

1.1. ROLE OF THE COMMISSIONER

A. Legislative Intent

The enabling statutes set forth statewide purposes and policies for LAFCOs. Among these basic purposes are to:

- Discourage urban sprawl,
- Preserve open-space and prime agricultural lands,
- Efficiently provide government services, and
- Encourage the orderly formation and development of local governmental agencies based upon local conditions and circumstances.

With regard to urban development patterns and the preservation of open space lands, the intent of the Legislature is that LAFCO:

Establish written policies and procedures and exercise its powers in a manner that encourages and provides planned, well-ordered, efficient urban development patterns with appropriate consideration of preserving open-space lands within those patterns.

The Legislature further directs LAFCOs to effect these policies:

By the logical formation and modification of the boundaries of local agencies, with a preference granted to accommodating additional growth within, or through the expansion of, the boundaries of those local agencies that can best accommodate and provide necessary governmental services and housing for persons and families of all incomes in the most efficient manner feasible.

The Commission is also subject to CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) and the Ralph M. Brown Act, the State's open meeting law.

B. Countywide Decision Maker

The members of the Commission, by majority action, establish public policy in the areas of governmental boundaries, urban form, the provision of public services and jurisdictional relationships between local agencies.

This requires each LAFCO Commissioner to weigh various factors and render:

- Policy decisions regarding such matters as urban sprawl, agricultural preservation and orderly governmental boundaries; and

- Technical decisions based upon factors such as the need and adequacy of public services, compatibility of proposals with adopted plans and the effects of alternate actions.

C. Balanced Membership

The Legislature has established a balanced membership on LAFCO consisting of City, County, Public and Special District members.

Members are not, however, appointed to be representative of a particular “city,” “county” or “special district” viewpoint. The mixed membership is to ensure that various backgrounds and appreciations are reflected on the Commission.

Government Code Section 56325.1 states that while serving on the Commission all members shall exercise their independent judgment on behalf of the interests of residents, property owners and the public as a whole. Members appointed by local governments shall represent the interests of the public as a whole and not solely the interests of the appointing authority.

Commissioners should rely upon their expertise and experience while on LAFCO and exercise responsibility through a countywide, LAFCO perspective in making decisions.

D. Independence

LAFCO is an independent commission. It is not a part of the County government, nor are its decisions appealable to local agencies. LAFCO is quasi-legislative, and its decisions are appealable through the court system.

Each Commission is independent in weighing and reviewing information and making determinations based on the matter under review and in consideration of LAFCO's underlying purposes.

E. LAFCO Operations

The Commission is responsible for establishing policies and objectives and adopting an annual budget that is adequate and appropriate to achieve LAFCO's legal and programmatic responsibilities.

It is the responsibility of the Commission to appoint an Executive Officer to fulfill LAFCO's managerial and staff needs, ensure required information is presented to support the decisions that are made, and administer LAFCO operations efficiently and effectively.