



JIM DESMOND

**SUPERVISOR, FIFTH DISTRICT
SAN DIEGO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

AGENDA ITEM

DATE: **April 10, 2024**

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TO: **Board of Supervisors**

SUBJECT:

ADJUST THE WARNER SPRINGS COMMUNITY PLAN BOUNDARY TO INCLUDE THE LOS COYOTES TRIBAL LAND (DISTRICT: 5)

OVERVIEW

The Warner Springs Community Sponsor Group (CSG) is a nine-seat advisory body made up of community members who reside or own property in the unincorporated community of Warner Springs. The community is located in District 5 in rural northeast San Diego County in a region broadly known as the “backcountry.” The Warner Springs CSG is a legally formed group and conducts business pursuant to Board of Supervisors (Board) Policy I-1. Members are appointed by the Board and serve local residents by advising County decision-makers such as the Director of Planning & Development Services (PDS), the Planning Commission, and the Board on matters concerning planning and land use.

Recently, the Chair of the CSG and the Los Coyotes Band of Indians (Los Coyotes) made a joint request to include the neighboring Los Coyotes tribal land into the Warner Springs community plan boundary to make Los Coyotes eligible to seat a member on the CSG. Tribal members from Los Coyotes frequently attend meetings and engage with the CSG on a range of topics and issues and they have expressed interest in participating in the advisory process more formally. In response, today’s action seeks to adjust the Warner Springs community plan boundary to include the Los Coyotes tribal land, making them eligible to nominate a member for appointment to the Warner Springs CSG.

RECOMMENDATION(S) SUPERVISOR JIM DESMOND

1. Find that the proposed actions are not a project pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15378(b)(5) of the CEQA Guidelines.
2. Direct the Interim Chief Administrative Office (CAO) to research the feasibility of adjusting the Warner Springs community plan boundary to include the entirety of the Los Coyotes tribal land and return within 120 days with options to implement.

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EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Community engagement in the land use process is crucial to ensure the public's interest is taken into consideration before the County acts on important topics relating to the physical use of land, road improvements, parks and recreation, stormwater, agriculture, and many others. Community Planning and Sponsor Groups (CPSGs) are at the cornerstone of the County's public engagement process, and truly serve as a collective voice for each community. Making it so that a member from the Los Coyotes tribe could be appointed to the Warner Springs CSG would help bridge the gap between County and tribal governments and would allow their unique perspective, knowledge and lived experience to help shape our local land use process.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The County's commitment to sustainability requires us to consider the long-term consequences of our actions on the environment, economy, and social well-being of our communities. Community Planning and Sponsor Groups are uniquely set up to help us do just that. Making it so that a member from the Los Coyotes tribe could be appointed to the Warner Springs CSG would enhance the County's ability to understand the history of the land and would allow for a more diverse conversation that better considers impacts to tribal lands from actions taken in the unincorporated County.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with today's recommendations. There may be costs related to the research of feasibility of adjustments to the Warner Springs community plan boundary which will be absorbed within Planning & Development Services' Fiscal Year 2023-24 Operational Plan. Any future related actions with fiscal impacts would return back for consideration and approval by the Board. Upon return by staff, funding for future costs will need to be identified and will proceed once identified. At this time, there will be no change in net General Fund costs and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

The Los Coyotes reservation, established by executive order in 1889, is located in the greater Warner Springs area in northeast San Diego County just east of Warner Springs and bordered by the Cleveland National Forest and Anza Borrego Desert State Park. Their land is roughly 25,500 acres in size and broadly consists of mountainous, wooded terrain. The tribe currently has over 400 members with 50 families residing on the reservation, with a rich history dating back long before the end of the 19th century when the reservation was created. As active and involved members of the broader Warner Springs community, the tribe has expressed interest in having a member seated on the Warner Springs CSG. However, because the reservation is currently not included in the Warner Springs community plan boundary, individuals residing within the reservation are not allowed to be appointed to the group. This is an artificial barrier to cooperation

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and co-stewardship of local land use and fails to recognize the cultural benefits and historical knowledge that tribal members contribute to our communities.

Recently, the Chair of the CSG and the Los Coyotes Band of Indians made a joint request to include the neighboring Los Coyotes tribe into the Warner Springs community plan boundary to make Los Coyotes eligible to nominate and seat a member on the CSG. Members of the Los Coyotes tribe are already attending meetings and engaging with the community on a range of topics and issues. Allowing for tribal membership on the Warner Springs CSG would enhance the County's understanding of impacts to tribal lands from actions taken within and/or by the County. While the CSG boundary would include Los Coyotes, it's important to note that the CSG does not - and will not by today's action - have the authority to make any land use recommendations over the Los Coyotes reservation because policy I-1 does not apply to tribal areas.

In response to the joint request made by the CSG and Los Coyotes, today's action seeks to make the necessary adjustments to the Warner Springs community plan boundary to include the Los Coyotes tribal land, making them eligible to nominate a member for appointment to the Warner Springs CSG.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

Today's proposed action supports the *Justice: Environmental* and *Community: Engagement* Strategic Initiatives in the County of San Diego's 2024-2029 Strategic Plan.

Respectfully submitted,



JIM DESMOND
Supervisor, Fifth District