

# **San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency**

**DATE:** February 23, 2026

**TO:** Board of Directors

**FROM:** Lance Eckhart, General Manager

**BY:** Maricela V. Cabral, Exec. Asst./Clerk of the Board

**SUBJECT: Riverside LAFCO 2026 Special District Selection Committee Election, Regular Special District Member – Western Riverside County**

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Approve and ratify the issuance of a letter of support endorsing Vice President Lawrence “Larry” Smith for the position of LAFCO Regular Special District Member – Western Riverside County and provide direction to the Board President regarding completion of the Special District Selection Committee (SDSC) ballot.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Riverside Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) is responsible for overseeing municipal boundary changes, annexations, incorporations, and changes in service areas throughout Riverside County. The LAFCO Board includes representatives from the County, cities, and special districts. Special district representatives are selected through a vote of the Special District Selection Committee (SDSC), which is composed of presiding officers or authorized board members from eligible special districts.

Riverside LAFCO has initiated the 2026 SDSC election for the position of Regular Special District Member – Western Riverside County, with a term running from May 4, 2026, through May 6, 2030. Seven (7) eligible nominations were received for this position, including Vice President Smith. The election will be conducted using Instant Runoff Voting (IRV), allowing voting members to rank candidates in order of preference. Completed ballots must be submitted to Riverside LAFCO no later than 5:00 p.m. on April 9, 2026.

## **ANALYSIS**

The purpose of this item is to provide the Board with information regarding the Riverside LAFCO 2026 Special District Selection Committee election and to request direction regarding the Agency’s participation. Consistent with prior LAFCO SDSC elections, the Board is asked to consider whether to formally support a candidate and to provide direction to the Board President for completion of the SDSC ballot.

Vice President Smith has been nominated for the position of Regular Special District Member – Western Riverside County. Staff has prepared a letter of support endorsing Vice President Smith’s candidacy for the Board’s consideration. No additional analysis is required beyond Board direction on this matter.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no fiscal impact associated with approving the letter of support or participating in the Special District Selection Committee election.

### **ACTION**

Provide direction to the Board President regarding support for a candidate in the Riverside LAFCO 2026 Special District Selection Committee election, including completion and submission of the SDSC ballot, and ratify the issuance of the letter of support endorsing Vice President Smith.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Letter of Support for Vice President Larry Smith  
Riverside LAFCO 2026 Special District Selection Committee Ballot



February 9, 2026

via electronic mail

**2026 SPECIAL DISTRICT SELECTION COMMITTEE (SDSC) BALLOT INSTRUCTIONS  
FOR SPECIAL DISTRICT MEMBER OF THE RIVERSIDE LOCAL AGENCY  
FORMATION COMMISSION**

To Special District Selection Committee Members:

**Please read these instructions carefully before completing your ballot.** As previously announced, a physical meeting of the Special District Selection Committee (SDSC) is not feasible at this time, therefore, the selection proceedings are being conducted by electronic mail or regular USPS mail. A nomination period for the position in the title above was opened December 2, 2025, and closed at 5:00 p.m. on February 2, 2026.

Enclosed you will find your ballot.

**LAFCO Regular Special District Member – Western Riverside County:** A total of 7 nominations were received for this position.

All members of the SDSC may cast a ballot for a regular member.

Pursuant to procedures adopted by the Selection Committee in 2016, the election for the LAFCO regular position will be conducted using Instant Runoff Voting (IRV). IRV eliminates the requirement for the expensive and lengthy process of sending out a second runoff ballot to achieve a majority. An example demonstrating how IRV works is attached.

Please fill out your ballot by ranking each nominee in the order of preference, using "1" for your first choice, "2" for your second choice and so on. Please note ranking more than one candidate will not work against your first choice candidate, however, voting for only one candidate is allowed. Do not mark the same number beside more than one candidate and do not skip numbers.

**General Instructions and Information:**

- Completed ballots must be delivered via electronic mail to [rholtzclaw@lafco.org](mailto:rholtzclaw@lafco.org) and cc: [info@lafco.org](mailto:info@lafco.org), or hand-delivered or by regular mail addressed to the LAFCO office at 6216 Brockton Avenue, Suite 111-B, Riverside CA 92506 **no later than 5:00 p.m. on April 9, 2026.**
- Only the presiding officer or another board member authorized by your board of directors to vote may cast the ballot. Board members designated by their district board to vote in place of the presiding officer must provide that authorization (in the form of a resolution or minute order) to LAFCO no later than the time the ballot is cast. District managers or other staff members may not vote.
- The voting member must print his or her name on the ballot as well as sign and date the certification indicating he or she is authorized to vote for the district.
- We must receive a ballot with an original signature. However, if you deliver your ballot via electronic mail, you may return a scanned copy of the signed ballot by email to [rholtzclaw@lafco.org](mailto:rholtzclaw@lafco.org) and [info@lafco.org](mailto:info@lafco.org) .
- Failure to follow these instructions will invalidate the ballot.

