

These minutes are not intended to be a verbatim transcription of the proceedings and discussion associated with the business on the Commission's agenda; rather, what follows is a summary of the order of business and general nature of testimony, Commission deliberation, and action taken. Votes are shown in abbreviated format when unanimous (Ayes-Noes-Abstain).

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

A. Roll Call

Chair Cox called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

Members present: Commissioners Carpenter-Harris, Jill Cox, Grossman-Crist, Johnson, and Alternate Commissioner Kasper (seated as voting member).

Members absent: Commissioner Brownfield, Burke, and Corbett, Alternate Commissioners Gogan and Harper.

Staff Present: Colette Santsche, Executive Officer (EO), Krystle Brogna, Clerk/Analyst

2. PRESENTATIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Trinity Public Utilities District – Paul Hauser, General Manager

TPUD General Manager Paul Hauser provided an overview of the District's service area and current wildfire mitigation efforts. He noted that TPUD serves 80% of the Trinity County population but does not serve all areas of Trinity County, including downriver area (Salier), south county area (Mad River), and remote areas like Post Mountain remaining off-grid. Most of the county is classified as a high fire severity zone. In light of a previous fire claim that cost TPUD \$10 million, the District no longer carries wildfire insurance.

To reduce fire risk and potentially regain insurance coverage, TPUD is proposing to widen their standard right-of-way (ROW) from 20 feet to 130 feet—a move expected to reduce wildfire risk by nearly 95%. Undergrounding power lines was deemed cost-prohibitive at nearly \$1 billion. Environmental constraints, particularly in riparian zones, may limit the ability to implement full-width ROW expansions in all areas. CEQA/NEPA documentation is underway with anticipated completion next spring, although litigation is possible.

Hauser noted the District is pursuing approximately \$20 million in grant funding for implementation. TPUD is also exploring the feasibility of providing power to Post Mountain. Although a PG&E line crosses the area, a substation would be required. Serving the area would involve crossing U.S. Forest Service land, a potentially decade-long permitting process. Commissioner Kasper suggested exploring hydrogen-powered steam generators, which has garnered some community interest. Additional suggestions included pursuing partnerships with timber companies and seeking grants tied to wildfire mitigation, as the expanded ROW could function as a fire break.

3. CONSENT CALENDAR

A. Approval of Minutes from April 15, 2025 Regular Commission Meeting

Motion to approve the consent calendar was presented by Carpenter-Harris, seconded by Commissioner Johnson, and passed by 5-0-0 voice vote.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT OPPORTUNITY

No public comment was received.

5. PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. Final Budget and Workplan for FY 2025-26

EO Santsche presented the final budget for fiscal year 2025-26, outlining current expenditures and the ongoing need to increase contributions to close the gap between revenues and expenses. There were no comments from Commissioners or the public.

Motion to adopt Resolution 25-05 approving the final FY 2025-26 LAFCo budget was presented by Commissioner Carpenter-Harris, seconded by Commissioner Kasper, and passed by 5-0-0 roll call vote.

6. BUSINESS

A. Strategic Planning Discussion: Strengthening LAFCo Coordination with Special Districts

EO Santsche introduced the strategic planning topic, noting the regional approach taken in recent fire service reviews and referencing the Fire Districts Advisory Committee (FDAC) White Paper on fire service funding. She stated that now is an opportune time to examine governance structures—including potential consolidations—and emphasized LAFCo's role in facilitating these discussions.

Commissioner Grossman-Crist discussed the operational limits of smaller departments, such as Hayfork, which cannot deploy personnel to other areas without compromising local coverage. He emphasized that current funding models—heavily reliant on volunteerism and community fundraising—are unsustainable. Suggestions included exploring hybrid paid-volunteer staffing models and examining successful service models from other jurisdictions.

Commissioner Carpenter-Harris identified insurance costs as a significant concern for departments like Salyer and questioned whether interdepartmental coordination could help reduce premiums. She noted that while small departments provide valuable local knowledge, there is a growing need for regional planning and shared support. Commissioner Kasper asked whether the Fire Chiefs Association could be leveraged to strengthen collaboration among departments.

EO Santsche confirmed that LAFCo can provide technical and planning assistance through municipal service reviews and pre-application support. Commissioners expressed strong interest in continuing LAFCo's focus on fire services.

7. EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT/CORRESPONDENCE (Information Only)

EO Santsche noted that CALAFCO recently sent out a notice regarding several CALAFCO University sessions covering a wide range of topics that will be open to staff and Commissioners. Staff will forward this notice to Commissioners if they would like to attend.

8. COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Kasper noted his work on alternative power systems for Post Mountain PUD and that he is continuing to coordinate with the Board.

9. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair Cox adjourned the meeting at 5:42 pm.

ATTEST:



Krystle Brogna, Clerk

DATE: August 19, 2025