

Agenda Item 1

Balancing Community and Commerce



5000 S. AIRPORT WAY □ SUITE 209 □ STOCKTON, CA 95206 □ 209-953-7646

SUMMARY MINUTES

August 13, 2026

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS CHAMBERS
44 NORTH SAN JOAQUIN STREET, 6TH FLOOR
STOCKTON, CALIFORNIA

Chair Ding called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Commissioners Barton, Diallo, Gardea, Johnson, and Chair Ding

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

ALTERNATE MEMBERS PRESENT: Commissioners Arriola, and Dhaliwal

ALTERNATE MEMBERS: Commissioner Dhatt

OTHERS PRESENT: J.D. Hightower, Executive Officer; Mitzi Stites, Clerk Analyst, Nubia Goldstein Legal Counsel; and Claudia Iboa, Administrative Assistant

CONSENT ITEMS

1. The Chair introduced Agenda Item No. 1, Summary of Minutes

Chair Ding opened the floor to Commissioner Comments.

No comments were made

Chair Ding opened the floor to Public Comments

No Comments were made

A motion was made by Commissioner Barton and seconded by Commissioner Johnson to approve the Consent Items

Chair Ding asked for a Roll Call Vote:

Ayes: Commissioners Arriola, Barton, Dhaliwal, Diallo, Gardea, Johnson and Chair Ding

Noes: None

Absent : Commissioner Dhatt

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

3. Chair Ding opened the floor to Public Comments

No one came forward

Chair Ding closed Public Comments

CORRESPONDENCE

2. J.D. Hightower, Executive Officer, presented a PowerPoint presentation of both the findings and the recommendations from the San Joaquin Civil Grand Jury, Coordinating and Planning Growth, Case No. 0225 as well as San Joaquin LAFCo's proposed response. Mr. Hightower provided the Commission with a detailed overview of the Civil Grand Jury letter and discussed each finding and recommendation in detail. Following the presentation and discussion, the Commission agreed to approve the response to the letter

Chair Ding opened the floor to Commissioner Comments.

Commissioner Barton stated that the grand jury did its job, and LAFCo's response reflected the reality and your work has EO. Commissioner Barton inquired what are the Commission's obligations and responsibilities moving forward

LAFCo Counsel Nubia Goldstein stated that the response was appropriate, particularly because districts, cities, and counties had been facing similar challenges in responding to Civil Grand Jury findings. Ms. Goldstein noted that, based on discussions with Mr. Hightower, and a review of the report, it was clear that the Civil Grand Jury had conducted its due diligence and fulfilled its role as a watchdog agency responsible for reviewing the mechanics and operation of independent bodies within the County.

LAFCo Counsel Nubia Goldstein explained that there were both procedural and practical considerations regarding the agency and commission's obligations. From a procedural standpoint, the response needed to be provided in the format Mr. Hightower had drafted for the Commission review. The response addresses each finding by indicating whether the Commission agreed, disagreed or agreed in part,

and also addresses the recommendations. Ms. Goldstein further stated that, beyond the procedural response, the Commission was responsible for carrying out the actions it had committed to undertake. Mr. Hightower has proposed significant steps to evaluate budgeting concerns, staffing consideration and overall operational changes that the Commission will consider and approve in the future. This agency is a watchdog that reviews but does not have independent authority to mandate specific actions. The Commission will consider its recommendations while determining the appropriate course, considering the practical challenges and unfunded state mandates faced by this and other agencies.

Ms. Goldstein stated that the agency lacked independent funding, which created practical challenges. It is also affected by market forces and other factors beyond its control, which shaped its response to the Grand Jury.

Commissioner Barton stated that JD Hightower, Executive Officer, responses accurately reflected the reality of our staffing, budget and mandates. I appreciate the direction in responding to the Grand Jury.

Commissioner Johnson stated Mr. Hightower did an excellent job addressing the report and respecting its findings, which had not always been the case. You addressed the key issues and presented a thoughtful, practical plan. Commissioner Johnson also appreciated Mr. Hightower's focus on using technology to address challenges rather than increasing staffing, recognizing that technology could be adjusted more easily.

Commissioner Arriola thanked J.D. Hightower, Executive Officer and staff, for their responses, he also wanted to acknowledge the Civil Grand Jury and the importance it plays in our local government. Many of the recommendations have already been implemented or will be implemented. Commissioner Arriola also thanked staff for explaining the findings and responses clearly. One theme that he noticed, especially around audits and reserve funds, may be more of a communication issue than transparency issue. Commission Arriola stated that he has been elected official locally for 10 years, and believes LAFCO is functioning effectively. Of course we can always do better. Regarding the website, it is well laid out, but when it comes to policies and procedures, there may be an opportunity to make the information easier for the public to understand. right now, much if it listed as PDF files. Since the Grand Jury raised concerns about transparency, perhaps we can look at better ways to communicate our policies and procedures through the website. I'm curious if there is an opportunity to improve this in a cost-effective way, both to make the information clear and to maintain it going forward.

J.D Hightower, Executive Officer, stated there are always ways to improve transparency, and we can work toward that. We have received cost estimated for adding interactive maps to the websites. This would allow property owners to enter their property information and see which special districts receive their property taxes. They could also see information about what those districts do.

Commissioner Arriola thanked J.D. Hightower. Executive Officer. I think those interactive tools are great. Since we already have these PowerPoint presentations, maybe we could post the slides on the website under Policy and Procedures with

simple headings. This could make the information easier for the public to understand.

Chair Ding thanked the Grand Jury for the time and work they put in. He noted that most people did not know what LAFCO was or what it did, so it was helpful to have someone review their work. He thanked J.D Hightower, Executive Officer, for doing a great job with the response and thanked counsel for the clear summary.

Chair Ding open the floor to Public Comments

Bob Benz addressed the Commission.

Commissioner Dhaliwal asked what more the Commission could do to address the Civil Grand Jurys concerns.

LAFCO Counsel Nubia Goldstein stated that the Grand Jury's report focused on transparency and giving the public more information. The Commission's response, based on JD Hightower's response, was that LAFCo was looking for ways to provide more information to the public.

LAFCO Counsel Nubia Goldstein stated that the Commission had addressed the concerns and objectives, it should do so.

Commissioner Johnson asked if the Commission had met the criteria

LAFCO Counsel Nubia Goldstein stated that, based on what she heard, the Commission supported the proposal without any changes or concerns, that was the time to raise them. Otherwise, the draft response would be finalized and sent to the Civil Grand Jury. Ms. Goldstein also explained that the response would follow the standard format for responding to the Grand Jury's findings and recommendations. Since there were no changes, the response would move forward for final approval by the Commission.

EXECUTIVE OFFICER COMMENTS

6. J.D. Hightower. Executive Officer thanked the Civil Grand Jury for their thorough review and report given on LAFCo's operation and process.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Ding adjourned the meeting at 9:41 a.m.