Finally, these positions ensure special districts are appropriately represented on our local boards. Appointments are only valid if ballots representing a quorum, from 29 of our 55 independent special districts, are returned. Please return your ballots in a timely manner.

If you have any questions, please contact our office at (951) 369-0631.

Sincerely,



GARY THOMPSON  
Executive Officer

Attachments:

2026 Special District Selection Committee – Ballot  
Instant Runoff Voting Election Process (IRV)

**SPECIAL DISTRICT SELECTION COMMITTEE**  
**Regular Special District Member of the**  
**Local Agency Formation Commission – Western Region**

**2026 BALLOT**

**Name of District:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*Print District Name Here (required)*

**Certification of voting member:**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ hereby certify that I am (check one):  
*Print Name Here (required)*

- The presiding officer of the above-named district.
- A member of the board of the above-named district authorized by the board to vote in place of the presiding officer. [Authorization:  previously transmitted  attached]

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature (required)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date (required)*

**LAFCO Regular Special District Member – Western Region**  
(Term running May 4, 2026 through May 6, 2030)

**Please rank the candidates in preferential order, "1" being the first preference, "2" being the second and so on.**

		Circle rank for each candidate						
1	STEVE PASTOR, Lake Hemet Municipal Water District	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	LESLIE ALTAMIRANO, Rubidoux Community Services District	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	STEVE CORONA, Eastern Municipal Water District	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	ROBERT GRIFFITH, Mission Springs Water District	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	LARRY SMITH, San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	JOHN FLORES, Beaumont-Cherry Valley Rec & Park District	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7	DANIEL SLAWSON, Beaumont-Cherry Valley Water District	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

*Listed in random drawing order conducted on 2/03/2026 at 11:00 a.m.*

Completed ballots must be delivered via electronic mail to [rholtzclaw@lafco.org](mailto:rholtzclaw@lafco.org) and [info@lafco.org](mailto:info@lafco.org), or by regular mail or hand delivered to the LAFCO office at 6216 Brockton Avenue, Suite 111-B, Riverside CA 92506 no later than 5:00 p.m. on April 9, 2026.

## INSTANT RUNOFF VOTING (IRV) ELECTION PROCESS

### Introduction

In 2016, the Special District Selection Committee voted to utilize instant runoff voting (IRV) for all future elections to select members to the Riverside Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). IRV is a method of conducting elections with three or more candidates whereby a majority determines the winner without the need to have a second ballot/runoff proceeding. A separate runoff election could cause a delay of more than 90 days, as well as causing LAFCO additional expense.

The explanation below and example that follows illustrates how the instant runoff voting method will be used for determining the winner in a fictional election for the "Porcupine LAFCO" Special District Commissioner open seat. A process similar to the one explained below will be utilized to determine the Riverside LAFCO Special District Member.

### Ballot Specifications and Directions to Voters

The ballot will allow a voter to rank candidates in order of preference. All nominated candidates are listed on the ballot. Voters will vote for candidates by indicating their first-choice candidate, their second-choice candidate, their third-choice candidate, and so on.

The voter will indicate his/her first choice by marking or circling the number "1" beside a candidate's name, the second choice by marking or circling the number "2" by that candidate's name, the third choice by marking the number "3," and so on, for as many choices as the voter wishes.

Voters are free to rank only one candidate, however, doing so does not offer any additional advantage to that candidate, as ranking additional candidates cannot help defeat a voter's first-choice candidate. Voters must not mark the same number beside more than one candidate or skip rank numbers.

### Ballot Counting

The ballots cast will be tabulated and the result declared by the official responsible for conducting the election. Votes will be counted for each candidate using the following procedure:

- The first choice marked on each ballot shall be counted. If any candidate receives a majority of the first choices, that candidate shall be declared elected.
- A majority is a number of votes greater than half (50%+1) of the total number of ballots received.

- If no candidate receives a majority of first choices, the candidate who received the fewest first choices shall be eliminated and each vote cast for that candidate shall be transferred to the next-ranked candidate on that voter's ballot. If, after this transfer of votes, any candidate has a number of votes constituting a majority, that candidate shall be declared elected.
- If no candidate receives a majority of votes from the continuing ballots after a candidate has been eliminated and his/her votes have been transferred to the next-ranked candidate, the continuing candidate with the fewest votes from the continuing ballots shall be eliminated. All votes cast for that candidate shall be transferred to the next-ranked continuing candidate on each voter's ballot. This process of eliminating candidates and transferring their votes to the next-ranked continuing candidates shall be repeated until a candidate receives a majority of the votes from the continuing ballots. This candidate shall be declared elected.

