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## Unincorporated Reliez Valley Road residents want influence in Lafayette

By Pippa Fisher

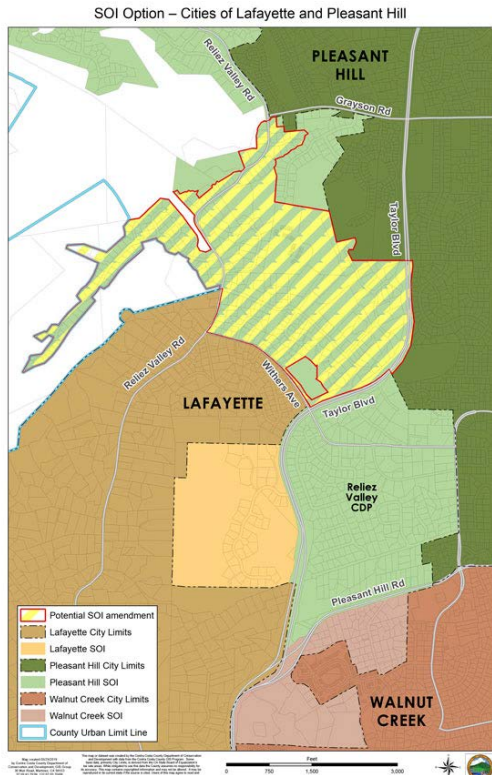


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high.

Altbaum made the point before both the city council and LAFCO that they are simply asking for change in SOI, not annexation to the city. This was a point that Council Member Cam Burks took issue with. "It is clear to me that the SOI change is solely geared towards annexation," he said.

LAFCO Executive Officer Lou Ann Teixeira explained that the agency can amend the SOI for each district and city. "Sphere of influence, by definition, means a plan for the probable physical boundaries and service area of a local agency, as determined by the commission," she said. "If there is no indication that an area will be annexed to a local agency (i.e., city, district), then LAFCO would typically have no reason to place that area in the SOI. The city of Lafayette does not currently include the Reliez Valley in its General Plan, which indicates they are not planning to serve this area in the future."

Referring to an email sent to council just hours before the meeting from Former Mayor Don Tatzin urging a "no" vote on the matter, Altbaum told the LAFCO hearing, "Don still puppeteers our city." She went on to say that the letter was full of fear mongering and absent truths. "Costs associated with a potential annexation was the excuse he laid out, but if costs are so prohibitive, how then did 17 annexations to the city of Lafayette occur prior to 1983 in the span of just 11 years and how do boundary changes happen all the time, up and down the state of California?" asked Altbaum.

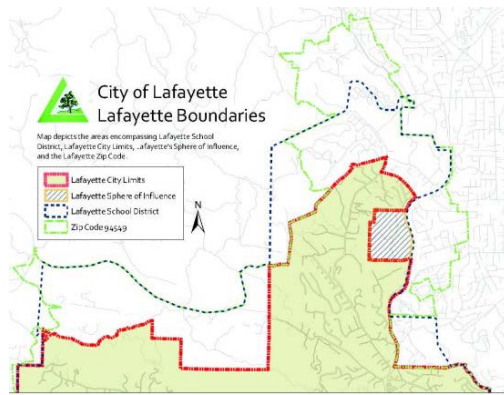
It is not known when the LAFCO subcommittee will report back to the commission with an update, but Altbaum says that she appreciates the thoughtfulness of the LAFCO commissioners in forming the committee. "I'm cautiously optimistic that the adhoc committee can work with Lafayette and County to make us feel included in Lafayette's demographic and that costs to residents will be consistent with the past 17 Lafayette annexations."

Despite a 4-1 vote from the Lafayette City Council at its May 28 meeting - with Council Member Susan Candell the only one opposing - to notify the Local Agency Formation Commission of its opposition to any change in sphere of influence for unincorporated Reliez Valley area residents, the issue is not necessarily over quite yet. LAFCO, while not approving any changes to SOI, subsequently decided to form a subcommittee to further discuss the topic.

Kristen Altbaum and Roger Chelemedos, representing an area of roughly 300 homes in unincorporated Contra Costa County along Reliez Valley Road between Grayson and Withers that share the Lafayette zip code, have Lafayette addresses and send their children to Lafayette schools, had requested that LAFCO remove them from the Pleasant Hill SOI and that they be placed in the Lafayette SOI.

Residents of this area say they want to simplify jurisdictional boundaries. They want school districts and city boundaries to align. They say they identify with Lafayette and that their area is home to coaches and involved community members. They point out they patronize Lafayette restaurants and businesses, spend their time in activities and sports with their Lafayette school-attending children in Lafayette and as such should be under the Lafayette SOI enabling them to vote in elections on Lafayette matters that affect them, such as traffic and safety along the RVR corridor.

Interim City Manager Niroop Srivatsa explained to the council in her presentation that an SOI change is the first step and that the next logical step is annexation. And in such a scenario she warned the costs could be



From the city's staff report, showing the area in question.

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