

June 2, 2026

Via Email to Mark.Bramfitt@sonomacounty.gov and Personal Delivery

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RE: Request for Reconsideration of May 6, 2026 Resolution Rejecting Petition for Formation of Alexander Valley Water District (File No. 2025-03)

Petitioners for the Alexander Valley Water District (AVWD or District) appreciate the two hearings and two study sessions the Commission has invested to consider the proposed District. Petitioners are thrilled that the Sonoma Local Agency Formation Commission (Commission or LAFCO) finds that a new water district is needed for Alexander Valley. While Petitioners seek to collaborate with the Commission to ensure registered voters have a voice in water supply decisions, Petitioners respectfully disagree with the Commission's denial on the basis that it prefers a registered voter district to a landowner district as the form of governance for AVWD. Through five years of preparing the Petition, Petitioners determined that a landowner district is the only viable model for this boundary. Further, a preference for a registered voter district is not a lawful ground for denial under the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act (CKH Act). This request for reconsideration provides additional authority and facts demonstrating the appropriateness of a California Water District for Alexander Valley, and proposes Board eligibility criteria to address the Commission's concerns.

Approval of the proposed district with new conditions will restore the democratic process the CKH Act provides: the Commission must then set a protest hearing at which every registered voter and every landowner may terminate the district if a majority of either class objects. Petitioners urge the Commission to allow that process to unfold.

I. Request for Reconsideration

Petitioners Dennis Murphy, Bradley Petersen, and James Young, together with the Russian River Property Owners Association, request that the Commission reconsider and rescind its May 6, 2026 denial of the Petition for Formation of AVWD, LAFCO File No. 2025-03 (Petition), pursuant to Government Code section 56895.

II. Grounds for Reconsideration

A Preference for a Registered Voter District Is Not an Appropriate Ground for Denial; a Hybrid Voter-Landowner Board will Ensure a Diversity of Representation

Some Commissioners expressed concern about the potential exclusion of residents and registered voters in the governance of the District and the potential that water supply would be controlled by larger properties. Petitioners agree that all water users in Alexander Valley should be represented and protected, but Petitioners do not believe that the CKH Act authorizes LAFCO to

reject a landowner district proposal because it would prefer a registered voter district. The Commission should reconsider its denial because it did not meaningfully consider alternatives suggested by the Petitioners that would provide input of all stakeholders within the proposed California Water District. This would include the appointment of the initial Board of Directors by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors with clear instructions for diversity. Subsequent adoption of bylaws of the District with input from the Commission would include clear guidance that would mandate a diversity of future Directors.

Refinement of the District Powers Will Alleviate Concerns

The Commission commented on powers of the proposed District including formation of a GSA and administering the Frost Protection Program but failed to meaningfully consider alternatives or modifications. These potential services of the District are not absolutely essential but they warrant additional discussion.

The challenges of reliable and sustainable water supply in Alexander Valley with the surrender of PG&E's Potter Valley Project are clear. The landowners will have the burden to pay for the new diversion of wintertime high flow of the Eel River. They will be responsible for paying to raise Coyote Dam and potentially to fund a pipeline from Lake Sonoma to Alexander Valley. These projects are all in their initial stages of conversation. A water district is the obvious vehicle for a seat at the table to craft long-term solutions and to generate revenue to pay for the solutions.

A Registered Voter District Would Disenfranchise the Landowners Who Pay for and Receive the District's Services

The proposed AVWD boundary is predominantly agricultural and commercial: 93% of the 28,000 acres is agricultural or commercial land, which accounts for 70.3% of assessed land value and the vast majority of water diversion and use. There are approximately 1,817 registered voters, but residential property comprises only 7% of total land area and 29% of assessed land value. Many of the largest landowners — including two federally-recognized Native American tribes, 29 wineries, three lumber mills, and owners of approximately 14,900 acres of irrigated crops — would have no vote under a registered voter district. The Commission must recognize that this district would not exist without landowners organizing and agreeing to tax themselves.

Moreover, the greatest concentration of registered voters already receive potable water service from existing suppliers (California-American Water Company serves Geyserville; mutual water companies serve Palomino Lakes and Vineyard Club/Valley View; Rains Creek Water District serves others). These voters are largely insulated from the agricultural and commercial water supply challenges AVWD is designed to address. By contrast, the other registered voter water districts in Sonoma County all provide potable water and sanitation to predominantly residential customers — AVWD would provide no potable water service and would serve a 93% agricultural and commercial territory. The only comparable district, North Bay Water District, is correctly organized as a landowner district for the same reasons.

