

## **AGENDA ITEM 6.A.**

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**MEETING:** April 15, 2025  
**TO:** Trinity LAFCo Commissioners  
**FROM:** Colette Santsche, Executive Officer  
**SUBJECT:** Status of Post Mountain Public Utilities District

### **BACKGROUND**

Post Mountain Public Utility District (PUD) is an independent special district governed by a five-member board of directors, authorized to provide fire protection and road maintenance services in the Post Mountain/Trinity Pines area of unincorporated Trinity County. In recent years, the District has faced significant operational, financial, and administrative challenges, including limited board member participation, inadequate firefighter staffing, insufficient funding for road maintenance, failure to complete timely audits, and increasing difficulty in sustaining reliable service delivery. These issues have been further compounded by turnover in leadership and concerns regarding equipment maintenance and the District's overall emergency response capabilities.

In October 2024, Trinity LAFCo reviewed the status of Post Mountain PUD and determined that the District had not made sufficient progress in remedying deficiencies identified during the 2023 Municipal Service Review (MSR) and Sphere of Influence (SOI) update process. As a result, the Commission adopted Resolution 2024-03, which established a zero sphere of influence for the District and declared the Commission's intent to initiate dissolution following a 12-month remediation period.

During this period, if the District demonstrates sufficient progress toward operational and service improvements, the Commission may reconsider dissolution. An extension of time to address deficiencies may also be considered. However, if adequate progress is not achieved, the Commission may consider formally dissolving the District at a noticed public hearing tentatively scheduled for October 2025.

As part of the ongoing process, LAFCo staff committed to providing a status update to the Commission within six months of the resolution's adoption. This report provides that update and outlines recent activities and coordination efforts.

### **DISCUSSION**

Since adoption of Resolution 2024-03, Post Mountain PUD and LAFCo staff, along with support from County representatives, have continued to coordinate to evaluate pathways for sustaining essential services and addressing long-standing governance and operational challenges. Key updates from recent coordination efforts are summarized below:

- **Fire and Road Services Planning:** District volunteers and leadership continue to assess and document the condition of fire and road maintenance equipment. The district has confirmed one operational water tender (3541) and one fire engine (3531), with additional vehicles in various states of disrepair. Road department activities remain limited, but grant efforts are underway, including coordination with FLOWRA on potential fire mitigation and sediment reduction grants.
- **Strategic Equipment and Infrastructure Planning:** The District has identified needs for a functioning snowplow at the fire station, an operational water source and new storage tank at the

station, and repair or replacement of key apparatus. A future plan is needed to assess and prioritize these capital needs and guide purchases, repairs, and volunteer training.

- **Volunteer Recruitment and Training:** Increased interest from Hmong community residents has led to multiple applications for volunteer positions in both the road and fire departments. Title 22 certification and other fire and EMS training opportunities are being explored but with limited completion. For public safety personnel in California, Title 22 first aid training requires a minimum of 21 hours of instruction which is valid for 2 years and refresher training every two years thereafter, providing First Aid/CPR responders with the required skills. CPR classes are available in Hayfork. Community education about 911 protocols and emergency response standards is also needed.
- **Board Governance and Meeting Schedule:** Governance challenges continue. The regularly scheduled February 14 and 25, 2025 board meetings were canceled due to inclement weather and board member health concerns. The March 14 meeting did not meet quorum. A special meeting was held on March 29, 2025, where quorum was achieved. A regular board meeting was scheduled for April 11, 2025 at 10:00 a.m. at the fire station. A full board remains seated, though attendance issues and conflicts among board members and staff have been reported.
- **Board Member Conduct and Personnel Concerns:** Persistent internal conflicts have been reported. Incidents include allegations of verbal threats and harassment involving multiple board members and department personnel, and concerns about interference in chain-of-command and operations. These issues continue to disrupt progress and may require outside intervention or mediation.
- **District Administration and Policy Updates:** The District has demonstrated progress in administrative operations, including timely payment of bills, submission of required financial reports (e.g., to the State Controller and FRMS), and improvements in records retention and compliance with the Brown Act. New policies have been reviewed and adopted by the Board. There have been some disputes about station access, but new access control policy has been implemented to secure conference room office facilities and confidential district information.
- **Special Tax Measure Planning:** The District is exploring a special tax measure to secure dedicated funding for road maintenance. Coordination with the Trinity County Elections Office has confirmed that the next general election is November 3, 2026. Preliminary discussions have included drafting an ordinance for an annual special tax of \$175/parcel for roads, while maintaining the existing \$24/parcel annual fire assessment. The District is proceeding with early planning efforts to confirm election filing requirements and meet election deadlines.
- **Agency and Technical Assistance Coordination:** LAFCo continues to coordinate with the District on governance questions, special tax procedures, and compliance issues. Additional technical assistance resources are being explored to help support strategic planning, board training, and long-term sustainability of services. Options for district reorganization, dissolution, or annexation remain under consideration as part of the overall evaluation.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Commission receive this report and provide direction to staff as needed.