

(Letter to the Editor: February 24, 2015)

Fall River Valley Coordinated Fire Protection District SOI

The map of the proposed Fall River Valley Fire Protection District sphere of influence presented at the February 19, 2015 Shasta County LAFCO meeting again showed a portion of Cassel included. The area had been removed and did not appear on the map in the December 18, 2014 meeting. This reappearance is unacceptable, whether accidental or intentional.

As stated in previous LAFCO meetings, the SOI is of no benefit to Cassel residents as most calls for our fire personnel are for medical reasons and the Fall River Fire Department cannot respond faster than the current configuration of the Cassel Fire Department and mutual assistance. The latter disappearing in the proposed SOI change, which would put Cassel residents in even greater jeopardy. It also appears that all study of the issue has been from the FRV side without input from Cassel, except from our Fire Chief and possibly a Cassel Fire Board member when they became aware of Cassel being included in a LAFCO meeting and attended said meetings without benefit of knowing what was to be discussed. It is our understanding that LAFCO does not take action without those affected approving, and this is not the case in Cassel.

Several years ago the Burney Fire District looked into annexing Cassel per a LAFCO inquiry. Residents of Cassel filled Cassel Center on a couple occasions to question, and soundly object to, the idea. Upon investigation by then Burney Fire Chief Ray Barber, it was determined that it was of no benefit to Burney due to the minimal tax income, inability to improve response time, and that Cassel Voluntary Fire Company, Inc. property and equipment would not be part of the deal, as well as the fact that Cassel residents were not supportive of the annexation. Residents of Cassel realize that maintaining our Fire Department is challenging with our population being primarily retirees, but neither Burney Fire nor this FRV SOI has shown an ability to respond in as timely a manner as Cassel firefighters.

This said, what would the benefit be to the Fall River Valley Coordinated Fire Protection District SOI if it included Cassel? The Fall River Valley CFPD SOI has been on the Shasta County LAFCO agenda for several years with neither a presentation to nor survey of Cassel residents. We recognize that this is an unresolved issue from the previous LAFCO administration. However, the current Shasta LAFCO executive officer, Jan Lopez, has indicated in recent LAFCO meetings that she does not know of Cassel as an unincorporated community (we have our own zip code) nor its location, which one would have assumed would have been part of her research on her visits to the Fall River Valley area to discuss the SOI!

Rather than continuing the issue of a portion of Cassel being included in the SOI, a resolution could be a decision by the Commission to remove Cassel from further consideration in this SOI. If LAFCO administration and/ or FRV CFPD organizers desire to continue this issue, we propose that a meeting be called for local input and resolution. The Cassel Volunteer Fire Company will be happy to host such a meeting at Cassel Center and provide suitable notice to Cassel residents.

President Jolyn Knowles,
Cassel Volunteer Fire Company, Inc.

Vice President John Knowles, Cassel
Volunteer Fire Company, Inc.

Secretary Leslie Mastalarz, Cassel

Volunteer Fire Company, Inc.

Treasurer Edie Baltzer, Cassel
Volunteer Fire Company, Inc.

Director & Fire Chief Don Chaix,
Cassel Volunteer Fire Company, Inc.