County Water Districts within Sonoma County

District	Service Type	Population/Connections	Agricultural/Commercial
Forestville CWD	Potable water & wastewater	3,000 connections	~76 AF/yr recycled to ag
Rains Creek WD	Potable water	142 acres residential	None
Russian River CWD	Potable water & fire protection	1,200 residential connections	None
Sonoma Mountain CWD	Potable water	517 acres residential	None
Sweetwater Springs WD	Potable water	3,762 connections; 95% residential; pop. 8,026	5% commercial; no agricultural
Timber Cove CWD	Potable water	270 residential lots	None
Valley of the Moon WD	Potable water	23,697 people; 6,800+ connections	No ag; commercial 11.7% of demand
Windsor CWD	Potable water & wastewater	30,000 pop.; 9,830 connections	No ag; commercial/industrial use

California Water Districts within Sonoma County

District	Service Type	Population/Connections	Agricultural/Commercial
North Bay Water District	Groundwater management; on-farm recharge; conservation (property-related services)	Sparsely populated; no service connections; all self-supplied	>90% of land acreage
Alexander Valley Water District (proposed)	Groundwater management; water sharing; recharge & recovery (property-related services)	28,000 acres; 1,817 registered voters; no service connections; all self-supplied	93% of land acreage

Denial Undermines Sonoma County and LAFCO's Own Agricultural Land Policies

For decades, the Sonoma County General Plan and the Commission's Agricultural Lands Policy have discouraged urban sprawl and protected agricultural land. Denying this Petition deprives Alexander Valley farmers of the tools needed to address mounting water supply risks posed by the decommissioning of the Potter Valley Project and increasing hydrologic extremes from climate change. The Commission's denial contradicts its own stated policy goals.

III. Modifications Requested

Rescind the Resolution

Because the Commission's stated basis for denial — a preference for registered voter districts — exceeds its authority under the CKH Act and is unsupported by evidence, the May 6, 2026 Resolution must be rescinded.

Adopt Petitioners' Proposed Resolution

Petitioners have demonstrated the need for the District, the appropriateness of the plan for services, and a feasible funding plan. A proposed resolution was submitted on May 5, 2026 and acknowledged by Commission Counsel as adoptable. Petitioners urge adoption of the Proposed Resolution with the following additional conditions addressing Commissioner concerns:

- 1. Initial Board Appointment:** The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors shall appoint the initial five-member Board of Directors, with a majority (at least three) being

registered voters within the boundary. At least one director shall be a domestic well user on a parcel of 10 acres or less, and at least one shall be a farmworker residing in the District.

2. Bylaws Requirement: The initial Board must adopt director qualification bylaws — with input from the Commission — requiring that a majority of subsequent directors be registered voters and that directors represent a diversity of land ownership sizes, land uses, and water uses.

3. Services: Petitioners will accept a Commission decision to defer authorization of frost protection and Eel-Russian water supply services outside the boundary. Petitioners will also accept limits on becoming a GSA under SGMA. However, administration of the Russian River Water Sharing Program within Sonoma County is an essential service not provided by any other entity.

Conduct a Protest and Inclusion/Exclusion Hearing

Government Code sections 57078 and 57091 require a protest hearing following approval of a district petition. If a majority of either landowners or registered voters submit written protests, the formation is terminated. Landowners and voters were deprived of this democratic opportunity when the Commission denied the Petition. Petitioners request that the protest hearing be combined with an inclusion/exclusion hearing under California Water Code sections 34300 and 34305. Several properties have already requested inclusion. If removing communities already served by existing public water suppliers — including Geyserville, Palomino Lakes, Vineyard Lake, and Rains Creek — would address Commission concerns about registered voter representation, Petitioners would not object, as doing so would not frustrate the District's primary objectives.

IV. Conclusion

Petitioners respectfully request that the Commission rescind its denial resolution, reconsider the Petition, and adopt the Proposed Resolution.

Sincerely,

Dennis Murphy
Petitioner
and
President, Russian River
Property Owners Association

Bradley Petersen
Petitioner

James Young
Petitioner