**Fresno Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo)**

**Executive Officer’s Report**

**Agenda Item No. 8**

**DATE: August 13, 2025**

**TO: Fresno Local Agency Formation Commission**

**FROM: Brian Spaunhurst, Executive Officer**

**BY: Jessica Gibson, LAFCo Analyst**

SUBJECT: Consider Approval – “Raisin City Water District Reorganization” A proposed annexation of approximately 55,543 acres to the Raisin City Water District for territory generally located generally located in northwest central Fresno County.

 (LAFCo File No. RO-24-04)

 Applicant: Raisin City Water District

**Landowners/Parties of Real Interest**: 747 landowners

**ATTACHMENT A: Proposal Information**

**ATTACHMENT B: Proposed Raisin City Water District Annexation Map**

**ATTACHMENT C: Protest Resolution–James Irrigation District**

**ATTACHMENT D: Protest Resolution–Reclamation District No. 1606**

**ATTACHMENT E: Landowner Comments**

**RECOMMENDATION:** **Conditional Approval by taking the following Actions:**

**Action 1:**

1. Acting as Responsible Agency pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) Guidelines, find that prior to approving the proposed reorganization, the environmental effects of the Proposal as shown in the CEQA documents prepared, adopted, and submitted by the Lead Agency, were reviewed and considered, and determine these documents to be adequate pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15096.

**Action 2:**

1. Find that the proposed annexation is consistent with LAFCo Policies and the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 (“CKH”).
2. Find pursuant to CKH and information in the record that:
	1. The territory is inhabited pursuant to Gov. Code § 56046; and
	2. Not all landowners or registered voters have consented to the reorganization.
3. Assign the distinctive short form designation “Raisin City Water District Reorganization”.
4. Find that the notices mailed on April 23, 2025 and July 23, 2025, were given to all landowners and registered voters within the affected territory, as well as within 300 feet of the affected territory, disclosed that there is potential for the extension or continuation of any previously authorized charge, fee, assessment, or tax by the local agency in the affected territory, and that the Commission intends to waive protest proceedings pursuant to Government Code section 56663 unless written opposition is received before the conclusion of the Commission proceedings on this proposal.
5. This Commission’s action approving this proposal shall expire one year from the date of this resolution unless all proceedings are complete including condition compliance and a Certificate of Completion issued by the Executive Officer.
6. If written opposition to the proposal was received and not withdrawn prior to the conclusion of the hearing, approve the proposal subject to the requirements of the CKH, the 30-day reconsideration period, and compliance with all of the above conditions, and direct staff to set a protest hearing pursuant to the requirements of CKH (Government Code section 57000 et seq.).
7. Nothing in LAFCo’s determination authorizes the transfer of ownership of any third party facilities, James Irrigation District (“JID”), Fresno Irrigation District (“FID”), Reclamation District No. 1606 (“RD 1606”) or any other entities, to RCWD.

**Action 3: Conditions of Approval**

* + 1. Pursuant to Fresno LAFCo Policy 108-07, the Executive Officer shall record the approved application if all conditions have been satisfied and once, he or she has determined that the facts pertaining to the application during the time of recording are materially similar to those facts considered by the Commission when the application was approved.
		2. Raisin City Water District’s (“RCWD”) execution of an Indemnification Agreement as described in the staff report for Agenda Item No. 7 (LAFCo File No. MSR-24-01/RSOI-211).
		3. Prepare an MSR Update or Addendum with the inclusion of a Master Service Plan before additional powers are activated per RCWD’s principal act authority.
	1. Upon pursuit of additional activation of powers enumerated in the RCWD’s principal act, the District will conduct CEQA analysis according to State guidelines and amend the MSR to provide a service plan for providing water services, which may include administration of a Proposition 218 election or other fee, charge, or ratemaking procedures consistent with the California Constitution to fund water projects.
	2. This condition is not subject to Action 2(E).

# Executive Summary

On May 13, 2024, RCWD submitted an application to Fresno LAFCo for annexation of approximately 55,543 acres. However, prior to the annexation proceeding, an expansion of the Sphere of Influence (“SOI”) must be approved and the Municipal Service Review (“MSR”) must be determined to be adequate. At present, the District is authorized by LAFCo to provide the following services: levying and collecting assessments and standby charges, executing agreements, entering into contracts, and engaging in planning activities related to the distribution of water for irrigation purposes. Agricultural water users within the District primarily rely on groundwater pumping for irrigation. The District’s primary purpose is to improve groundwater conditions throughout the Raisin City area.

**Proposal/Land Use**

* The proposal consists of the annexation of approximately 55,543 acres.
* Information related to the proposal’s affected territory, land use, proposed development, special districts, surrounding areas, and existing/proposed servicescan be found on **Attachment A.**
* The territory is inhabited.
* The affected territory is within the RCWD SOI. **(Attachment B)**

# Environmental Determination

The RCWD, acting as “Lead Agency” under CEQA, determined that the proposal is categorically except pursuant to CEQA guidelines section 15319 – Annexation of Existing Facilities and Lots for Exempt Facilities. On April 5, 2024, RCWD filed a Notice of Exemption with the Fresno County Clerk (#E202410000093).

As a “Responsible Agency” pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, the Commission is required to independently review and consider the environmental review for the proposed annexation. LAFCo finds that the proposal does not have the potential to result in a significant effect on the environment, and that the annexation is not subject to CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15319. Therefore, the proposal is exempt from environmental review.

