhelming majority of Yucca Mesa residents adamantly oppose this sphere of influence amendment proposal. What has changed since this accurate assessment of the uniqueness of the community of Yucca Mesa? HVCC feels it would be wise for the proponent group of this new proposal to respect those wishes, and accept, as their predecessors did, that Yucca Mesa is a unique community with its own identity. The MSR/SOI amendment neglects to acknowledge this.

Intent:

The 1993 LAFCO resolution also states: ***“As determined during the incorporation process, the boundaries submitted by the proponent group were considered reasonable and appropriate boundaries for the town. Although Yucca Mesa was not included as part of the Town of Yucca Valley during its cityhood process and is not part of this sphere of influence review, residents of Yucca Mesa retain the option of requesting a sphere of influence amendment in the future.”***

The Yucca Valley MSR/SOI Amendment fails to address the fact that this sphere of influence amendment proposal is not at the request of the residents of Yucca Mesa. HVCC is unaware of any proponent group or organization authorized by the people of Yucca Mesa to have made this request. The HVCC was surprised when learning of this proposal, and has expressed its unwavering opposition to it from the beginning. LAFCO should know this is entirely a one sided sphere of influence amendment proposal with absolutely no mutual agreement.

The Town of Yucca Valley appears to have put much effort into flying this proposed amendment under the radar as long as possible, and even more effort into avoiding communications with stakeholders such as the Yucca Mesa residents, the YMIA, and HVCC. The extreme opposition to this proposal should not come as a surprise to anyone, especially Yucca Valley.

Conclusion:

The MSR/SOI Amendment submitted to LAFCO on March 30, 2009, does not adequately make the case that Yucca Valley can provide better government representation and municipal services than what is currently available to Yucca Mesa through local organizations like YMIA, HVCC, and the County of San Bernardino. It avoids recognition that the residents of Yucca Mesa did not request this amendment proposal, and that they overwhelmingly oppose it. To this day, Yucca Valley has still not contacted HVCC regarding this application. We ask the LAFCO commissioners to reject this application for sphere of influence amendment, should it come before the commission for consideration.

Respectfully submitted,



Jim Harvey
President, Homestead Valley Community Council