

## LAFCO IN CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

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The problem in Contra Costa County started years before LAFCO was created. The Contra Costa Mosquito Abatement District in the early days encompassed the central portion of the county, and was isolated from the coastal portion containing Richmond, El Cerrito and several other cities by a ridge of hills which provided a geographic barrier and helped produce different climatic conditions. It was of no great concern to people in the central areas as to whether or not there was a mosquito control program on the west slope of the hill. Certain people in the western portion of the county wanted a mosquito control program, but others were violently opposed to it. This situation simmered for a number of years until LAFCO came into being.

In 1964 a committee was appointed by the Board of Supervisors to study the needs in the county and to make recommendations. The committee presented the recommendation that the Diablo Valley MAD in the east part of the county, the Contra Costa County MAD in the central part of the county, and the uncontrolled area in the west part of the county be included in a single county-wide service area which would not only do mosquito control but also perform other functions, all under the direct control of the Board of Supervisors.

The matter was quiet for several years. At one time the Contra Costa County MAD was approached about the desirability of a service area being formed in the western part of the County and contracting with the MAD. The Board of Trustees of the District was agreeable to annexation or to almost any reasonable solution short of giving up its own program. In 1969 the situation finally came to a head, with some of the local people mounting an offensive, using LAFCO procedures. The matter was brought before the Board of Supervisors, who initiated the action requesting LAFCO to study this subject and hopefully to recommend that the entire west portion be annexed to the Contra Costa MAD. At the public hearing, only city council members and managers of two cities, Richmond and El Cerrito, appeared in opposition. There were some 60 letters from private citizens urging that the area be annexed to the MAD. There were two cities very much in favor of the annexation. At the same time, the executive officer of LAFCO suggested to the Commission that, if the annexation were successful, the Board of Supervisors should consider taking over the mosquito abatement function in the entire county. He carried this matter to the Board of Supervisors and got a commitment from them that they would be willing to take over the operations if the cities wished it.

Our Board of Trustees did not want the string tied to the annexation that if the annexation occurred the County would take over the program. We even debated whether we would accept the annexation — we do have that option

under the District Reorganization Act. This matter had been stewing for too many years and was not going away, so we decided to face it. The Board did agree to consider the annexation, to hold the hearings that were necessary, but they made it quite clear that they did not want the County Supervisors to take over. A hearing was set up, and opposition consisted only of a vocal minority of the city councils of Richmond and El Cerrito. The annexation was completed, but, immediately following, one of these cities reminded the Board of Supervisors to keep its promise to take over the function of the District. The Supervisors passed a resolution and sent out copies to each of the cities in the District, offering to do mosquito control if the cities wished it. Our Board of Trustees is appointed almost entirely by city councils — we had 13 appointees from cities and one representing the county. Particularly among the eight original cities, the trustees contacted their respective city council members to support the district. The city of Lafayette was the first to come through with a letter to the Board of Supervisors stating "No thank you, we like the district, we want to keep it." Other cities did likewise, so the Supervisors threw the matter into the mayors' conference for a quick decision. I was offered ten minutes to talk to this Conference to explain that the District was in a better position to handle the control than was the county. At the conclusion of the debate, the mayor of Brentwood in the Diablo Valley MAD in east county, said: "We all know that these studies take time, cost money — I move that this matter be tabled and that we move on to other more important business." The mayor of San Pablo agreed: "We have been trying for many years to get a program going in the west part of the county, we now are within sight of our goal, we have been annexed and hopefully during the coming season we can get some relief—let us not delay the matter further." A roll call vote was 10 to 4 in favor of tabling the matter, hopefully forgetting it, and letting the districts carry on. The four mayors voting for carrying out the study to give the program to the County Supervisors were from the west area which had never been served by an organized mosquito control agency. Every mayor of every city served by a mosquito abatement program unanimously supported us.

We got considerable newspaper publicity, and this should have been the end of the matter, but it was not. A few weeks later we were surprised when we got another resolution from the Board of Supervisors, this time directed to our Board of Trustees, saying that if the parties concerned were interested, they would be willing to take over the program. This resolution also went to the Diablo Valley MAD. It irritated the Contra Costa County MAD Board, which could not understand why the Supervisors could not take no for an answer. The District Board took a very polite approach, requesting that a committee of our Board

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meet with the Supervisors or a committee of that Board, and stating that we would be happy to listen to any reasons why the Supervisors thought they could do the job better or more economically.

The Supervisors immediately replied, saying they were referring the matter to their local government coordinating committee. Perhaps we could have dropped the matter, but the District Board said "NO! We want the meeting. We want to know why the Supervisors persist on this." Our Board President wrote to the chairman of the local government coordinating committee, asking again that a date be set. Finally, late in September the meeting was held. At this meeting the Supervisor's committee seemed apologetic. It was obvious that this was a political matter, that pressure had been applied to the Supervisors. The committee indicated that the meeting was not really necessary, that there was nothing special to present to the District, that the com-

mittee itself recognized that the District was doing a good job. The LAFCO executive officer pointed out that this was the way things were going, that the Supervisors were always looking for ways to cut down on expenses, and that we may hear about this from time to time, as the Supervisors try to meet their problems. The Supervisors themselves gave every indication that they would like to forget the matter. Inasmuch as it took over six months to arrange for the original meeting, our Board felt that the county would not initiate another meeting in the near future.

Under the District Reorganization Act, there is no provision at this time for the Board of Supervisors or LAFCO to dissolve an operating district so long as that district is functioning and carrying out its powers, without going to a vote of the people to uphold them. If the district were not functioning, the Supervisors could dissolve the district with the consent of LAFCO.

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