**Example:**

Four candidates are running for the Porcupine LAFCO Special District Commissioner open seat: Paul Alto, Mort Bragg, Charlene Newberry, and Samantha Cruz. 60 ballots are cast, therefore a candidate needs a majority of 31 votes to win the election:

- Alto is ranked #1 on 10 ballots
- Bragg is ranked #1 on 25 ballots
- Newberry is ranked #1 on 5 ballots
- Cruz is ranked #1 on 20 ballots

In the first round no one receives the required majority of 31 votes. Newberry, as the candidate receiving the fewest first (#1) choice votes, is eliminated. Those 5 ballots that had Newberry ranked as their first (#1) choice are reviewed for their second (#2) choice. On those 5 ballots:

- Alto is ranked #2 on 3 of those 5 ballots
- Bragg is ranked #2 on 1 of those 5 ballots
- Cruz is ranked #2 on 1 of the 5 ballots.

These second (#2) choice votes, which are now first (#1) choice votes for the succeeding candidates, are added to the results of the first (#1) choice count in round one as follows:

- Alto has 10 plus 3 for a total of 13 votes
- Bragg has 25 plus 1 for a total of 26 votes
- Cruz has 20 plus 1 for a total of 21 votes

Thus, in the second round, no one receives the required majority of 31 votes. Alto, as the candidate receiving the fewest adjusted first (#1) choice votes in this round is eliminated. Those thirteen ballots that had Alto ranked as their adjusted first (#1) choice are reviewed

for their second (#2) choice, or (third (#3) choice, if adjusted from the previous round). On those 13 ballots:

- Bragg is ranked #2 (plus one adjusted #1 from the first round) on 8 of those 13 ballots
- Cruz is ranked #2 (plus one adjusted #1 from the first round on 4 of the 13 ballots.

These second (#2) choice or third (#3) choice votes, are now designated as first (#1) choice votes for the succeeding candidates, and are added to the results of the adjusted first (#1) choice count from the second round as follows:

- Bragg has 26 plus 8 for a total of 34 votes
- Cruz has 21 plus 4 for a total of 25 votes
- One of the ballots did not pick a second or third choice candidate.

Bragg wins with 34 votes (the required majority was 31) and Cruz is second with 25 votes.

**President**  
Robert Ybarra

**Vice President**  
Larry Smith

**Treasurer**  
James Tickemyer

**Secretary**  
Sarah Wargo

**Directors**  
Dr. Blair Ball  
Chander Letulle  
Mickey Valdivia

**General Manager**  
Lance Eckhart,  
PG, CHG

**Legal Counsel**  
Holland Stewart

February 10, 2026

To Special District Board Presiding Officers and Clerks



SAN GORGONIO PASS  
WATER AGENCY  
*A California State Water Project Contractor*

To Whom it May Concern:

The San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency (SGPWA) is proud to endorse Lawrence "Larry" Smith for the upcoming seat on the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) as the Regular Special District Member – Western Riverside County.

Mr. Smith was elected to the SGPWA Board of Directors on December 4, 2020, and currently serves as Vice President. He represents Division 5, including the communities of Calimesa and Beaumont, and works diligently to ensure the region maintains a high-quality, reliable, and affordable water supply. These communities along with Yucaipa have experienced some of the highest growth rates in the region, making thoughtful land use planning, service delivery, and infrastructure coordination especially critical. Mr. Smith is a strong advocate for clean water, transparent governance, and public accountability principles that align directly with LAFCO's mission.

Mr. Smith brings decades of public service experience, including four years of service on the Hemet City Council, where he was selected to serve as Mayor in 2014, and his tenure as a two-time President of the San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency. In these roles, he addressed complex issues related to land use planning, annexations, service delivery, infrastructure development, and intergovernmental coordination core responsibilities of LAFCO, particularly in rapidly growing communities.

In addition, Mr. Smith has served on several regional boards, including the Riverside County Transportation Commission, Western Council of Governments, and the Southern California Association of Governments, providing him with a strong regional perspective on growth management, infrastructure investment, and coordinated service delivery.

Mr. Smith holds a degree in Business Management from the University of Redlands and has more than thirty years of experience in the construction industry, including work on major roadway, dam, and bridge projects. This background provides him with a practical understanding of infrastructure planning, capital financing, and complex contract negotiations expertise that is highly relevant to LAFCO deliberations in fast-growing regions.

The San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency strongly believes Vice President Smith would be an exceptional asset to LAFCO and a trusted representative for local agencies throughout Western Riverside County. We respectfully request your support for his candidacy and appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lance Eckhart, PG, CHG  
General Manager