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15096(i), if the Commission determines that these documents are adequate, a Notice of Determination will be prepared and filed with the County of Fresno Clerk's office in compliance with Public Resources Code section 21152.

**Costs and Other Changes Affecting Residents or Landowners**

RCWD may impose fees or assessments on lands within its boundaries consistent with the California Constitution.

**Agencies and Individuals Submitting Comments**

* Kevin Tsuda, Environmental Health Specialist II, Fresno Co. Dept. of Public Health
* Cesar Gonzalez, IT Analyst, Fresno County Elections Department
* Bryant VanderVelde, Supervising Cadastral Tech., Fresno Co. Assessor’s Office
* Augustine Ramirez, Division Manager, Fresno Co. Dept. of Public Works & Planning
* Bernard Jimenez, Assistant Director, Fresno Co. Public Works & Planning
* Laurence Kimura, P.E., Chief Engineer, Fresno Irrigation District
* Riley Chaney, Board of Directors President, James Irrigation District
* Manny Amorelli, General Manager, Reclamation District No. 1606 & James Irrigation District
* David M. Merritt, General Manager, Kings River Conservation District
* Steven Haugen, Watermaster, Kings River Water Association

**Agencies Submitting Resolutions of Objection**

When a proposed change of organization includes a district annexation, the Commission must consider all of the following: (1) whether the proposed annexation will be for the interest of landowners or present or future inhabitants within the district and within the territory proposed to be annexed to the district; (2) Any factors which may be considered by the Commission as provided in Section 56668; (3) Any resolution raising objections to the action that may be filed by an affected agency; and (4) Any other matters which the Commission deems material. (Gov. Code § 56668.3(a).)

“*The commission shall give great weight to any resolution raising objections to the action that is filed by a city or a district*. The commission’s consideration shall be based only on financial or service related concerns expressed in the protest. Except for findings regarding the value of written protests, the commission is not required to make any express findings concerning any of the factors considered by the commission.” (Gov. Code § 56668.3(a) [emphasis added].)

Two districts have submitted resolutions raising objection pursuant to Government Code section 56668.3: James Irrigation District (“JID”) and Reclamation District No. 1606 “RD 1606” (attached hereto as **Attachments C and D**, respectively). Both JID and RD 1606 have expressed financial and service-related concerns; however, the current proposal does not involve the addition or modification of existing active services and does not impose financial impacts on the objecting agencies. Service-related concerns will be addressed when RCWD returns to the Commission to request activation of its latent water delivery powers.

**Territory Boundaries**

The boundaries of the proposed annexation are definite and certain, and the Fresno County Assessor’s Office has determined that the map and legal description are adequate to file/record with the Fresno County Recorder’s Office.

**Registered Voter Data**

The Fresno County Election’s Office reported that there are 514registered voters in the affected territory.

**Compliance with the Requirements of CEQA (Original Proposal)**

**Lead Agency**: Raisin City Water District

**Level of Analysis**: Exempt

**Finding**: Exception (see Environmental Documents at www.fresnolafco.org under the LAFCo Commission Hearing Quicklink in the August 13, 2025 file).

**Individuals and Agencies Receiving this Report**

* Jessica Johnson, LAFCo Counsel
* Randy Hopkins, P.E., Manager – Engineer, Provost & Pritchard
* R. Gere Gunlund, Director and Board President, Raisin City Water District
* Laurie Sales, Senior Project Administrator, Provost & Pritchard
* Bernard Jimenez, Assistant Director, Fresno Co. Public Works & Planning
* Manny Amorelli, District Manager, Reclamation District No. 1606 & James Irrigation District
* Ariel Namvar, Board President, Mid-Valley Water District
* David Merritt, General Manager, Kings River Conservation District
* Laurence Kimura, P.E., Chief Engineer, Fresno Irrigation District
* Steven Haugen, Watermaster, Kings River Water Association
* Jerry Rai, Landowner-Interested Party

**Attachment A**

**PROPOSAL INFORMATION**

**1. Affected Territory**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Acreage:**  | 55,543 |
| **Current Land Use:** | Primarily Agricultural |
| **Number of Residences/ Population:** | 1,928 |
| **Registered Voters:** | 514 |
| **Assessor Parcel Number(s):** | 801 parcels |

**2. Proposed Development** – The proposal does not involve the exercise of new or different functions or classes of service within the district. The affected territories are not proposed for development.

**3. Surrounding Territory** – Agricultural and rural residential

**4.** **Existing Service Agencies and Proposed Service Changes**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Service** | **Existing Service** | **Change** |
| Water | Private Wells | No Change |
| Sewer | Septic | No Change  |
| Fire Protection | Fresno County Fire  | No Change |

**5.** **Cities and Districts Included Wholly or Partially Within the Affected Territory**

* Fresno County
* CSA 35
* Fresno County Library District
* North Central Fire Protection District
* Lower San Joaquin Levee District
* Fresno Westside Mosquito Abatement District
* Kerman Unified School District
* State Center Community College District
* Fresno Mosquito and Vector Control District
* Fresno Irrigation District
* West Fresno Red Scale Pest Control District
* Fresno County Fire Protection District
* Kings River Conservation District
* Tranquillity Resource Conservation District
* Golden Plains Unified School District
* West Hills Community College District
* Mendota Unified School District